

GERMANY'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE OSCE: PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

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March 1, 2016

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 2:15 p.m. in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

Commissioners present: Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Roger Wicker, Co-Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, Ranking Member, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Joseph R. Pitts, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Witness present: H.E. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Germany.

HON. ROGER WICKER, CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. WICKER. All right. It goes without saying that the loudspeaker's working very well today, so I'll back up a bit.

My name is Roger Wicker, and I'm co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission. Our chairman, Chris Smith, is casting a recorded vote on the House Floor now and will be along soon. He has asked that we go ahead and begin.

And I'm joined today by my dear friend Ben Cardin, whose leadership at the Commission has been long capable. Ben, I don't know about you, but it's good to be back in the Cannon Building. It was my first office as a member of the House of Representatives, and I'm glad to be back.

And I am pleased to join members of the panel in welcoming Foreign Minister Steinmeier before the Helsinki Commission. So welcome, sir. I appreciate having the foreign minister's views and expertise as the Commission works to formulate U.S. policy regarding the OSCE.

For 40 years the OSCE has worked to bolster security, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In recent decades, Europe has faced major changes, crises and conflicts. These have included the fall of communism, the war in the former Yugoslavia and the war on international terrorism. In addition to the continued terrorism threat, OSCE today must contend with new and ongoing challenges such as the migration crisis, human traf-

ficking, a resurgent anti-Semitism, protecting other minority groups, and corruption in government.

As a 57-member organization that operates by consensus, the OSCE is also not without internal challenges. Russia has attempted to redefine European borders through force. It has tried to use the power of veto and the power of the purse to paralyze the OSCE's mission. These actions should be addressed in a meaningful way. There are also differing views among OSCE members on how to address the unprecedented migration of refugees into Europe.

Mr. Foreign Minister, Germany's chairmanship of the OSCE comes at a critical time in history. I wish you every success, and I look forward to your insights and counsel on how we can make a better world for future generations throughout the OSCE region.
Senator Cardin.

**HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, RANKING MEMBER, COMMISSION
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. CARDIN. Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

And, Mr. Foreign Minister, it's a pleasure to have you before the Helsinki Commission. I enjoyed our opportunity this morning to have a conversation on many of these issues.

I think it is particularly important for OSCE that Germany has stepped forward to take on the chair-in-office. And we thank you personally, but we thank your country for being willing to share your time with the security of Europe, Central Asia and our own continent.

I've been working with the Helsinki Commission now for three decades. One of my very first trips was to West Germany to visit with the leaders of West Germany to better understand the circumstances. I was able to go to West Berlin and take a helicopter tour and see the contested Wall, and see how it was dividing a country and dividing people; and then went through Checkpoint Charlie, harassed a little bit by the East Germans. And then into East Germany we went, talked to the people about their fears, recognizing in many respects it was through the Helsinki Commission, through the OSCE that we were their voices to stand up against the oppression of their government. I returned a little later when the Berlin Wall was coming down, and I actually have a photograph in my office with my hammer knocking down the Berlin Wall. It's one of the prize photographs in my office. And I've been back many times since to see a united Germany and see the strength.

And I go through that because it points out that the OSCE principles work. It was the basic commitments within the OSCE that raised the issues and brought Germany back together. And it's so fitting that you today are the chair-in-office to help us deal with the challenges.

I do want to acknowledge Spencer Oliver, who's here, the recently retired secretary-general of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We take pride in the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. My friend Senator Wicker is one of the leaders in that parliamentary assembly and does an incredible job.

I also want to acknowledge Andy Baker, Rabbi Baker, who's here, who's the special representative on anti-Semitism. I have the opportunity of being the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's special representative on anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance.

There's not a lack of challenges that you have coming in as chair-in-office. I've been working with ODIHR—he was here recently, Michael Link—on anti-Semitism. I have visited Paris and Copenhagen, the sites of dramatic anti-Semitic activities, and am working with the leaders of Europe or leadership, particularly in improving the programming within the schools on tolerance.

We also had a chance to talk this morning about the issues of the migrants. And my task as special representative will also take on discrimination against the migrant communities. And I look forward to working with you. There's clearly great risk.

On the Roma population, I would just urge you to continue our effort. As someone who has long encouraged Germany to address the genocide of Romas, I was deeply heartened by Chairman Merkel's participation in the 2012 unveiling of a memorial for the Roma and Sinti victims of National Socialism. I would just urge you to continue to involve the Roma issues as you move forward with your agenda this year, including the work of the OSCE, and include the Roma population as members of the OSCE mission. So I would just urge you to continue to do that.

I also might point out we are working with discrimination against individuals of African descent. In our own country we have problems with discriminatory policing, which we're going to take on, but it's also a problem within Europe.

You are not going to have a lack of challenges. We talked this morning about corruption generally, and specifically in Ukraine. Clearly, corruption erodes all the principles of the OSCE, and one in which we have to have special attention.

I would also just lastly point out I think we have the traditional concerns of countries that have never really fully complied with the OSCE commitments, from Belarus to Tajikistan. But we have backslidings on some of our close allies—NATO allies such as Hungary and Poland—that we have to be concerned about.

So clearly the threat of extremism and ISIL is front in our minds to protect our population, and I can assure you this Commission looks forward to working with you and look forward to your vision during this year.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Foreign Minister, it is our honor to recognize you for an opening statement.

