

**Statement of Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin, Ranking Member  
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe  
hearing on  
“Belgium’s Chairmanship of the OSCE”**

**June 28, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, today’s hearing with Belgian Foreign Minister Minister Karel De Gucht focusing on Belgium’s chairmanship of OSCE is particularly timely as a number of us prepare for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Annual Session to be held next week in Brussels. The OSCE is a dynamic process that has gone through several phases since the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act – from the dark days of repression during the Cold War to the heady days of the late 80’s and early 90’s, the bleak days that witnessed genocide in the Balkans, to the challenges of the present day. Throughout, we have had the benefit of the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security encompassing all three dimensions of the process – military security, economic and environment, and the human dimension. For three decades now, the U.S. Helsinki Commission has sought to make real the promises contained in the Helsinki Final Act, work that is far from complete.

Although the Commission is best known for the human dimension, we also recognize the multidimensional nature of many of the challenges facing the participating States, including the United States. Human trafficking, corruption, terrorism and many other problem areas each have a security dimension, an economic dimension and a human dimension.

In recent years, I have concentrated much of my effort on the economic and environmental dimension, including through my work as Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly’s Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment (Second Committee). I appreciate the focus of the Belgian chairmanship on combating international crime. This Commission provided some important leadership in pressing for the issue of corruption to be address at the Istanbul summit. I continue to view that issue as a continuing impediment to progress in all aspects of the Helsinki process, including economic and environmental issues. During our meeting in Brussels we will be discussing the new United Nations Convention Against Corruption, and our Committee will urge the OSCE Participating States to ratify and implement this new convention, which for the first time reaches both public and private conduct.

Recently, the Commission held a hearing in connection with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, an event that has lingering consequences for people in Belarus, Ukraine and parts of the Russian Federation. Indeed corrupt Soviet practices exacerbated that accident and complicate efforts to contain contaminated materials that remain at the Chernobyl plant.

Corruption, disaster response and energy sustainability are issues that present unique challenges to all of our countries, but particularly to governments in transition. There is clearly much work to be done. I am confident, however, that by sharing experiences and working cooperatively, we can see results. In this regard, I would be remiss if I did not mention the

valuable work being done by Mr. Bernard Snoy, the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and his excellent staff.

Mr. Minister, welcome and I look forward to hearing about your priorities for the balance of the Belgian chairmanship and your insights that can help us beyond your term in office.