

## **Statement of the Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin**

### **The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Seminar on OSCE Mediterranean Partner Engagement**

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia – and to welcome their representatives to Washington, DC on the occasion of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Seminar on OSCE Mediterranean Partner Engagement which will be convened here in the Capitol tomorrow.

As Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki Commission, I am particularly pleased that we are hosting this important seminar, which was conceived and organized by my good friend, and Commission Co-Chairman, Representative Alcee Hastings. Co-Chairman Hastings serves as Special Representative for Mediterranean Affairs of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and has worked diligently for years to enhance the relationship between the OSCE participating States and their Mediterranean Partners.

Mr. President, this long-standing relationship dates back to the origins of the Helsinki Process and is rooted in the important geographical, historical, cultural, economic, and political links between the OSCE participating States and the states of the Mediterranean region. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation, now the OSCE, recognized this unique and important relationship in a specific section of the Final Act on “Questions relating to Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean.”

Since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE Participating States and their Mediterranean Partners have worked to increase mutual confidence and develop cooperation on a broad array of matters in order promote security and stability throughout Europe and the Mediterranean basin. It is through this unique forum that Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia continue to develop their capacity for leadership in the region, while at the same time exchanging expertise with the OSCE participating States.

Recent years have seen an increase in opportunities for participation by the Mediterranean Partners in the work of the OSCE, however there are still a number of challenges to overcome. The Commission’s seminar will provide a forum for participants to directly engage one another on topics of mutual regional interest and offer perspectives on challenges in the OSCE region.

A robust complement of leading parliamentarians and ministerial delegations from the Mediterranean Partner States will be participating in the seminar, as well as the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, representatives of the Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE and other OSCE Participating States. I invite all of my colleagues to attend and actively participate in the seminar as well.

Thank you, Mr. President