

GLOBAL THREATS, EUROPEAN SECURITY AND PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

JUNE 16, 2010

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JUNE 16, 2010

COMMISSIONERS

	Page
Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe	1
Hon. Alcee L. Hastings, Co-Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe	3
Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Ranking Member, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe	18

WITNESS

João Soares, President OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Member of Parliament, Portugal)	5
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APPENDICES

Prepared statement of Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin	23
Prepared statement of Hon. Christopher H. Smith	25
Prepared statement of João Soares	26

GLOBAL THREATS, EUROPEAN SECURITY AND PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

June 16, 2010

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 10 a.m. in room 202/203, Capitol Visitor Center, Washington, DC, Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

Commissioners present: Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Alcee L. Hastings, Co-Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Ranking Member, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Witness present: João Soares, President OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Member of Parliament, Portugal).

HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. CARDIN. Good morning, everyone. I know I'll be joined shortly by our Co-Chair, Congressman Hastings. We're going to start on time at 10, because the Senate has a scheduled vote in about 40 minutes. Fortunately, our location is very close to the Senate floor, so it's not difficult to go up and cast a vote and come back. So that shouldn't disrupt us very much.

I want to welcome Spencer Oliver back to the Congress of the United States. Spencer, of course, started here on Capitol Hill many years ago with the Foreign Relations Committee, whatever the name was at that time. It's gone through different name changes over the years. But we're very proud of his role in regards to the Helsinki process and the OSCE.

It's also a pleasure to have João Soares here with us today, our distinguished President of the Parliamentary Assembly. He has been a great leader, and we welcome you to the U.S. Congress and the Helsinki Commission.

The tradition of the Helsinki Commission is to invite before us the leaders of the OSCE. We've had hearings for the Chair-in-Office. We've had hearings for the senior representatives from the executive branch who work with us on the Helsinki Commission. We've had many of our representatives of the Chair-in-Office who have testified before our Commission and there's no more important person to have before our Commission than the President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

We believe that the Parliamentary Assembly is a critical arm of the OSCE, so much so that our own Alcee Hastings took on the Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly for 2 years, which was an incredible commitment of time and resources, considering that most of the activities within OSCE occur in Europe and Central Asia and requires a great deal of commitment of time in order to assume that responsibility.

I am also pleased to be a Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly, and I am proud that we have had officers within the Parliamentary Assembly consistently throughout its time. So today we're privileged to have the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, and he's a dear friend of all of us and he has been a very close ally of the U.S. delegation to the OSCE.

This is a critical moment in the Parliamentary Assembly for many reasons. Your timing couldn't be better. Our delegation has been actively preparing for the annual meeting in Oslo. We have organized from the point of view of trying to make this the most productive annual meeting of a Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. President.

We have really tried to streamline the supplemental items. I know that you are concerned by the numbers. But I think you're going to find that the matters that we bring to the attention of the Parliamentary Assembly are those that are critically important, including nuclear security and the safety of journalists. We believe that's a critical issue of our time.

We also are actively involved, as you know, this year with the Chair-in-Office from Kazakhstan, who is working toward a summit of heads of state later this year. That is a unique opportunity. We haven't had a head of state meeting summit since 1999 and we obviously want to make sure that is a successful opportunity, and your work there has been noted and we very much want to work with you in that regard. Now Kazakhstan itself has presented challenges for us. I just point out the most recent headline, where the Kazakh leader gets immunity power to the rule of law for life.

That may be something we want to take a look at and I just mention that, because we thought that the fact that he did not sign the parliamentary law meant that it would not become law but it looks like it has become law without his signature. So it's something we obviously are concerned about.

We've gone through an internal review, an internal review within the OSCE itself, the Corfu process. I joined our distinguished President in Corfu and was very proud of your presentation to the representatives who were there and I think we all believe that we need to reinvigorate the OSCE process and particularly the relationship between the Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE and that is a continuing process.

The Corfu process is to make more effective not just security, but also economics and environment and human rights within the context of the OSCE and I know our president and our Parliamentary Assembly have played a very important role there.

The expanding threats to security within the region is clear, through terrorism and nuclear safety, and we look at the headlines today of what's happening in Kyrgyzstan and our prayers and

hearts go out to those who have been victimized due to the violence in Kyrgyzstan.

We know that our President, and the OSCE have played a role in trying to bring about the right transition for the people of Kyrgyzstan. But we know that there are serious issues there and we welcome our president's thought as to how we can be more constructive in that very difficult part of the OSCE region.

In regards to economic and environmental challenges, the President of the United States addressed the American people last night, talked about not only the spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but also the need for a renewed energy policy in America that uses less fossil fuels and puts us on a course to be a responsible international citizen.

I'm proud of the work within the Parliamentary Assembly on energy security and on oil transparency so that the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is fully engaged and supported within the Parliamentary Assembly. Then the signature issue, the issue that has been the most visible within the OSCE, within the Parliamentary Assembly, within the Helsinki Commission, has been human rights.

It was the issue that attracted me to get involved in the Helsinki Commission when I was first elected to Congress in 1987. It has been an issue for which I'm very proud of the U.S. delegation. The U.S. delegation has raised the issue of trafficking, has raised the issue of anti-Semitism, has raised the issues of intolerance and all forms of discrimination, has raised the issues concerning the Roma population, has raised the issues of human rights of journalists.

The list goes on and on and on and we are very open in calling out specific names, as I have in regards to Russia, as I have in regards to other countries. So it is a challenging time, as I said, for our organization. The challenges are there. We are a consensus organization, which means we need to work cooperatively with all the 56 states. That presents its own set of challenges. We depend upon goodwill and we depend upon leadership and at times, leadership has not been as strong as we would like it to be.

But I can tell you without any qualifications at all, we are proud of the leadership of our Parliamentary Assembly under President Soares. We believe that he has brought our organization together in a very strong, effective manner, and he is leaving it in good shape. He's term-limited, so this will be his last year as President and we are very honored that he has chosen to visit us here in Washington. With that, let me turn it over to Congressman Hastings.

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS, RANKING MEMBER, COMMISSION
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for allowing me to have the opportunity to speak and welcoming our good friend, João Soares, to Washington, the U.S. Congress and the Helsinki Commission. I certainly wish João success in the upcoming OSCE Parliamentary Assembly annual session in Oslo, and I also wish him the best as he becomes the President Emeritus of the assembly for at least 1 and perhaps 2 years.

Having been there myself as a President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I can say that passing the baton to another parliamentarian does not necessarily mean time to relax. You appointed me, Mr. President, as your designee to the Mediterranean Partners, and it has kept me continuously busy in an emeritus posture.

