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February 15, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

We write to underscore the importance of robust American leadership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, especially at a time when the Russian Federation and several other participating States are actively seeking to scale back the OSCE's vital work, particularly in the human dimension.

With the recent release of the proposed U.S. budget for Fiscal Year '09, it has become clear that funding for the OSCE and seconded American personnel will fall short; a development which will inevitably be interpreted by others as a diminishment of our overall commitment to the organization. Besides difficulties in allocating resources to cover the basic U.S. obligations to support the OSCE and its field operations, we understand that the Department has or will soon eliminate extra-budgetary contributions, such as those which have supported special projects aimed at combating anti-Semitism.

While we appreciate that funding for the work of the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Unit has been normalized as part of the unified budget covering the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, we recognize that many worthy projects and activities depend upon the willingness of participating States to step forward with contributions beyond their basic obligations. In the past, the United States has been willing to match its rhetorical support for specific projects aimed at addressing anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. In all instances this has involved quite modest sums.

At a recent Commission hearing reviewing OSCE efforts to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, experts confirmed that valuable proposed initiatives, including those focused on education, civil society, and data collection, remain on the shelf for want of resources. There is also a multiplier effect with U.S. backing impacting the willingness of other donors to come forward with their own contributions. Until recently, the U.S. has served as a leader in these efforts. If it appears that such activities are no longer a priority for the U.S., others will likely come to a similar conclusion.

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We are concerned that the appearance of waning U.S. leadership in pressing for, and financially contributing to, sustained OSCE engagement in efforts to combat anti-Semitism will thus lead to an erosion of support by others for maintaining a unique focus on the plague of anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. We underscore our willingness to work with you and your colleagues at the Department to ensure continued robust U.S. involvement and leadership in all areas of the OSCE's vital work.

Sincerely,

ALCEE L. HASTINGS, M.C.
Chairman

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, U.S.S.
Co-Chairman

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, M.C.
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RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD, U.S.S.
Commissioner

LOUISE MCINTOSH SLAUGHTER, M.C.
Commissioner

CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, U.S.S.
Commissioner

HILDA L. SOLIS, M.C.
Commissioner

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, U.S.S.
Commissioner

JOSEPH R. PITTS, M.C.
Commissioner

JOHN F. KERRY, U.S.S.
Commissioner

GEORGE V. VOINOVICH, U.S.S.

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