

**Statement of Representative Alcee L. Hastings  
Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**Hearing on  
A Parliamentary Perspective on Security and Cooperation in Today's Europe  
October 18, 2007**

I am pleased to convene this morning's hearing in which we will hear a parliamentary perspective on security and cooperation in Europe. Our witness, a close personal friend of mine, is Goran Lenmarker, a Swedish parliamentarian and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Riksdag, as well as my successor as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The role of parliamentarians in the Helsinki process goes back almost to the beginning. With the creation of the Helsinki Commission in 1976, the U.S. Congress has played an enormous role in shaping U.S. OSCE policy, combining regional and diplomatic expertise with the political capital Members of Congress have. Over the years, many countries expressed interest in emulating the Commission in their own national parliaments, but the creation of the 320-member OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has served a similar purpose. It has created groups within parliaments knowledgeable about OSCE issues and willing to keep the diplomats moving forward.

As we see today, however, these issues are not necessarily easy. The challenges in U.S. and European relations with Russia are growing, for example, while Russia's internal development is a cause for deep concern.

Numerous local and regional conflicts which erupted in the 1990s continue to simmer. People continue to suffer the effects of these conflicts today, although they are rarely noticed given the absence of widespread violence. The lives and well-being of more people are at risk if political solutions are not found.

In December, what many consider the last open question in the Balkans – the status of Kosovo – is expected to be answered. Unfortunately, there continues to be disagreement on what the answer should be, creating increased instability at a time when the whole region should be working on European integration.

Despite their freely undertaken OSCE commitments, many OSCE States are behind in their democratic development and fail to respect basic human rights. Belarus comes to mind, along with some countries of Central Asia. On a wider scale, we continue to see manifestations of anti-Semitism, racism and other forms of hatred and intolerance.

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And of course, as we well know here in the United States, there are the challenges of protecting civil liberties and basic human rights at the same time we fight terrorism. As our witness today is aware, the President of the Belgian Senate, our colleague Ann Marie Lizin, testified before this Commission earlier this year about her investigation of the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay.

Parliamentarians have an unquestionable role to play in responding to these issues. They know the workings of democracy and the threats democracy faces. They deal with people, and have an understanding of how a society works. And through the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and similar fora, they pool their experience and expertise to make Europe, the wider OSCE region and the world a better place.

As we know, governments often resent parliamentarians holding them accountable, and diplomats can be very much like the governments they represent. As a result, there are institutional issues that come up in the OSCE, including the role of the OSCE PA, that unfortunately sidetrack us from real issues like the holding of free and fair elections, combating corruption or responding to conflict.

I know our witness today, Goran Lenmarker, will be addressing questions regarding the situation in various parts of the OSCE region as well as within the organization, and I very much look forward to hearing his views.