The experience that comes with leading the assembly brings an ongoing expectation by others and a very real sense of commitment from within oneself to continue to work hard in various assignments that hopefully will improve the lives of those living in countries or regions troubled by conflict, corruption and repressive regimes, or both, and the Senator correctly has pointed to some of those areas in the OSCE sphere.

Unfortunately, with the added description of “emeritus” to one’s title, it also becomes more difficult to get others to notice the work that you’re doing and I speak for myself and I believe Göran Lennmarker of Sweden in expressing a commitment to work with you on issues of common concern after the annual session in July.

Perhaps by pooling our talents, we can get greater notice and more things accomplished as past Assembly Presidents when we work together. It also needs to be said that the President of the Parliamentary Assembly will carry much less significance if not for the support that comes from the international secretariat.

The people who work in Copenhagen are a very talented and enthusiastic group coming from across the OSCE region and they share their experience with Europe’s future leaders through research fellowships for aspiring young scholars.

I make no bones about the fact that I will do everything I can to assure that Spencer Oliver and the staff that I came to know and have great respect for will continue their efforts with the President that follows you, João.

I want to reiterate the assessment provided by the Commission Chairman, Senator Cardin, that the OSCE must respond to the new challenges. But it also should do so with credibility, and if the OSCE is to remain relevant in the coming year. For me, two issues are of great importance. One is the need to bring greater opportunities for engagement to our Mediterranean partners in the OSCE.

I believe we can coax and encourage them to engage, but I believe that we must find ways that make the advantages of engagement self-evident to these countries and make them seek us out for what the OSCE has to provide.

The other is the continuing need, if not the growing need, to respond to diversity in Europe and a subset of that has to do with gender equality and all of us, presidents before you and I’m sure those that come, will know the legendary work of Tone Tingsyard and other women, Louise Slaughter here in our Congress and the Commission, and how much we respect their efforts and compliment them.

The OSCE countries have long focused on how to accommodate and integrate the national minorities who’ve lived there for centuries with the borders changing around them. Today, there are new groups from other regions of the world requiring responses to combat racism and xenophobia on the continent. I hope we will hear the views of our esteemed witness today on these and many other issues of concern to the Helsinki Commission.

I note the presence now behind you. Ambassador Idrissov has entered and I'm sure you will have the opportunity to speak with him with them being the Chair-in-Office. But on the subject of diversity, let me just add one thing.

As much as we concentrate on human rights, and rightly we should, as much as we concentrate on media freedom, and rightly we should, and we should restore as best we can a media award for the brave journalists that work in the OSCE sphere and around this world as we have done. I think we did a lot of good when we had the award that was given.

As much as we talk about the rule of law, and we should, I remind my friends in the OSCE sphere that discrimination is rank and rife throughout the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly, all of the structures that we have come to know. In various forms, it shows its ugly head. Perhaps the biggest one in Europe that shows it is the plight of Roma and Sinti.

I said to a group that the German Marshall Fund has in the Cannon House Office Building as we speak, these youngsters came from everywhere, including a young law professor from Portugal, João, was among them—I said to them what I said in the civil rights era to a White man that asked me 1 day, what do your people want.

I told him and this is what I say to Europe, and what I say to anybody else that discriminates: get out a pencil and a piece of paper. Write down everything you want for your family and sign my damned name. You understand? That needs to be said over and over in France, and in England, and everywhere else as people seek to integrate into society.

Mr. President, Chairman, I'm sorry I went on, but there aren't any of our other colleagues here so I took their time. Thank you.

Mr. CARDIN. You're starting to sound more and more like a Senator. Let me welcome again our President, João Soares; pleasure to have you here.

**JOÃO SOARES, PRESIDENT OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
(MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, PORTUGAL)**

Mr. SOARES. Thank you so much, dear Chair of the Helsinki Commission and dear Co-Chair of the Helsinki Commission. My first words are to express my—how glad I am to be here and how honored I am to be here in front of you once again and to be on the side of Spencer Oliver, our Secretary-General. It's for us a great moment in improving the work of the Parliamentary Assembly, as we have done following the rules that were left to us by our former President, Alcee Hastings.

I wanted to underline the fact that I believe strongly in the OSCE and, of course, in the Parliamentary Assembly, which is the only democratic institution inside the OSCE.

I believe in the history of the OSCE, and what we have done since Helsinki Final Act in '75 and what we have proved that we could do as an international institution, one of the most active, if not the most active and the most flexible as far as the conflicts and human rights problems and development problems were concerned in Central Asia, in the Caucasus, in the Balkans.

We have been along these 30 years of history the most effective international institution and the most flexible international institution with a strong contribution from our Parliamentary Assembly, and I have to recognize the work that has been done both by Senators and Congressmen of the United States. It has always inspired us very much, and I want to recognize the work that Alcee Hastings made as our previous President.

He was the only President that visited all the Mediterranean countries and I remember the meeting that we had here, not in this room, but in a room very close by, last summer on the Mediterranean issue.

And of course I always remember, and you have heard me saying several times, the speech you made once in our Standing Committee that was for me so important as far as human rights and torture is concerned in bad times, even in your home country, and that is something that I always remember as something that touched me profoundly and gave me the real sense of belonging to this Parliamentary Assembly.

And I think since you said it, we have done our work and we have done hard work because we have the best Secretariat in the world, the team that is headed by Spencer Oliver. It's a very small team with a small budget, the smallest budget of all Parliamentary Assemblies in the world. We have made the work for the Bureau meeting where Alcee was in Lisbon comparing the budgets and the teams that worked in the secretariat and we have done an amazing amount of initiatives, touching the most important issues.

The wars that we had, we had one war during my mandate, my first mandate as President of the Parliamentary Assembly. We had the war in the South Caucasus between Georgia and Russia and we had one of the most important international meetings discussing the issues in the South Caucasus, and we were among the international institutions those who were most effective as far as this problem is concerned.

And of course we are following, as you said, Senator Ben Cardin, very actively what is happening in Kyrgyzstan and in all Central Asia.

We had a conference just a few weeks ago in Almaty, and after the conference we went once again to Kyrgyzstan to speak with the new authorities, to speak with the opposition parties, to try to give them a real and concrete help as far as work in the field is concerned to develop their democracy as they want to develop one parliamentary democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

And of course we have followed what happened in South Kyrgyzstan in recent days. We have our Special Envoy, Mr. Kimmo Kiljunen, who is already—I hope he is already there and we are following it very closely in work with the OSCE field mission.