H.E. FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Mr. STEINMEIER. Senator Wicker, Senator Cardin, many thanks, first of all, for inviting me and inviting us, the German delegation, and for your kind words in the beginning.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's really a great honor for me to address you today as chairman-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. And it is a particular honor to do this as a German, because we Germans know how much we owe to this institution and to the CSCE process—looking back on the path to

détente between East and West, the end of the Cold War, and finally the reunification of my country.

The Helsinki Commission, created almost 40 years ago, was instrumental in that endeavor. My country will never forget the unequivocal support of your country. We will not forget the United States' steadfast commitment to regarding European security as inseparable from its own security. That was the decisive factor in ending the Cold War peacefully.

However, our hopes that the end of the Cold War would herald an era of peace have not come true. The vision of the Charter of Paris, of a Europe whole and free, has not yet materialized. Yet again we find ourselves facing violent crises and conflicts, even on our own continent. Russian aggression in Ukraine has brought the devastation of war right back to the heart of Europe, violating central provisions of international law, the Helsinki Final Act, and the OSCE commitments.

At the same time, violence has spiked in regions of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Terror, religious radicalism and regional rivalries have led to immeasurable human suffering.

That is particularly true for Syria. I hope that the recent diplomatic initiative for a cessation of hostilities that is being tirelessly promoted by Secretary Kerry and others will bring the violence to a halt and pave the way for urgently needed political negotiations.

The brutal conflicts in the Middle East have also reached the European continent. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes and are seeking shelter in Europe, many of them in Germany.

We live in turbulent times, ladies and gentlemen. I believe that, in the light of these enormous challenges, we should remember the crucial lessons we learned in overcoming the Cold War.

The first lesson is simple, but critical: We are only strong if we stand together. Secretary Kerry just reminded us in Munich that the transatlantic community has faced numerous challenges before, but we stood together to overcome them. And we will continue do so—not only because there is only one common transatlantic security, but also because we are a community of shared values and of shared beliefs.

Another lesson I see is this: We need to make the best possible use of our existing tools to help solve conflicts, and to promote peace and security. In fact, we must strengthen these instruments.

The OSCE is one of these tools, a crucial one. With its unique and inclusive membership, its operational capacities and established formats for dialogue, it is a central pillar of our common security. To me, strengthening the OSCE and using its full potential as a platform for dialogue is imperative, particularly in these challenging times, with trust at a low ebb.

This is why, ladies and gentlemen, “renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, restoring security” is the motto we have chosen for our OSCE chairmanship in 2016. The dialogue we want to renew is not one that sugarcoats our differences, nor is it dialogue for its own sake. It is dialogue to engage one another substantively, to face our differences, and to really effect change.

In the conflict in and around Ukraine, we have condemned Russian violations of international law and of OSCE principles and

commitments, and we have exerted political and economic pressure in response. At the same time, however, we have established formats for dialogue to avoid further bloodshed and to help find a political solution.

I agree with many of you that the results of this—the Minsk agreements—are far from being perfect. We are still awaiting the complete implementation of their provisions by all sides. But I remain convinced that the Minsk agreements are still the best chance we have to overcome this conflict, and the OSCE has been instrumental in bringing that chance about.

Senators, ladies and gentlemen, in the midst of the Cold War in the 1970s, in the face of the real danger of military confrontation between East and West, we put special emphasis on the implementation of human rights standards in the whole Euro-Atlantic area. It is my firm conviction that safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms is a crucial and direct contribution to a more stable international system and to comprehensive security. That is why we will place a special focus on the human dimension during our OSCE chairmanship. I would like to name just a few of our priorities.

Freedom of the media is of particular importance to us. Our societies should be able to communicate freely and without interference from state propaganda.

We also need to intensify our fight against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance. We need to address it throughout Europe, including in my own country. In Germany, people's overwhelming readiness to help arriving refugees has recently been overshadowed by xenophobic assaults and demonstrations. These are despicable acts that we must not and will not tolerate.

We will also place a special focus on combating anti-Semitism. I have reappointed Rabbi Andrew Baker as my personal representative on combating anti-Semitism, and thank him for his valuable work in this regard. We will support the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR. And we will also host a number of events in Berlin on combating anti-Semitism, building on the OSCE conferences of 2004 and 2014.

Another emphasis will be on gender equality, as well as on dialogue with civil society.

And finally, the pressing issue of migration should figure more prominently and comprehensively on the OSCE's agenda. There is a lot of expertise that the OSCE can bring to the table on human rights standards, on best practices in labor migration, and on combating human trafficking. We support the efforts of the Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Ladies and gentlemen, despite all the differences in the OSCE area, we have to work on real solutions to the crises and challenges we face in these turbulent times. In the long term, we will need to return to a broader dialogue on European security, and we should adhere to the vision of renewed arms control and more cooperative security in Europe. The OSCE provides a platform for such dialogue, and we should make use of it.

Ladies and gentlemen, the OSCE is a unique organization. But my hope is that its principles can provide a glimmer of hope to other regions, particularly to the Middle East. Let us remember

that the road to Helsinki began when the Cold War was at its coldest. At the start of the negotiations, who would have dared to hope that at the end of it the Berlin Wall would fall?

