



BUDGET REQUEST

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE FISCAL YEAR 2010

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2010

I. Budget Authority and Appropriation Request for FY 2010

The Commission was created on June 3, 1976, pursuant to Public Law 94-304, codified as 22 U.S.C. ' 3001, et. seq. This statute authorizes and directs the Commission ". . . to monitor the acts of the signatories which reflect compliance with or violation of the articles of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, with particular regard to the provisions relating to human rights and Cooperation in Humanitarian Fields." Information on the Commission's activities in 2008 is submitted pursuant to the provisions of 22 U.S.C. ' 3006.

The Final Act was agreed to in Helsinki in 1975 by 35 countries, including the United States, Canada, West and East European states, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The states which emerged as a result of the breakup of the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia subsequently joined the Helsinki process, at which time each new participating State signed the Helsinki Final Act and explicitly and unconditionally agreed to all commitments of the Helsinki process. In 2006, Montenegro was admitted as the newest participating State, bringing total membership to 56 countries.

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia are OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, and Afghanistan, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand are Partners for Cooperation. (See Appendix (C) for a list of OSCE participating States and Partners).

As of January 1, 1995, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The organization is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. Specialized offices of the OSCE are also in The Hague and Warsaw, and the OSCE maintains field offices in a number of other countries. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In accordance with section 3 of Public Law 99-7 (March 27, 1985), codified as title 22 U.S.C. ' 3007(a), there are authorized to be appropriated to the Commission for each fiscal year such sums as may be necessary to enable it to carry out its duties and functions.

For fiscal year 2010, the Commission requests an appropriation of \$2,610,000 for salaries and expenses, in keeping with the President's budget request for fiscal year 2010.

II. Commission Membership

The Commission is composed of twenty-one Commissioners, nine each from the United States Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, appointed respectively by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. In addition, there are three Commissioners from the executive branch, one each from the Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce, appointed by the President of the United States.

At the beginning of each odd-numbered Congress, the President of the Senate designates a Senate Member as Chairman and the Speaker designates a House Member as Co-Chairman. At the beginning of each even-numbered Congress, the Speaker designates a House Member as Chairman and the President of the Senate designates a Senate Member as Co-Chairman. (See Appendix (A) for the list of Commissioners in the 110th Congress).

III. Commission Personnel

The Commission's staffing consists of seventeen permanent positions. Staff responsibilities are noted in Appendix (B). Over the years, the Commission has benefited from the assignment of a Senior Foreign Service Officer, detailed from the Department of State on a full-time basis. The Government Printing Office also details a printing clerk to the Commission on a full-time basis.

Since its establishment, the Commission has maintained a small but highly motivated and exceptionally capable professional staff. In addition to their expert knowledge in the geographical areas of the OSCE and in the human rights, military security, economic and legal dimensions of the Helsinki process, current staff members are proficient in languages including Azerbaijani, Belarusian, Chinese, French, German, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish and Ukrainian.

Moreover, due to the extensive experience and service of the Commission staff and their primary focus on OSCE issues, the Commission provides a continuity and unmatched reservoir of institutional knowledge within the U.S. government on such matters, and helps contribute to the development of a consistent and principled policy in keeping with its statutory mandate. This institutional knowledge has been utilized by the Congress and U.S. government agencies, most especially the Department of State, in its preparation for and participation in a wide variety of OSCE meetings, as well as by non-governmental organizations and private sector institutions and think tanks. The OSCE community has also recognized the Commission's unique leadership, knowledge and talent, consulting with Commission staff in preparation for meetings and the drafting of documents, and other OSCE-related initiatives.

IV. Implementing the Commission's Mandate in the 110th Congress, 2nd Session

The Commission has the responsibility, the international credibility, and the expertise to make a significant difference on issues that potentially threaten peace, security, and stability in the expansive OSCE region stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Commission engagement at home and abroad offers a unique avenue for promoting U.S. national interests in the security, economic, and human dimensions. The Commission's unique composition allows it to affect both U.S. foreign policy and congressional support for specific policies, while its expert practice of public diplomacy vigorously advances American values, ideals, and principles.

The Commission is mandated to monitor participating States' compliance with provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent OSCE agreements, with particular attention to human rights. These human rights commitments encompass a broad array of issues, including the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association and movement; religious liberties; and the treatment of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. In the wake of the failed 1991 coup attempt in

Moscow, the OSCE participating States specifically recognized “the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the [Helsinki process] are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.”

Of the 56 OSCE participating States, the Commission pays particular attention to those where persistent violations of human rights or democratic norms occur (especially states where authoritarian regimes cling to power); to countries and regions in which there is potential, ongoing or residual conflict; and to countries where particular political developments open windows of opportunity to advance specific human rights improvements. Additionally, the Commission focuses on the United States’ own implementation record, engaging with relevant officials with the aim of bringing laws, policies and practices into conformity with OSCE commitments.

Protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, such as in Transdniestria, Chechnya (where some of the most egregious violations of international humanitarian norms in recent years occurred), and areas of the Balkans, also present significant ongoing challenges. In the Caucasus, it seemed as if stability had been restored but in August, war broke out between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia, a breakaway region. Moscow and Tbilisi traded accusations of responsibility for the hostilities, which followed months of heightened tensions and provocations.

The Commission pursues its mandate in a variety of ways. First, specific instances of human rights abuses or shortcomings are often raised with the country of concern. Members of the Commission may intercede directly with that country’s officials and representatives (at home and abroad), and through correspondence. Commissioners occasionally offer relevant legislation, resolutions and Congressional Record statements. When warranted by human rights improvements, Commissioners draw attention to positive developments as well.

Members of the Commission regularly communicate their views to the Department of State and other relevant U.S. government agencies and, when necessary, seek to raise or improve the level of official U.S. engagement regarding specific countries, cases or issues, or on OSCE policies. Ongoing staff contact with the U.S. Mission to the OSCE, the State Department country desk officers and human rights officers at U.S. Embassies abroad – posts with noticeably high turnover – helps ensure that these offices are kept informed of issues of concern. This, in turn, strengthens the human rights reports issued by the Department of State. Significantly, the work of the Commission has resulted in considerable success in helping to resolve individual cases of human rights violations, and in ameliorating specific problems in this fashion.

Hearings and briefings offer the most public forum to highlight violations of human rights. For certain topics, Administration officials testify on U.S. government policies, and Commissioners have also utilized these hearings to press the Executive Branch to take more resolute actions where necessary. These hearings find an audience among other U.S. government agencies, non-governmental organizations, the media, the general public, and among embassy personnel and other officials from OSCE participating States. Moreover, as a tool for applying international pressure on their own officials, the records of these public hearings and briefings are highly valued by human rights activists in countries which violate human rights. (For a complete listing of Commission hearings, briefings, reports, and articles, see Appendix (D).)

Commissioners or Commission staff members have served as members of every U.S. delegation to every major OSCE meeting since the Commission was established, a fact which strengthens the Commission's institutional knowledge and influence. The multilateral context affords the Commission an important venue for advancing its mandate to monitor and promote compliance by OSCE participating States with their freely undertaken commitments. In particular, within the context of OSCE fora, specific violations of commitments are consistently raised directly with the States concerned. Finally, participation in these meetings uniquely enables the Commission to contribute to the process of standard-setting and establishing priorities and goals to advance implementation of the OSCE commitments, and to monitor the organizational development of the OSCE.

Although an independent agency of the U.S. government with Commissioners from both the executive and legislative branches, the Commission's leadership rests in the Congress and its membership is primarily provided by the Congress. This structure reinforces an understanding in foreign capitals that the Congress and the American people attach high priority to respect for individual human rights and other aspects of the Helsinki process. The Commission's bipartisan and bicameral nature, its tenure, and its relentless efforts reaffirm that respect for such rights is a matter of basic principle for Americans. Equally importantly, the Commission's work facilitates an understanding by foreign governments of the singular involvement of the U.S. Congress in foreign affairs, an aspect of American politics that is often not well understood overseas. (In fact, no other legislature of any other OSCE country has a body analogous to the Commission.)

The Commission continues to be an active and highly effective proponent of public diplomacy, reaching out to the private sector, think tanks, media, public groups and individuals to explain and promote the principles of the Helsinki documents. Members and staff attended public fora, delivered presentations, lectured at the Foreign Service Institute and other venues, participated in panel discussions, made media appearances in both the domestic and foreign press – especially the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty – in an effort to heighten public awareness of the Helsinki commitments and of issues involving specific OSCE participating States, and engaged both organizations and individuals in the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as essential components of European security and cooperation. Again, these activities reinforce in the public mind the leadership of the Congress on individual rights, issues the American people care about very deeply.

The Commission has been particularly instrumental in introducing private citizens directly into the activities of the OSCE by supporting the inclusion of public members on U.S. delegations to OSCE meetings, seminars and specialized events. Under the guidance and assistance of Commission staff, these individuals have made important contributions to these meetings and have acquired for themselves a unique awareness of the value and mission of the OSCE. The Commission has also been the single most active voice for ensuring that the meetings and processes of the OSCE are as transparent as possible, and that non-governmental organizations can have full participation in appropriate OSCE activities.

The Commission's Internet web site <www.csce.gov> has been a portal for public diplomacy and serves as an important distribution point for the Commission's message at home and abroad. Commission publications – including hearing and briefing transcripts, articles, reports, press

releases, and Congressional Record statements – may be viewed online by country, issue, or date. The website also allows access to an extensive archive of materials on the Helsinki process.

An increasing number of individuals and officials around the globe have subscribed to receive Commission materials via the Internet. The Commission continues its outreach to U.S. government employees, foreign government officials, non-governmental organizations, scholars and other individuals monitoring the countries and issues central to the Commission’s mandate. The Commission has bolstered its utilization of information technology to enhance its automated e-mail distribution system with the aim of offering a more effective, user-friendly message delivery system. The subscriber base has expanded significantly as a result of these initiatives. Data collection reveals a diverse audience for Commission materials extending well beyond the OSCE region.

V. U.S.-OSCE Policy and Engagement with OSCE Leadership

The Commission continues to focus attention on the relationship between U.S. foreign policy, human rights, and the OSCE. Engagement with Senior Department of State officials, including the Secretary of State, provides an important avenue for Commissioners to help influence related U.S. policy. In this regard, regular contact is maintained especially with the Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs; South and Central Asian Affairs; and Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. During 2008, a particular focus on these exchanges centered on Kazakhstan’s commitments to undertake certain reforms in connection with the decision taken at the 2007 Madrid OSCE Ministerial Meeting designating that country as OSCE chair-in-office for 2010.

Similarly, the Commission leadership has placed importance on direct engagement with the top political leader of the Vienna-based organization, having convened a hearing with the OSCE Chairman-in-Office annually since 2001.

Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ilkka Kanerva addressed a wide range of issues facing the Vienna-based organization and its 56 participating States at a Commission hearing in mid-February. Kanerva, having served in parliament since 1975, the year in which the Helsinki Final Act was signed in Finland’s capital, stressed the unique contribution of parliamentarians in their role embodying “the aspirations of our peoples and to voice their concerns in all OSCE countries.” Chairman Alcee L. Hastings, President Emeritus of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, expressed appreciation for recognition of the parliamentary dimension of the Helsinki Process.

Minister Kanerva underscored the fact that the OSCE is a value-based organization that actively promotes our common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. He stressed the importance of pressing for full implementation of the human rights commitments by the participating States.

Chairman Hastings and Kanerva had a lengthy exchange regarding developments in Kosovo and their implications for Balkans as well as the possibility of sustained OSCE engagement in the region. Kanerva expressed his firm belief that the OSCE work in Kosovo is and will be

beneficial to all Kosovars, stressing that the OSCE has remained “status-neutral.” Mr. Hastings, who visited both Priština and the northern area around Mitrovitsa earlier, noted that the OSCE mission in Kosovo complemented the work undertaken by KFOR forces.

