

**Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe:
U.S. Helsinki Commission**

“Poland's Leadership of the OSCE in a Time of Crisis”

Committee Members Present:

**Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chairman;
Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN), Co-Chairman;
Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Ranking Member;
Representative Ruben Gallego (D-AZ);
Representative Marc Veasey (D-TX)**

Witness:

Zbigniew Rau, Polish Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairman-in-Office

**The Hearing Was Held From 10:05 a.m. To 11:03 a.m., Room 419, Dirksen
Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD),
Chairman, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding**

Date: Thursday, February 3, 2022

CARDIN: The Commission will come to order.

Mr. Rau, it's a pleasure to have you here and we thank you very much for your willingness to serve the OSCE as the Chairman-in-office. As we were talking privately, it's a real challenge with all the participating States and the consensus requirements. It requires a real diplomat, and we know with your experience, serving in the parliament in Poland both in the senate and the house, that you bring incredible experience to this position, and we appreciate your commitment to not only the human rights agenda in the OSCE but also in Poland itself. So it's a pleasure to have you before our Commission.

This is the traditional hearing that we've had with the Chairman-in-office. It underscores the importance that the United States Congress and the members of our Commission pay towards our participation in the OSCE. We are extremely engaged both in Vienna with our – with Ambassador Carpenter and our mission there, as well as active in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, where several of our members are in key leadership positions within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

And I know that Congressman Cohen will be leading a congressional delegation to Vienna in two weeks for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Winter Meeting. I know that Senator Wicker will participate in that as well. So, we have robust participation in the OSCE and we look forward to this opportunity to review with you your priorities and to share with you some of our thoughts about the key issues that need to be confronted within the OSCE.

This year, the OSCE is facing one of the most serious crises in decades. Russian troops are amassed on the border with Ukraine. I'm going to just point out there's an all Senate briefing on Ukraine – classified briefing – that occurs at 11:00. So that's going to have some conflicts with this hearing. We recognize that. But as I told the minister, the minister's presence before us is our top priority today and we very much appreciate that. So we will take the time that's necessary.

The Kremlin threatens menace not only to Ukraine and the wider region, including Poland, but also the long-cherished dream of Europe – whole, free, and at peace. President George H.W. Bush first raised that concept in a speech in Germany in 1989 and said that the foundation of lasting security comes not from tanks, troops, or barbed wire; it is built on shared values and agreements that link free people. These are the same values that the OSCE has built since the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.

The United States stands ready to find areas of common purpose and cooperation with Russia if it's willing and sincere. But the sovereignty of Ukraine and the freedom of Europe is not something we can bargain away at a point of a gun. I welcome that Poland is offering Ukraine military support, including defensive arms. It's now up to Russia to consider its place in Europe, in the world, and in the OSCE.

The Kremlin must choose to make war on Europe and risk scathing international isolation, crushing economic penalties, and invite the full defensive power of the Euro-Atlantic

to Eastern Europe, or Moscow can recommit itself to diplomacy and its obligations under the Helsinki Final Act and we can forge a new future based on mutual respect, cooperation, human rights, and democracy.

Yesterday, as I explained to the minister, the Commission held a hearing to discuss the threat with a panel of experts. That discussion, I thought, was extremely helpful, and it was a very lively discussion that took place before the Commission.

Of course, your chairmanship at the OSCE will also have to address other concerns as well. Kazakhstan has recently seen surprising unrest, and for the first time ever, intervention by the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. Last year's war between Azerbaijan and Armenia has left an enlarged Russian military presence in the South Caucasus along with its continuing military occupation of major portions of Georgia.

All participating States continue to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the way that it has been used in some countries to rationalize restrictions on critical voices, journalists, political demonstrations, and civil societies.

In addition to serving as the chair of the Helsinki Commission, I also serve as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance. In this role, I've focused on the growing manifestations of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim bigotry in the region, including in the United States, as well as discriminatory policing, racism, and xenophobia, including towards migrants and refugee populations.

These problems have been made worse by the pandemic and reflect the need for the OSCE states to strengthen the implementation of our human rights commitments.

