

Statement of the Honorable Alcee L. Hastings, Chairman  
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe  
hearing on  
“Finland’s Leadership of the OSCE”

February 13, 2008

As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission I am most pleased to welcome my good friend Minister Ilkka Kanerva to Capitol Hill and today’s hearing on Finland’s leadership of the 56-nation Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I am especially delighted that you are appearing before us so early in your chairmanship. This provides us with a timely opportunity to learn of your priorities for 2008, as the political leader of the OSCE, a complex task given the diversity of participating States and diverging views among some on fundamental aspects of the organization and its mission.

I note that the overarching themes of continuity, coherence and cooperation chosen to guide your chairmanship seem most approximate to the current times which require skilled diplomacy yet an unwavering commitment to the core principles enshrined in the Final Act and agreed to, at least on paper, by all participating States, irrespective of when they joined the Helsinki Process.

Given the mandate of this Commission, we fully support and welcome Finland’s calls for greater effort by participating State to implement our common political commitments. Implementation is key, as the late President Gerald Ford underscored in his remarks in Finlandia Hall when he signed the Helsinki Accords on behalf of the United States. I am also mindful that all participating States, including this country, are obligated to translate words on paper into action and I welcome the scrutiny of others when our own policies and practices come up short. As Andrei Sakharov observed, “The whole point of the Helsinki Accords is mutual monitoring, not mutual evasion of difficult problems.”

Many of the challenges facing our countries individually, and collectively, are multidimensional in nature encompassing the security, economic, and human dimensions. From questions of energy security and longstanding conflicts to human trafficking and the plight of ethnic, religious and other minorities, each must be addressed across the spectrum of these dimensions. Finding solutions will require emphasis on cooperation, perhaps the part of the OSCE that needs more emphasis than ever before.

As President Emeritus of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I especially appreciate your recognition of the unique role parliamentarians can and should play in the Helsinki Process. It is my hope that the parliamentary dimension will be strengthened under your leadership. On behalf of the entire OSCE PA leadership, let me say how much we are looking forward to your presence in Vienna next week at our Winter Meeting.

Minister, I would be remiss were I not to express my appreciation for your confidence in appointing me to lead the OSCE election observation mission to Georgia for the January 5<sup>th</sup> extraordinary presidential elections.

Finally, I note that the bonds between our two nations are strong as we prepare to celebrate 90 years of diplomatic relations next year. I appreciate your willingness to assume leadership of the OSCE, an often thankless task, and stand ready to help in any way I can to make this a successful year.