We have always supported very much the field missions, because I think sincerely that even considering the United Nations, the European Union, and all other international institutions, the OSCE has since the beginning been the most effective, and the most flexible as far as the real issues in the field are concerned and with dealing directly with them.

And I think the added value that the OSCE has always had along its history is the fact that more than 85 percent of its re-

sources, human and financial, were dedicated to the field missions and what is occurring.

And we have to face the problems in front as they present to us, that now the situation is coming back—not so good as we wanted it to become, because Vienna is becoming—if you allow me, my English is not so good as I would like to have it—but Vienna is becoming fat, and the field missions are becoming thin.

And there is a bureaucracy in Vienna that you both know very well, especially Alcee Hastings during his 2 years as President of the Parliamentary Assembly, and the bureaucracy is taking the floor in Vienna instead of taking the decisions.

There is a lack of transparency. There is a lack of accountability, and we should think on reforming the OSCE, because it can be one of the most effective, if not the most effective, international tool that the international community has.

And what is occurring in Vienna, it's a real problem. We could probably have prevented the war in the Caucasus if the Permanent Council worked correctly, you spoke very correctly, Senator Ben Cardin, about the Corfu process.

I had the honor of being on your side but the Corfu process for me, as an engaged observer of the OSCE, is proof that the Permanent Council doesn't work and that they needed—the Ministers needed another instance to take clear political decisions that should have been taken in the Permanent Council in Vienna if there was transparency, if there was accountability, if there was a correct evaluation of what occurs there.

There is no real debate in the Permanent Council, and Alcee Hastings, he has been there several times like myself, when he was President. Ambassadors, I have all the respect for the diplomats and I love their work, but they read their papers one after the other and there is no real debate on the main issues.

The new architecture of security in Europe, where was the debate in the OSCE? In the Parliamentary Assembly. The war in the Caucasus, where was the debate? In the Parliamentary Assembly. The Kyrgyzstan issue and the conflict in Kyrgyzstan, where was the real debate, the live debate? It was in the Parliamentary Assembly just a few weeks ago in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

I salute the Kazakhstan Chairmanship, and I want to underline that we were since, Alcee Hastings' Presidency, and with Göran Lennmarker's Presidency, and my humble Presidency also, in support of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship, according to the rules of the Helsinki Final Act, because we are an inclusive organization, a democratic but inclusive organization where two worlds started to talk together to demolish walls and to demolish iron curtains. We gave a great contribution.

And that's why we wanted Kazakhstan to have the Chairmanship and we are very glad, and we are very proud to see that the Kazakh Chairmanship is a very active one and they have played their role, and they are playing their role very correctly, very engaged with intelligence, with very good and experienced people. And that's something that we should also recognize. And the idea of a summit, as you underlined, Senator Cardin, is a very good idea, because it could shake at another level the OSCE and especially the Permanent Council in Vienna.

With all respect for the diplomats, we need the shake. We need a change and I think change is possible and you showed us in the United States that when there is political will and when there is democratic conviction, change is possible.

Let's change the OSCE for the benefit of the international community, and I believe so strongly in the work that we can do. Of course, the role of the parliamentarians is a primary role and that is something that we have always said, even when we are not heard and we know that sometimes we are not heard by the Permanent Council.

But I think these are the main challenges that we should address and I am sure that my successor as President of the Parliamentary Assembly, with all our contributions, will deal with them so actively as we dealt them since Alcee Hastings' Presidency. Thank you.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, thank you so much for that very comprehensive and very frank assessment. We agree completely of the relevancy, historically and in the future, of the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly, and that it is out of frustration, because we think it can be even more effective, that we would like to see the types of reforms so that we can be more engaged and have more impact on carrying out the commitments under the Helsinki process.

Let me start with Kyrgyzstan if I might, just to get your assessment, and it certainly has been one of the areas where having the Chair-in-Office in Kazakhstan has been a real advantage in dealing with this conflict. The quick involvement of OSCE, the most effective international organization in dealing with it, brought about the successful transition of power from the point of view of the exile and the dealing with immediate issues.

Now it looks like violence, ethnic violence has erupted again. People have lost their lives and we're not exactly sure the current situation as this hearing is taking place. How do you see the role of the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly moving forward to help Kyrgyzstan and perhaps other countries in Central Asia deal with the transition to more democratic countries?

Mr. SOARES. Thank you for the question. I think Kyrgyzstan has always had a special role in Central Asia. It has one of the strongest civil society movements as far as Central Asian countries are concerned, and they have had several attempts to go toward a democracy and the parliamentary democracy, which is a very rare situation in Central Asia.

Both attempts led to electing a new President after they were disruption, and they went on the side of authoritarianism, nepotism and destruction. We know how Mr. Bakiyev was fairly and correctly elected in a free election, where I think Alcee was and where I was sent by Alcee at the time when he was President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

I remember these elections. He was correctly elected, but we know how things turned into a nondemocratic system. Of course, there were still always opposition people who weren't represented in Parliament, and who weren't even represented in our Parliamentary Assembly.

You know perfectly, Senator Ben Cardin, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva that was our colleague and was in our last meeting in Vienna and spoke actively both in the Standing Committee and in the plenary on behalf of Kyrgyzstan when she was the main opposition leader, and she is now the interim President and Prime Minister.

We have met with her several times after the Almaty meeting, which was also dedicated to Kyrgyzstan, because it was supposed to be the dedicated to Afghanistan and when Kyrgyzstan incidents occurred we put Kyrgyzstan also on the agenda, and we had meetings with all other political leaders. Of course, there are great difficulties because one of the things that we have to recognize, it's one of the routes of drugs that come from Afghanistan.

There are some marginal people, leaders of this kind of marginal activities, who have some power. Of course, she is a respected person. She is popular. She is well-known by all the sources that we had the opportunity to talk with in Bishkek and other parts of Kyrgyzstan. She is respected and well-known for being non-corrupt and for having a real and sincere will to go toward democracy and parliamentary democracy to avoid the terms that we had in other Presidential elections.

But it's a very difficult situation, and of course we know that—I have been there several times—there is a U.S. base there in Manas, in Bishkek airport, and of course we know what happened with Mr. Bakiyev when he went to Russia.

He said, the United States are going to be out, and after he said the contrary some months after and there are games—there are heavy games being played there, especially in the south, where there is an Uzbek minority that in the south, in some parts, is also a majority and we know the difficulties of the relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is one of the most closed countries there. It's the only country—I think Alcee was there and Göran was also there. But I couldn't get there because they don't come to the Assembly—they pay their dues, but they don't come to the Parliamentary Assembly and they don't want really—they don't want us to go there.