Numerous other human rights concerns were also discussed from combating anti-Semitism and trafficking in humans as well as promoting democracy. Co-Chairman Benjamin L. Cardin stressed the importance of sustained OSCE engagement in efforts to fight anti-Semitism.

Russia’s troubling attempts to restrict the scope and size of OSCE election observations missions was also discussed. Chairman Hastings and Minister Kanerva agreed on the importance of engagement with Russia.

Kanerva praised the Commission for its longstanding engagement with the OSCE and the values that underpin it. “The OSCE can only work with the full engagement of its participating States. The United States has always played a key role, and must continue to do so, if we are to achieve the ambitious goals we have set for our Organization,” the minister concluded.

On September 17th the Commission held a hearing on “The Role of OSCE Institutions in Advancing Human Rights and Democracy.” Appearing before the Commission were Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and Mr. R. Spencer Oliver, Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The hearing examined the unique role played by each of these institutions, their contributions to strengthening human rights, and the challenges they face as some OSCE countries seek to curtail the organization’s work. Among issues discussed were: Russia’s invasion and occupation of Georgia; the upheaval following Armenia’s 2008 elections; the abuse of detainees at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility; and ODIHR and OSCE PA election monitoring activities.

VI. The Parliamentary Dimension of the OSCE

Both Commissioners and Commission staff have continued to participate in the activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as well as to solicit the involvement of other Members of Congress in these activities. Representation at these inter-parliamentary events unquestionably demonstrates a solid, ongoing congressional commitment to maintaining and strengthening United States-European relations.

The primary task of the Copenhagen-based OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is to promote parliamentary involvement in the activities of the OSCE and to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation among parliamentarians from 55 of the 56 participating States (one State – the Holy See – has no parliament). Other important objectives of the Assembly are: to assess the implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States; to discuss subjects addressed during meetings of the Ministerial Council and summit meetings of OSCE Heads of State or Government; to develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts; to support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in the participating States; and to contribute to the development of OSCE institutional structures and of

relations and cooperation with other OSCE institutions.

A total of 320 parliamentarians, including as many as 17 members of the U.S. Congress, can participate in the Assembly's major meetings, which include a Winter Meeting in Vienna, an Annual Session in changing locations, and a Fall Conference/Mediterranean Forum the venue of which also changes from year-to-year. The Bureau, an equivalent to an executive committee, also meets every April and December. Beyond these meetings, parliamentarians also contribute their political and regional expertise by serving as Special Representatives, members of Ad Hoc Committees and participants on election observation missions undertaken by the Assembly throughout the year.

In 2008, Helsinki Commission Chairman Alcee L. Hastings completed his service as President Emeritus of the OSCE PA, and Co-Chairman Benjamin L. Cardin continued his term as one of nine Vice-Presidents. Commissioner Hilda L. Solis, who was elected Vice-Chair of the (Third) General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions in 2007, was asked to serve as Acting Committee Chair through the Annual Session in July 2008 due to a vacancy arising from the departure of the previous Chair from the Spanish Parliament. At the Astana Annual Session, Rep. Solis was elected to be the new Committee Chair

Chairman Hastings continued his appointment as the Assembly's Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs. In this capacity, the Chairman traveled to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Israel in December 2008 to meet with parliamentarians and senior government officials to discuss greater engagement with the OSCE, the Middle East Peace process, enhanced economic cooperation and the Iraqi refugee humanitarian crisis. Commissioners Solis and Christopher H. Smith completed their appointments as Special Representatives on Migration and on Trafficking, respectively, at the 2008 Annual Session.

Helsinki Commission Co-Chairs Hastings and Cardin, along with Commissioners Louise McIntosh Slaughter, Mike McIntyre and Hilda L. Solis, and Representative Michael R. McNulty, represented the United States at the Winter Meeting held February 21-22, 2008. U.S. statements supported OSCE efforts in the Mediterranean region, described action to stop waterboarding and other forms of torture at Guantanamo Bay and drew attention to the challenges of managing labor migration. The status of Kosovo and missile defense were both the subject of special debates in which the U.S. Delegation also took an active role.

The Assembly's 17th Annual Session took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, from June 29 to July 3, 2008. The U.S. Delegation was led Commission Chairman Hastings and included Co-Chairman Cardin, Commissioners Robert B. Aderholt, Mike McIntyre, Hilda L. Solis and G.K. Butterfield. They were joined by Representatives Zach Wamp, Loretta Sanchez, Diane Watson, Madeleine Z. Bordallo and Gwen S. Moore. Altogether 227 parliamentarians from 50 of the OSCE participating States attended the session.

The U.S. Delegation actively participated in the work of the Assembly's three general Committees, each of which considered a draft resolution. In addition, together they addressed a total of 18 supplementary items circulated by delegates prior to the opening of the Annual Session. One additional item was considered in the opening plenary.

Five of the supplementary items were proposed by members of the U.S. Delegation: Encouraging Transparency in the Extractive Industries, by Co-Chairman Cardin; Recognizing the Economic, Civic and Social Contribution of Migrants, by Rep. Solis; Strengthening Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims, by Rep. Christopher H. Smith (and, in his absence, by Rep. Wamp); Urging Adoption of the Paris Commitment Regarding Vulture Funds, by Rep. Moore; and Expressing Concern Over the Security Environment in Georgia, by Chairman Hastings. All were adopted with few if any amendments. The Georgia resolution, while timely, was also controversial, with parliamentarians from Russia and some European countries strongly opposed. Chairman Hastings remained firm and pointed to the moderately worded text and noted past willingness of U.S. delegations to accept criticism when warranted. Russian action in the Caucasus was of sufficient concern to a majority of the delegates present that the resolution was ultimately adopted.

U.S. delegates were also instrumental in garnering support for supplementary items introduced by others, including a Canadian resolution on Holodomor (Ukrainian Famine-Genocide) and a Belgian resolution on Combating the Sexual Exploitation of Children. In addition, the United States Delegation introduced 20 amendments to various resolutions, most all of which were adopted.

While in Kazakhstan, members of the U.S. Delegation met with President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Prime Minister Karim Masimov and State Secretary Kanat Saudabayev as well as prominent Kazakh human rights activists and opposition leaders. Members of the delegation also visited Beit Rachel, the largest synagogue in Central Asia, and met with the chief rabbi and the deputy imam from the Islamic community to discuss tolerance and religious freedom in Kazakhstan, especially for religious minorities.

Chairman Hastings and Co-Chairman Cardin also participated in the Fall Conference and Mediterranean Forum, which took place in Toronto, Canada, September 18-21, 2008. The Forum discussed a wide variety of security, economic, environmental and humanitarian issues affecting the Mediterranean region. The conference also held a lively debate on the outbreak of armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in and around South Ossetia, a breakaway region within Georgia's international borders.

Chairman Hastings was appointed to head the OSCE International Election Observation Mission, including OSCE PA delegation, observing the January 5, 2008, extraordinary presidential election in Georgia. He was joined by Representative Lloyd Doggett as part of the OSCE PA delegation. Commission staff also participated in OSCE PA election observation activities surrounding parliamentary elections in Georgia as well as in Belarus and Macedonia later in 2008.

The Helsinki Commission was also instrumental in facilitating OSCE PA observation of the U.S. election in November 2008. This included the organization of a seminar on the elections held on September 22-23, 2008. Commission staff also assisted OSCE PA parliamentary observers in Virginia, Maryland and Florida on election day.

On September 17, 2008, the Helsinki Commission convened a hearing on "The Role of OSCE

Institutions in Advancing Human Rights and Democracy,” which included OSCE PA Secretary General R. Spencer Oliver as a witness. The hearing focused extensively on the role parliamentarians can play in pressing human rights issues and facilitating democratic development throughout the OSCE region and beyond.

VII. OSCE Partners for Cooperation and Mediterranean Partners

The 56-nation OSCE now has 11 Partners for Cooperation, including six Mediterranean Partners: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia; and five Partners in Asia: Afghanistan, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea and Thailand. Partner countries, while not participating in regular political negotiating fora of the OSCE, nevertheless attend and observe many OSCE meetings. Since 2007 Partners are seated with the participating States during the weekly meetings of the Permanent Council in Vienna and participate fully in discussions. The OSCE and its Partners for Cooperation maintain close relations and hold frequent seminars to explore ways to strengthen cooperation on issues of mutual interest and to meet OSCE principles, goals and values. The Partners were active throughout 2008 sending representatives to all major meetings and seminars.

The Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE was reformulated in the mid-90s as “Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation” to include Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia. Such “partner” status does not require commitment to Helsinki principles by these countries. In 1998, Jordan was accepted as a Mediterranean Partner, and Afghanistan, which many consider to lie within the broader Middle East region and which borders the Central Asian states of the OSCE, was accepted as a Partner for Cooperation in 2003.

In an effort to broaden and intensify this relationship, the OSCE, including the Parliamentary Assembly, has convened numerous seminars, conferences and forums emphasizing issues of particular interests to both the participating States and the Partner countries from the region. Additionally, two contact groups exist within the OSCE to provide an ongoing opportunity for participating States and the Partners to maintain dialogue on pertinent issues. One contact group is for the Asian Partners, and the other for the Mediterranean Partners; monthly meetings of the group are typically held at the ambassadorial level.

Chairman Hastings was reappointed in 2008 as Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and actively engaged the Mediterranean Partner States throughout the year. On May 16, 2008, Hastings accompanied Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer and other senior Members of Congress on a visit to Israel to mark that country’s 60th Anniversary. The delegation met with President Peres, Prime Minister Olmert, Defense Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Livni, as well as with the leaders of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities in Jerusalem. Chairman Hastings also accompanied Speaker Pelosi on a side trip to Baghdad where they met with Prime Minister Maliki and the Speaker of Iraq’s Parliament. Hastings used the visit to urge Maliki to increase his government’s funding for aid to its citizens who are displaced both within and outside Iraq.

In late May, Chairman Hastings had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Mediterranean Partner states and Greek Ambassador Mara Marinaki, Chair of the OSCE

Mediterranean Partner Contact Group, on the margins of his participation in the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in Vienna, Austria. They enjoyed a wide ranging discussion on a host of topics including migration, the need for cooperation in resolving the Iraqi refugee crisis, election observations, and a renewed request by the Palestinian Authority to become an OSCE Mediterranean Partner. Chairman Hastings expressed his intent to visit all of the Mediterranean Partner countries by the end of the year, as well as his interest in exploring visits to Libya and Lebanon to discuss the potential of their participation as partners of the OSCE.

Deeply concerned by the flood of Iraqi refugees into neighboring countries, particularly OSCE Mediterranean Partner Jordan which has accepted more than 500,000 refugees, and the impact of this humanitarian crisis on the region, Chairman Hastings convened a Commission hearing on April 10 to raise awareness of the plight of the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) – now approaching 5 million – and to examine strategies to alleviate the suffering of these vulnerable populations. Testifying before the Commission were the State Department, Department of Homeland Security, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mayor Anders Lago of Sodertalje, Sweden, a small city of 80,000 people which has accepted more than 5,000 Iraqi refugees, and Mr. Noel Salah of the Arab American Community Center for Economic and Social Services.

Following a June 11 Commission briefing regarding the situation of Iraqi refugees who worked for the U.S. government in Iraq, and whose lives have been put in grave danger because of that service, Chairman Hastings and Co-Chairman Cardin, along with fifteen other Members of Congress, wrote to President Bush urging him to take immediate steps to provide for the safety and resettlement of these individuals.