Of course, you can't transfer a security architecture to another region, but perhaps our experiences can highlight useful principles and processes. And maybe they can encourage the parties in the Middle East to live up to their responsibility and explore new paths to political settlements. This is a discussion that we started at the OSCE conference in Jordan last year, and which we would like to build on.

Ladies and gentlemen, in 1977, Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, chairman of the U.S. delegation at the CSCE follow-up meeting in Belgrade, held that, and I quote, "A healing of the divisions in Europe cannot be divorced from progress in humanitarian matters and human rights. The pursuit of human rights does not put détente in jeopardy. Rather, it can strengthen détente and provide a firmer basis for both security and cooperation."

It is in this spirit that we will pursue our chairmanship, and hope to make a contribution to peace and stability in the OSCE area in 2016. Of course, rebuilding trust will not be easy, and there will not be a quick fix in 2016. But in my view, we have no alternative but to make every effort to do so if we want to be able to look future generations in the eye and hold that we did everything possible to return to peace in Europe.

Many thanks.

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Foreign Minister, thank you so very much. Luckily, I read your statement in advance—[laughter]—so I apologize on behalf of myself and my House colleagues that we couldn't be here to hear you in person, but I, and my of course Senate colleagues, deeply appreciate not only you being here, but for your leadership. Germany certainly is in an ideal situation at one of the most critical times in the OSCE history, where not only the migration crisis, but obviously the ongoing problems with Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh and other so-called frozen conflicts—I mean, the world is a powder keg, and we're grateful that we have a very steady hand at the helm as chair-in-office. So I want to thank you.

I do have some opening questions, and then of course go to our two distinguished senators for any questions they have. And, without objection, I would ask unanimous consent that my statement be made a part of the record; opening statements can't be made after—[chuckles]—you're well into the hearing.

So I would ask you first of all, if I could, maybe to shed some light on this—and perhaps you did, in addition to your opening comments—but last November, via a vote of 418 to zero, the House passed a resolution that I had introduced. It was co-signed by Democrats and Republicans alike, a very robust effort to say to our European friends that the security services of all of our countries—in our case, Homeland Security and local police, state police—need to more effectively partner with the Jewish communities in each of our respective countries, right down to the level of the synagogue and the Jewish community center, to provide very tangible assist-

ance—financial, surveillance—partnering, you know, in every way to prevent, hopefully, acts of anti-Semitic hate, but also when they do happen to have a very quick mechanism in place to correctly identify it for what it is and to go after the perpetrators of those crimes to hold them to account, so that there is no sense of impunity anywhere in the OSCE space. We called it the Safety and Security of Jewish Communities in Europe Resolution.

We do work, as you know, very closely with Rabbi Andy Baker, who thankfully you continue to keep as the personal representative in combating anti-Semitism. And, of course, Ben Cardin is the Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative for combating anti-Semitism. And I just would ask if you could speak to any plans that you might have with regards to really trying to get countries—I know the U.K. does it very well; I hope and believe that Germany does it as well—to make sure that that kind of law enforcement expertise is robustly brought to bear.

Secondly, if I could, child exploitation is an interest of all three of us and other members of the Commission. We've worked very hard on combating human trafficking. And we know that with this huge, huge refugee flow making its way into Europe, that the traffickers are preying on women especially. One estimate was that there were 10,000 unaccompanied minors, and the number may be higher—it was a guesstimate. And I'm wondering if you could speak to, you know, at the Border Security and Management Conference in Berlin, will you focus on making sure that these children and at-risk persons, especially women, are protected from predators? We did pass legislation, and President Obama signed, a bill called the International Megan's Law, which we're hoping you will take a look at and see if it might become part of your efforts. It is a noticing provision so that countries of destination, when there's a convicted pedophile, that country—whether it be Germany or the United States—we're hoping will be told when those folks are coming here so that we could either watch them or even perhaps deny them entry into the country, because we know child sex tourism is exponentially rising globally, including in the OSCE area.

First two questions, if I could, and, please, any insights you can provide.

Mr. STEINMEIER. Yes, I was just mentioning in my opening remarks that there are some reasons to take care about the situation of human rights, and unfortunately not only beyond our borders but also with regard to the situation in Germany. I think Rabbi Baker will witness the situation in Germany very carefully, and so far I think we were quite successful in our fight against anti-Semitism and every kind of populist racism.

There were some events two years ago, and so therefore we indeed renewed our engagement in the fight against anti-Semitism. And now, being chairman of the OSCE, we have decided to organize a meeting in June with special envoys on combating anti-Semitism. I think official institution will be part of that, hopefully also police and servicemen from all around Europe. And we will support a big ODIHR project to address anti-Semitism, focusing on security needs of Jewish communities, education, civil society, coalition-building and so on. So what I want to say is Jewish security

of the—security of the Jewish communities will be actively followed up by our German chairmanship.

On children's rights—children's rights, and this will be part of our planned agenda. We will organize a special workshop about the children's right, very important indicator for the implementation of human rights because they are—that is our view—the children are the most vulnerable group. So therefore, we have to take care that especially children will not be harmed in new developments in and outside the OSCE countries.

