

**Opening Statement of the Hon. Alcee L. Hastings, MC  
Member, United States Commission on Security and  
Cooperation in Europe  
President, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
Helsinki Commission Hearing on  
Advancing the Human Dimension in the OSCE:  
The Role of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
May 17, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, as a Member of this Commission, I welcome this hearing, particularly its specific focus on ODIHR and its role in monitoring elections in OSCE countries. However, as President of the Parliamentary Assembly, which has played a leading role in OSCE election monitoring since 1993, I must express my surprise, and frankly my disappointment, that the parliamentary dimension of election monitoring is not represented on this panel of witnesses today.

So, I guess I am wearing two hats today. Therefore, I will try to contribute to this hearing, both as a Commissioner and as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I suppose I might also contribute wearing a third hat, having been appointed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE short-term observers and to speak on behalf of the OSCE at recent elections in Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine.

As I assume you know, Mr. Chairman, the Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR are formal partners in the election monitoring activities of the OSCE. Our roles are defined in a Cooperation Agreement signed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President in 1997. I submit for the record, Mr. Chairman, a copy of that Agreement and ask that it be included in the record and the report on this hearing. As a footnote right there, Mr. Chairman, the Agreement was signed by PA President Javier Ruperez of Spain and Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen. I also submit for the record, Mr. Chairman, a copy of a recent review of the activities of OSCE Parliamentarians in election monitoring, and I ask that this also be included in the record of this hearing.

I should also note that today, at this very hour, the distinguished Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Dr. Nevzat Yalcintas of Turkey, is in Montenegro leading the OSCE observers, including nearly 100 Parliamentarians from the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament, along with 200 OSCE short-term observers, for the Referendum to be held this Sunday. Professor Yalcintas has been appointed to lead this mission by the current OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister DeGucht of Belgium.

I take pleasure in welcoming my very good friend, Ambassador Christian Strohal, to the Helsinki Commission, and commend the excellent work done by the ODIHR in cooperation with Parliamentarians in the field of election observation. This unique partnership between the election technicians and experts of the ODIHR and the practical

experience of publicly elected officials gives the OSCE a strong combination, unmatched by any other organization in this field.

I also welcome the other witnesses here today, all of whom play an important role in the development of democracy and the promotion of free elections. I look forward to hearing the views of Assistant Secretary Volker representing the State Department and, by extension, the U.S. government which is, I believe, the main source of funding for all of the organizations represented by the other witnesses, as well as a substantial contributor to the budget of the ODIHR. Not only as a Commissioner, but as a Member of Congress, and as a strong supporter of the spread of democracy, I will be interested to learn just how much money we actually spend on this important endeavor, including voluntary contributions as well as regular contributions to the ODIHR.

I will also be interested to learn just how this money is spent and what results are achieved by the work of these various organizations in building democracy and promoting free and fair elections.

In welcoming Mr. Gershman, Mr. Merloe and Mr. Craner from the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute to this Commission hearing, I cannot fail to take note of a remarkable coincidence related to this Commission and to the genesis of your organizations. As some of you may be aware, it was the first Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, one of my mentors, Congressman Dante Fascell of Florida, who as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee was the principal author of the legislation that actually created the N.E.D., the N.D.I. and the I.R.I.

Furthermore, as a few of you know, the first staff director of the Helsinki Commission, Spencer Oliver, is now the Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to which I referred earlier, and of which I am currently President. Mr. Oliver is also, as we speak, on his way to Montenegro to assist in the organization of the OSCE election observation mission to the Referendum this Sunday. Contemplating all those coincidences, Mr. Chairman, it is certainly appropriate to say that, despite time and space and distance, it is a small world indeed.

Since I know we are limited in time and not all Members of the Commission are in attendance today and some of us may not be able stay throughout, I would ask for unanimous consent that we be able to submit written questions to the witnesses over the next few days, and that the answers to those questions be included in the record of this hearing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.