

Mr. Chairman, I want to begin by thanking you for organizing today's forum on confronting and combating anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. Let me also welcome the distinguished members from the German Bundestag, led by OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Vice President Dr. Gert Weisskirchen. I also want to acknowledge the distinguished panel of expert witnesses that will testify before us today, and want to thank the hard work of the many non-governmental organizations that have tirelessly advocated for Jews and religious freedom for many years.

Today's forum, Mr. Chairman, continues this Commission's important work and focus on anti-Semitism. In May 2002 the Helsinki Commission held a hearing on escalating Anti-Semitic violence in Europe. At that hearing we received extensive testimony which conclusively documented the rising amount of anti-Semitic violence in both Europe and throughout the OSCE region.

In July 2002 the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, meeting in Berlin, held a separate forum on this issue with American and German parliamentarians. The Parliamentary Assembly ultimately adopted a resolution on anti-Semitic violence in the OSCE region. The Berlin Declaration recalled that in 1990 in Copenhagen all participating states pledged to "unequivocally condemn" anti-Semitism and take effective measures to protect individuals from anti-Semitic violence.

Today I would like to focus on what specific steps OSCE parliamentarians can take to address this growing problem. The Berlin Declaration urges that participating states take several concrete steps to combat anti-Semitism, including: making public statements recognizing violence against Jews and Jewish cultural properties as anti-Semitic; ensuring aggressive law enforcement by local and national authorities of anti-Semitic criminal acts; and reviewing their laws, regulations, practices and policies to ensure that they conform with relevant OSCE commitments on anti-Semitism.

We must also remember that violence against Jews can never be justified by international developments or political issues. The OSCE participating states have an obligation to stamp out anti-Semitism now, and not wait for this cancer to continue to spread its prejudice and intolerance towards Jews and ultimately to other religious minorities.

I am pleased that at the conclusion of this forum a letter of intent will be signed by the American and German parliamentary delegations to the OSCE. Let me point out two actions discussed in the letter of intent. First, the letter of intent pledges that the parliamentarians will promote educational efforts throughout the OSCE region to counter anti-Semitic stereotypes and attitudes among younger people. As I stated in our May 2002 hearing on this issue I believe that education of the younger generation is a key solution to tackling the issue of anti-Semitism. In some countries we have actually seen counterproductive educational programs that actually breed prejudice, hatred, intolerance, xenophobia, and ultimately anti-Semitism. We must take a more

pro-active approach to this issue by encouraging and promoting tolerance and diversity in our curriculum, so that generations of our young people are not growing up learning to hate their fellow citizens simply based on their religious beliefs and practices.

Second, the letter of intent supports the establishment of an OSCE parliamentary-based “Coalition of the Willing” to address anti-Semitic propaganda that appears to be increasing rapidly in a number of OSCE partner countries, most recently and notably in Egypt, who is an ally in the Middle East of the United States. I strongly support further engagement and discussion with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation (which includes Israel and Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) on the issue of anti-Semitism. I am very eager to open a dialogue with our fellow parliamentarians in those nations in the near future.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for hosting this important forum today. As we approach our February 2003 Winter Session in Vienna and the July 2003 Rotterdam Annual Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I look forward to engaging our Parliamentary colleagues from throughout the OSCE region as we seek to further our common goal of combating anti-Semitism.