This is, you know, already the link with the third issue you were raising—this is human trafficking. And trafficking of human beings is certainly an important topic in the OSCE, not only since we were overtaking the chairmanship also in the Swiss chairmanship, I remember. We will host a special conference in Berlin beginning in September 2016 on preventing trafficking in human beings for labor exploitation in supply chains, and the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has already been invited to the next alliance against trafficking in persons. So therefore, I think we are well-prepared to highlight this as one of the priorities during our chairmanship in the OSCE.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.
Commissioner Cardin.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, again, thank you, Mr. Minister.

I want to ask you a question about the nuts and bolts of the OSCE. In my role on the Foreign Relations Committee, I have the opportunity of working with the OSCE, with the Organization of American States, ASEAN, African Union, a lot of the regional organizations. And I think OSCE has been a real leader on the effectiveness of a regional organization. As we talked this morning, just looking at the role of OSCE in Ukraine and its mission points out its valuable role. Its field missions have been incredibly important. It's been able to be very effective in changing the way of life in so many of the OSCE states.

But it does work on consensus, which can be very challenging at times. The charter and operations are now many decades old. And I'm just interested, under your chairmanship, as to whether there are ways that we can make the organization more effective and more efficient in responding to the challenges that we face today.

I'd mention also, if I might, the budgetary issues. You shouldn't have to go with tin cup in hand to try to get money for special missions. There should be a more predictable way to finance the operations of the OSCE.

Mr. STEINMEIER. Starting with the budget, I think the budget is far too limited because, you know, the challenges and the tasks for the OSCE are increasing. So, therefore, what we need is some more flexibility in our budget. But I will not complain because for the first time since years we have an agreed budget before the beginning of our chairmanship, and that is really a sort of luxury because, you know—[chuckles]—the chairman-in-office during the last years were fighting during their chairmanship for the budget. This is done already, so therefore we are now in the beginning of our chairmanship in a better situation compared with former days.

But you're right, the OSCE is a very—how should I put it—very traditional, one of the biggest regional organizations. But to be honest, three years ago, five years ago, it was nearly a forgotten institution. It was, you know, we had our celebrations, but nobody was really aware that we are in need of such a regional organization. That has changed since the beginning of the conflict in and around Ukraine.

It was very clear that the OSCE was the only institution in which East and West were still present. So therefore, it was the only platform for a dialogue. And you will remember, it was hard in the beginning to start a dialogue about Ukraine because, you know, every side felt justified about what they were doing. The Russians were trying to find arguments why Crimea was forever part of the—of Russia, belonging to Russia. And the Ukrainians were very clearly saying there is no need to talk and to have dialogue with the aggressor.

So I think, without OSCE, we would never have been successful to start this dialogue, which was leading to Minsk, and from Minsk to the establishment of the OSCE observer mission. Since then, we are still far away from a political solution, but there is a significant de-escalation of the conflict, which is, from the point of the view of the people who are living in the eastern Ukraine, a real progress.

So a lot has to be done now. And we are just inviting—not in the OSCE format but in the so-called Normandy format together with France—we are inviting the foreign ministers of Ukraine and Russia to Paris on Thursday of this week. And we are now discussing the next steps. In the sequence of the Minsk agreement, the next which has to be done is now an agreement about a new election law which is, you know, able to organize elections in the east of Ukraine, creating new legitimacy. And there are still bigger gaps to bridge. And that is what we are trying to do, accompanied by additional attempts to calm the situation and to keep the security situation on the ground in the eastern Ukraine more stable as it is.

So therefore, I think we learn—we all learned in Europe that the OSCE is a still a needed organization. And my hope—my personal hope is that this is an additional argument why we have to modernize this organization a little bit. We have asked Ambassador Ischinger, who is chairing the Munich Security Conference with a group of experts, to give us some advice for the modernization of the institution. And I'm just talking with some of my colleagues yesterday evening, with Secretary Kerry, about new formats inside the OSCE that we should have—that is my idea—that we should have the opportunity to talk sometimes in a more informal way.

And you know the procedures inside OSCE when 57 members are sitting around the table and reading their notes. This is not the discussion we are needing in difficult times. So opening the discussion in perhaps a more informal format, that is what we have—what we want to try to do during this year in our chairmanship. I don't know if there is support from a relevant number of member states of the OSCE, but we are trying to convince, first of all, some of the bigger member states, and then hopefully others will follow.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank the ranking member.

Chairman Wicker.

Mr. WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Mr. Minister, for your opening statement, your testimony so far.

You know, with all that is going on, I think it is important that you put the 40-year history of OSCE in perspective. In 1976, I don't know that I ever expected the people of Poland or Czechoslovakia or I could name any other country, to have free elections, or to have the level of independence that they have. And it was—actually, it was a decade and a half before that came to fruition. But the fact that you would mention the historical context of the entire 40 years gives me hope that things will improve.

Also, with regard to what Mr. Cardin said as to the nuts and bolts and tools, I appreciate your thinking this through. I can tell you, at the Parliamentary Assembly level, we are also talking about a different approach to basically all we have. And that is dialogue. We need to think of a better way to have dialogue. We need to think of a better way to have consensus building and to mobilize international opinion through the power of words. We don't have policemen to send in. We don't have judges to go in and do injunctions. And we certainly don't have an army, nor would I want it to be. What we have is the opportunity for better dialogue and to better use the power of words.