On July 15, 2008 Chairman Hastings re-introduced the Iraqi Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement, and Security Act of 2008 (H.R. 6496). This legislation would authorize substantially increased humanitarian assistance for Iraqi refugees and IDPs; expedited processing of Iraqi refugees for resettlement in the United States; and increased international cooperation to address the crisis. Companion legislation was introduced by Senate Commissioner, and now Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, in September 2008.

On September 18, Chairman Hastings attended the Fall Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Toronto, Canada which examined the theme “The OSCE in an Open World.” During the conference the Chairman addressed The Mediterranean Forum. His remarks focused on the Mediterranean Partners contributions to the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly, opportunities for economic growth and investment, migration and the proposal for a new Mediterranean Union. Chairman Hastings also took the opportunity to again raise awareness of the Iraqi refugee crisis and to urge European colleagues to expeditiously develop a program to resettle Iraqi refugees and to appoint an EU coordinator to implement it.

On October 27-28, Commission staff attended the 2008 OSCE Mediterranean Conference on “The OSCE Approach to Regional Security – A Model for the Mediterranean” in Amman, Jordan. This event followed the tradition of the annual OSCE Mediterranean Seminars. The focus on regional security included politico-military, environmental, and human rights aspects in a series of sessions among regional experts, NGOs, and government officials. An independent

session on “Cooperation with the Mediterranean Civil Society and NGOs in Promoting Tolerance and Non-discrimination” yielded a report of recommendations to further empower women and migrant communities, as well as to promote intercultural dialogue.

In December, Chairman Hastings traveled to the Mediterranean Partner States Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Israel. In each country he met with parliamentarians and senior government officials to discuss greater OSCE engagement by the Mediterranean Partners, reinvigoration of the Barcelona Process through the new Union for the Mediterranean, the Middle East peace process, resolution of the disputed Western Sahara, and the Iraqi refugee humanitarian crisis.

At the conclusion of his trip, Hastings was asked by OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Joao Soares to brief him on conclusions of his meetings with the Mediterranean Partners and what efforts must be taken to bring about greater engagement of the Mediterranean Partners in the frame work of the Parliamentary Assembly. Chairman Hastings’ tour yielded a plan to convene a meeting of the Mediterranean Partners in Washington in 2009, in an effort to direct the Parliamentary Assembly as well as the Congress on how to improve relations with countries in the region. In particular, Hastings intends to bring together the Mediterranean Partners to begin working together on how best to confront regional security, economic, and environmental challenges.

VIII. Military Security and Emerging Threats: Twenty-First Century Security in the OSCE Region

The Commission monitors implementation of the fundamental commitments of the Helsinki Final Act, including those provisions in the field of military security.

From its inception in the early 1970s, the Helsinki process – which includes the original Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, follow-up activities after 1975 and, since 1995, the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – has been a multilateral, politically binding security arrangement. The original focus was on enhancing security through transparency. Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) – such as prior notification of troop maneuvers and observation of military exercises – formed the core of this work on military aspects of security and contributed to overcoming barriers of secrecy and diminishing the threat of surprise attack or misunderstanding of military activity.

Having addressed successfully the challenges of the Cold War, the OSCE has maintained its relevance by combining a uniquely comprehensive definition of security with flexibility and innovation of response, which includes maintaining an active dialogue on security issues, addressing issues like the trade in small arms and light weapons as well as excess stockpiles of arms and ammunition, addressing regional conflicts and training civilian police. Many of these activities are integrated into a larger OSCE effort to combat terrorism.

The underlying principle of security in the OSCE region is that true stability is based on upholding the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the individual. Besides human rights, OSCE principles encompass key aspects of relations between states which have gained new

urgency in the post-Cold War period: refraining from the threat or use of force; inviolability of frontiers; territorial integrity of states; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-intervention in internal affairs; equal rights and self-determination of peoples; cooperation among states; and fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law. Traditionally, the OSCE has worked to develop agreements that increase confidence and cooperation between and among states, forming a web of mutual interests that is not easily broken.

In 2008, the Helsinki Commission continued to encourage OSCE work on a wide-range of security issues. First and foremost, the Commission continued to focus on frozen conflict areas, particularly the instability created in Georgia and Moldova by Russia's lingering military presence in those independent participating States. In conjunction with the signing of the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) in 1999, and in light of realities associated with the break-up of the Warsaw Pact and the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia made parallel commitments (adopted at the 1999 Istanbul Summit) to withdraw Treaty-Limited Equipment as well as military personnel from Moldova, to withdraw or destroy excess equipment and munitions, and to close two bases and to negotiate the future of remaining Russian bases and facilities in Georgia. To date, these commitments remain unfulfilled; accordingly, NATO allies have been unwilling to ratify the Agreement on Adaptation which would bring the revised treaty into force. Russian intransigence on its Istanbul commitments has, in turn, created a stumbling block to progress on other issues at several OSCE Ministerial Council meetings. Russia unilaterally suspended its compliance with the CFE Treaty effective December 12, 2007.

In early June, at a conference in Berlin, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev critiqued the shortcomings of leading multilateral institutions and called for a restructuring of the security architecture for Europe. "It is hard to escape the conclusion that Europe's current architecture still bears the stamp of an ideology inherited from the past," Medvedev said. NATO, he suggested, "has failed so far to give new purpose to its existence....Atlanticism as a sole historical principle has already had its day." The Russian President decried attempts to isolate and marginalize countries, warning of the consequences of creating zones with differentiated levels of security and abandoning the creation of general regional collective security systems.

Barely two months later, Russian military forces crossed into neighboring Georgia in blatant violations of virtually all of the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Having earlier granted blanket Russian citizenship to resident of Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia, Moscow cited protection of its nationals as the basis for its invasion and occupation of Georgian territory, including the conflict zone and beyond. The French EU Presidency played a leading role in efforts to broker a ceasefire agreement undertaking several rounds of shuttle diplomacy between Moscow and Tbilisi. Ultimately, an agreement was reached that included the deployment of EU monitors to assess the situation on the ground in Georgia.

Amid the Russo-Georgian war, the United States and Poland signed an agreement regarding the installation of American interceptor missiles on Polish soil. In reaction, a Russian official suggested that Poland could be targeted by Russian nuclear warheads. Two months later, President Medvedev announced Russia's plans carry out the deployment of sophisticated missile systems in the noncontiguous Kaliningrad oblast sandwiched between Poland and another NATO ally Lithuania. In January 2009, a Russian defense official announced that Russia would

not proceed with the deployment due to the perceived less aggressive pursuit of European missile defense by the Obama administration than its predecessor. It is unclear if the Russian government would reverse this latest decision if the Obama administration seeks to move ahead with the actual deployment of a missile defense system in Europe.

In early October at an international security conference, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and his Russian counterpart discussed Medvedev's European security initiative. Sarkozy suggested that the OSCE should serve as the logical place for further discussion of the idea. Foreign ministers attending the OSCE Helsinki Ministerial held an informal luncheon to exchange views regarding the initiative. Thus far the Russians have offered few specifics details about what kinds of proposals they envision. While many Europeans are interested in engaging with Moscow, others are hesitant to commit to convening a high-level OSCE meeting to launch a negotiation without more particulars. The matter is certain to continue to generate discussion within the OSCE and elsewhere, including NATO.

IX. Cooperation in the Field of Economics and the Environment

The Commission has been instrumental in advancing U.S. initiatives within the OSCE aimed at increasing transparency in resource-rich countries, ensuring a level playing field in developing climate change policies, and enhancing environmental security. These issues will continue to be a focus of the Commission's work, with an emphasis on extractive industries transparency, climate change issues and immigration.

The first session of the 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF), "Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region." was convened in Prague, Czech Republic, October 16-18, 2008. The Forum focused on migration management with a particular emphasis on reducing illegal migration through implementation of appropriate labor migration policies. The key areas of discussion included how to design labor migration policies that meet the needs of both employers and employees; aspects of these policies that ensure return or allow for permanent migration; attracting high-skilled and low-skilled labor; and enforcement aspects such as anti-human trafficking and anti-human smuggling measures. Commission staff moderated a panel discussion on circular migration, looking at the very mixed record of success of circular migration policies in France, Germany, Canada, and the United States, emphasizing the need for circular migration programs to be "balanced partnerships" between the sending countries and the destination countries so that not only economic needs are met but also development needs as well.

The Commission continues to focus specific attention on the issue of energy security in the OSCE region. As part of series of hearings on energy security that was started in 2007, the Commission held a hearing on May 6, 2008 entitled, "Clearing the Air, Feeding the Fuel Tank: Understanding the Link between Energy and Environmental Security." The hearing examined the nexus between energy security and environmental security as well as the diversification of energy supply and sustainable technologies.

Another aspect of energy security is the need for greater revenue transparency in the extractive industries in order to promote more stable governments in resource-rich countries. At the Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Commission Co-Chairman Cardin introduced a resolution calling on governments and companies involved in the extractive industries to proactively report in all areas relevant to revenue transparency on a county-by-country basis; encouraging governments and appropriate regulatory agencies to introduce mandatory revenue transparency reporting for the operations of companies at home and abroad; and encouraging governments from oil and gas producing countries to introduce regulations that would require all companies operating in their territories to make public information relevant to revenue transparency. The resolution was agreed to and included in the final statement of the Annual Session.

As part of the Commission's efforts to promote environmentally-friendly trade policies, at the Annual Session Co-Chairman Cardin also introduced a resolution on the nexus between climate change and trade, encouraging participating States to pursue climate-friendly economic and trade policies that guard against migration of domestic carbon-intensive industries to other parts of the world, that prevent loss of market share to more carbon-intensive foreign producers, and that create incentives for other countries to reduce emissions. The resolution was agreed to and included in the final statement of the Annual Session.

X. Protection of Human Rights

1. U.S. Leadership at the 2008 Human Dimension Meetings

The Annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

From September 29 to October 10, 2008, the OSCE participating States met in Warsaw, Poland, for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM). The HDIM is Europe's largest human rights gathering, convened to discuss the compliance of participating States, with the full range of human dimension commitments they have previously adopted by consensus.

The HDIM is the only multinational human rights meeting in Europe where non-governmental organization representatives and government representatives have equal access to the speakers' list. The implementation review meetings are intended to serve as the participating States' principal venues for public diplomacy and can be important vehicles both for identifying continued areas of poor human rights performance and for shaping the OSCE decision-making process with respect to human dimension concerns.

As at past meetings, the Commission's preparations for, contributions to, and participation in the HDIM was substantial. In advance of this meeting, the Commission staff met with Department of State officials regarding the U.S. approach to the meeting, suggested specific human rights concerns to be raised, recommended prospective public members, and provided draft U.S. interventions. In doing so, the Commission was able to draw on its institutional memory of the Helsinki process, its regional expertise, and its specialization in human rights matters to advance U.S. interests. At the meeting itself, Commission staff participated in all aspects of the U.S.

delegation's work, including the delivery of U.S. interventions, bilateral meetings with other countries' delegations held to raise specific human rights concerns, meetings with NGO representatives, and consultations on the overall direction of OSCE human dimension activities.

At the 2008 HDIM, senior Department of State participants included Ambassador W. Robert Pearson, Head of Delegation; Ambassador Julie Finley, Head of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE; Ambassador Karen Stewart, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor; and Mr. Bruce Turner, Acting Director, Office for European Security and Political Affairs. Mr. Will Inboden, advisor on religious freedom issues, and Mr. Nathan Mick, advisor on Roma issues, served as Public Members. Ms. Felice Gaer, Chair of the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom, and Mr. Michael Cromartie, Vice Chair, also served as members of the delegation. Members of the staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe also participated in the delegation.

