

Opening Statement by Senator Cardin

**Resolving Crises in East Asia through a New System of Collective Security:  
the Helsinki Process as a Model**

*December 11, 2013*

Good afternoon and welcome. Thank you all for joining us today at this hearing on the potential for a Helsinki process for North East Asia.

We face a lot of insecurity in this world and we could spend the rest of the afternoon ticking off the names of countries or regions that are unstable and violent; but the security situation in North Korea is one of the longest-running and perhaps most intractable security problems the international community has faced. It has withstood the best efforts of decades of seasoned diplomats. I am sure if we ran a highlight reel of the past 20 years of negotiations, sanctions, special envoys, ambassadors and retired basketball players, we would see some pretty impressive and creative efforts that have all brought us back to the same place.

And that place is a closed country that imposes grave human rights abuses upon its own citizens and brandishes a nuclear weapon threat against the Korean peninsula and the United States as well.

I have had the privilege of serving on the U.S. Helsinki Commission for over 25 years and have seen first-hand the tremendous progress that can be made through engagement. The original language in the documents that served as the foundation for the discussions in the 1970s was quite modest, and frankly was not considered groundbreaking. In fact, the whole concept was heavily criticized at the time here in the United States. But Helsinki created an opportunity

to change things; it committed our adversaries to try; it gave countless people hope for the future. As a result, Helsinki made a difference.

The Helsinki Final Act was a document deeply rooted in its own time and its own space. The world in 1975 looked radically different than our world today, and not only because of the shift in alliances and borders. We have seen a tectonic shift toward globalization that has changed the way citizens around the world gather and share information. Our knowledge of each other's worlds is greater than ever before.

But knowledge does not always lead to understanding. Despite growing more interconnected, we still have huge gaps in our world views and the only way to narrow those gaps is with communication. That is why I believe there are a number of lessons we can learn from the Helsinki experience. When we do look back on the many failures of the past 20 plus years with North Korea, I think we can take heart in the fact that there were many very dark times during the Helsinki Process, but that it ultimately survived and produced results along the way.

What I hope we can set out today is a broad outline of what this type of engagement looks like. Not engagement for engagement's sake, but engagement that is principled and structured and based on the mutual understanding that conflict will not solve this impasse.

To help us with that task we have an extremely well-seasoned panel. First we have Mr. Carl Gershman, the President of the National Endowment for Democracy, and one of the long-standing supporters and advocates for human rights across the globe, and he has been a long-standing advocate of using our Helsinki Process experience in East Asia.

Ms. Karin Lee is the Executive Director of the National Committee on North Korea. In that capacity she oversees the Committee's work to facilitate engagement between citizens of the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The committee also works to reduce tensions and promote peace on the Korean Peninsula and improve the well-being of the citizens of the DPRK.

And Mr. Frank Jannuzi, Deputy Executive Director of Amnesty International, is a former advisor to then-Senator Kerry and also has experience at the State Department working on multilateral affairs. He has also written a wonderful piece in Foreign Policy magazine that we distributed here titled, "The Road to Pyongyang goes through Helsinki."

The full bios of each of our distinguished witnesses have been made available to you all, so I will now turn to our first witness, Mr. Gershman.