

Mr. Chairman, thank you for hosting this important and timely forum. I also want to welcome and thank our Co-Chairman for this event, my friend and colleague from the German Bundestag, Dr. Gert Weisskirchen. An expert in international affairs and cultural studies, Dr. Weisskirchen is a Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and has also served with distinction as Chair of the Assembly's General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights Humanitarian Questions.

It is indeed fitting that this forum convenes today as we mark the 54th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That document confirmed in international law inalienable and universal human rights for people in every corner of the globe, and made it the responsibility of all nations to ensure the protection of those rights.

The adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 indisputably linked respect for basic human rights and fundamental freedoms to security and long-term peace. In the landmark 1990 Copenhagen Document, the participating states of the OSCE adopted the first international agreement to condemn anti-Semitism.

Those commitments, Mr. Chairman, are not taken lightly. This forum provides the opportunity for members of the U.S. delegation and our German colleagues to build on our initiative in Berlin last July. We must not only understand the breadth and depth of the anti-Semitic violence which engulfed much of the OSCE region during the past year, but also raise awareness among our citizens of its threat to our societies.

Clearly, the first line of action is immediate and forceful condemnation of anti-Semitic acts and swift prosecution of those who commit violent crimes. Public leaders play a critical role, and bear a particular responsibility, to ensure this is done. In the long-term, in my view, ongoing educational programs in schools and other public fora will be critical to combating the ignorance and intolerance which spawn anti-Semitism and racial hatred.

It is my hope that the distinguished panel of witnesses here today will provide recommendations for action we can take in cooperation with other parliamentarians to ensure that the governments of all OSCE participating states forcefully condemn and prosecute anti-Semitic violence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.