And of course Kazakhstan played a great role. We had not our special representative that I talked about Kimmo Kiljunen of Finland was not able to go because he was in Bhutan. We nominated immediately an experienced Senator from Kazakhstan, Mr. Adil Akhmetov, who went immediately to Bishkek and he did great work as the Special Representative of the Kazakh Chairmanship during the direct days.

But we have to recognize there is also some rivalry between them. Kyrgyzstan is a smaller country and there are some problems with rivalry. I'm glad that the border was opened. We played the role, very discrete, but we played a role with the Parliamentary Assembly as far as the border between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan was opened and I want to greet the constructive work that was made by our colleague and our Vice President, Kasim-Zhomart Tokayev from Kazakhstan.

He played also a great role and of course we are trying to play all the cards that we can, to be very actively engaged, very discretely to be more effective as far as Kyrgyzstan is concerned. But it's a difficult issue.

Mr. CARDIN. What I was going to point out is that, unfortunately, when there's a change in governance, and then there's coming elections to deal with either electing officials or constitutional reform, it's a focal point for ethnic tension, which has happened in Kyrgyzstan.

I would just urge us working with our governments and also working within the OSCE to provide technical help and assistance so that we can try to calm the areas as it goes through this transition, supporting the government and its efforts to bring about democratic institution building within that country, and I think the Parliamentary Assembly can play an even more active role here and I know it's difficult.

But we need to do everything we can do support calm during this difficult period in Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. SOARES. I agree completely with you, Senator, and I think we have played this role and we have seen—I've seen this since I was a normal member of our Parliamentary Assembly under Hastings' leadership, under Göran Lennmarker's leadership. I've seen like you have seen some people who were not correctly elected. I will not tell you the names, and you will not ask them to me—from countries where the democratic rules are not followed completely.

But they have improved their democratic values by the simple fact of being members of our Parliamentary Assembly and seeing democracy work, and I've seen many of these cases.

I think that sincerely that to evaluate, not to be too pessimistic, the role that we played in Ukraine, in the last Presidential elections and I was glad that my good friend Alcee Hastings was also there. We played really a great role. We have been in many, many missions. I was sent by Alcee, and by Göran, on many missions, and I've been also as President on two or three missions.

But I remember very well the role that Alcee played in Georgia, and I was there in the Presidential elections in 2008, before the war, and it was a great role. But I think that now in Ukraine it was really a point where it was very decisive. If we hadn't done what we have done and we said correctly what we had seen and observed, there was a risk of turning bad after the elections because there is also a tradition.

Those who expect to be defeated sometimes start to build their own arguments to go to the streets and to say that their actions were not correct when they really were correct and they were in Ukraine, and it was a good democratic transition and there we played really a role in the name of human rights.

Mr. CARDIN. Let me cover one other subject. Then I'll turn it over to Congressman Hastings. You spent a good deal of your time in your presentation dealing with the Permanent Council and dealing with bureaucratic issue which are clearly a challenge for all of us. We want an effective organization. We are pleased that the participating states invest in a support team in Vienna so that they give the seriousness to the OSCE agenda that it deserves.

That's something that is important to us, that this be treated as a major commitment, not just joining and agreeing to abide by the principles but then having the priority within that government to have a mission in Vienna, to work with the other states to make

sure that these commitments are carried out and to challenge other states that may not be doing what they should be doing. But it has developed into a bureaucracy. There is no question about that.

One of the real strengths of the Parliamentary Assembly is that we are legislators. We know what it means to get things accomplished. So when the Parliamentary Assembly issues its report every year, by action taken in a very democratic way, the debate that takes place during our annual meetings rival the best debates in any parliament around the world.

We then take that product back to our Congress and to the other parliaments and we expect that there will be some followup, some action taken. So one of the concerns that I have—that you've already expressed—is how do we take the energy that's in the Parliamentary Assembly, the ability that's in the Parliamentary Assembly for action within the various legislatures, how do we take that and mold it into the process within OSCE, which was originally envisioned, and be able to take the energy and commitment that each of the participating States make in Vienna so that we're not always fighting each other, but working together to be much more effective in carrying out the mandate.

Part of this is the consensus organization that exists, but we've overcome that in the Parliamentary Assembly much better than the Permanent Council. Do you have any specific recommendations?

Mr. SOARES. You are asking me to solve the problem of the egg of Columbus and I'm not qualified to—I've thought about it like, Alcee has thought about it and like Göran has thought about it, and all our team has thought about it.

I think sincerely that there are many, many national delegations and in your case it is one of the best that tries to work with their own Foreign Ministers with inside their own Parliament with their own governmental side to influence and to have something achieved as far as Vienna is concerned.

But after I did—humbly—my small country, small but very old country like Portugal, I tried it several times and I reached some of the goals and the others I couldn't reach because there is this problem of the bureaucracy and the lack of transparency of accountability in Vienna, and to be sincere, the majority of the Foreign Ministers don't want to take care of it.

That's the problem, and we have to shake it and the only way I see it, it's under this proposal that the very courageously and very strategically that the Kazakh Chairmanship made, to have a summit.

It could be the shake that we need because change is needed and I think that, yes, we can, but we have to change it. You talked, Senator Cardin, excuse me, but I don't know if I understand because I have problems with English sometimes.

Mr. CARDIN. We don't believe that for a moment.

Mr. SOARES. No, no but let me tell you, if we add up—I have never made the countings—but if we count, what every one of our countries, small, medium, big as the United States, spend in their embassies in Vienna and if we put it together with what is the budget of the OSCE, which is not a big budget, and the budget of the OSCE that is spent in Vienna or in Vienna affairs, yes and we

know that sometimes that is a strategy from the Secretariat to put on the expenses of Kyrgyzstan if the Secretary-General, somebody from Vienna goes to Kyrgyzstan, they put on the expenses of Kyrgyzstan what should be the expenses of Vienna.

If we put this together, we should think about price and effectiveness of what you do. I think you have to go to the Senate. You have a vote.

Mr. CARDIN. No, no I'm fine.

Mr. SOARES. But I think that sincerely we should think—we should think with the same audacious way that we thought in '75, when we started the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and that's why the experience like Spencer Oliver is so important.

President Ford risked, and I've read Kissinger's memoirs, and he said that probably he was defeated in the elections because he signed the Helsinki Final Act with Brezhnev, and he was also criticized, but he was courageous and even if he lost the elections he made a great deal for the world because the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall fell.

Mr. CARDIN. I'll just make one observation about the summit. For the summit to be successful, and I hope it will cover more than just substantive issues, it will have to address the organizational issues that you have referred to, because I think it's important that it does that. There's got to be a lot of preparatory work done before the heads of state meet because at the meeting itself there's not the time to iron out the differences.