Now, Chairman Smith and I have mentioned a number of issues in which it seems that we're backsliding in the OSCE region. So give me your opinion—and let's be honest here, we're on the record and the TV cameras are here—it seems to me that with regard to corruption, we are backsliding in the OSCE. It seems that with regard to anti-Semitism there is not only a lack of progress, we are heading the other way. And you know, to that I would add other minority groups. I don't know that we're progressing in the area of human trafficking. So let's talk honestly about that. Let me get your opinion and let's get it on the record. And if we are backsliding in one or all of these areas, help us identify the reason why that situation is headed in the wrong direction.

Mr. STEINMEIER. Thank you. Only a few remarks to your first issue about history of the OSCE. My impression now, at the beginning of my chairmanship, is sometimes when I'm discussing OSCE issues with the German public that history might be, you know, looking to the younger generation, a sort of obstacle, because from the point of view of the younger generation, the OSCE is in a certain way linked to the times of the Cold War. And they are not really aware that issues like human trafficking, anti-Semitism, corruption are higher now on our agenda.

So when you are asking are we backsliding, I think on the surface that might be. But you know, this depends a little bit from our effort, or let's say from our success, in dealing with different crises around Europe. I think—and returning from Ukraine last week—you know, many people in Ukraine are completely aware that the fight against corruption in their own country is the fight for democracy. And the main question is if Ukrainians will be able, and if we will be able to support, those who are really engaged in this, if we are able to create conditions that the fight against corruption will be successful.

I met a number of members of the parliament and so-called reformists in the Cabinet who are really engaged and determined to fight against corruption. And I hope that we will, and the Ukrainians will, create conditions that their fight will be successful. But you're right, corruption is not only an issue in Ukraine. We are observing that in greater parts of Asia, especially in some of the Central Asian states. And I think we must be clear with the OSCE, and we will be clear during our chairmanship, we will not allow backsliding in all the three issues you were mentioning—corruption, anti-Semitism, human trafficking.

But human trafficking is also linked to the conflicts in the Middle East. And so therefore talking about migration or human trafficking, I think we have the political and moral obligation to try what we can in combination with all the regional actors to find solutions for crises and conflicts which are the cause, which are the source for migration and human trafficking. And regarding especially the biggest crisis in the Middle East, Syria, I'm far from being optimistic that after five years of civil war, 250,000 victims, for the first time there is perhaps a glimmer of hope that we are progressing.

Mr. WICKER. Do you agree with me that we are backsliding when it comes to anti-Semitism?

Mr. STEINMEIER. Looking to Europe, you're right. We have, and also in Germany, we're making the experience that populist parties, some of them with a portion of anti-Semitism in their programs, that they are becoming more influence in our societies. I think this cannot only be the obligation and the task of the OSCE to fight these new tendencies. This is also an obligation of national governments and civil society. So far, talking about Germany, I'm quite happy that a lot of people are really standing up against these new kinds of populism. And hopefully they will not have the expected success in the parliamentary elections.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Chairman Wicker.
Commissioner Joe Pitts.

**HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Mr. Minister, and thank you for your testimony.

Let me ask you about Moldova. If you have one from your government's new perspective as chair, can you offer us an update on the five-plus-two negotiations with the Russian Federation? Specifically, has there been any update on the Federation's making good on its past promise to withdraw Russian ammunition and military forces from the Transnistria region within the Republic of Moldova?

Mr. STEINMEIER. Yes. These are different aspects. And I'm afraid for the time being I have not very much encouraging signals to give. First of all, regarding the domestic situation in Moldova, there is a sort of still-stand, as you know. A new government is created and we have to wait if this new government will have the needed support from the parliament, and if this new government is really following the path of former government, meaning a course of reforms including the fight against corruption. There was

some skepticism, as you know, during the last weeks and few months.

On Transnistria, I have announced publicly that we will make a new effort. I don't see any kind of progress on solving these old—very old, frozen conflicts. And we will use all the instruments inside and outside the OSCE to bridge the gaps, or some of the gaps. But being honest, I think there is, for the time being, not really justified optimism.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Pitts.

Let me ask a few final questions. And again, Mr. Foreign Minister, if you have any questions you have of us, you know, this is a dialogue, we would appreciate those questions as well. Let me—you know, Chairman Wicker mentioned the backsliding and anti-Semitism. And the empirical data clearly shows it's getting worse. In the United States it has gotten worse, the last years for which we have statistics. Despite the fact that men and women who happen to be Jewish comprise 1.9 percent of our population, 57 percent of anti-religious hate crimes that were motivated by an offender's anti-Jewish bias were committed against Jews.

And the comparison between Muslims and Christians pale in terms of the numbers. And yet Jews comprise about 1.9 percent of our population. And the Kantor Institute shows very similar numbers happening all over Europe, including Germany, France, the U.K. Italy has seen almost a doubling of the number of hate crimes year over year. So it's a very, very troubling trend. So all the more reason why your leadership on this—you know, it was in this room more than a dozen years ago, almost 15 years ago to be exact, that Gert Weisskirchen and I agreed to a—and our Commission—but we did it right here, right where we sit right now, to a coalition of the willing within the Parliamentary Assembly to try to get other parliamentarians to take up this cause.

And I have to tell you, it was a hard fight. Many people wanted to just immediately make it include everything. And everything does have to be included, but anti-Semitic hate, as we all know, is of a very special form of virulent bias that continues year over year.

