



**UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)**

**Hearing on “U.S. priorities for engagement at the OSCE”
Tuesday, December 8, 2020
10:00 AM**

Representative Richard Hudson, Commissioner

I join my Helsinki Commission colleagues in welcoming our witness, Acting Assistant Secretary Philip Reeker, to this hearing.

Having taken part in our OSCE work for the past 5 years, I have been frustrated by the Russian Federation and a few other countries’ efforts to block OSCE from doing more, particularly in the area of human rights. We have come a long way from where we were 30 years ago when we think about what the Helsinki process accomplished to end the Cold War or to respond to the challenges of the 1990s when cooperation was possible.

I say that in order to make a point. Despite the concern about the present, I still value the OSCE as a useful tool to advance U.S. interests. I have found the quality of U.S. representation in Vienna to be excellent, and the staff there are true experts on their issues.

The OSCE has dedicated people on the ground in Ukraine and elsewhere, reporting the truth on what is happening. Perhaps most important, I have learned that within the OSCE the United States does not have to go it alone; we do have friends, partners and allies in other countries who share our perspectives and our values.

This is evident in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, where delegates have greater freedom to advocate what they wish and decision-making on resolutions is by majority vote, not consensus. We can reflect the overwhelming sentiment among the public of OSCE countries on things like the Russian invasion of Georgia and Ukraine, and human rights violations in Belarus.

As one example, a draft resolution was put forward in Luxembourg in 2019 that essentially equated the United States and Russia on the failure of the INF Treaty regime. Moscow seemed content with that, sharing the blame. However, I put forward amendments, engaged parliamentarians from NATO countries, and with just a little extra effort we succeeded in making the text clear, despite Russian objections, that Kremlin violations of the treaty were the underlying problem, not the U.S. response.

I am honored to currently serve as chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s First Committee, dealing with political affairs and security issues. While the Committee’s activities have been somewhat limited by the pandemic, we have still found ways to engage in crucial debates on issues.

I've also led my colleagues across the Atlantic, including our Committee's excellent vice-chair from Romania and rapporteur from Lithuania, in several joint public statements, including on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict; the invasion of Georgia; and the political crisis in Belarus.

I have also sought to advance our interests on counterterrorism by serving on the Assembly's ad hoc committee on countering terrorism, of which I am currently a Vice-Chair.

In that context, I have worked closely with colleagues at the State Department to advance discussions on crucial issues that could benefit from greater coordination among OSCE participating States, such as the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters. I am currently advocating for the group to discuss how to share best practices on using evidence gathered on the battlefield to ensure terrorists are successfully prosecuted.

I look forward to hearing from you today about the State Department's priorities and am especially interested in hearing from you on how you think we might best collectively advance our interests at the OSCE in close partnership – the State Department, the broader interagency, the U.S. Mission to the OSCE, the Helsinki Commission, and we individual Members of Congress serving on the Commission and as delegates to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I have no doubt that through continued collaboration, we can continue to maximize our impact in the service of the American people. Thank you.