The summit has to be the focal point for bringing about that type of energy to the organization. The summit in and of itself is important, don't get me wrong. The fact that heads of state meet to reaffirm the commitments that are under the Helsinki Final Act are very important, and we haven't had a summit since 1999. That's too long.

So I agree with the importance of having a summit, but if we're going to be successful, if we're going to deal with advancements of human rights and security and economic and environment, then prep work needs to be done so that the heads of state can use that energy to advance the progress of the OSCE.

But also if we're going to be able to iron out the fundamental problems of the bureaucratic inertia within Vienna, that also needs to be addressed prior to getting to the summit itself.

Mr. SOARES. I agree completely with you. But don't leave the prep work to Vienna. It's what happened after Corfu.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, I agree with that. We're with you on that.

Mr. SOARES. We're discussing how many meetings, how many lunches and dinners have been made about Corfu and what substantial things have you heard from that.

Mr. CARDIN. That's why the U.S. delegation has been pushing very hard for the meetings and conferences prior to the summit to do the hard work so the summit can be successful and we will continue to press for those opportunities. Let me turn the gavel over to Congressman Hastings, and I'm going to go up to the floor and vote and I will be back in a few moments.

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My good friend, João, you sir have done an outstanding job as President of the Par-

liamentary Assembly. I thank you first as a friend and then on behalf of my country and as well as fellows traveling on this planet.

The assessment that you've given, among other things, is testimony to how those of us in the OSCE sphere and those of us traveling together on this planet need to get beyond some of our differences and begin to do everything we can to gain understanding, both of each other's cultures or religions, and of our societies and our national structures.

I for one am tired of the fight, and not tired of being in the Parliamentary Assembly, not tired of being in the U.S. Congress, but just tired of witnessing the world in turmoil when it could be made so much better for so many more people.

That said, your assessment about how we could be more effective touches me deeply and I know that you and I, if we were talking about Kosovo or the Balkans or the Roma or racism, Islamophobia or anti-Semitism or relationships with the CIS, the continuing challenges we face with ODIHR, trafficking, security, all of those things I could raise.

And I think I already know your answer, because you and I have spent a lot of time together and some of my most enjoyable times, not only in this organization but in life, have been experiences that we have had, both working professionally and in the limited time, too limited time, that we've had an opportunity to socialize.

That said, I would appreciate it if you would give me your honest assessment as you prepare to pass the office to another parliamentarian and become the President Emeritus or elder statesman of the assembly, give me your honest evaluation of how you see the United States evolving as an OSCE participating state and coupled with that, our very important partners in this experience, your honest evaluation of the CIS and more specifically, Russia, as an evolving participant in the OSCE.

Mr. SOARES. I'm going to be absolutely sincere. I was at your side as Vice President, or as a simple member of the Parliamentary Assembly during these last 6 years, and I'm very proud to be on your side during your presidency and I'm very grateful to you.

You even wrote a small preface to the small book that I published about the OSCE, and it was for me so touching. I think the Russians, like it or not, are those who are dealing, as far as Vienna is concerned and OSCE is concerned, more professionally and more effectively. I have to recognize it, like it or not, and they have a team of very good diplomats, starting with Lavrov, who is the Foreign Minister that you know as well as me, and going to the people who are in Vienna and who are in some of the field missions.

They are those who are most effective. We know the line. We know what they want and they express it and sometimes they even joke with us, because there is no European Union presence—and I am proud of being member of a country who is member of the European Union. But there is no European Union. There is no European Union. There is no face. There is nothing as far as the OSCE is concerned.

And unfortunately, the United States could be much better than they are, to be absolutely sincere. It's probably unpopular to say it here, but I say it as an old friend and with the greatest sincerity because you took the new administration and you know personally

how I was emotionally engaged in this process that we followed in the election observation mission in 2008. But the United States took more than 1 year to designate an Ambassador in Vienna.

Mr. HASTINGS. Yes.

Mr. SOARES. And we need change and yes, we can make the changes, and I think that you should—you have the best parliamentary representation. I don't want to caress your ego or that of Senator Ben Cardin.

You are absolutely the best people that we have there, and everybody's proud to have you there. You have been always in the biggest debates and the most important debates, including about the United States in international field work. They were done under your leadership I remember the debate that we had in Vienna, under your leadership, about the Iraq war.

I remember and the authority that you and Ben Cardin have, you are among all of us, of course—if we compare, I don't want to be impolite to other colleagues and other parliamentary delegations. But if we compare with Russia, as far as parliamentary work is concerned, of course, but the governmental side is the weakness.

It's the weakness of the organization and it is also the weakness of the United States. But I hope there will be a change, and it has to come from you, and from Senator Cardin, and from those who are so engaged, and who know so well because my main point is that we have one of the most effective tools that we could use in international organizations. We are talking about energy.

We had the debates about energy. We have the biggest consumers and the biggest producers. We are talking about new architecture for security in Europe. That's the table around which everyone should be. We are talking about conflicts like Kyrgyzstan, and the South Caucasus, and it's from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It's there.

Where is the problem? The problem is in the bureaucracy, and in the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability in Vienna. With all due respect for the diplomats, they need to be shaken and it's from our side starting from the parliamentarians, Congressmen and senators.

Mr. HASTINGS. You offered a more than sincere and honest assessment and it is deeply appreciated by me. As you well know, with the assistance of the secretariat and specifically with Secretary-General Oliver, we had two tremendous efforts regarding transparency, which are continued by Göran's work and yours and the entirety of the Parliamentary Assembly.

One of the things I think I shared with you, and you said in your opening remarks, is that much of the genuine debate is generated inside the Parliament Assembly.

One of my personal peaks or concerns, coupled with the fact that I don't like it, is that we do all of the germinating, the developing, the discussion to pull the countries together on major issues and then the government structure, particularly the diplomats in Vienna, go forward and undertake what we said to do and then get the credit for it and that's not fair.

That's not right. Anti-Semitism, the subject of the conferences that we developed in the Parliamentary Assembly—they wind up

getting the credit for it. Freimut Duve working with Spencer, developed the Freedom of the Media award. They get the credit for it and you go on and on and on. But you and I know what the problem is.

I told them, just as I'm sure you did. I came out of Belarus in a very difficult election, and went into Vienna to meet at the permanent council. Spencer was by my side and I probably scared him. I told them point blank they are boring, that is what they are. They issue non-papers. What in the hell is a non-paper? That's just the way I said it. You know, this is a piece of paper and you issue non-papers.