At this hearing – as this hearing is taking place following recent commemorations of January 27th, the International Day of Holocaust Remembrance, I would be remiss if I did not raise the recent attack of the Jewish synagogue Congregation Beth Israel in Texas. This is yet another example of the threat many Jewish synagogues, schools, and cemeteries have been under, forcing the need for increased security for Jewish institutions. We must act, and I urge the OSCE to make this an even greater priority.

In July, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's annual meeting adopted a resolution I drafted entitled "Addressing the Rise in Hate, Intolerance, Violence, and Discrimination Across the OSCE Region." This resolution calls for an OSCE strategy to strengthen the implementation of existing commitments, especially those concerning anti-Semitism and discriminatory policing. I hope you will make this a priority during your chairmanship.

I also urge that you prioritize the holding of the Human Dimensions Implementation Meeting in Warsaw this year. Russia must not be allowed to again block this essential meeting, which not only reviews the human rights records of all OSCE states but also provides a unique forum for civil society to bring their concerns directly to the governments' concerned.

I am encouraged that your Chairmanship has already released draft decisions on the arrangement for the meeting. I would also like to stress the importance of fighting corruption. I hope that the OSCE can step up its efforts in this regard. President Biden, rightly, has declared that countering corruption is a core U.S. national security interest, and there's no doubt in my mind that corruption poses a threat to democracy.

As you can see, that's just scratching the surface at the agenda, and we know that you have extremely challenging agenda items to cover during your year as Chair-in-office. We are joined by Congressman Cohen, who is the House chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission. We also have Representative Gallego, who's with us today, who's a member of our commission, and others will be attending in person and virtually.

And if the co-chair is prepared, or we can go right to the minister, whatever – all right.

I've already, I think, pointed out that Minister Rau has a distinguished record of government service, having served in both the upper and lower houses of Poland's parliament and as a governor. He's also an active member of Poland's first independent trade union, Solidarity. The Solidarity movement challenged Soviet authorities 40 years ago and is credited with contributing to the eventual collapse of the ruling Communist Party in Poland and across the Soviet bloc.

So, we're really honored to have you before the Committee and you may proceed as you wish. Your written statement will be made part of our record, but you may proceed as you would like.

RAU: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Honorable Chairman Cardin, Honorable Co-Chairman Cohen, distinguished members of the Helsinki Commission, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in my capacity as the OSCE Chairman-in-office. We highly value and greatly appreciate your leadership and commitment in advancing the principles of the organization.

I'm particularly looking forward to working closely with you on fulfilling the OSCE mandate and its important mission. Allow me to open with a personal remark. When the CSCE final document was signed in Helsinki back in 1975, I was a law student at the University of Lodz. Poland was a country subjugated to the Soviet Union. The Iron Curtain seemed to divide the continent permanently.

However, the final document signed in Helsinki inspired people throughout the communist bloc. Despite repressions, they were not afraid to follow the idea of freedom and to defend human and civil rights. There were not many of them and they risked a lot.

In my home country, Poland, the Workers' Defense Committee was established as well as the Movement for Defense of Human and Citizen's Rights. It openly set as its objective the pressuring the authorities of the Communist Poland to comply with the provisions of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In neighboring Czechoslovakia, the Charter 77 Movement was founded and the Prague Appeal was published. Revision of Europe as a common area of peace and freedom was developed. At that time, these were dreams which required civil courage to follow them. But so it is with the great things of this world that there are always few to begin with and the task seems difficult.

When I was helping to establish the Solidarity movement in the early 1980s, I had a conviction that the movement is only a branch of a community of free people that saw no walls, no curtains, and no borders. The same conviction was ventured by 10 million of Poles who joined Solidarność.

At the time, I could not have imagined that 40 years later, already as foreign minister of a free Poland and the OSCE chairman-in-office, I would be appearing in Washington, D.C., before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

I'm now of a similar age of the first chairman of the Commission, Dante Fascell, who assumed that position nearly 45 years ago. Chairman Fascell was a man of action. He and his friend decided to join National Guard when Hitler and Stalin invaded Poland in 1939, giving a start to World War II. He was also a man of principles, a sincere anti-communist, but at the same time a politician aware that military force alone cannot solve the problems of this world.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Commission, I am honored to visit you here but I do not bring you good news. The drums of war are heard again in Europe. My intention for today's meeting was to present Poland's priorities for its chairmanship, which cover all aspects of the OSCE agenda.

