

**Statement of the Honorable Alcee L. Hastings, Chairman
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

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

February 7, 2008

Welcome to the second of our hearings focused on efforts to combat anti-Semitism within the OSCE Region. While unfortunately I was unable to attend the first hearing due to commitments in Florida, I am pleased that we will be continuing the conversation today with key partners in the fight.

I am very happy that Senator Voinovich is able to be here and hope that you will continue to join us at Commission hearings. In particular, on Feb. 13th, the Finnish OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister Ikka Kanerva will appear before the Commission. I am certain that much of what we are covering in this series of hearings will be on the agenda. That hearing will take place in B-318 in the Rayburn House Office Building at 11 am. I hope that you and members of the audience will be able to join us.

It is good to see so many familiar faces here today. Many of you I last saw at the OSCE Mediterranean Partners meeting in Tel Aviv, where we focused on the roles Israel and Arab nations could also play in combating all forms of intolerance. In my talks with Prime Minister Olmert during that visit, I noted the importance of Israel’s continued leadership in the fight against global anti-Semitism.

Looking back from where we started, it is remarkable that we are at a point where OSCE Partner States are now looking at issues of tolerance, when just a few years ago we were fighting for OSCE participating States to simply acknowledge that there was a problem. We have indeed come a long way.

During part one of this series, we not only heard from the two OSCE experts most closely following trends involving anti-Semitism and related violence, but also of the numerous initiatives, including the Personal Representatives, conferences, educational tools, and training programs. There has been a tremendous amount of activity since our efforts beginning in 2002, to raise the profile of these concerns within the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly.

In our own government, thanks to the work of Helsinki Commissioners, there is now a Special Envoy to monitor global anti-Semitism within the State Department. Dr. Rickman, we are glad that you were able to join us today. I also understand that you are working on a global report on anti-Semitism, which I hope that, once completed, you will make advanced copies available to this Commission.

It is because of the extraordinary efforts within the OSCE, our own government, and NGOs who are in the trenches everyday, that I am deeply saddened by continued reports of hate crimes and other acts of anti-Semitism in the OSCE region.

Even with reports of anti-Semitism declining somewhat in my home state of Florida, vandals brandishing swastikas and other sentiments are still a reminder that we must be ever vigilant, lest the prejudices of some gain a foothold as we are seeing with the surge in growth of xenophobic groups and hate crimes in other parts of the OSCE region.

It has become abundantly clear why the protection of the rights of members of minorities and combating discrimination against those targeted because of their religion, race, national origin or gender are core principles of the Helsinki Process and their essential role in sustaining stable, productive, democratic societies.

It is my hope that today's hearing will shed further light on what more we all can do to uphold these principles as we review and continue our efforts to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance.

Thank you.