The annual HDIM agenda provides a soup-to-nuts review of the implementation of core human rights and fundamental freedoms (e.g., freedoms of speech, assembly and association; prevention of torture; right to a fair trial), as well as rule of law, free elections and democracy-building issues. National minorities, Roma, tolerance and non-discrimination are also on the agenda. The United States continued its longstanding practice of naming specific countries and cases of concern.

In accordance with OSCE procedures, the 2008 agenda included three specially selected topics, each of which was given a full day of review. This year, those subjects were: 1) education and awareness-raising in the promotion of human rights; 2) freedom of religion or belief; and 3) focus on identification, assistance and access to justice for the victims of trafficking.

As at other OSCE fora, the United States was criticized for retaining the death penalty, contrary to the abolitionist trend among the OSCE participating States. Other issues of concern raised with the United States included the status and treatment of detainees.

Other Human Dimension Meetings

In May, Chairman Hastings and Commission staff participated in the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on “National Institutions against Discrimination in Combating Racism and Xenophobia with a Special Focus on Persons belonging to National Minorities and Migrants.” Chairman Hastings delivered opening remarks, where he outlined the broad range of U.S. institutions and policies created to address inequality and discrimination. (Although Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings have traditionally been held in Vienna, the Commission has supported moving them to different countries to make them more accessible to a wider segment of the public.)

Commission staff also participated in the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on “Sustainable Policies for Roma and Sinti Integration,” July 10-11. This meeting also became a forum for NGOs to protest Italy’s announced plans to fingerprint Roma and Sinti. (During the meeting, the OSCE’s newly appointed Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Janez Lenarcic, announced that the OSCE and Council of Europe would undertake a special fact-finding trip to Italy to examine the situation of the Roma there.)

The Commission's Policy Advisor to the U.S. Mission to the OSCE in Vienna, Austria, participated in the weekly meetings of the Permanent Council (the OSCE's main decision making body) as well as its working groups. Additionally, she participated in the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, the annual OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Kazakhstan, Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings in Vienna as well as the Helsinki Ministerial. The Commission's presence in Vienna affords a unique opportunity to provide input into the daily work of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE and fosters understanding by other delegations of the role of the U.S. Congress in foreign affairs.

2. Regional Developments

The Caucasus

2008 was an eventful year in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Unfortunately, in all three, the events in question either promoted instability or moved the countries farther away from democratization.

In February, Armenia held a presidential election. What had been expected to be an easy victory for Prime Minister Serzh Sarkissian turned into a horse race when former President Levon Ter-Petrossian reentered politics and energized an opposition coalition. When the authorities announced that Sarkissian had won with 53% of the vote, opposition demonstrators claimed fraud and assembled in a central square in Yerevan. After days of peaceful protests, the authorities, alleging the demonstrators were planning a coup, declared a state of emergency, shut down opposition media and violently dispersed the protesters, arresting many. At least 10 people were killed in the process. The Commission held a hearing to discuss the election's aftermath and human rights situation.

At year's end, about 60 pro-opposition activists remained in prison. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which has characterized those jailed as political prisoners, has threatened to deprive Armenia of its vote if Yerevan does not comply with conditions laid out in PACE resolutions in April and June.

The most dramatic regional events unfolded in Georgia, which, after a period of relative stability in 2004-2007, has reverted to previous patterns of unpredictability. A snap presidential election in January followed disturbances in November 2007, when authorities cracked down on protesters and shut down opposition and independent media. According to the Central Election Commission, Mikheil Saakashvili retained his position with 53%, narrowly avoiding a runoff. Commission Chairman Hastings headed the International Election Observation Mission, which concluded that despite serious problems and continuing challenges, the election had largely met OSCE norms.

It seemed as if stability had been restored but in August, war broke out between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia, a breakaway region. Moscow and Tbilisi traded accusations of responsibility for the hostilities, which followed months of heightened tensions and provocations. As Russian forces easily crushed Georgia's forces and occupied areas outside the conflict zone, French President Sarkozy brokered a peace deal. Military activities ceased but

Moscow recognized the independence of South Ossetia and separatist Abkhazia. Some 8,000 Russian troops remain in both regions, which almost the entire the international community continues to recognize as part of Georgia. The Commission held a hearing on the ramifications of Russia's invasion of truncation of another OSCE state.

The Commission organized a hearing in July to look at likely scenarios for Azerbaijan's presidential election in November. In that contest, there were no surprises. President Ilham Aliev, who inherited his position from his strongman father in 2003, effectively had no competition, as the leading opposition figures boycotted the race. His official tally was almost 90%.

Soon after, Azerbaijan announced plans to hold a referendum in March 2009 on constitutional amendments that, inter alia, would eliminate term limits on the president. Given the virtual certainty of passage, Aliev seems intent on establishing a legal basis for a family dynasty in this strategically important, oil-rich state.

Throughout 2008, Azerbaijan's crackdown on opposition and independent media continued, with at least 3 journalists jailed for political reasons. Towards the end of the year, Baku announced plans to end FM broadcasts of Congressionally-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, as well as BBC. Chairman Hastings, Co-Chairman Cardin and Ranking Minority Member Smith sent a letter to President Aliev in late November urging him to reconsider, but on December 31, RFE/RL broadcasts ceased, depriving Azerbaijanis of a critically important source of objective information.

As 2008 came to an end, Georgia's reputation as an experiment in democracy in the Caucasus was seriously tarnished, while troubling questions swirled about Saakashvili's authoritarianism and responsibility. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, progress towards democratization remains elusive.

Russia

2008 witnessed a continuing downward trend in U.S.-Russian relations across a vast array of issues. Principle among these were Russia's restrictions on foreign observation of their presidential election in March, which was widely seen as not meeting basic international norms and commitments and Moscow's invasion and occupation of neighboring Georgia beginning in early August and Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. Further complicating these negative developments was the continued harassment of opposition voices, human rights defenders, and independent journalists as well as a sharp uptick in xenophobic violence throughout Russia.

The year was also one of extraordinary transition with new administrations ascendant in both Moscow and Washington with the ultimate balance of power between new Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin still unclear.

Chairman Hastings began the year in January by welcoming the creation of a Russian think tank, known as the Institute of Democracy and Cooperation that will ostensibly study human rights

and democratic development in the United States and Europe noting that “We have nothing to hide.”

Later in January, the Commission’s bipartisan leadership issued a joint statement expressing concern regarding Russia’s decision to limit the number of election observers to the presidential elections held on March 2. As a result of Russia’s attempts to impose heavy handed restrictions, the OSCE decided not to observe the elections on Moscow’s terms. Commission staff traveled to Moscow on election day to meet with various NGOs and independent journalists conducting their own unofficial observation of the poll. On May 8, the Commission held a hearing to examine possible new opportunities in bilateral relations with the Medvedev Administration.

On February 20 the Commission hosted a briefing with *The Economist’s* former Moscow bureau chief Edward Lucas to discuss the conclusions of his recent book, “*The New Cold War: Putin’s Russia and the Threat to the West.*”

Chairman Hastings continued to engage Russian parliamentarians via the OSCE’s Parliamentary Assembly travelling in May to St. Petersburg, Russia to participate in a joint meeting between officials of the parliamentary assemblies of the OSCE and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

On June 19 the Commission held a briefing entitled, “Ingushetia: The New Hot Spot in Russia’s North Caucasus.” This briefing addressed rising violence in the region and concerns over the possibility of a new war in the North Caucasus.

On August 7, Russia invaded Georgia, its small southern neighbor, under the pretext of protecting Russian “citizens” in South Ossetia – a separatist region of Georgia. The invasion sparked an outcry around the globe largely critical of Moscow’s flagrant violation of Georgian sovereignty. The Commission’s added its voice to those concerned about the humanitarian tragedy in Georgia and its destabilizing influence on the region.

The possibility of such a conflict was foreseen earlier in the year when Commissioners strongly urged Russian President Putin to reconsider his decision to strengthen ties to Georgia’s separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Additionally, at the annual session of the OSCE’s Parliamentary Assembly held in Astana, Kazakhstan in July Chairman Hastings introduced a resolution expressing concern about the alarming sequence of events that have escalated tensions in the separatist regions of Georgia – the resolution was adopted.

Following the Russo-Georgian war, Chairman Hastings was the first in Congress to introduce legislation to aid the republic of Georgia in the devastating wake of the Russian invasion. This legislation focused on expanding trade, business, and economic opportunities and assistance for reconstruction and recovery efforts. Additionally, the Commission held a hearing on September 10 addressing Russia’s Armed Intervention into Georgia to examine the conflicts implications for U.S.-Russian relations as well as European security infrastructure. Later in the month Chairman Hastings introduced a resolution affirming the Stimson Doctrine of non-recognition of territorial changes brought about by force alone as a cornerstone of stability and an enduring principle of U.S. foreign policy. In October, Commission staff traveled to Georgia to assess the damage of the Russian invasion as well as international humanitarian relief operations.

In October, French President Nicolas Sarkozy embraced an initiative launched in early June by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev calling for a new pan-European security structure – an idea that has since gained some momentum in the international community and will likely be a subject of intense debate in 2009. Sarkozy suggested that such discussions take place within OSCE.

Late December 2008 saw the eventual, but sadly, predictable breakdown of energy talks between Russia and Ukraine during some of the coldest European weather in decades.

Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova

Throughout 2008, Ukraine's political scene continued to be tumultuous, and its democratic, pro-Western leadership was engulfed in an intense political feud between President Victor Yushchenko and his former Orange Revolution ally, Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko. Ukraine continued to be designated as "free," and not merely "partly free," according to Freedom House's widely respected "Freedom in the World" report, the only non-Baltic post-Soviet country to earn that designation. However, the rule of law, including a truly independent judiciary, remains weak and corruption continues to have a debilitating impact on the political elites and society as a whole.

Hope of further integration into Euro-Atlantic structures were dashed during the year when Ukraine failed to gain a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the April Bucharest NATO summit, then again at a NATO meeting in December, despite the strong support of the Bush Administration and Congress. Russia's vehement opposition and the apparent acquiescence of NATO allies particularly Germany, as well as Ukraine's lack of political stability, were contributing factors. The Commission held a hearing on the eve of the Bucharest summit on NATO expansion, at which Commissioners, as well as witnesses, supported a MAP for Ukraine and Georgia. Throughout 2008, Russia's stance towards Ukraine became more aggressive, the result of the Ukrainian leadership's moves in the direction of NATO and its support for Georgia following Russia's August invasion and occupation of that country. Finally, Ukraine has been especially hard-hit by the global financial crisis, despite a \$16.5 billion loan from the IMF designed to stabilize the financial system.

Neighboring Belarus witnessed some minor improvements in the bleak human rights and democracy situation, notably, the August release of political prisoners and some loosening up of restrictions on several independent media. In general, however, respect for human rights and attempts at democratic expression continued to be trampled upon by the repressive regime of Aleksandr Lukashenka. The conduct of the September 28 parliamentary elections fell significantly short of international standards. The Commission followed the run-up to the elections closely. A hearing was held on September 16 titled "Business as Usual? Belarus on the Eve of the Elections", at which Assistant Secretary of State and Helsinki Commissioner David Kramer and representatives of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) – all organizations with a long track record of work in Belarus – testified. In late September, Commission staff traveled to Belarus where they were deployed as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's observers.

The Commission periodically raised specific human rights concerns through press releases, Congressional Record statements, contacts with the State Department and directly with Belarusian officials throughout 2008.

Central Asia

In Central Asia, there were no large-scale military hostilities between or inside states or significant terrorist episodes. However, executive branch dominance continued to hold sway domestically, as “super-presidents” retained their tight grip on the political arena. There was a clear trend towards tightening government control over the media, NGOs, and religious organizations. Kazakhstan made little progress in implementing the reforms it promised at the OSCE Madrid Ministerial, while the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan deteriorated significantly. Uzbekistan took some steps towards reengaging with the U.S. and others; relations had been virtually non-existent since the violence in Andijon in May, 2005.