Mr. STEINMEIER. But your—if I may say, your common efforts had some outcome, some result, because I remember you and Gert Weisskirchen, you were initiating the first anti-Semitism conferences. And we are now organizing the third one, I think.

Mr. SMITH. And I can't tell you how grateful we are for that and, again, for the work that Rabbi Andy Baker does. So but I think all of us have to—including here in the United States—we have a problem in our universities, where there's a growing bias against Jewish people, Jewish students. So there needs to be, I think, a redoubling of all of our efforts.

Let me ask you, with regards to the trafficking issue, when we met with the chair-in-office from Ukraine, we asked him as a commission if he would convene a conference that would look at the overall issue, which you are doing, but also at very specific parts of it, including the use of the airlines to carry victims from one location to another. And many of our airlines, as you know, Delta Airlines and others, have done a situational awareness program.

It's been incorporated into what's called Blue Lightning that Homeland Security promulgates.

A woman named Nancy Rivard, with the Airline Ambassadors International, came up with one of the best, simplest ways of being situationally aware on a flight, conveying information of a suspected trafficking in progress to the pilot, who tells law enforcement so when the travelers disembark, law enforcement, not the pilot, not the flight attendants, can ascertain whether or not there's a trafficking situation. And many, many women have been saved, rings have been broken up. And I would ask—you know, we're trying to get all of our airlines to do it. They haven't all. It would be great if Lufthansa and all the other European carriers would consider it. But if you could look at, perhaps, including that in your conference as a workshop?

And the other would be, if I could, with all due respect, the whole of sex tourism for children. We know child sex predators have a huge propensity to recommit those crimes. The recidivism rate—and that's just for those who get caught—approximates about a third, depending on the study you look at. So for every one who gets caught, how many go undetected because of the secrecy of the travel? Our new international Megan's Law, which is named after a little girl from my district, my hometown, named Megan Kanka, who was—lived across the street from a convicted pedophile, nobody knew, he lured her into the house, slaughtered her, raped her, and buried her in a local park. That led to all 50 states enacting Megan's Law.

We now have a very serious, well-vetted database of sex offenders, including child sex offenders. And our new international Megan's Law will systematize the noticing of every country in the world when these individuals travel. And then it's up to Germany to say: We will deny entry—I know we have visa waiver and all of that—but we'll deny—you'll have the actionable information in a timely fashion. I think it's something—we've gotten Parliamentary Assembly resolutions passed asking that states look at international Megan's Law, as well as its core, of Megan's Law itself. And I would beseech you to take a look at that yourself. It can provide you with all kinds of data, because it is an idea whose time has come.

Mr. STEINMEIER. Yes. Thank you for this information. I promise you that we will integrate that in the preparation of our conference.

And I have no question to you, but I want you to invite you to Germany, to these conferences, or wherever they will take place, so that you can directly influence the discussion during these conferences. So I hope to see you.

Mr. SMITH. That would be an honor. Thank you. And for my colleagues, all of us, we would make every effort to be there.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Chairman, let me just add a little bit on what you've said. The Airline Ambassador Program, the staff on the plane is trained to recognize or spot characteristics of traffic victims. They do not intervene. They have a hotline number which they call. And they're met when they get on the ground. And the proper authorities then intervene, take the people out of the queue and intervene. So they're really serving as eyes and ears and alerts

with their training, the airlines. So if you could help facilitate training like that with the airlines, that would be very good.

Mr. SMITH. And it's low-cost and highly efficacious. If I could, Mr. Foreign Minister, you know, Chairman Wicker led us to a Parliamentary Assembly in Baku. And we had a very lively, I can tell you, exchange between President Aliyev and our delegation. We've been there twice as a commission. And we've noticed, with alarm, as I know you have and I know many in the European Union have, that Azerbaijan has now put behind bars something on the order of 100 political prisoners. People in opposition now are incarcerated.

And one of those journalists, Khadija Ismayilova, a woman who we met with or interviewed by for Radio Free Europe. And now she has a seven-and-a-half-year prison sentence for exposing the excesses and, frankly, the corruption of the Aliyev regime. My hope is that—I mean, I've introduced a bill called the Azerbaijan Democracy Act. And it has a number of things, like we did with the Belarus Democracy Act years ago, targets individuals for denial of visas based on complicity in crimes. And I'm wondering if you will, you know, use your good offices to press the government to release this woman and the others who have been unfairly incarcerated.

Mr. STEINMEIER. Yes. Not only that, I met the President Aliyev during the Munich Security Conference. I have already announced my visit in Azerbaijan. And to be sure, we will urge Azerbaijan to respect the freedom of media. And we are talking about individuals. And therefore, we are taking care about those people who are prosecuted, who are sitting 30 years in prison. And I hope that we will find a solution to one or the other case.

Mr. SMITH. I would just point out that when we heard a hearing on Khadija, it was incredible to me how the Azerbaijani government, including their parliament, so grossly overreacted and suggested absolutely wrongly—and I want this on the record for everyone—that I, we, were put up to it by the Armenians. They claimed that the Armenian lobby had written the resolution. They didn't even know about it until after it was introduced. It was all about, as you pointed out, protecting journalists and political prisoners, so—

Mr. STEINMEIER. We have completely similar experiences.

Mr. SMITH. I know. I'm sure you do.