However, I must start with the developments concerning the growing threat to Ukraine, which are deeply alarming. We are in a critical moment for European and global security, and we should talk about the role of the OSCE in addressing the ongoing tensions.

As a matter of fact, the risk of a major war in Europe is now greater than has been anytime in the last 30 years. This is not just a rhetorical figure. We need to be aware that any escalation of a country in and around Ukraine would not only bring human suffering but would also bring about profound political, strategic, economic, and military consequences.

Once war is unleashed, nobody can foresee its outcome. The situation can spiral out of control very quickly and push whole Europe into a massive, multi-dimensional security crisis with suffering of millions on the scales unseen in the – since World War II. But the stakes couldn't be higher.

Europeans and our allies in North America are facing a threat to the very principles of a security system which the CSCE and OSCE have been designed to underpin and promote. The European security architecture as we know it could quickly descend into chaos. If this attempt

succeeds, a threat of force and the use of force can gradually become a new standard in international politics.

In the past half century, the number of interstate arms conflicts dropped down significantly. If we allow the return of the war of aggression into the foreign policy toolbox of states, the interstate conflict can become a norm again, and the rules-based international order established with a great deal of effort by the greatest personalities of humankind, from Woodrow Wilson to Mikhail Gorbachev, from Mahatma Gandhi to Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, from Andrei Sakharov to Václav Havel, and my great compatriot, Pope John Paul II, will be lost.

The order they helped to build can be destroyed and replaced by another order based on one contradicting their beliefs – that is, the principles of might makes right. Violation of the rules enshrined in the U.N. Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, Paris Charter for a New Europe, and other fundamental documents would have detrimental impacts not only in the Euro-Atlantic area but also globally.

I cannot say it strongly enough: the consequences of erosion of peace in Europe would go beyond the old continent. The desire to redraw maps and expanse by territorial grabs is becoming widespread around the world. If we fail to defend peace in Europe, the aggressors around the world would unite in using force against less powerful neighbors or rivals, and the conventional warfare could easily escalate to the nuclear level.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Helsinki Commission, the OSCE can and should step up to the challenge and this Commission's support is of the essence. Since the middle 1970s, the CSCE and, later, the OSCE has become a pillar of Euro-Atlantic security and stability. It brought stability to millions of people living from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It offered mechanisms of arms controls, transparency, and predictability and helped ease tensions among states.

It also linked the security of states to security and rights of individuals. At least four generations, from our parents to our grandchildren, have benefited from this stability. It is our duty to protect it for future generations.

The United States and Helsinki Commission played a fundamental role in transforming OSCE into a pillar of our collective security. As members of this commission, you understand that the security on both sides of the Atlantic is closely interconnected and that the U.S. is an indispensable part of European security order.

I greatly appreciate your support, which is a visible manifestation of indivisibility of our security in the Euro-Atlantic area. I am sure that, together, we can find a way out of any crisis.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Helsinki Commission, against this backdrop, Poland wants to act diligently and innovatively in pursuit of its OSCE agenda. Mindful of our common principles and the values, we want to use existing instruments and also

create frameworks that will allow to ease tensions, improve the climate of cooperation, and the return to Helsinki culture of resolving problems.

To this end, I have proposed an initiative to start a dedicated informal process within the OSCE which aims to reinvigorate the European Security Dialogue. We would focus on strengthening a broad set of confidence- and security-building measures to cover such areas like military transparency, risk reduction, incident prevention, and nonmilitary aspects of security.

As a part of the process, I'm going to invite the participating States to a dialogue on the relationship between the main principles related to the political and military aspects of European security as developed within the OSCE and on the application of its principles in the current situation.

There is a need to compare notes about understanding of the concepts of comprehensive security, indivisibility of security, and peaceful coexistence and favored relationship with other OSCE principles such as the freedom of adherence to alliances. I believe that this is an enormous opportunity for the OSCE to show its relevance and effectiveness in the 21st century.

