

**Statement of Rep. Joseph R. Pitts, Commissioner
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**“Protecting Children: The Battle Against Child Pornography
and Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation”**

September 27, 2006

Mr. Chairman, I was privileged to lead the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE PA Annual Session in Brussels in early July. There I was able to advance an initiative put forward by Co-Chairman Smith aimed at combating the insidious problem of child pornography. I am pleased to report that our resolution was unanimously approved by parliamentarians from the 56 OSCE countries. Indeed, child pornography is an issue throughout the OSCE region and a common threat to the wellbeing of future generations of young people.

This is a concern that deserves priority consideration by the OSCE and the participating States. I raised this issue with the OSCE Chair-in-Office, the Belgian Foreign Minister, when he testified before the Commission. While at the Parliamentary Assembly meeting in July, I participated in a special session focused on the subject of today's hearing. Parliamentarians from other OSCE countries share our concern and I look forward to their continued backing in the lead up to the Brussels OSCE Ministerial and beyond.

In a related initiative, the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) surveyed 184 Interpol member countries, including the OSCE participating States. Their recently released study reveals significant gaps in the legal framework that hamper the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies to combat international child pornography networks operating across borders, principally via the Internet. A survey of OSCE countries finds that:

- 6 countries lack any laws criminalizing any aspect of child pornography
- 32 countries lack any legal definition of child pornography
- 16 countries have failed to make the possession of child pornography a crime
- 20 countries lack laws criminalizing the electronic distribution of child pornography via the Internet
- 50 countries do not require Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to report suspected child pornography to law enforcement

Of the OSCE countries, only Belgium, France and the United States have enacted comprehensive laws combating child pornography. I say this not to hold up our country, for we must also recognize that much of the demand originates right here in this country. As Ernie Allen, ICMEC president and CEO, who participated in the Brussels event and is with us again this afternoon, has observed, “We know that many world leaders do not yet recognize that child pornography has become a multi-billion dollar industry and that the world's children are paying the price.”

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for convening this hearing and look forward to learning from the experts who are with us today. Thank you.