



# HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

## Testimony :: Hon. Christopher H. Smith

Chairman - Helsinki Commission

We warmly welcome the Foreign Minister of The Netherlands, His Excellency Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Chair-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is a pleasure to have you here with us today, and we thank you for your leadership. I also want to thank you and your government for your warm hospitality during the 12th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held in Rotterdam last July. Your participation in that meeting was greatly appreciated.

The Commission has frequently held hearings to examine various aspects of the OSCE--in the past six months, we have held hearings which have examined the role of OSCE participating States in arming rogue regimes, missing persons in southeast Europe and internally displaced persons in the Caucasus region, as well as public briefings regarding the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the critical human rights and humanitarian situation in Chechnya--all critical issues challenging the OSCE. We look forward to the insights that Foreign Minister de Hoop Scheffer, serving in the OSCE's most senior political position, can bring to us today.

At the beginning of your tenure, Mr. Minister, you set what I believe is an ambitious, yet practical, agenda for your chairmanship: Advancing the fight against international terrorism, including a focus on combating trafficking--in human beings, drugs and weapons--and the criminal organizations which thrive on these activities; redoubled efforts to resolve the continuing conflicts in the Caucasus and the stalemate in Moldova, and meaningful institutional reform within the OSCE.

I thank you, in particular, for your focus on combating trafficking in human beings, a scourge that is nothing less than modern day slavery. The U.S. delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has taken the lead in trying to combat trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, and the Assembly adopted our comprehensive resolution in Rotterdam last July. As the primary author of the U.S. law combating human trafficking, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I am pleased that your leadership has produced an Action Plan for combating trafficking in human beings. We look forward to working with you and other participating States in working to eradicate this evil.

As you know, the U.S. delegation, along with our German colleagues, have taken the lead in focusing the attention of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on anti-Semitism. Thank you for conducting the excellent OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism in June. Along with Mayor

Giuliani, I was honored to co-lead the U.S. delegation to the Conference, and Congressman Alcee Hastings also served on the delegation. This meeting was an important step in encouraging participating States to seriously address this critical and longstanding human rights issue in concrete and practical ways, such as reporting statistics on anti-Semitic incidents to the ODHIR for compilation and review.

I am also pleased that the sister Conference on Discrimination, Racism and Xenophobia, which begins tomorrow, will raise other significant issues also deserving of attention. As the OSCE has repeatedly focused on issues of tolerance in a singular fashion, such as with the April Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Roma and Sinti, this flexibility is one of the OSCE's greatest assets. In fact, considering the unique history of anti-Semitism in Europe and the fact that sporadic violence continues to arise in both North America and on the continent, I think it premature to remove the Organization's singular focus on this topic. With the Germans committed to hosting a follow-up meeting in Berlin in 2004 specially devoted to anti-Semitism, I hope our European friends will continue to support these efforts to raise anti-Semitism as a specific issue of concern.

Members of this Commission have also followed closely developments in Central Asia, and I know you have focused on the region as well during your Chairmanship. We are particularly concerned about the deteriorating situation in Turkmenistan, where there are credible reports that many arrested following the November 25 coup attempt were tortured and convicted in show trials, where exit visas have been reimposed and where minorities and religious believers are harassed and discriminated against. I continue to believe that the OSCE can and should do more to promote the development of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect for human rights and market economies in Central Asia.

Again, I appreciate the Foreign Minister's willingness to testify before this Commission and offer his insights as Chair-in-Office. We are eager to hear more about your vision for the OSCE and its role in the region.