Mr. STEINMEIER. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so much. And I'm done.

Mr. WICKER. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. [Whereupon, at 3:10 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Good afternoon and welcome to everyone joining us today—especially to His Excellency Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

With the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and the refugees from Syria and nearby countries entering the OSCE region—as well as the security threats the Syrian conflict is generating—I think it is safe to say this will be a challenging year for the OSCE. We are grateful that Germany has shouldered the responsibility to lead the OSCE at this critical time.

Through its influence and the respect it has earned from all sides among OSCE nations, Germany is ideally suited to lead the organization.

Never in the OSCE's history has its relevance been so clearly necessary. Russia's latest and most egregious attempts to change borders by force and expand its territory continue to reverberate across all three dimensions of the OSCE in direct defiance of all ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

That the OSCE is a consensus organization does not make it powerless in the face of a Russian veto. Even as Russia walks away from its OSCE commitments, undermines Europe's longstanding security architecture, it is still able to bear witness—to speak truth to power—and to convene and encourage negotiations.

The Chair-in-Office can persistently declare that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea will never be recognized by the international community; that its flimsy denials of military intervention in Donbass and Luhansk are fooling no one; that that even at home, imprisoning voices of dissent will not silence them; and that the outsourcing threats and attacks on those who would exercise rights Russia itself recognized some forty years ago in no way absolves it of accountability for the consequences.

We hope and fully expect that the Chair-in-Office will do this—and we will give our full support. I'm confident that our government will continue to do so, and certainly my Co-Chairman, Sen. Roger Wicker, and I, and our fellow Commissioners will do everything in our means to support you as well.

Your Excellency, I look forward to a conversation with you today on your plans for your Chairmanship. As you know, a number of us will also raise issues that we work on in the OSCE. I have spent much of my career, both within Congress and the OSCE PA, in support of human rights, including the fight against trafficking and anti-Semitism. You may be aware that I offered the first OSCE PA resolution on fighting human trafficking in 1999 in St. Petersburg, and the first resolution on fighting anti-Semitism in 2002.

We are glad to see that these issues are high on your Chairmanship's agenda as well. Unfortunately, despite our collective best efforts, these problems have not gone away, and may be getting worse.

One of the other issues I'll be raising is prisoners of conscience held by OSCE countries.

I'd like to take this opportunity to announce that the Commission will soon post a list of prisoners of conscience held by various OSCE participating states—this list will be very carefully vetted, and we will advocate systematically on behalf of the people who are on it, in keeping with the Commission's mandate.

This list will be in response to a disturbing trend among a certain states that find it easier to imprison dissenting voices rather than engage in dialogue with them. After 1990 the situation with prisoners of conscience dramatically improved in the OSCE—the reversal in the past several years is deeply disturbing. I hope that the German Chairmanship will be able to make the release of political prisoners a priority as well.

I'd like to make a specific appeal on behalf of Khadija Ismayilova, a prisoner of conscience in Azerbaijan. Khadija is an Azeri, and worked as an investigative reporter for Radio Free Europe. She did outstanding work exposing the corruption of the Aliyev family and for her work she was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison. In December of last year I chaired a hearing on her case and the repression in Azerbaijan more broadly. I'd ask you to make her release, and the release of other Azeri prisoners of conscience, a priority.

If you make a visit to Azerbaijan, please request to meet with her personally. Azerbaijan has over 100 prisoners of conscience, and Russia has a similar number.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for speaking to the Commission this afternoon.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Thank you, Chairman Smith. I join you in welcoming His Excellency Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier before the Helsinki Commission. I appreciate having the Foreign Minister's views and expertise as the Commission works to formulate U.S. policy regarding the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

For 40 years, the OSCE has worked to bolster security, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. In recent decades, Europe has faced major changes, crises, and conflicts. These have included the fall of communism, the war in the former Yugoslavia, and the war on international terrorism. In addition to the continued terrorism threat, OSCE today must contend with new and ongoing challenges, such as the migration crisis, human trafficking, a resurgent anti-Semitism, protecting other minority groups, and corruption in government.

As a 57-member organization that operates by consensus, the OSCE is also not without internal challenges. Russia has attempted to redefine European borders through force. It has tried to use the power of veto and the power of the purse to paralyze the OSCE's mission. These brazen actions should be addressed in a meaningful way. There are also differing views among OSCE members on how to address the unprecedented migration of refugees into Europe.

Mr. Foreign Minister, Germany's chairmanship of the OSCE comes at a critical time in history. I wish you every success, and I look forward to your insights and counsel on how we can make a better world for future generations throughout the OSCE region.

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF H.E. FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER

Chairman Smith, Co-Chairman Wicker, Distinguished members of the Helsinki Commission, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address you today as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

And it is a particular honor to do this as a German, because we Germans know how much we owe to this institution and to the CSCE process—looking back on the path to détente between East and West, the end of the Cold War and finally the reunification of my country.

The Helsinki Commission, created almost forty years ago, was instrumental in that endeavor.

My country will never forget the unequivocal support of your country, ladies and gentlemen! We will not forget the United States' steadfast commitment to regarding European security as inseparable from its own security. That was the decisive factor in ending the Cold War peacefully!

However, our hopes that the end of the Cold War would herald an era of peace have not come true. The vision of the Charter of Paris, of a Europe “whole and free”, has not yet materialized.

