

**Helsinki Commission Hearing on:
Global Threats, European Security and Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation
Wednesday June 16, 2010**

**Representative Alcee L. Hastings, Co-Chairman
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Opening Statement

Let me join Chairman Cardin in welcoming our good friend, Joao Soares, to Washington, the U.S. Congress and the Helsinki Commission.

I wish Joao success in the upcoming OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session in Oslo, Norway. I also wish him the best as he becomes the President Emeritus of the Assembly for at least one, and perhaps two years.

Having been there myself as a President of the OSCE PA, I can say that passing the baton to another parliamentarian does not necessarily mean it's time to relax. The experience that comes with leading the Assembly brings an ongoing expectation by others -- and a very real sense of commitment from within oneself -- to continue to work hard in various assignments that hopefully will improve the lives of those living in countries or regions troubled by conflict, corrupt and repressive regimes or both.

Unfortunately, with the added description of "emeritus" to one's title, it also becomes more difficult getting others to notice the work you are doing. I speak for myself and, I believe, Mr. Lennmarker of Sweden, in expressing a commitment to work with you on issues of common concern after the Annual Session in July. Perhaps by pooling our talents, we can get greater notice and more things accomplished as past Assembly Presidents.

It also needs to be said that the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly would carry much less significance if not for the support that comes from the International Secretariat. The people who work in Copenhagen are a very talented and enthusiastic group coming from across the OSCE region, and they share their experience with Europe's future leaders through research fellowships for aspiring young scholars.

I want to reiterate the assessment provided by the Helsinki Commission Chairman, Senator Cardin, that the OSCE must respond to the new challenges, but it must also do so with credibility if the OSCE is to remain relevant in the coming years.

For me, two issues are of great importance. One is the need to bring greater opportunities for engagement to our Mediterranean partners in the OSCE. I believe we can coax and cajole them to engage, but I believe that we must find ways that make the advantages of engagement self-evident to these countries, and make them seek us out for what the OSCE has to provide.

The other is the continuing need, if not the growing need, to respond to diversity in Europe. The OSCE countries have long focused on how to accommodate and integrate the national minorities who have lived there for centuries, with the borders changing around them. Today, there are new

groups from other regions of the world, requiring responses to combat racism and xenophobia on the continent.

I hope we will hear the views of our esteemed witness today on these and many other issues of concern to the Helsinki Commission.