The modalities of this initiative is now being discussed in Vienna, and I call on all participating states to engage in this process in good faith. We greatly appreciate strong support and commitment to this initiative from the U.S. government. At the same time, I hope this effort will be well received by members of the U.S. Congress.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Commission, all the ongoing conflicts in the OSCE area present serious challenge – or, rather, challenges – to European security. Very often they have resulted from flagrant violations of international law and OSCE principles and commitments.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict remains the most blunt example of violations of our commonly-agreed principles and, therefore, I will focus on this crisis. The situation in Eastern Ukraine deserves our constant attention and care. Any sustainable political solution must fully respect sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine.

We strongly support the political settlement process undertaken in the Normandy format, and I am glad we have seen some positive signals over the last few days. As the OSCE chair, Poland will facilitate further talks between Ukraine and Russia within the Trilateral Contact Group. But the negotiations cannot be reduced to mere politics alone. As I mentioned in Vienna a few weeks ago, behind any protracted conflict there are people that suffer the most.

Therefore, we will also spare no efforts that the prisoners exchange based on the principles all for all finally takes place, as provided in the Minsk Agreements, and the humanitarian situation in the conflict areas is improved.

Of course, we are aware that the reality does not always reflect our expectations and that the resolution of the conflict will not come overnight. Therefore, it is of crucial importance that the security situation in Donbas is conducive for further dialogue.

In this respect, Poland will continue efforts of the previous OSCE's Chairperson-in-office to facilitate implementation and monitoring the ceasefire agreement in Donbas, which requires that the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is strengthened and its mandate systematically extended. The most urgent challenge is to ensure that SMM monitors have unrestricted and unconditional access throughout Ukraine. We will spare no efforts to facilitate the extension of the SMM mandate beyond March 31st.

We deeply regret the Russian decision not to support the extension of the mandate of another OSCE observer mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk at the border with Ukraine, which was an important confidence-building measure. I am determined to work with all parties involved to hammer out a working solution of the problem.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Commission, the economic and environmental aspects will remain crucial for the comprehensive concept of security in the OSCE area. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on many aspects of our economic and social life. It is, therefore, only natural for our chairmanship to focus on sharing experience and best practices in solving challenges related to the pandemic.

The same is true of the OSCE's possible role in advancing climate and energy policies that are key to the security and stability of the participating states. We can build on the premise that we all are interested in a just, effective, and sustainable energy transformation of our economies.

We will also focus on anti-corruption, promotion on – of investment, business, good governance, promotion of trade and transport, as well as human capital development. The first in-depth discussion on these issues will take place soon in Vienna and will be followed by events organized in Poland.

Combating corruption is among the long-term goals of the OSCE. We fully support the activities of Ms. Anita Ramasastry, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-office on Combating Corruption, and we look forward to cooperating with her.

I highly appreciate the Helsinki Commission record in adoption legislation introducing U.S. sanctions against individuals violating human rights and corruption. All states should follow this example and codify the rule that no one can profit economically from actions which breach basic OSCE commitments. This includes both companies and individuals. The U.S. could lead the way in adopting such legislation.

I strongly encourage the Commission to extend this kind of legislation on those who signed with aggressors and are making money on aggression by taking positions in leadership or boards of the companies controlled directly or indirectly by perpetrators of war of aggression, entities, and individuals. These sanctions should also affect people who engage in transactions with state-controlled companies run by the aggressor state.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, let me stress the human-centered perspective that will apply in daily operation of our chairmanship. I will continue advocating for promotion and protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and democratic institutions in the OSCE area. In fact, since the very beginning of the democratic transition in Poland, my country has always been active in this field offering our support, assistance, and sharing experience with other partners.

Only in the last year, Poland offered a safe harbor for members of the Belarusian democratic opposition. We should not forget about more than 1,000 political prisoners in Belarus. This is, indeed, heartbreaking for all of us. Thousands of families are affected. We should keep Belarus on the agenda.

