

**Statement by Rep. Alcee L. Hastings**  
**Chairman**  
**Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**  
**Hearing on “Promises to Keep: Kazakhstan 2010”**  
**July 22, 2008**

Welcome to the second in our series of hearings on Kazakhstan and the OSCE. In our first hearing last October, we examined the pros and cons of Astana’s bid to be the OSCE’s Chairman in Office in 2009. Their campaign to become the first Central Asian country to lead the OSCE began in 2003 and was controversial. Russia and the CIS countries were supportive, but the U.S. and some EU countries questioned the suitability of Kazakhstan to lead an organization dedicated to the promotion of democracy and human rights. A decision was finally reached at the 2007 OSCE Summit in Madrid and Kazakhstan will chair the OSCE in 2010.

One of the key factors in a favorable decision for Kazakhstan’s future chairmanship was the speech made in Madrid by Kazakh Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin. At the 2007 Madrid Ministerial, he pledged that not only would Kazakhstan implement a number of key democratic reforms before it took over as Chair-in-Office, but while Chair, it would also strongly support OSCE human rights programs. Specifically, he said that Kazakhstan would amend the media law in accordance with OSCE recommendations; that it would implement ODIHR recommendations on elections, including reform of the electoral law; that it would strengthen the role of parliament; and that it would develop a mechanism to ensure greater participation in the legislative process, among other things.

This hearing follows a trip to Kazakhstan by 11 Members of Congress earlier this month. We traveled to Astana to take part in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Annual Meeting, which was held in Kazakhstan for the first time. In Astana, we met with President Nazarbaev, Prime Minister Massimov, State Secretary and former Ambassador Saudabaev, and others. We also met with representatives of the political opposition, human rights groups and religious minorities. Most significantly, I think, is that we heard President Nazarbaev himself commit Kazakhstan to implementing the same domestic political reforms outlined by Foreign Minister Tazhin in Madrid.

So, from our discussions in Astana we received a thorough grounding in how the government—and its critics—view the situation in Kazakhstan. Today we will continue the discussions begun in Astana of Kazakhstan’s post-Madrid record. We have a slate of witnesses today that are certainly more than qualified to discuss this issue. Before introducing them, I would like to turn to ..... for any remarks s/he would like to make.