



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Co-Chairman - Helsinki Commission

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing as a vital link between the political leadership for the OSCE and the Helsinki Commission. Before turning to the topic of the Dutch chairmanship of the OSCE, I want to express my appreciation to the Foreign Minister as The Netherlands has repeatedly demonstrated in recent years that it is a reliable friend and ally in word and in deed. Mr. Minister, thank you for your role in strengthening the bonds between our countries as we face challenges to our interests across the globe.

As the largest regional security organization, the OSCE 55 participating States is active in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security includes not only arms control, preventive diplomacy and confidence-and-security-building measures but, equally as important, a focus on protecting human rights, democratization, election monitoring and economic and environmental security.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is the foundation of democracy and it has been the cornerstone of the OSCE's mission since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. Participatory democracy cannot grow in societies where there is no respect for the individual. While there has been tremendous progress in many participating States, Belarus and the countries of Central Asia give cause for particular concern given the flagrant violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights in these nations. The continuing conflict in Chechnya remains of deep concern to this Commission as the most egregious violations of international humanitarian law are occurring in that region of Russia. Also of concern is Ukraine, a country where recent trends are troubling especially in the lead up to presidential elections scheduled for 2004.

Mr. Minister, as sponsor of the Senate resolution on anti-Semitism and related violence in the OSCE region, I thank you for your leadership in convening the Vienna Conference and enlist your support for a sustained specific OSCE focus on anti-Semitism especially in light of the German offer to host a follow-up OSCE event in Berlin next year. In order to maintain focus and momentum on this issue, the December OSCE Ministerial your government will host should embrace the German initiative.

Since my appointment to the Commission leadership in 1999, I have worked to draw attention to the importance of combating corruption and organized crime in the OSCE region. These interrelated issues have taken on greater urgency given the strong nexus between the

operations of transnational criminal groups and international terrorist organizations. Indeed, according to experts, they frequently work together in the fields of drug trafficking and money laundering. In this regard, we have strongly supported the work of the SECI Center for Combating Transborder Crime located in Bucharest, Romania. While not an OSCE entity, this Center involves the close coordination of 12 OSCE countries in a strong regional effort to battle international criminal gangs and could, I believe, serve as a model for other participating States.

Finally, as a former law enforcement officer, I have followed closely the excellent work on police training undertaken by the OSCE in Kosovo and elsewhere in the Balkans. Professional law enforcement--that protects human rights rather than abuses them--is crucial to building strong democratic institutions and rule of law and the Commission will be watching closely new programs sponsored by the OSCE in Central Asia. It is vital that these programs foster real democratic change and protection of human rights in countries of transition.

Again, I welcome the Chair-in-Office and look forward to his testimony.