

Good morning. Allow me to welcome all of you to this Parliamentary Forum on Confronting Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region. It is a particular pleasure for me to greet Dr. Gert Weisskirchen, Dietmar Nietan, and Markus Loening, the members of the German Bundestag who have come from Berlin to Washington to be with us on this occasion. It is particularly fitting that we can be here with our German friends and hold this event on December 10, International Human Rights Day.

Today's meeting is the continuation of a process that we began in Berlin in July on the occasion of the Annual Session of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly when our German colleagues graciously hosted a special event on anti-Semitism. The eleven members of the U.S. delegation to the Assembly, which I led, believed that such an event was urgently needed to underscore our shared concerns about the rise in anti-Semitic violence we had observed earlier this year in much of the OSCE region. The violence included vandalism against Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and cultural property to mob assaults, fire bombings and gun fire. This unsettling trend had led the U.S. Helsinki Commission to hold a special hearing on anti-Semitism in May to obtain a clearer picture of the threat and consider how we could respond.

At the Berlin Parliamentary Assembly meeting 40 parliamentarians from 14 countries co-sponsored a U.S. draft resolution on anti-Semitism that received the overwhelming endorsement of the full Assembly. Among other things, this resolution declared that anti-Semitic violence must have no place in the 21st Century and called upon OSCE participating States to take concrete steps to make this vision a reality.

The process that we and our German parliamentary colleagues are carrying forward is designed to be an action plan to help realize and build upon the goals endorsed by the Parliamentary Assembly. At the conclusion of today's event, we and our German Parliamentary colleagues will sign a Letter of Intent to continue and expand our joint cooperative initiative within the framework of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. In this document we propose specific actions that we believe should be taken to confront and combat anti-Semitism throughout the OSCE region. Among the concrete measures we call for are formal condemnation by Parliaments, of anti-Semitism – as the Bundestag and the U.S. Congress have already done, the enactment of appropriate criminal legislation to punish anti-Semitic acts and other actions generated by racial hatred, and the promotion of expanded educational efforts to combat anti-Semitism among young people.

It is our hope that representatives of other parliaments in the OSCE's 55 participating States will sign on to this document and actively commit themselves to this initiative and its worthy goals. We wish to disseminate information on our own "best practices" as well as help others learn from our mistakes. By working actively and persistently together, I am convinced that we can reverse the troubling trend of increased anti-Semitic violence in the OSCE region and create an

environment that not only tolerates diversity but welcomes its potential for greatly enriching our societies.

Given the many impossible dreams that have already been realized through the Helsinki process, such as the great progress in establishing freedom and democracy throughout former communist Central and Eastern Europe and in Russia itself, this is not an unrealistic goal.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses from Europe and the United States. We will particularly appreciate their recommendations on actions we can take to obtain maximum benefit from this process. Following their contributions – and using the formula we began in Berlin – we will be prepared, time permitting, to open up questions and comments to all those who have made the effort to be with us today.