As the host country of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, we'll maintain close cooperation with the OSCE autonomous institutions, firmly supporting their independent mandates. We want to dedicate more attention to the humanitarian aspects in the zones of conflict, including, in particular, the situation of children and persons with disabilities.

I would also like to stress the necessity of the protection of women's rights in countries not only ravaged by war but also in those societies in which oppression of women is still commonplace and socially acceptable. Similarly, promotion of freedom of religion or belief will remain pivotal importance for the chair. We should not let violence, hatred, and discrimination become a new normal in our societies.

Let me remind you that it was my country that put forward the resolution establishing the international day commemorating the victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief approved by the U.N. General Assembly in May 2019.

Let me also underline that Poland opposes any attempts to weaken the role and impact of the OSCE Human Dimension. As the OSCE chair, Poland will spare no efforts to facilitate and support preparations for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting that should take place in Warsaw in September and the beginning of October.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Commission, taking over the important role of the OSCE chair, I do feel the burden of responsibility. Being fully aware of the challenges laying ahead of us, I also look to the opportunities that we can collectively use to improve the security environment around us, and I'm confident that we will successfully manage through the current problems together by showing our unity, cohesion, and resolve.

I believe that the only way out of the current crisis is to firmly stick to the fundamental principles of the peaceful relations between states, as agreed in the U.N. Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter, and subsequent OSCE documents. We must recommit to these principles which we all have already endorsed and for long considered a guidance in our approach to building security in Europe.

Europe dreams to be whole, free, and at peace. We cannot allow to turn it instead into Europe divided, at despair, and war. Thank you.

CARDIN: Well, Mr. Minister, thank you for that very comprehensive report outlining your priorities, which are very much in tune to the priorities of the U.S. Helsinki Commission. We intend to strongly support your leadership within the OSCE on the agenda that you have laid out.

On a personal note, I appreciate you mentioning Dante Fascell. I came to the Congress in 1987, and Chairman Fascell was chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He had turned over the leadership of the Helsinki Commission to my good friend, Steny Hoyer, at that time, and I started my work on the Helsinki Commission when it was the CSCE, not the OSCE. So, thank you for taking me back to some of those memories.

I also appreciate your emphasis on the current security crisis, and you outlined how serious the current crisis is not only related to the two countries directly involved but to the region and even beyond the region. So I strongly support a process within the OSCE aimed at reinvigorating the European Security Dialogue.

We hope that that will be the path that Russia will seek rather than using force, contrary to the Helsinki commitments, and your support for expanding and extending the mandate in regards to the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine is one that we also strongly support. We need to have the objective OSCE monitors on the ground to know exactly what the circumstances are. So we very much support your efforts in that regard.

I also just want to underscore how I appreciate your emphasis on the anti-corruption agenda. We recognize that corruption is the fuel for breaking down democratic institutions. We've seen that playbook being used by Mr. Putin and it is now being copied in other countries, including within the OSCE region. No country is free from corruption. So all of us have responsibilities to root out corruption, and I appreciate your commitment in that regard.

Thank you. It was either good staff work or whatever that you mentioned our work here in regards to sanctions, particularly, individual sanctions. We do believe that individual sanctions can play a critical role in reversing the type of human rights violations that we've seen.

We do believe that these individual sanctions need to be applied in regards to fighting corruption as well as the enablers, and I appreciate your reference to sanctions should affect people who are engaged in transactions with state-controlled companies run by aggressive states. We have enablers, and the enablers also need to be part of that.

We were joined by Senator Wicker. Senator Wicker has been my co-partner in regards to the individual sanction legislation in the United States Senate. We're also joined by Congressman Veasey, who is with us today via the internet.

One or two more points. Then I'm going to turn it over to Congressman Cohen for his comments and questions. Thank you for mentioning Belarus because, unfortunately, with what's happening right now in Ukraine, some are forgetting the – those who have been victimized by the tragedies within Belarus. And thank you for Poland's efforts in regards to those who have fled the oppressive regime there.

So, and lastly, in regards to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, I can assure you we will be there actively participating in Warsaw for that meeting, as I mentioned to you a little bit earlier.

