

CARDIN: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for holding this hearing. I think this subject is extremely important and one in which the Helsinki Commission and the OSCE can take a major leadership role.

I regret I will not be able to stay for much longer. We have the immigration bill that's on the floor this week and there's a little bit of interest from our constituents on that issue.

But let me just underscore this particular hearing in a couple ways. First, I did chair, as the chairman knows, the second committee, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and I must tell you energy was one of our top issues and we are concerned about it from a security point of view. It is a challenge for the OSCE states.

One of my major concerns is that for the United States to exercise leadership in this area, we need to start with our own energy policies. And this last week, the United States Senate passed an energy bill that I think moves us in the right direction. I would have liked to have seen some additional provisions that we were unable to get, but it's a strong bill and it speaks to the United States moving toward energy independence.

Now, we're all going to be dependent on the region, there's no question about it, but the United States uses too much energy and has not made the type of investment in alternative fuels that it needs to if it's going to be able to be a major player in the international community dealing with the subject of this hearing.

So I've introduced legislation that calls upon our nation to become energy independent. We were able to put a person on the moon. You've heard this analogy made by many of us. Why not make an Apollo-type commitment towards energy independence?

And my legislation requires us to be 90 percent self-sufficient by the next decade. I think that can be achieved. But it starts with conservation and must have a large ingredient for alternative renewable energy sources and we need to continue our commitment to research.

Now, why do we need to do this? Well, today's hearing is concerning security and that's a major issue. A lot of the energy that's consumed by OSCE states, the United States, in particular, has its roots in countries that don't necessarily agree with our foreign policy objectives, and that's putting it mildly.

So that when we fill up our tanks with gas here, we are supplying resources to countries who, quite frankly, disagree with our way of life and that's something that we need to make sure we avoid in the future.

So there's strong security reasons why OSCE should be concerned about its energy sources and the dependency among different states for energy. It's also very important for economic reasons.

I just came back from the eastern shore of Maryland, filled up my tank with gasoline and two of my constituents took the opportunity to complain to me about the

cost of gasoline. Now, we might argue whether it's a fair price or not, but I can tell you the unpredictability of energy costs in America is affecting our economy and, I dare say, affects the entire OSCE's economic growth by the fact that it's unpredictable.

Investors do not like to make decisions based upon unpredictability. We've lost some plants in Maryland because of energy costs and the unpredictability of energy costs.

And the last point I want to make, which I think the United States must exercise leadership, is on the environmental front. Global climate change is real. So as we look at the security issues concerning energy, we also need to be mindful to get away from the carbon-based energy sources so that we address the global climate change.

I come from the state of Maryland. We're a coastal state. Sea level change has a dramatic impact on my state. Global climate change has an impact on the entire OSCE and our entire world.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'm glad that this hearing is taking place. I think it is of the utmost priority and I assure you the fact that I am unable to stay for the witnesses is not my lack of my interest and my staff will inform me and we intend to follow-up with the people that are at the witness table.

I thank our governmental witnesses for being here. I particularly thank our two ambassadors and our private sector experts for sharing their wisdom with this committee.