That means you don't want to do any work to develop whatever it is that's on your paper and you know, it evoked a very good response. The Ambassador from Armenia, the Ambassador from Russia, the Ambassador from Canada, all were very forthcoming, and put aside their papers that they had prepared and began an active discussion and dialogue among themselves and me. And guess what came out of that one?

The Belarusian Ambassador also was complimentary of the fact that we tried to get them to change. Do you agree with me in the transparency effort? With Steny Hoyer we did our conference there in Germany. We did the colloquium here in the United States. But like in front of this camera right now, when you mentioned that it's here, we are streaming live internally here. It's not on C-SPAN.

Sometimes when we have major, major issues of the day, we have national streaming of our meeting. What about the Vienna group streaming their meetings? Do you think it would liven them up and maybe they wouldn't bore each other as much as they bore me?

Mr. SOARES. Absolutely. It could be the egg of Columbus. I agree completely.

Mr. HASTINGS. See there, you did have the egg of Columbus solution.

Mr. SOARES. Very good, you have found the egg of Columbus solution. It would be an absolute change. I'm absolutely sure because it would give transparency and in a certain way also accountability. But I go a little bit further than you. I even accept the idea that the credits for our ideas go to them if they do it.

But the problem is that those are the exceptions. The problem is that they don't do it. It's not because they are not qualified, because we have very good Ambassadors there, and we know many of them personally and they are very good and very qualified. The problem is the system.

We should have the right to propose as parliamentarians, as we have in our countries and in other international institutions, to propose certain things about the budget. We should control the budget or at least make an examination of the budget and discuss the budget of the governmental side.

We should have an objective consultation when they choose the Secretary-General or when they choose their people who are nominated as heads of field missions because this is the center. We know who the heads are. You know all of them. Except Uzbekistan, I know all of them, and we know that they are always having to

go to Vienna to the Permanent Council to get one more penny for their work in the field and nobody cares.

That's the main problem for me, and of course they are jealous of our work as parliamentarians, not only because we have the transparency, and the accountability they don't have, but also because we propose changes that they don't want. It's much more comfortable for them not to have the changes.

But because they are jealous of the work that we make with our Secretariat and with Spencer's team with a small budget, with a small team of people supported by the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen, and with a small team in Vienna we do work, as you know better than me, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and that makes them jealous.

Mr. HASTINGS. Yes. We've been joined by my friend and our Ranking Member who the Senator is fond of saying and I am as well, the longest serving Member in this process here in the United States, and particularly active all throughout that period.

Before turning to him for any remarks he may wish to make and/or questions, I would like to explore a bit more—I'm leaving on the table so many things I'd like to talk about, Roma particularly, and the fact that this organization, as much as Tone and others have pushed us forward on gender equality, and we have made great strides, I might add, during your tenure and in previous times and I hope we continue.

But the growing issues of diversity writ large in Europe are going to need to be addressed, and this organization can play a role in that and we have begun an effort twice now in Brussels, and sidebar meetings in Geneva on the subject of racism in Europe and I know of what I speak, because I live in the United States. Therefore, no one in Europe, France included, need try to tell me that they don't have a problem.

They have a problem. It's significant. It needs to be addressed, and OSCE needs to address it head-on and, again, lead perhaps in the 56 countries' in that area. I would hope if there is a summit that, aside from addressing the governmental issues, and I might add I support vigorously that there be a summit, it's been a long time since—

Mr. SOARES. In '99.

Mr. HASTINGS. Yes, since we have had the Istanbul Summit, and interim matters in Madrid and Corfu need to be refreshed in my view. Perhaps we should use the term of the day is "reset," so that everybody can come to the table and be frank with each other. There are happy moments, and unhappy moments.

But now besides a ministerial or a summit meeting in Kazakhstan—and hope that the Ambassador can stay around to talk with me personally for about 10 or 15 minutes. One other thing I would urge, Mr. President, is that you and the Secretary-General, please encourage as many members as possible to attend the tolerance conference in Kazakhstan. It's scheduled for June 28 and June 29.

I'm awaiting understandings from Secretary Clinton and Speaker Pelosi as to whether or not I will be able to attend. I'm making preparations, but they have the call on whether or not I will be able to. It's particularly important, but it's also particularly impor-

tant that Kazakhstan put forward straight up the Madrid commitments, and that would be true for a variety of reasons.

But at the very same time, how do you see us shaping up and what role, if any, do you see nongovernmental organizations who are so critical to the overall process of development of human rights and democracy having and what constructive criticism would you offer Kazakhstan and the rest of the countries as they proceed toward this summit, and then I would, after you respond, ask Congressman Smith if he will go forward.

Mr. SOARES. I agree completely with you as far as the summit is concerned, and the shake that the organization needs and that could come from the summit. We talked a lot about it, and I agree completely with you as far as the issues of racism, fight for human rights and the Belarus example you gave is also very important because I know what you have done when you were President and we tried to follow your line.

Mr. HASTINGS. You did a great job.

Mr. SOARES. And I think we have made a lot of things. I remember the conference that we made more than 1 year ago there in Minsk, in Belarus, and where we engaged Mr. Milinkevich, one of the most respected leaders of the opposition, to come with us and this simple gesture made a very strong political significance, and I think we contributed a lot to the better developments that occurred in Belarus. Nevertheless, the difficulties there still remain, and that's the why we are trying to work.

I think sincerely that Kazakhstan, despite some difficulties were referred here by Senator Ben Cardin and I agree with him, has done a great job. There are some credits that should be added to the work that has been done, and the tolerance conference is very important.

As far as what they have done on several human rights issues, we were there and we asked to send one of our most credible members, an Italian colleague of ours, to see Mr. Zhovtis who was in prison, and we have the support from the Kazakh Chairmanship and from our colleagues from both Senate, and Parliament of Kazakhstan, especially Adil Akhmetov, Kuinyoh Sultanov, and Kasim-Zhomart Tokeev, which I greet once again with great pleasure and I see what they have done.

We've talked in a very discreet manner about human rights issues, and with the freedom of religion, about Jehovah Witnesses, and I have seen what they have done and we didn't want to think any about it. But I have seen that it was a real good step. Despite who will receive the credits after, the fact is that they have improved a lot, and are much better than they were, and we made that a very discreet job.

I always remember the reports that was made by a U.S. Ambassador in Bosnia in the '90s. Ambassador Barry had said, the OSCE is the most effective as work in the field is concerned and less known internationally. We are not media friendly. Some of our colleagues say that's bad for us. Of course we live in a society, and in a world so full of spectacle and media and if you are not in the media, you do not exist.