So with that, let me invite Congressman Cohen for his comments and questions.

COHEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Minister, thank you for coming to our hearing and to our country. I've read your bio and I feel very comfortable with your position as Chairman at this very crucial time for the OSCE and for all of the democratic states in Europe and North America.

Your opening remarks took me back a little bit further even than the Chairman's. When I was in high school Dante Fascell was my congressperson, and it was the first congressional campaign, I think, I participated in. It was in a very minor way, but I went and did some things. And I was in law school about the same time you were.

So I never imagined I'd be at the OSCE or even here in any way whatsoever. But we've come a long way and now we're at a spot where we have to do something of great importance and you have a particularly important role because I don't think we've faced a greater crisis than we do today.

What's going on is we had a hearing yesterday with Dr. Fiona Hill, an expert on Russia and Putin, Ambassador Taylor, and General Hodges, and they gave us their thoughts. They all were kind of of the perspective that they thought we would not have military conflict in Ukraine. I'm not as comfortable as they are. Mr. Putin is – he's on a mission that doesn't stop in Ukraine. It doesn't stop in Eastern Ukraine. It doesn't stop in Kyiv, and it goes to Warsaw.

So we have to be concerned greatly. Finland's at risk, Estonia, all the Baltic region. He will not stop. I feel comfortable. I think our conference in Vienna coming up in three weeks will be most important to discuss these issues, and I look forward to supporting you in your efforts to have ODIHR have a hearing in Warsaw this year, which the Russians blocked last time, to look into issues.

The Chairman is our particular emissary on issues concerning anti-Semitism and that's an issue he and I share a great concern about and I think the whole Commission does, in fact. But that's another issue that will come up – more anti-Semitism acts in the United States than in almost any years before – it's really scary – and around the world as well.

Let me deviate from these focused remarks to a little bit of an explanation or an apology, more an explanation. I was on a television program about May of this past year, I believe it was, and I was commenting on a congressperson's remarks about concentration camps in Germany. And I was probably going somewhere I didn't need to go but I wanted to clarify in my remarks that the concentration camps were not just in Germany because Auschwitz is not in Germany.

I just didn't use the proper terminology to say German-occupied Poland, and I said Poland because I went to Auschwitz. It was in Poland. That is Poland. But at the time it was German-occupied Poland, and I didn't mean to in any way whatsoever disparage the Polish people and in any way suggest that they had anything to do with the construction of the concentration camps or the process of genocide that the Germans engaged in, and you suffer from it as well. I know that.

So there was a lot of pushback. I got immediately on the social media and other places. I didn't think it was warranted but, I guess, in some ways it might have been because of my indelicate terms, and I should have said German-occupied Poland. So I express to you my thoughts.

I visited Poland on a couple of occasions. My grandmother left Poland in 1914. She was able to leave before the Holocaust and all. But I have relatives from Poland and a fondness for the Polish people. So, I look forward to working with you.

When Lukashenko sent the refugees to your border, do you believe that was and have you found any reason to believe that Russia was behind that, or was that all Lukashenko's idea, in your opinion? You can go ahead and answer that and I'll go to some other questions. Or you can chastise me for not saying German-occupied Poland. I'll accept it. Congressman.

RAU: So I wanted to address – Mr. Chairman, am I supposed to answer right now or you are – OK.

CARDIN: You have the floor.

RAU: OK. Thank you. Thank you very much for raising the issues that I managed to stress in my presentation. Thank you for all your kind words and the promise to support the agenda of the OSCE under my Chairmanship.

As far as the questions – detailed questions put by the congressman, well, let me begin with the developments in and around Ukraine. Well, there are many good reasons to believe that the dynamics of this conflict is going to look exactly the way you described it, Congressman, because there is a lot of military, but, I believe above all, historical arguments to pursue this line of thought.

But we have to remember that the task of the OSCE is to implement the principles of international law, including the principles of the OSCE, which state that all members of the international community, especially with states, are free and equal, and if we assume that, it rules out by definition not only any concept of the spheres of influence or the regionalization of security but also it rules out any activities that are aimed at establishing this kind of international order, and I'm convinced that, despite these dynamics, that can be justly defended in intellectual terms. There is reasonable conviction and a true one that if we join forces, if we stick to the principles of the OSCE, there is still a chance to stop these detrimental developments.