In 2003, Kazakhstan announced its intention to become OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 2009. Many European capitals voiced support but objections by the U.S. and U.K. governments, which pointed to serious problems with human rights and democratization, blocked a favorable decision. However, at the Madrid Ministerial of November 2007, after much diplomatic activity by the Spanish Chairman-in-Office, a deal was reached allowing Kazakhstan to become CiO in 2010. The chairmanship was granted without any formal conditions, though Astana promised to reform media and electoral legislation, and pledged to preserve the mandate of the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), whose election monitoring Russia has sought to undermine.

President Nursultan Nazarbaev has been running that oil-rich nation since the late 1980s. He was re-elected for a third 7-year term in December 2005 with 91% of the tally, according to official figures; the OSCE said the election “fell short of a number of international standards.” Kazakhstan has yet to hold an election which met OSCE standards.

That record has continued. The 2007 election, which Helsinki Commission staff observed, resulted in a one-party parliament. However, as part of an effort to fulfill promises made at the 2007 OSCE Madrid Ministerial, Kazakhstan has enacted limited legislative reforms. The new election law provides for representation of a second party in the parliament even if that party does not garner enough votes to reach the threshold necessary to win. However, a separate law on political parties does little to make the registration process easier.

Virtually no voices critical of Nazarbaev are permitted in the media. Kazakh authorities have selectively used civil and criminal libel cases to punish political opponents and harass opposition newspapers. In 2008, several journalists were victims of violent attacks, and an editor was arrested after seeking asylum in the U.S. Embassy. A new media law allows the government to bring charges against journalists for slander. In addition, Kazakhstan passed a restrictive new religion law, making it harder for smaller, non-traditional religions to conduct activities.

Commissioners traveled to Kazakhstan to participate in the 17th Annual Session of the OSCE

Parliamentary Assembly, held in Astana June 29 to July 3, 2008. While there, Commissioners met with a number of leading opposition figures, religious groups, and non-governmental organizations to hear their concerns about the political and social situation in Kazakhstan. In particular, members heard from religious groups who were experiencing ongoing intimidation and obstruction of their work by the government, as well as the concerns of leaders of opposition parties about the lack of political space within which they could operate and the continued suppression by the government of any meaningful opposition activities within Kazakhstan. The delegation also had a chance to speak with government officials, including the Foreign Minister and the President. In July, the Commission held the second in a planned series of hearings examining Kazakhstan's human rights record in light of its bid to chair the OSCE.

Kyrgyzstan has been unpredictable since the Tulip Revolution of 2005, as the executive and legislative branches have sought to amend the constitution to rework the relationship between them. In 2008, the situation deteriorated. Restrictive new laws were passed curbing freedom of assembly, freedom of media, and freedom of religion. At year's end, opposition activists announced plans to begin a series of demonstrations in spring 2009, in an attempt to oust Bakiev.

In January 2009, Chairman Hastings, Co-Chairman Cardin, and ranking Minority Member Smith sent a letter to Kyrgyzstan's President Kurmanbek Bakiev urging him not to sign a pending religion law that would severely restrict religious freedom by raising the minimum number of members for registration, ban unregistered communities, restrict the education of children, censor imported religious literature, and restrict missionary activity.

In Tajikistan, democratization made no headway in 2008, as some religious minorities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, were banned as a result of restrictive new legislation. In addition, the U.S.-funded democracy-promoting NGO, National Democratic Institute, had to close down after failing to win re-registration. Commission staff met with a large and diverse group of Tajik officials and NGO representatives to discuss developments in Tajikistan.

While Saparmurat Niyazov ruled Turkmenistan (1985-2006), he strove to keep his country isolated and insulated while imposing his own arbitrary, increasingly erratic obsessions on the country's benighted population. For example, he cut education and banned popular forms of entertainment, such as the circus and opera. Meanwhile, state media praised him in a cult of personality that rivaled North Korea's.

Niyazov's death in December 2006 brought to power former Minister of Health Gurbanguly Berdymukhamdov. During his first two years in office, there has been much talk of reform and some small steps, but Turkmenistan is hardly more open now than before. In 2008, Turkmenistan adopted a new constitution and a new election law. These provide for some changes, like allowing international election observers, but still make it almost impossible for a multiparty system to develop. Parliamentary elections in December were conducted in an orderly fashion, but did not allow for any real competition or choice.

In November, the Commission held a hearing on "Turkmenistan: Prospects for Change?", examining whether or not the country was moving toward change, and whether the new legislative framework will result in real reform for the December parliamentary election.

Uzbekistan, under President Islam Karimov, remains one of the world's most repressive states. No opposition is permitted, and Soviet-era censorship effectively continues. In May 2005, Uzbek security troops attacked demonstrators in Andijon, killing hundreds. Ever since, U.S.-Uzbek relations have been in a deep freeze and Uzbek authorities have intensified their crackdown on human rights activists and opposition figures. There were some signs in 2008 that relations with the U.S. may be thawing. Several human rights activists were released from prison this year, and ICRC is again allowed to visit prisons. Uzbekistan also has stepped up its efforts to combat trafficking in persons, including by putting in place new legislation on victim protection.

In May, the Commission held a briefing on "Human Rights in Uzbekistan Three years after the Andijon Events", examining the human rights situation and state of civil society in Uzbekistan three years after Andijon. Despite sanctions by the European Union and the United States, Tashkent has refused to allow any independent investigations of the tragedy.

Southeastern Europe/Western Balkans

The countries of Southeastern Europe/Western Balkans continued to make progress in recovering from a decade of conflict which caused major human rights violations, economic collapse and fragile democratic transition. Kosovo's February declaration of independence was unquestionably the most significant regional event in 2008, initially leading to violent protests and confrontation in Serbia and Serb-held parts of Kosovo. Belgrade's official refusal to acknowledge the loss of Kosovo retarded progress within Kosovo and perpetuated concerns of major violence there. At the same time, Serbia's domestic politics took a more positive turn than many had expected. Albania, Croatia and Macedonia undertook additional measures early in 2008 to realize their NATO aspirations, but Greece's decision to block Macedonia's bid to join the Alliance caused some deterioration in that country. Montenegro, two years after becoming independent, also sought to advance its prospects for European integration. Bosnia-Herzegovina saw the fewest gains in 2008, as worsening inter-ethnic politics stymied hopes for more functional government.

Ongoing Commission efforts sought to encourage further progress through U.S. policy as well as OSCE activity, with a particular focus on combating trafficking in persons, encouraging the return of displaced persons, responding to discrimination against and harassment of Roma, and calling for the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. These efforts were reflected in Commission participation in various seminars, conferences and other events, as well as in engagement with the U.S. State Department, diplomatic representatives of the countries concerned, representatives of OSCE institutions and field missions, various human rights and ethnic non-governmental organizations and the press.

In February 2007, UN envoy Maarti Ahtisaari first proposed supervised independence for Kosovo along with numerous protections and privileges for the Serb and other minority communities. A year of subsequent diplomatic wrangling failed to achieve a UN Security Council Resolution endorsing the plan, so Kosovo declared its independence in the context of the plan in February 2008. The move was coordinated with the United States and European countries that moved quickly to recognize the new state. Helsinki Commission Co-Chairs Rep.

Alcee L. Hastings and Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin issued a statement welcoming the move, noting the Ahtisaari plan “provides a real opportunity for the Serb community in particular to remain in Kosovo and have a future there.” “Further delay,” they concluded, “would only bring greater instability by encouraging intransigence and mutual hostility.”

While hope was expressed for progress in an independent Kosovo, attention quickly shifted to the situation in Serbia, where organized protests led to an attack against the United States Embassy. Debating the status of Kosovo at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Winter Meeting in Vienna, Austria, Co-Chairman Cardin deplored the violence in Belgrade, calling for demonstrations to be peaceful and for embassies to be protected. During subsequent weeks, other incidents prompted the Commission co-chairs also to call for an end to the violence and threats against the independent Serbian media outlet B92, as well as for the protection of ethnic Albanian citizens of Serbia who had their property damaged by Serbs protesting Kosovo’s independence.

On April 3, Chairman Hastings convened a Commission briefing focusing on these and other developments regarding the future of democracy in Serbia, featuring experts from the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the International Republican Institute. In expressing concern about negative developments in Serbia, the briefing hoped to encourage positive change in time for the May 11 snap parliamentary elections that were called in response to Kosovo’s independence. Fortunately, some positive changes did take place, and not only were the elections conducted largely in line with OSCE standards but the outcome reflected a continuing Serbian commitment to European integration.

Positive movement within Serbia was confirmed with the July capture of wartime Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic in Belgrade, who was indicted in 1995 for genocide and numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Helsinki Commission co-chairs applauded his arrest, calling it “a very important step for both Serbia and Bosnia” and “terrific news for everyone in the world who supports human rights and justice.” A November 17 Helsinki Commission briefing for congressional staff featuring Head of the OSCE Mission in Serbia, Norwegian Ambassador Hans Ola Urstad, confirmed further progress in democratic transition during the remainder of the year.

As the situation in Serbia itself stabilized, the impact of Belgrade’s efforts to undermine Kosovo’s independence resurfaced as a concern. While Serbian authorities took some action to preclude unrest in Kosovo, they also took full advantage of Russian support in the United Nations and the willingness of some countries within the European Union, Spain, in particular, to neutralize international efforts in Kosovo as far as status. Perhaps Belgrade’s biggest success was obtaining an official UN request for an advisory from the International Court of Justice on the legality of Kosovo’s declaration of independence, although that step did not stop additional countries, including some Balkan neighbors, from recognizing Kosovo. Against backdrop of the ongoing debate over Kosovo, Russia attempted to use that, in part, to justify its military invasion and occupation of Georgia as well as Moscow’s recognition of the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Commission efforts sought to clarify that, while the same Helsinki principles could apply in both cases, this did not mean arriving at the same conclusion in each of them and that Kosovo had much stronger grounds for becoming independent. Along with others, the Commission also noted the duplicity of the Russian position, evident in Belgrade’s reluctance

to support the Russian incursion.

On June 3, the Helsinki Commission convened a hearing on the “Challenges to Minority Communities in Kosovo” featuring the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, former Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek, which noted the continuing problems facing these communities but also opportunities for improving their situation. As the year progressed, however, it became clear that the great portion of the threat to implementation of the Ahtisaari plan lay with the international community and its inability to deploy effective missions in Kosovo to assist. Efforts, particularly within the European Union, to remain status-neutral only encouraged Serbian intransigence and Kosovar fears of being boxed into compromising its hard-won independence. Increased tension associated with efforts to deploy a European Union Rule-of-Law Mission (EULEX) to replace the existing UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMiK) prompted a Helsinki Commission staff delegation to visit Kosovo for one week in December 2008, which reported on the dangers of a neutralized international presence and called for a mechanism to be found in which Belgrade and Pristina could begin a greater dialogue.

While concerned about the implications of Kosovo’s status on regional stability, other countries in the Balkans sought to ensure their own stability and contribute to European security by joining the NATO Alliance. The goal of the three Adriatic Charter countries – Albania, Croatia and Macedonia – was to obtain invitations at the NATO summit held in Bucharest, Romania in April 2008. One month earlier, on March 4, the Helsinki Commission held a hearing on the prospects for these three candidates, in addition to Georgia and Ukraine, obtaining Membership Action plans (MAPs). Testimony was given by analysts from the Center for Strategic and International Studies as well as from the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, with the embassies of the five countries presenting statements for the records.

