



# HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

## Testimony :: Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin

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Co-Chairman - Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

PREPARED STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman, I welcome this hearing, the latest in a series of Commission sessions with OSCE chairmen. I dare say that there is no other governmental entity in the OSCE region with the depth of experience and engagement in the Helsinki process as this Commission. Engagement like this between the highest executive authority of the organization and parliamentarians is most useful and appropriate.

As a Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I am pleased to welcome you here today, Mr. Minister. This hearing follows on the heels of a similar meeting held earlier this month with OSCE PA President Göran Lennermark. Additionally, the Commission regularly holds hearings with senior State Department officials responsible for U.S. policy toward OSCE.

Spain's active role in the Helsinki process dates back over two decades, when Madrid served as the venue for the follow-up meeting from 1980-83. As Chairman Hastings has already noted, the Spanish parliament played a leading role in the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly. Over the years we have maintained excellent working relations with Javier Ruperez and others.

Spain's national experience is particularly relevant to many of the challenges facing the OSCE and the participating States, from the transition to democracy and the threats posed by terrorism to the Mediterranean security and the importance of tolerance in a multicultural and multiethnic state.

I commend the Government of Spain for organizing the 2005 Córdoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance. This Commission has been particularly active in the face of the spike of anti-Semitism and related violence in the OSCE region. We appreciate your efforts to keep this important issue on the OSCE agenda with the reappointment of the personal representative on different aspects of tolerance as well as the related conferences convened this year in Bucharest and Córdoba.

Mr. Minister, I appreciate your efforts to move the Helsinki process forward and advance our common work to translate lofty principles into meaningful policies and practices. Leadership of an organization with the geographical, political and cultural diversity of OSCE can be a thankless job. Perhaps the Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher Maimonides, from your home town, put it best when he said, "The risk of a wrong decision is preferable to the terror of indecision." Mr. Minister, thank you for willingness to accept that challenge.