And why do I believe that? Because there is no reasonable alternative to the world that the generations of Europeans have been dreaming of and this is, quite frankly – and I'm saying this with great conviction – what we have in Europe, what we have had in Europe in the last 30 years, it's the best time of the continent ever, and this is imperative on us, despite the political tradition we are coming from – and despite all the constellation – of political constellations, including these constellations of force and power, it is still, I believe, it's imperative on us to preserve the Europe as it is today.

As far as Belarus is concerned, well, it's deplorable to use human beings as a weapon in a political game. It is exactly what we are seeing at the Polish-Belarusian border. I don't want to speculate whether this has been arranged by the Belarusian authorities on their own or somebody has helped them to orchestrate this international endeavor, so to speak.

But, nevertheless, the moral evaluation of its deeds are such that they have nothing to do with the values that we are determined to defend. And as far as the refugees are concerned, let me just – let me, Congressman, stay for a while with the Polish experience. For the time being, we are hosting about 200,000 Belarusians in Poland these days. We issued 15,000 humanitarian visas. On top of that, we are hosting a million and a half of our Ukrainian neighbors, and we, in Poland, used to host about three decades ago thousands and thousands of refugees from Chechnya. So, this indicates that our approach to the refugee issue has not only political but, above all, a human and moral dimension.

We, Poles, used to ask for shelter and the international protections in other countries, especially people of my generation who belong to the Solidarity generation and it was offered to us, and we do believe that it's our natural duty – not even thought a moral duty; simply, human natural duty – to offer a similar shelter to those who are in need but who are really, really in need and they are not being instrumentalized.

And the last thing, Congressman, you were kind enough to raise was the Holocaust remembrance, and unfortunately, the fact that intentionally or unintentionally so many media and authorities are trying to use this, the memories of the Holocaust, for their own reasons. And thank you for indicating that, indeed, Auschwitz and other concentration camps launched and that organized by the Germans during World War II were created – indeed, were created in occupied Poland. They were and they should stay in our memory only as German concentration camps, regardless where they were established.

I suppose this is this kind of intellectual honesty that we owe, above all, to the victims of Holocaust. Thank you.

COHEN: Thank you, sir. I maybe shouldn't have asked you if you thought that Russia was behind the border crisis. But you showed – by doing it you showed me why you were the foreign minister. Your answer was perfect, and you're right that we – even though my feelings are less optimistic than the panelists we had yesterday concerning the Russian action in Ukraine, Elie Wiesel, a great survivor of the Holocaust and human rights advocate, told President Reagan he should not go to Bitburg Cemetery because there were SS soldiers there.

And he said at the time that there was all kind of problems in the world. There were apartheid in South Africa and there were issues between the people in India and Pakistan and within India as well, and other places in the world. And he said, everywhere I look there's problems. But you can't – you have to have hope. You always have to, because if you don't have hope the only answer is despair, and despair is never the answer.

So, we're fortunate to have you as the chairman and I look forward to working with you, and I thank you, sir. Yield back.

RAU: Thank you.

CARDIN: Mr. Minister, we stuck to our commitment and tried to conduct this within an hour. Again, we thank you for your comprehensive report. We want to work closely with you. As I've mentioned earlier, we are active not only in the OSCE through our mission in Vienna but through the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The United States is somewhat unique because of the Helsinki Commission but also because of the separation of branches. So, the – we work very closely together with the executive branch and the legislative branch on OSCE matters – and we hope that you will utilize our participation and the participation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in carrying out your mission.

The good thing about the Parliamentary Assembly, we don't have to always act by consensus so we can get things done a little bit easier than the U.K. and in Vienna. I know at times you're envious about that. So let us make sure we work together. The circumstances are rather dire, and the OSCE has a proud tradition of being a very effective forum to resolve these not only regional issues, they're really global issues.

So, again, thank you for your commitment and your time and your willingness to take on this responsibility. the Commission will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the hearing ended.]