At the hearing, there was considerable support for NATO enlargement, at the same time considerable encouragement of further reforms in each of the countries considered. This sentiment was also expressed in meetings Commission Co-Chairman Cardin had with the Albanian and Macedonian foreign ministers during their visits to Washington in 2008. The Co-Chairs also called for additional efforts in Croatia in an October statement condemning a car bomb attack which killed two Croatian journalists.

While Albania and Croatia did receive invitations to join NATO, and the U.S. Senate in September 2008 ratified the necessary protocols for this to occur, Greece blocked an invitation from being extended to Macedonia, its northern neighbor, due to a longstanding dispute over that country’s name. The rejection had some negative impacts on Macedonia, which already was struggling with its reform efforts. This was particularly evident in the June 1 snap parliamentary elections called in light of not receiving an invitation. While the election was conducted in accordance with OSCE standards in many parts of the country, where there were problems they were severe, including violence and intimidation of voters and poll workers. The incidents reflected political rivalries within Macedonia’s sizable Albanian community. It is hoped that the problems highlighted in the election will be corrected in time for the important municipal elections to be held in March 2009.

The Helsinki Commission maintained an elevated focus on Bosnia-Herzegovina in light of that

country's ongoing struggle to achieve the internal integration to make its further external integration into Euro-Atlantic and European institutions possible. During the first half of 2008, for example, the Commission continued to make its Senior Advisor from the State Department available to serve in a temporary assignment to help respond to tensions in Srebrenica, a municipality still seeking to cope with the experience of the genocide which occurred there in July 1995. He worked to coordinate efforts to address the concerns of Srebrenica's residents and future returnees for justice, security and a better life. This included finding specific solutions to the election of municipal officials in October 2008 by allowing former residents to continue to vote in the municipality.

In light of the transfer of Radovan Karadzic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), located in The Hague, the Netherlands, the Helsinki Commission also continued to press for the apprehension of the remaining two at-large indictees and Ratko Mladic in particular, viewing justice as an essential component of stability on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the region as a whole.

4. Other Areas of Concern

Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism: U.S. Practices and Policies Regarding Detainees

Although the Helsinki Commission largely focuses its attention on issues relating to the other OSCE participating States, the Commission has periodically examined domestic compliance issues. In recent years, no other issue has been raised as vocally with the United States at OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meetings than the status and treatment of detainees captured or arrested as part of U.S. counter-terrorism operations.

At the start of the year, on February 6, the Helsinki Commission organized a closed-door briefing for Members on interrogation methodology by Dr. Robert Fein. Dr. Fein specializes in threat assessment and the prevention of targeted violence. As a member of the Director of National Intelligence's Intelligence Science Board, he is chairman of the ISB Study on Educating Information.

On July 15, 2008, the Commission held a hearing on detainee-related policy issues in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Boumediene v. Bush* that foreign terrorism suspects held at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility have the right under the Constitution to challenge their detention in a U.S. civilian court. Additionally, the hearing considered how European countries are dealing with terror suspects. Testimony was received from Mr. Matthew Waxman, Associate Professor of Law, Columbia Law School (and former DOD Assistant Secretary of Detainee Affairs); Mr. Gabor Rona, International Legal Director, Human Rights First; and Mr. Jeremy Shapiro, Research Director of the Center on the United States and Europe, Brookings Institution.

On July 24, the Commission held a briefing with Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), regarding the medical evidence of torture of detainees by U.S. personnel in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay. Representatives of PHR presented their recently released report entitled, "Broken Laws, Broken Lives," in which they documented individual cases of torture, the impact

on detainees and made recommendations based on the findings of their investigation. The panelists for the briefing included Leonard Rubenstein, J.D., President, Physicians for Human Rights; Allen Keller, M.D., Advisor to Physicians for Human Rights and Director of the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture; and Scott Allen, M.D., Advisor to Physicians for Human Rights.

Human rights and counter-terrorism issues were addressed elsewhere during the year as well. Since 2006 (at Russia's initiative), "human rights and counter-terrorism" has been included as a regular agenda item for the OSCE's annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. These issues were also addressed by the Chairman, the Co-Chairman and Commissioner G.K. Butterfield in 2008 at meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism, Racism and Xenophobia as well as Intolerance and Other Forms of Discrimination in the OSCE Region

The Commission maintained a high level of activity in 2008 focused on efforts to monitor and combat intolerance and discrimination in the OSCE region.

In February, Chairman Hastings led a two-part hearing entitled, "Taking Stock: Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region." Witnesses included Professor Gert Weisskirchen, the OSCE Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism; Dr. Kathrin Meyer, the OSCE Advisor on Anti-Semitism Issues; Dr. Gregg Rickman, the U.S. Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism; Commissioner Felice Gaer of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom; and representatives from the Anti-Defamation League, National Conference on Soviet Jewry, American Jewish Committee, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Prior to participating in the Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna, Austria, Co-Chairman Cardin led a Congressional delegation to Prague, the Czech Republic, from February 18-20. He was joined by Chairman Hastings, Commissioner Louise McIntosh Slaughter and Congressman Michael McNulty. The delegation met with representatives of the Jewish community and discussed anti-Semitic manifestations, most notably a large demonstration organized the previous November on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, and other planned demonstrations by extremists.

In March, the Commission held a hearing entitled, "The Museum of the History of Polish Jews." At that hearing witnesses described the vision that led to the decision to establish the Museum, its mission, and what it means for Poland – a country that was once home to one of the largest Jewish communities in the world. Testimony was received from Sigmund Rolat, Chairman of the Board of Directors, North American Council, Museum of the History of Polish Jews and Polish-born survivor of the Holocaust; Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka, Undersecretary of State, Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland; and Ewa Wierzycka, Deputy Director, Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw. Ranking Member Christopher reintroduced legislation, H.R. 3320, the Support for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews Act of 2007.

In March, Chairman Hastings introduced a Resolution recognizing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) as a cornerstone of global

efforts to combat racial discrimination and uphold human rights.

In April, Chairman Hastings convened a hearing entitled, “The State of (In)visible Black Europe: Race, Rights, and Politics.” This first Commission hearing on Black Europeans focused on the challenges and opportunities experienced by the more than 5 million members of Europe’s Black population amidst reported increases in hate crimes and discrimination, anti-immigration and national identity debates, and growing security concerns. The impact of recently introduced anti-discrimination laws and diversity initiatives aimed at ensuring and protecting equal rights were also discussed. Witnesses included the Joe Frans, United Nations Vice Chair of the Working Group on People of African Descent; Gary Younge, Journalist for the UK Guardian; Dr. Philomena Essed of Antioch University and the Netherlands Equal Treatment Commission; Dr. Allison Blakely, Boston University; and Dr. Clarence Lusane, American University.

In May, Co-Chairman Cardin moderated briefing entitled, “Hate in the Information Age,” which focused on the role of the internet in spreading hate propaganda and promoting hate crimes. Representatives from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Southern Poverty Law Center, Human Rights First, and the Internet Hate Coalition of the Anti-Defamation League addressed concerns related to increases in hate crimes in the OSCE region and the role of the internet and other technologies in the training, recruiting, and funding of hate groups. Methods for combating hate propaganda and internet governance issues in the United States and Europe were also discussed (e.g., liability of internet providers, free speech concerns, content control responsibility).

In June, the Commission hosted a Congressional staff briefing on “Fighting Anti-Muslim Discrimination.” Panelists were the OSCE Advisor on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination Against Muslims, Mr. Taskin Soykan; Mr. Shaarik Zafar, Department of Homeland Security’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties; and Dr. Azizah Y. al-Hibri, President and Founder of KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights. The briefing focused on the OSCE’s efforts to address the harassment, violent attacks, and distorted representations of Islam and Muslim communities in media and political discourse, which impacts Europe’s 20 million Muslims.

In July, Mr. Hastings chaired a hearing entitled, “Racism in the 21st Century: Understanding Global Challenges and Implementing Solutions.” Witnesses included OSCE Chair-in-Office Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, Ms. Anastasia Crickley; the United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Ms. Gay McDougall; and President of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Mr. John Payton. The hearing provided an overview of the continuing challenge of addressing non-violent and violent forms of racial and ethnic discrimination in the OSCE region.

In September, Chairman Hastings introduced a resolution urging increased efforts to combat racism and discrimination against Blacks and other minorities in Europe. In November, the Chairman and Co-Chairman wrote to the Slovak Prime Minister to express concern about anti-Semitic an outburst in the Slovak parliament.

Commission staff also actively worked with Commissioner Hilda Solis, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Migration. Racial and ethnic minorities in the OSCE region

-- often African, Asian, and Muslim migrants -- have increasingly been the targets of hate crimes, and discrimination in employment, education, and housing, with an increase in recorded racist crimes reported in 8 European Union Member States and throughout Russia and the former Soviet Union. In February, Commissioner Solis led two events at the OSCE PA Winter meeting addressing migration, including issues of intolerance and discrimination. As a result of her work in this area and commitment to human rights, Commissioner Solis was selected to Chair the OSCE PA's General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights, and Humanitarian Questions at the Annual Session in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Commission staff participated in the various OSCE and partner organization meetings and events held throughout 2008 to discuss efforts to combat all forms of intolerance. In January, Commission staff attended that United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent Annual Session and Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's Review of the United States. In September, Commission staff attended the launch of the Black European Women's Council in Brussels, Belgium. Reports on these events are listed at the end of this report.

The Commission has also raised concerns regarding the rise in intolerance and discrimination with interested non-governmental organizations and government representatives from countries including the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and European Union.

Concerns relating to Roma were raised throughout the year, in a variety of different fora. In February, the Helsinki Commission Congressional Delegation to the Czech Republic (see above) held a round-table discussion with leading civil society and Romani activists. Their discussions touched on past instances of sterilizing Romani women without informed consent, and discrimination against Roma in education, housing and employment. Chairman Hastings also traveled from Prague to Bratislava, Slovakia, for additional meetings, where he was joined by Commissioner Solis. In Slovakia, they held a round-table discussion with Romani activists. Participants discussed the need to translate the government's program into concrete action, and the particular challenge of translating national policies into change at the local level.

In late February, Helsinki Commission staff spoke at a conference on Romani issues organized by the U.S. Embassy in Athens, Greece, primarily for human rights officers from U.S. Embassies in Europe. On the margins of the conference, Commission staff held meetings on Romani issues with representatives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Division for International Human Rights, Refugees, and Immigration; the Ombudsman for Human Rights; the Ministry of Interior; and the Ministry of Education. In addition, staff visited several Romani shanty towns in the Athens region, including the infamous Aspropyrgos camp.

In April, Chairman Hastings gave a floor statement entitled, "Teach About the Genocide of Roma," which focused on the experiences of Roma during World War II and was prompted by the remarks of a Czech official who had called for Roma to be "dynamited" out of her neighborhood.

The Commission closely followed the situation of Roma and migrants in Italy, following mob attacks on Romani camps and increasingly anti-Roma and anti-migrant manifestations. In June,

the Chairman and Co-Chairman wrote to the Italian Foreign Minister and urged Italy to ensure adequate and effective investigation of attacks in Naples, Milan and elsewhere.

In early December, Helsinki Commission staff visited Kosovo to review the changing mandates of a wide range of international actors in Kosovo. The delegation visited both sides of the divided northern city of Mitrovica, displacement camps there and the rebuilt neighborhood for the city's Romani population.

Also in December, the Commissions co-chairs issued a statement welcoming the groundbreaking for a memorial in Berlin for Roma and Sinti victims of the Holocaust.

Migration in the OSCE Region and Beyond

The Helsinki Commission continued its focus on immigration during 2008. In particular, Commissioners used the opportunities presented to advance the interests migrant workers and to promote tolerance toward migrants through better understanding of their contribution to society. At the Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Commissioner Hilda Solis led a debate among parliamentarians within the Economic and Environmental Committee on migration. The debate helped focus attention on the positive contribution of migrants and urged parliamentarians to use their legislative platforms to increase tolerance toward migrants and work for better conditions for labor migrants.

