



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

[Print](#)

Testimony :: Hon. Christopher H. Smith

Ranking Minority Member - Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

PREPARED STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman, I welcome this opportunity to hear from Minister Moratinos in his capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. His appearance is particularly timely in light of next month's ministerial meeting to be convened in Madrid. The road to Madrid could well prove to be a rocky one, especially given Russian rhetoric and the fact that the meeting takes place on the eve of Russia's parliamentary elections, which will be followed by presidential elections in March. Russia and like-minded countries, including Belarus and Kazakhstan, are joining forces in an attempt to gut OSCE election observation. Their actions are a testament to the efficacy of OSCE's democracy promotion activities, which they and others perceive as a threat to prevailing political structures firmly in the grips of authoritarian government determined to avoid or manipulate free elections. Those of us who in the past have defended the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act against Communist states must maintain our resolve to defend them against post-communist authoritarian states.

The OSCE has made important contributions in other areas of the Human Dimension. As the principle sponsor of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and reauthorization, I am particularly pleased that the issue of human trafficking remains high on the OSCE agenda. Priority attention must be paid to prevention strategies to stem the tide of trafficking, including in areas touched by conflict and humanitarian crises in which indigenous populations face a heightened vulnerability to violence. It is also important to aggressively prosecute traffickers responsible for this form of modern slavery. Additionally, appropriate protection and assistance must also be accorded to the victims of their heinous crimes. I will continue to promote these issues here in our own country and encourage others, including parliamentarians in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to combat human trafficking and its root causes.

I appreciate efforts over the past year to further enhance cooperation among the participating States in combating the sexual exploitation of children, building upon the ministerial decision adopted a year ago in Brussels on this important issue. I remain deeply concerned over the proliferation of child pornography and the perpetration of other crimes against children through trafficking, prostitution and sex tourism. The OSCE provides an excellent framework for advancing our joint efforts to protect children from such abuse.

Finally, I commend ongoing efforts to combat anti-Semitism and related violence throughout the expansive OSCE region. The phenomenon of anti-Semitism requires particular vigilance given the evils perpetrated against European Jewry, particularly during the 20th century. And I remain deeply concerned about the rising tide of intolerance toward Christian faith, which not a new phenomenon in Europe. I note that the Foreign Minister was in Rome yesterday for the beatification of 498 martyrs, Catholic priests, nuns, and lay persons slain for their heroic witness to their faith in one of the darkest hours of Spanish history.

Mr. Minister, the strength of the Helsinki process remains the core values and principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, and Charter of Paris and other OSCE document. The power of ideas remains a meaningful force today as witnessed by the drama being played out in the arena of the OSCE between those committed to pluralistic democracy and those pursuing authoritarianism, euphemistically termed "managed democracy, and dictatorship, as in Belarus and others. Compromising on core values or watering down longstanding commitments is not the solution to the current impasse. Rather, our responsibility is to remain steadfast to these values and principles to which all participating States – including those now recalcitrant – have promised to uphold in word and deed.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

