

**Statement of the Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin, Co-Chairman
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**Part II:
“Taking Stock: Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region”**

February 7, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding this second hearing reviewing efforts to combat anti-Semitism. I am glad that my colleague Senator Voinovich is able to join us again following last week’s informative hearing with representatives from the OSCE.

That hearing’s assessment on OSCE efforts to combat anti-Semitism revealed that we have definitely come a long way from where we were at the beginning of this decade in developing tools to address manifestations of anti-Semitism.

According to Dr. Meyer’s testimony, since 2004 the OSCE has held 9 major conferences and events and published 6 books and documents on, or related to, the issue of anti-Semitism. Over half of the participating States have also now been involved in related OSCE educational, civil society, and hate crimes initiatives.

Additionally, Professor Gert Weisskirchen, in his role as the Chair-in-Office’s Personal Representative, has been able to provide the much needed political attention to address worrying situations throughout Europe.

Unfortunately, our best efforts have not yet significantly decreased the record levels of violence and negative sentiments towards members of the Jewish community recorded at the beginning of this century. But, as our witnesses last week attested to, we seem to be on the right path.

We are hearing reports that governments of countries such as the United Kingdom are collecting anti-Semitic hate crimes data and supporting Holocaust education. In Russia, political leaders have spoken out in response to anti-Semitic violence, which some believe is on the decline, although it appears that other manifestations of xenophobia are increasing. Following meetings with members of the Jewish community, Ukraine has formed a special security unit to combat intolerance toward ethnic minorities. Today, I look forward to hearing our witnesses’ assessments of these reported developments and their views on how we should be proceeding within the OSCE.

Many of our witnesses today have been on the frontlines from the beginning and key to OSCE efforts on this issue. Welcome. Dr. Rickman, as the first U.S. Special Envoy on Combating Anti-Semitism, you indeed have both a special and tremendous load to bear. I look forward to hearing about your efforts and thoughts on how we can redouble efforts within the OSCE.

Felice Gaer, USCIRF’s hard work and diligent reporting have made valuable contributions to our knowledge of anti-Semitic acts and other examples of intolerance and xenophobia taking place in the signatory states of the OSCE. Rabbi Baker, Rabbi Hier [HIRE], Mark Levin, Stacy Burdett... you all have served as our eyes and ears on this issue over the years.

As working together has been key to the creation of the many existing tools now within the OSCE to combat anti-Semitism, your thoughts on how the Commission can continue to partner with all of you even as you partner with one another to move forward is of great interest to me. I look forward to your testimonies.

Thank you.