



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Christopher H. Smith

Co-Chairman - Helsinki Commission

Let me join Chairman Brownback in welcoming Secretary Fried today. This is the fifth time we have had a hearing featuring the Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs to discuss the OSCE and U.S. policy. I have found these hearings to be an excellent venue not only for building a cooperative relationship with the State Department on issues of common concern, but also for drawing wider attention to these issues and the OSCE's useful role in addressing them.

There is no doubt that the OSCE's most unique strength is its human dimension, an integral aspect of the organization's comprehensive approach to security. Russia and a small grouping of other repressive regimes have increasingly attempted to divert attention away from their poor rights records, claiming that the real problem is that OSCE is paying too much attention to human rights. Simply put, these countries -- Belarus and Uzbekistan among them -- do not want to implement OSCE commitments they have freely accepted.

Russia's ranting and obstructionist behavior at the OSCE in Vienna has sent scores of diplomats and foreign ministers scrambling to fix the "Russia problem." To their credit, Russian officials know how to play the diplomatic game and know their best chance of getting what they want is by going into the details of the organization others often overlook.

Under the guise of "reforms" Moscow and her allies are intent on hamstringing the OSCE's human rights work, seeking to curtail the critically important Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, sidelining human rights issues to a closed-door committee, and undercutting vital election observation missions. Is reform needed? Yes, but not in Vienna. Rather we should look for change in the very capitals clamoring for OSCE reforms. The OSCE is a vital element in advancing our values of democracy, human rights and rule of law. I trust that the Department will reject any attempts to undercut the human dimension of the OSCE.

Ultimately, the success of the OSCE as President Gerald Ford remarked in signing the Helsinki Final Act exactly 30 years ago, will be judged, "not only by the promises made, but the promises we keep."

The Commission has welcomed the extent to which the United States has, in recent OSCE

ministerial preparations, judged success in terms other than agreement for agreement's sake. We encourage the United States to hold firm on such things as adherence to Istanbul commitments. The Department should support what is effective for the organization in achieving its worthy goals rather than whatever compromises might provide some short-term relief to strained bilateral relations.

Ultimately, I want to see the OSCE shed light on human rights abuses wherever they occur. I want the OSCE to help thwart trafficking in persons and to defend the right of people to practice their own faith. I want the OSCE to inspire the new generations emerging in transition countries to make a difference not only for themselves, but for their countries and the world. I want the OSCE to counter anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred and intolerance, as well as the widespread discrimination against Roma.

None of this, I would add, is to the detriment of work in other areas. Those of us on the Helsinki Commission support, as does the United States, a wide variety of initiatives undertaken in the security dimension of the OSCE, including efforts to combat terrorism, to control the flow of small arms and light weapons, to destroy excess stocks of ammunition. In the economic dimension, we have often looked for needed efforts to combat official corruption and organized crime that stymie foreign investment and economic progress.

Freedom, safety and economic opportunity are mutually reinforcing, and I look forward to hearing the Assistant Secretary speak about these areas at today's hearing.