But sometimes the media, as you know better than me, have also preserved roles and the fact that we are not so media friendly gives

us the opportunity of going further in the political discussion. I remember the Toronto fall meeting discussion after the war, and if we were under media pressure, it couldn't have been as good as it was and so profound with such high level people present, of course starting with you, and that's also a point.

We make it discreetly. We don't want the credit. We want to be proud when we write both our memoirs in 30 or 40 years and that something was done really concretely in the field.

Mr. HASTINGS. OK, Senator Cardin has returned, but I'll go forward to give the floor to our colleague from New Jersey, Congressman Smith.

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

Mr. SMITH. Thank you Mr. Chairman, and welcome Mr. President. Thank you for taking the time. I apologize I'm a little late. We had a press conference at 10. I was one of the leads, and we had set it up long before this hearing. So I do apologize for that.

But let me just thank you for your extraordinary work, thank Spencer Oliver for his longstanding work on behalf of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We all know him from the '80s, he and I and Steny Hoyer and Ben and Alcee traveled with him to most of the countries of the East Bloc, and so it's great to have you here and to see him again.

Let me just—since I missed it—I will read your statement, but I know the Chairman has mentioned that Kyrgyzstan has been very much focused on and before I get to that I want to thank you again for naming me as Special Representative on human trafficking. We now mark the 10th year of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

A book that just came out yesterday, or Monday I should say, is a direct result of legislation that I offered and sponsored in 1998. It became law in the year 2000, called the TVPA of 2000, and that set up all of this, and we on the Helsinki Commission took the lead first at St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1999, and have tried thereafter to keep this issue front and center, and you might want to speak to that, especially as it relates to Kyrgyzstan.

Before getting to that, a couple of weeks ago, I met with a large delegation from Ukraine and I've done that with Russia and most of the counties of the OSCE and others throughout the world, and was very impressed with what the Ukrainians were doing from a law enforcement protection side. It is a full court press. They're serious about it.

They still want stronger legislation and they made it very clear some of the changes they would like to see, including in the area of child pornography, that the mere possession is not construed to be a crime, so that the demand side continues to go unchecked and of course the nexus with trafficking couldn't be more clear with obscenity and especially child pornography.

With regards to Kyrgyzstan, the report makes it very clear that that it is increasingly becoming a center for trafficked women, mostly from Uzbekistan, and I'm wondering if you might want to shed any light on it that you might have as to obviously with so many displaced persons, that's a very serious, fertile ground for the

traffickers to exploit women and men and children. Your thoughts on that?

Mr. SOARES. We have talked a lot about Kyrgyzstan. I think Kyrgyzstan is in a very specific geographical situation and geopolitical situation. Of course it's on the route of drugs that come from Afghanistan and we have seen them. Those who have been there in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have seen the effects of this, and there is a real problem as far as young people consuming drugs is concerned. But as far as also the power and the influence of money, the dirty and black money that comes from this, and of course there are in some of these countries problems of human trafficking and child abuse. It's clear. Even in the most closed countries, like Turkmenistan, because as you know Turkmenistan is one of the most closed countries.

A living President that has the statue and still is there because we were there 15 days ago, a statue, gold in the center of the city. There are also problems. But I think they have done a lot and I think that the Kazakh chairmanship is playing an important role. Now looking to the positive aspects, I think that the Kazakh Chairmanship is really doing a great role.

Of course with the difficulties of being one of the greatest, and as far as geographic limits are concerned, and one of the most powerful as far as resources and political skills are concerned, there is also a problem of relationship between all these countries. But the Kazakh Chairmanship is doing a great job.

For example, I agree completely with Senator Cardin about the resolutions that you are going to present out our Oslo meeting and nuclear security is one of the main issues.

Kazakhstan has authority as far as nuclear concerned, because among the countries that emerged from the former Soviet Union, it was the first one that renounced completely nuclear power, and they had nuclear power plants inside and most of the nuclear experiments were so tragic and environmental disasters were made in Kazakhstan territory and they renounced it completely.

Also as far as human rights, we can see the negative aspects, and we talked about it and I agree. But it's the only country that came from Soviet Union where there is a museum that I visited with Spencer Oliver on my demand of the gulag in a former gulag camp where they honor the victims of political repression and intolerance.

So that gives them also credit, and we have to push the positive role they are playing they have as far as all of these countries are concerned. But of course there are difficulties. But there is also—there are many, many NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. It's true. I have been amazed all the time by the energy that the civil society has here. There are many, many bad forces also that came from child abuse, human trafficking, and traffic of drugs. But there are also many others and I think our role is to support them.

We have a role as the OSCE and so do you, you bilaterally, as the United States, because you have a presence there, you are respected there. I've been in Manas base, and I've been in Bishkek Airport, and I've seen even in Bishkek, the respect they have for the United States and there are many, many other institutions. I

wanted to underline something that I admire very much. I went there with my friend and colleague, Andreas Baker.

The role that the Aga Khan movement is playing in Central Asia. They are building and it's already working, the University of Central Asia with three points: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

We have been in the Pamir Mountains, seeing what they have done and they have done amazing work, and they are building doing one of the nicest campuses in the world. I have seen it there in the Pamir Mountains near the Chinese border, and they have done a lot of work and they deserve our respect and our consideration.

And I always encourage this Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE to engage also the work with these because they represent one of the most important families of the Islamic world and the most tolerant and the more moderate families of the Islamic world and of course as far as the human trafficking issues are concerned, they are very present.

We saw the last time in Bishkek, and in Kazakhstan, the work they are doing and we are always engaged with these NGOs who have—of course there are all kinds of NGOs and sometimes there are also those who don't really work and who are always looking for international support and financial support to maintain their structure. But there are many and Kyrgyzstan is a good example and I praise very much the work that the Kazakh chairmanship is doing also.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I know the question's been asked about the OSCE itself and your disappointment that there's a lack of flexibility and that speeches are scripted. Has it not been like that for a long time, or do you see it's been a recent turn for the worst?

Mr. SOARES. It's not been better in the last years. I am following it very closely for almost 10 years ago when I returned to my own parliament, and I went to the OSCE for work. Of course I've fallen in love with the work because I knew the history but not so completely.

I started studying it, and I think it's the most effective tool that the international community can have, and that's why I regret so much that there is a mountain of bureaucracy and lack of transparency and accountability in the headquarters.

But I believe strongly that we could change it. You know, the history also explains a little bit. I remember a report by a Portuguese diplomat that was in the OSCE, a relative sedimentation of a conference into an organization, and that was very good in the beginning, because it gave the flexibility and the capability to address immediately in the moment the main issues, the conflicts and the prevention of the conflict.

