

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE RUSS CARNAHAN (MO-03)
COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE:
U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION**

**Hearing on
The Western Balkans: Developments in 2010 and Hopes for the Future
Wednesday, December 8, 2010, 11:00 a.m.
SVC 202/203, Capitol Visitor Center**

Chairman Cardin and Co-Chairman Hastings, thank you for holding this hearing regarding recent developments in the Western Balkans. I hope that the attention being given to this important issue today will help us work towards fostering lasting stability and growth in the region.

I greatly appreciate the invitation you have extended for me to participate in this hearing, as I have a concerted interest in the Western Balkans. With approximately 35,000 Bosnians residing in the St. Louis region, I represent one of the largest Bosnian populations outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In fact, I recently chaired a hearing of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, regarding the peace and reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina where its history of ethnic conflict presents unique challenges to protecting human rights and achieving long-term stability. As a country with strong ethnic and political ties to other Balkan nations, progress in Bosnia is fundamental to overall regional interests.

While the reform process in Bosnia has been stalled for the past several years, I remain hopeful that there is a path for meaningful progress in the aftermath of October's general elections. To realize such progress, however, the United States and the international community must seek every viable opportunity to reinvigorate the peace process.

The U.S. was instrumental in brokering the Dayton Peace Accord in 1995, and has been providing diplomatic, financial, and military resources to help facilitate peace since. Aid to Bosnia since 1993 totals over \$2 billion aimed at institution-building, policing to fight organized crime and terrorism, an independent judiciary, and reconciliation efforts, among other key programs. The task ahead for Bosnia is to reform its constitution and government institutions, and engage in more serious nation-building efforts. I look forward to hearing more today about how the United States, working with our international partners, may assist Bosnia in reaffirming its commitments to constitutional reform, reconciliation, and lasting peace. Specifically, I hope to gain further insight into how Bosnia's prospective membership into NATO and the EU may provide opportunities to leverage incentives for meaningful advancements in reform efforts.

In closing, I'd like to thank the witness, Deputy Assistant Secretary Countryman, for his testimony and presence here today. I hope that your answers and opinions will enhance our understanding of the most appropriate direction and options for U.S. foreign policy in the Western Balkans.