On April 24, 2008, the Commission held a hearing entitled, "Crossing Borders, Keeping Connected: Women, Migration and Development in the OSCE Region." The hearing focused on the impact of women migrants on family and society and the economic contributions to their home countries through remittances. In addition to several Helsinki Commissioners, the hearing drew the attendance of five other Members of Congress, including members of the Congressional Women's Caucus.

The Commission also organized a letter from Members of Congress to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security expressing the members' concern "about the growing evidence that the use of workplace raids conducted by U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as an immigration enforcement tool is causing psychological, as well as economic and social harm, to U.S. citizen children."

The Commission held a field hearing in Los Angeles, California, to draw lessons from the transitional experiences and accomplishments of migrant communities in the Los Angeles area. In particular, the hearing examined Los Angeles as a case study within the international context of global migration. The hearing, entitled, "Los Angeles: The Regional Impacts and Opportunities of Migration," was held on May 9, 2008, was the first domestic field hearing held by the Helsinki Commission outside of the D.C. Metropolitan area in more than 15 years.

At the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Astana, Kazakhstan, Commissioner Solis introduced a resolution recognizing the economic, social and civic contributions of migrants. The resolution encouraged parliamentarians to engage in actions to commemorate the positive economic, civic, and social contributions to both countries of origin and destination by migrant communities;

encouraged participating States to promote policies which harness the potential of migrant communities by improving their economic, educational, civic, and social integration, as well as improving their workforce development skills and providing them with citizenship classes, and recognizing the contributions migrants provide to host countries' economies; and urged participating States to improve cooperation with appropriate regulatory agencies and international financial institutions toward optimizing remittance mechanisms and small business micro-loan programs particularly for women supporting the development of local financial institutions which improve the economic contributions of remittances to the positive development of countries of origin. The resolution was agreed to and included in the final statement of the Annual Session.

Combating the Trafficking of Humans

The Commission continued to address the worldwide phenomenon of trafficking of human beings into slavery-like conditions of forced labor or commercial sexual servitude. Commission staff also worked with the OSCE Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit and the OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking to influence the direction and scope of their work.

Trafficking in human beings remains a critical challenge in the OSCE region and a matter of priority for the Helsinki Commission. The Commission strongly supported the previous adoption of the OSCE action plan to combat trafficking in human beings and the establishment of the position of special representative and coordinator of combating trafficking in human beings. These mechanisms have given greater focus to addressing this critical challenge in the OSCE region.

Since the adoption of the OSCE anti-trafficking protocols, participating States have made significant strides in combating the sexual dimension of human trafficking. However, there has been a growing consensus that more needs to be done to understand the scope and challenge of humans trafficked for forced servitude.

In February 2008, the OSCE, along with other multilateral institutions, cosponsored the United Nations Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking. Representatives of NGOs and 116 countries convened at this forum to develop a common framework for identifying trafficking victims. The forum also sought to establish common legal mechanisms prosecute traffickers and stem demand for trafficked human beings. Commission staff attended and engaged in numerous meetings and sessions complement the objectives of the forum.

In May 2008 Commission staff contributed to the UNODC-OSCE Workshop on "Promoting Law enforcement and Judicial Cooperation among Source, Transit and Destination Countries to Combat Human Trafficking and Migration Smuggling to and from Central Asia," in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. This event brought together regional law enforcement personnel to promote improved cooperation and information exchange to counter human trafficking and smuggling. In Uzbekistan, Commission staff visited shelters for human trafficking victims and engaged ministry officials and NGOs to form greater partnerships for identifying and supporting victims of trafficking.

During the 2008 OSCE PA Annual Session in Astana, Kazakhstan, Ranking Minority Member Rep. Christopher H. Smith introduced a measure on human trafficking, commending the ongoing work of the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; urging adoption of comprehensive anti-trafficking laws; encouraging greater media attention to trafficking; calling for more attention to forced labor trafficking; calling for greater oversight and training of peacekeeping forces and military personnel to prevent trafficking; and urging the aggressive prosecution of those responsible for trafficking infants, children, and youth. Smith, the sponsor of major U.S. anti-trafficking laws, was once again appointed by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President to serve as Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues.

Many participating States have still not adopted legislation to specifically address trafficking for forced labor purposes. In addition, much of the resources and early efforts to combat human trafficking have been directed at identifying and prosecuting sexual trafficking cases.

In further support of anti-trafficking efforts, Helsinki Commission Chairman Alcee L. Hastings and Commissioners Christopher H. Smith, Hilda Solis, Joseph R. Pitts and Mike Pence co-sponsored H.R. 3887, the Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2007. This legislation inspired several other legislative proposals to increase much needed resources for various anti-trafficking programs; protecting trafficking victims, and prosecuting the criminals that perpetrate these crimes. Commission staff contributed to Senate consideration of the legislation to ensure effective reorganization of U.S. initiatives to combat trafficking and expansion international partnerships. The legislation also enacted measures to intervene in the trafficking of youth to serve as child soldiers. The William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 was signed into law on December 23, 2008.

Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children in the OSCE Region

In 2008, the Commission held a hearing on Combating Child Pornography on the Internet, Commissioners supported a resolution at the OSCE PA Annual Session, and staff participated in an OSCE online conference on the issue. Co-Chairman Cardin, assisted by Commission staff, worked on U.S. legislation to combat sexual exploitation of children. .

During the 17th Annual OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session, held in Astana, Kyrgyzstan, June 29 to July 3, Commissioners supported a resolution to encourage OSCE member nations to establish national operation centers, collect and store data on persons convicted of child sexual exploitation in order to facilitate their apprehension and monitoring of parole, work with Internet Providers, credit cards companies, banks and others, and address demand.

Co-Chairman Cardin offered an amendment to the Protect our Children Act of 2008 aimed at strengthening international law enforcement cooperation in investigating and prosecuting child pornography on the Internet. Commission staff assisted with analysis of the bill. In connection with the legislation, July, the Commission held a hearing on “Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children: Strengthening Law Enforcement Cooperation.” Witnesses included representatives of the FBI, ICE, Microsoft, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. While they

made it clear that there is a significant amount of cooperation and coordination already taking place, the growing scope and international character of the crime makes it crucial to ensure that police in different countries can work together effectively.

Commission staff helped design the agenda for and participated in October online police experts workshop on countering the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet. The police experts' workshop brought together law enforcement officials from the participating States via the Internet to discuss how to strengthen international law enforcement cooperation and share lessons learned.

Appendix (A)

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

110th Congress

Legislative Branch Commissioners

United States House of Representatives

Alcee L. Hastings, Florida
Chairman
Louise McIntosh Slaughter, New York
Mike McIntyre, North Carolina
Hilda L. Solis, California
G.K. Butterfield, North Carolina
Christopher H. Smith, New Jersey
Joseph R. Pitts, Pennsylvania
Robert B. Aderholt, Alabama
Mike Pence, Indiana

United States Senate

Benjamin L. Cardin, Maryland
Co-Chairman
Russell D. Feingold, Wisconsin
Christopher J. Dodd, Connecticut
Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York
John F. Kerry, Massachusetts
Sam Brownback, Kansas
Gordon H. Smith, Oregon
Saxby Chambliss, Georgia
Richard Burr, North Carolina

Executive Branch Commissioners

David J. Kramer, Department of State
Mary Beth Long, Department of Defense
David Bohigian, Department of Commerce

Appendix (B)

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Staff Members

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Clifford Bond | Senior Advisor (Detailee from the Department of State) Balkans, Public Diplomacy, Inter-agency Contacts |
| Orest Deychakiwsky | Policy Advisor Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, NGO Liaison, Security Officer |
| Shelly Han | Policy Advisor Economics, Environment, Energy Security, OSCE Asian Partners for Cooperation, Labor Migration, Trade, Good Governance |
| Bob Hand | Policy Advisor Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Serbia, Kosovo, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly |
| Janice Helwig | Policy Advisor Afghanistan, Central Asia, Policing, Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children |
| Alex T. Johnson | Policy Advisor Environmental Human Rights, Environmental Justice Policy, Trafficking in Persons, OSCE Mediterranean Partners |
| Marlene Kaufmann | General Counsel |
| Ronald McNamara | Policy Advisor Greece, Cyprus, Media Freedom, OSCE Institutions |
| Michael Ochs | Policy Advisor Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan |
| Winsome Packer | Policy Advisor U.S. Delegation to the OSCE, OSCE Structure, Security Issues |
| Kyle Parker | Policy Advisor Russian Federation, Duma-Congress Inter-Parliamentary Exchange, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Daniel Redfield | Office Manager Budget Officer, Intern Coordinator, Personnel Administration, Travel Coordinator |
| Erika Schlager | Counsel for International Law Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Romani Minority Issues, OSCE and International Legal Issues, Domestic Compliance Issues |
| Josh Shapiro | Staff Associate |
| Harold Smalley | Printer/Proofreader (Detailee from the Government Printing Office) |
| Mischa Thompson | Policy Advisor Tolerance; Racism, Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia, Western Europe |
| Troy Ware | Congressional Black Caucus Fellow |
| Fred Turner | Chief of Staff |
| (vacant) | Policy Advisor |
| (vacant) | Communications Director |

Appendix (C)

OSCE Participating States as of January 2009

| Country | Participating States |
|--------------------|---|
| Albania | admitted as observer on June 20, 1990; admitted as fully participating State on June 19, 1991 |
| Andorra | admitted as new participating State on April 25, 1996 |
| Armenia | admitted as new participating State on January 30, 1992 |
| Austria | original participating State |
| Azerbaijan | admitted as new participating State on January 30, 1992 |
| Belarus | admitted as new participating State on January 30, 1992 |
| Belgium | original participating State |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | admitted as new participating State on April 30, 1992 (previously participated as part of Yugoslavia, an original participating State) |
| Bulgaria | original participating State |
| Canada | original participating State |
| Croatia | admitted as observer on January 31, 1992; admitted as fully participating State on March 24, 1992 (previously participated as part of Yugoslavia, an original participating State) |
| Cyprus | original participating State |
| Czech Republic | admitted as new participating State on January 1, 1993 (previously participated as part of Czechoslovakia, original participating State) |
| Denmark | original participating State |
| Estonia | admitted as new participating State on September 10, 1991 |
| Finland | original participating State |
| France | original participating State |
| Georgia | admitted as new participating State on March 24, 1992 |
| Germany | originally participated as two separate countries, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic; participation as single country began with German unification on October 3, 1990 |
| Greece | original participating State |
| The Holy See | original participating State |
| Hungary | original participating State |
| Iceland | original participating State |
| Ireland | original participating State |
| Italy | original participating State |
| Kazakhstan | admitted as new participating State on January 30, 1992 |
| Kyrgyzstan | admitted as new participating State on January 30, 1992 |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Latvia | admitted as new participating State on September 10, 1991 |
| Liechtenstein | original participating State |
| Lithuania | admitted as new participating State on September 10, 1991 |
| Luxembourg | original participating State |
| Malta | original participating State |
| Macedonia | admitted as observer as of April 1993; admitted as new, fully participating State on October 12, 1995 (previously participated as part of Yugoslavia) |
| Moldova | admitted as new participating State on January 30, 1992 |
| Monaco | original participating State |
| Montenegro | admitted as new participating State on June 26, 2006 (previously participated as part of Yugoslavia, and then as part of Serbia and Montenegro) |
| Netherlands | original participating State |
| Norway | original participating State |
| Poland | original participating State |
| Portugal | original participating State |
| Romania | original participating State |
| Russia | original participating State as the Soviet Union; Russia succeeded to the Soviet Union's seat on January 11, 1991 |
| San Marino | original participating State |
| Serbia | originally participated as Yugoslavia; suspended from participation in decision making on May 12, 1992; suspended from participating in meetings on July 7, 1992; re-admitted as new, fully participating State November 10, 2000; renamed Serbia and Montenegro on February 4, 2003; Montenegro separated from Serbia by referendum in May 2006 |
| Slovak Republic | admitted as new participating State January 1, 1993 (previously participated as part of Czechoslovakia, an original participating State) |
| Slovenia | admitted as an observer on January 31, 1992; admitted as new, fully participating State March 24, 1992 (previously participated as part of Yugoslavia) |
| Spain | original participating State |
| Sweden | original participating State |
| Switzerland | original participating State |
| Tajikistan | admitted as new participating State January 30, 1992 |
| United Kingdom | original participating State |
| United States | original participating State |
| Uzbekistan | admitted as new, fully participating State January 30, 1992 |

OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

| | |
|---------|--|
| Algeria | affiliated with the Helsinki process since 1973 |
| Egypt | affiliated with the Helsinki process since 1973 |
| Israel | affiliated with the Helsinki process since 1973 |
| Jordan | admitted as a Mediterranean partner for co-operation on May 22, 1998 |
| Morocco | affiliated with the Helsinki process since 1973 |
| Tunisia | affiliated with the Helsinki process since 1973 |

OSCE Partners for Cooperation

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Afghanistan | admitted as a Partner for Cooperation on April 3, 2003 |
| Japan | affiliated with the Helsinki Process from July 10, 1992; formally designated Partner for Cooperation on December 7, 1995 |
| Mongolia | admitted as a Partner for Cooperation on December 2, 2004 |
| Republic of Korea | formally designated Partner for Cooperation on December 7, 1995 |
| Thailand | admitted as a partner for co-operation on Nov. 9, 2000 |

Appendix (D)

Hearings, Briefings, Digest Articles and Congressional Delegations in 110th Congress, 2nd Session

A. Hearings

Taking Stock: Combating Anti-Semitism in OSCE Region (January 29, 2008)

Georgia in 2008: Elections or Street Politics? (February 6, 2008)

Taking Stock: Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region (Part 2) (February 7, 2008)

Finland's Leadership in the OSCE (February 13, 2008)

NATO Enlargement and the Bucharest Summit (March 4, 2008)

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews (March 13, 2008)

OSCE Partner States and Neighbors Overwhelmed by Iraqi Refugees: Band-aid Solution or Implosion in the Middle East? (April 10, 2008)

Armenia after the Election (April 17, 2008)

Crossing Borders, Keeping Connected: Women, Migration and Development in the OSCE Region (April 24, 2008)

The State of (In)visible Black Europe: Race, Rights, and Politics (April 29, 2008)

Cleaning the Air, Feeding the Fuel Tank: Understanding the Link between Energy and Environmental Security (May 6, 2008)

U.S.-Russia Relations: Looking Ahead to the Medvedev Administration – (May 8, 2008)

Los Angeles: The Regional Impacts and Opportunities of Migration (Field Hearing) (May 9, 2008)

The Challenges to Minority Communities in Kosovo (June 3, 2008)

Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children: Strengthening Internal Law Enforcement Cooperation (June 17, 2008)

Guantanamo Detainees after Boumediene: Now What? (July 15, 2008)

Racism in the 21st Century: Understanding Global Challenges and Implementing Solutions (July 16, 2008)

Promises to Keep: Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE Chairmanship (July 22, 2008)

Human Rights and Democratization in Azerbaijan (July 29, 2008)

Russia, Georgia, and the Return of Power Politics (September 10, 2008)

Business as Usual? Belarus on the Eve of Elections (September 16, 2008)

The Role of OSCE Institutions in Advancing Human Rights and Democracy (September 17, 2008)

Turkmenistan: Prospect for Change? (November 19, 2008)

B. Briefings

Edward Lucas Briefing (February 20, 2008)

The Future Democracy in Serbia (April 3, 2008)

Uzbekistan: Three Years after Andijan (May 13, 2008)

Hate in the Information Age (May 15, 2008)

The Forgotten: Iraqi Allies Failed by the U.S. (June 11, 2008)

Fighting Anti-Muslim Discrimination (June 13, 2008)

Ingushetia: The New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus (June 19, 2008)

Briefing by Physicians for Human Rights on Medical Evidence of Torture by U.S. Personnel (July 24, 2008)

Mongolia after the State of Emergency (July 31, 2008)

OSCE PA Election Seminar – Day 1 (September 22, 2008)

OSCE PA Election Seminar – Day 2 (September 23, 2008)

East or West? The Future of Democracy in Moldova (September 24, 2008)

C. Digest Articles

The Madrid Ministerial Council (January 25, 2008)

Georgia's Extraordinary Presidential Elections, A Competitive First (February 1, 2008)

Finnish OSCE Chairman-in-Office Outlines Priorities, Challenges for 2008 (February 27, 2008)

Greece Slated to Serve as OSCE Chair in 2009 (March 4, 2008)

Helsinki Commission Delegation Visits Prague and Bratislava (March 11, 2008)

Iraqi Refugee Crisis: The Calm before the Storm? (April 28, 2008)

Italian Fingerprinting Targeting Romani Communities Triggers Protests; OSCE Pledges Fact-finding (July 15, 2008)

Racism and Xenophobia: The Role of Governments in Addressing Continuing Challenges (July 17, 2008)

Georgians Return to Polls to Elect New Parliament as Political Polarization Persists (July 21, 2008)

Uzbekistan Three Years after the Andijon Massacre (July 21, 2008)

Srebrenica: Confronting the Past, While Embracing the Future (July 24, 2008)

Ingushetia: The New Hot Spot in the North Caucasus (July 28, 2008)

U.S. Congressional Delegation Visits Kazakhstan for OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session (September 5, 2008)

Iraqi Refugees: A Humanitarian Surge is needed for an 'Invisible' Humanitarian Crisis (September 8, 2008)

Belarus' Parliamentary Elections Fail to Meet OSCE Democratic Election Commitments (October 24, 2008)

Symposium Focused on Future of the OSCE (November 6, 2008)

Georgia Debate and Mediterranean Forum Highlight OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Fall Meetings in Toronto (November 12, 2008)

Report on the OSCE's 2008 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (November 18, 2008)

Georgia Rebuilds: After the August Conflict with Russia, Political and Economic Challenges Remain (November 19, 2008)

Report on the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Review of the United States and Seventh Annual Meeting of the United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent (WGPAD) (December 17, 2008)

U.S. Helsinki Commission Chairman Alcee L. Hastings Visits OSCE Mediterranean Partners to Advance Regional Cooperation (December 31, 2008)

Congressional Delegations

Congressman Hastings, Congressman Doggett, Fred Turner, Lale Mamaux, Ronald McNamara to Tbilisi, Georgia for OSCE PA election observation (January 1, 2008)

Senator Cardin, Congresswoman Slaughter, Congresswoman Solis and Congressman McNulty to Czech Republic and Austria to hold meetings on human rights and to participate in the Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (February, 18, 2008)

Congressman Hastings, Congresswoman Solis, Fred Turner and Mischa Thompson to Copenhagen, Denmark for OSCE PA Bureau Meeting (April 12, 2008)

Congressman Hastings, Congresswoman Solis, Fred Turner, Mischa Thompson to Copenhagen, Denmark to attend the Bureau Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (May 23, 2008)

Congressman Hastings, Senator Cardin, Congresswoman Solis, Congresswoman Moore, Congressman Wamp, Congresswoman Bordallo, Congresswoman Watson, Congresswoman Sanchez, Congressman McIntyre, Congressman Butterfield, and Congressman Aderholt to Kazakhstan for OSCE PA Annual Session (June 27, 2008)

Congressman Hastings, Senator Cardin, Marlene Kaufmann and Alex Johnson to Toronto, Canada for OSCE PA Fall Meeting (September 17, 2008)

Congressman Hastings, Alex Johnson, and Lale Mamaux to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Italy, and Portugal to meet with parliamentarians and senior government officials to discuss greater OSCE engagement by Mediterranean Partners (November 28, 2008)

Staff Delegations

Mischa Thompson to Geneva, Switzerland to attend the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent meeting (January 13, 2008)

Alex Johnson to Vienna, Austria to participate in the UNODC Vienna Forum on Human Trafficking (February 12, 2008)

Mischa Thompson to Geneva, Switzerland to attend the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination review of the US Commitments conference (February 17, 2008)

Erika Schlager to Athens, Greece to attend a regional conference on Romani issues organized by the U.S. Embassy in Athens (February 27, 2008)

Shelly Han and Kyle Parker to Moscow, Russia for consultations with the U.S. Embassy (February 29, 2008)

Marlene Kaufmann and Lale Mamaux to Jordan, Syria and Turkey to meet with NGOs on the Iraqi refugee situation and meet with government representatives handling border security (in Jordan), meet with the Syrian UNHCR staff, visit a Turkish Roma settlement and meet with NGOs (March 14, 2008)

Alex Johnson to Tashkent, Uzbekistan to attend the OSCE/UNODC Human Trafficking in Central Asia Forum (May 12, 2008)

Winsome Packer to Warsaw, Poland to attend the Human Dimension seminar entitled, "Constitutional Justice" (May 13, 2008)

Ronald McNamara and Orest Deychakiwsky to Tbilisi, Georgia to participate in the OSCE PA election observation mission (May 17, 2008)

Shelly Han to Prague, Czech Republic to attend the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (May 17, 2008)

Mischa Thompson and Alex Johnson to Vienna, Austria to attend a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting entitled: "The Role of National Institutions against Discrimination in Combating Racism and Xenophobia with Special Focus on Persons belonging to National Minorities and Migrant" (May 27, 2008)

Erika Schlager to Vienna, Austria to participate in the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Sustainable Policies for Roma (July 8, 2008)

Marlene Kaufmann and Lale Mamaux to Damascus, Syria and Beirut, Lebanon to meet with NGOs and government officials on the Iraqi refugee situation in Syria and Lebanon (August 1, 2008)

Mischa Thompson to Brussels, Belgium to attend the Black European Women's Council and meet with representatives from European diversity bodies (September 7, 2008)

Orest Deychakiwsky and Winsome Packer to Minsk, Belarus to monitor the parliamentary elections as part of OSCE PA's election observation mission (September 25, 2008)

Fred Turner, Clifford Bond, Mischa Thompson, Erika Schlager, Alex Johnson, Ronald McNamara, and Winsome Packer to Warsaw, Poland and Krakow, Poland to attend the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (September 28, 2008)

Fred Turner to Lisbon, Portugal to hold meetings with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President (October 5, 2008)

Shelly Han, Kyle Parker and Winsome Packer to Tbilisi, Georgia; Baku, Azerbaijan; Prague, Czech Republic to assess the Georgian political and economic situation and to be a part of the OSCE election observation mission in Azerbaijan. Shelly Han only to Prague to attend OCSE's Economic and Environmental Forum (October 6, 2008)

Alex Johnson to Bonn, Germany to attend the Environment, Forced Migration, Social Vulnerability (EFMSV) International Conference (October 8, 2008)

Winsome Packer and Alex Johnson to Amman, Jordan to attend the OSCE Mediterranean Conference on "The OSCE approach to regional security- a model for the Mediterranean" (October 24, 2008)

Winsome Packer to Helsinki, Finland to attend the OSCE Ministerial Council and the OSCE PA Bureau Meeting (December 2, 2008)

Clifford Bond and Robert Hand to Kosovo to assess the current situation and the effectiveness of the international presence in Kosovo (December 7, 2008)