Yet again we find ourselves facing violent crises and conflicts—even on our own continent. Russian aggression in Ukraine has brought the devastation of war right back to the heart of Europe—violating central provisions of international law, the Helsinki Final Act and OSCE commitments.

At the same time, violence has spiked in regions of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Terror, religious radicalism and regional rivalries have led to immeasurable human suffering.

That is particularly true for Syria. I hope that the recent diplomatic initiative for a cessation of hostilities—that is being tirelessly promoted by Secretary Kerry and others—will bring the violence to a halt and pave the way for urgently needed political negotiations.

The brutal conflicts in the Middle East have also reached the European continent. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes and are seeking shelter in Europe—many of them in Germany.

We live in turbulent times, ladies and gentlemen. I believe that in the light of these enormous challenges, we should remember the crucial lessons we learned in overcoming the Cold War.

The first lesson is simple but critical: we are only strong if we stand together. Secretary Kerry just reminded us in Munich that the transatlantic community has faced numerous challenges before. But we stood together to overcome them, and we will continue to do so—not only because there is only one common transatlantic security, but also because we are a community of shared values and of shared beliefs.

Another lesson I see is this: we need to make the best possible use of our existing tools to help solve conflicts and to promote peace and security. In fact, we must strengthen these instruments!

The OSCE is one of these tools—a crucial one. With its unique and inclusive membership, its operational capacities and its established formats for dialogue, it is a central pillar of our common security.

To me, strengthening the OSCE and using its full potential as a platform for dialogue is imperative—particularly in these challenging times, with trust at a low ebb.

This is why “renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, restoring security” is the motto we have chosen for our OSCE Chairmanship in 2016.

The dialogue we want to renew is not one that sugarcoats our differences, nor is it dialogue for its own sake—it is dialogue to engage one another substantively, to face our differences and to really effect change.

In the conflict in and around Ukraine, we have condemned Russian violations of international law and of OSCE principles and commitments, and we have exerted political and economic pressure in response.

At the same time, however, we have established formats for dialogue—to avoid further bloodshed and to help find a political solution. I agree with many of you that the results of this—the Minsk agreements—are far from perfect. We are still awaiting the complete implementation of their provisions by all sides. But I remain convinced that the Minsk agreements are still the best chance we have to overcome this conflict!

And the OSCE has been instrumental in bringing that chance about!

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the midst of the Cold War in the 1970s, in the face of the real danger of military confrontation between East and West, we put special emphasis on the implementation of human rights standards in the whole Euro-Atlantic area.

It is my firm conviction that safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms is a crucial and direct contribution to a more stable international system and to comprehensive security.

That is why we will place a special focus on the Human Dimension during our OSCE Chairmanship. I would like to name just a few of our priorities:

- Freedom of the media is of particular importance to us. Our societies should be able to communicate freely and without interference from state propaganda.
- We also need to intensify our fight against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance. We need to address it throughout Europe, including in my own country! In Germany, people's overwhelming readiness to help arriving refugees has recently been overshadowed by xenophobic assaults and demonstrations. These are despicable acts that we must not and will not tolerate!
- We will also place a special focus on combating Anti-Semitism. I have re-appointed Rabbi Andrew Baker as my Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism and thank him for his valuable work in this regard. We will support the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). And we will also host a number of events in Berlin on combating Anti-Semitism, building on the OSCE conferences of 2004 and 2014.
- Another emphasis will be on gender equality, as well as on dialogue with civil society.
- And finally, the pressing issue of migration should figure more prominently and comprehensively on the OSCE's agenda. There is a lot of expertise that the OSCE can bring to the table: on human rights standards, on best practices in labor migration and on combatting human trafficking. We support the efforts of the Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite all the differences in the OSCE area, we have to work on real solutions to the crises and challenges we face in these turbulent times.

In the long term, we will need to return to a broader dialogue on European security, and we should adhere to the vision of renewed arms control and more cooperative security in Europe. The OSCE provides a platform for such dialogue, and we should make use of it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The OSCE is a unique organization. But my hope is that its principles can provide a glimmer of hope to other regions—particularly in the Middle East.

Let us remember that the road to Helsinki began when the Cold War was at its coldest. At the start of the negotiations, who would have dared to hope that at the end of it, the Berlin Wall would fall?

Of course, you can't transfer a security architecture to another region. But perhaps our experiences can highlight useful principles and processes. And maybe they can encourage the parties in the Middle East to live up to their responsibility and explore new paths to political settlements.

This is a discussion that we started at the OSCE conference in Jordan last year and which we would like to build on.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 1977, Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, Chairman of the US Delegation at the OSCE follow up meeting in Belgrade, held that—and I quote—

“a healing of the divisions in Europe[,] cannot be divorced from progress in humanitarian matters and human rights. The pursuit of human rights does not put detente in jeopardy. Rather it can strengthen detente, and provide a firmer basis for both security and cooperation.”

It is in this spirit that we will pursue our Chairmanship and hope to make a contribution to peace and stability in the OSCE area in 2016.

Of course, rebuilding trust will not be easy, and there will not be a quick fix in 2016.

But in my view we have no alternative but to make every effort to do so if we want to be able to look future generations in the eye and hold that we did everything possible to return to peace in Europe!

Thank you.



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