



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin

Ranking Member - Helsinki Commission

Mr. Chairman, let me take this moment to thank you for convening this hearing on this subject at such an important and opportune time. U.S. involvement in the OSCE has always been important to the Organization and to our interests, from the earliest days of the Helsinki process to the most recent meetings in Vienna and elsewhere. U.S. participation in the OSCE was critical to the successful end of the Cold War. Today, however, as the OSCE addresses issues such as anti-Semitism, ending the slavery known as human trafficking, fighting corruption and assisting the developing democracies of Afghanistan and Iraq, our role and the need for U.S. participation has never been more important. This hearing should provide a welcome vehicle for the State Department to lay out its intended objectives for the United States on these and other issues.

During the Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Edinburgh, Scotland, last July, I was re-elected as Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Assembly to develop strategies that we, as parliamentarians, can pursue both in the Assembly and in our own national parliaments to enhance economic progress and environmental protection in the OSCE region. Clearly, our work should also complement and support that of the OSCE and its institutions, and I have consulted with Ambassador Stephan Minikes, the U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE in Vienna, in this regard. I have also consulted with our Commerce Department Helsinki Commissioner, Assistant Secretary Bill Lash, regarding his views on economic challenges in the region.

In Maastricht last December the participating States adopted the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension. As you know, this is the first major OSCE economic document since the historic 1990 Bonn Document on Economic Cooperation and it calls, inter alia, for combating money laundering, criminalizing the financing of terrorism, strengthening the rule of law and enhancing transparency and the adoption of a long-term strategy to combat corruption. July's Edinburgh Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly calls on the participating States to convene a meeting of Ministers of Justice and the Interior to initiate the development of a comprehensive and long-term anti-corruption strategy as stated in the Maastricht document. Such a strategy must also include effective means to combat organized crime, money laundering and the financing of terrorists – all interconnected in the operation of transnational criminal organizations.

It is my hope that the United States will work for the organization of an inaugural meeting of OSCE Ministers of Justice, Interior and Finance as well to initiate the development of such a strategy during the upcoming Ministerial Meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria. I look forward to hearing the views of our distinguished panel of witnesses in this regard.