And the problem is that the sedimentation is becoming too heavy as far as bureaucracy is concerned and we are not addressing the conflict. I will give you concrete examples: the Caucasus war, the South Caucasus war. We could probably have prevented it. I'm not out of touch.

I have the sense of reality. But there were reports that have come from a senior British office in the field mission about it, and

they were put under the table and nobody looked at them. Probably we could have prevented it.

Mr. SMITH. Last question, and I would ask unanimous consent Mr. Chairman that my opening statement be made a part of the record.

Mr. CARDIN. Without objection, all opening statements will be made part of the record, including our distinguished President's.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, one last question, how would you assess the OSCE mission in Minsk? I've met with both groups of dissidents, men and women, who have been in and out of prison within the last month, and they are very conceded about the accommodations it made that they think the Minsk mission has taken. Do you have any thoughts that you might want to share with us on that?

Mr. SOARES. I have a good impression of the Minsk mission. Of course there are always human factors that we cannot control, absolutely, as you know better than I. But I remember the head of the previous head of the Minsk mission was a German diplomat, and I remember the meeting that we have done there with Uta Zapf who are responsible for the Belarusan dossier and I talked about it.

We made initiatives as far as Milinkevich is concerned, and I think we played a good role. I don't know the changes, I don't have recent news from the last months after the changes took place there. But my evaluation as far as what I have seen in the previous years is a positive evaluation.

Of course it's always difficult, and sometimes I have seen in other places some diplomats that are sent in a seconded way, that's another problem. That's another problem that we should solve. Sometimes some diplomats tend to be too much compromised with the power. I've seen it.

I can give you an example from many years ago when Alcee sent me there, or Göran, in Turkmenistan. I've seen it. Now we have, for example in Turkmenistan, we have a very good head of mission, a Macedonian citizen, diplomat and a man who has been in the Permanent Council in Vienna, very good. He has a clear knowledge of how Vienna sometimes works badly.

Mr. SMITH. I do have one last question. Again, meeting with the opposition—Lubedko—and some of the others in Belarus—

Mr. SOARES. Milinkevich.

Mr. SMITH. They've made it very clear at the Chinese Government is assisting Lukashenka in developing a capability to use the Internet to repress the human rights and pro-democracy forces there. Have you gotten any information on that?

Mr. SOARES. I know that the Chinese are very good experts in these matters.

And they shouldn't be proud of that. But we have to find ways of dealing with it and pressing them not to create these kind of problems. But there are many other countries in the OSCE area that we have these kinds of problems.

Mr. HASTINGS. Would my colleague yield just a moment?

Mr. SMITH. Absolutely, sure.

Mr. HASTINGS. I met with those opposition leaders as well and Chairman, hopefully Ron McNamara [Policy Advisor, Commission

on Security and Cooperation in Europe] was in one of the meetings and I indicated that I thought what would be helpful is for us to have a hearing to deal with the Belarusian issue and to do so—I forget the date or time in September—Ron is nodding to me and I hope we can accomplish that. All right, thank you. I'm sorry.

Mr. SOARES. Belarus is a very good case where of course there is an authoritarian system. That came, if we see the beginning of the President, it came on a democratic way but after it turned on some non-democratic matters.

But where there are credible and popular opposition, people, leaders—I personally like very much Milinkevich, and the role I had there with Alcee when we had a very nice press conference saying clearly that the elections were not free and fair, because they were not free and fair, and it was among all of them where I've been—and I've been in more than 30—it was the worst I have seen and I remember that specifically with a Congressman, a Republican from Illinois, during this mission around Minsk, and I remember very well this mission and in the end, during the day it was absolutely marvelous. You have to have been there. Music, food, children in every polling station. But after the problem was the counting. The counting we could not see.

Mr. CARDIN. There's no question—there's no question of the problems in Belarus from the point of view of democratic institutions. We took a delegation there last year. So we were in Minsk and had a chance to meet with the President.

We had an opportunity to bring home an American who was being held inappropriately in their prison, and if there is any hope here for some progress, it's the current desire to be more independent from Russia, which might give an opportunity for some progress to be made. But there are certainly issues that Congressman Smith has raised on the human rights issues that are pretty egregious and we would like to see some positive steps.

We don't expect change overnight, but we do expect progress, and that's a country of great interest to us. We are not giving up on any country in the OSCE as far as meeting its commitments under the Helsinki Final Act. Mr. President, you've been extremely generous with your time.

Mr. SOARES. Thank you.

Mr. CARDIN. We will continue this discussion in Oslo in a few weeks. So we look forward to a very robust debate. I just want to make one last observation, where I think you're absolutely correct about.

Under your leadership and under Spencer Oliver, our Secretary-General, we've had some of the best debates on timely subjects during our meetings. We're all very busy, but when we attend and have a chance to meet with other parliamentarians, we want it to be meaningful and under your leadership the discussions we've had, the actions we've taken, the ability to interact with parliamentarians has been at the highest level, and we know that will continue in Oslo.

So we look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting and with that, the Commission will stand adjourned. Thank you.

Mr. SOARES. Thank you very much.

Mr. HASTINGS. Good meeting.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you sir. Chris, thank you for being here.

[Whereupon, at 11:24 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDICES

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

At the outset of this hearing we would like to express our condolences to the families of victims of the terrible violence occurring in Kyrgyzstan. According to the latest reports, the situation seems to be stabilizing but since last week we have witnessed widespread bloodshed and ethnic cleansing in an OSCE State. I am sure President Soares will want to discuss this very serious issue in greater detail but I wanted at this juncture to at least acknowledge these events and express our concerns before we go on.

Today's hearing of the Helsinki Commission is one in a regular series of hearings we have had in recent years. In these hearings, instead of focusing on a specific issue or country, we hear the views of an important official on the entire range of human rights, security and economic and environmental issues which are the basis for the Helsinki Commission's ongoing work.

There is a tradition of having senior U.S. officials appear annually before the Commission to discuss U.S. policy toward the OSCE, and we regularly invite the Chair-in-Office to appear early on in their tenure to exchange our respective goals and priorities for the OSCE in the coming year.

As today's hearing demonstrates, we have also developed the tradition of having the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly presenting testimony as well, relying on the expertise of a leading parliamentarian who can exchange views with us on the same range of issues but with fewer of the constraints that diplomatic or executive-branch office often impose on our other witnesses.

This hearing comes at an important time. The OSCE is in the midst of its consideration of whether to schedule a summit of heads of state or government. This is something which has not been done since 1999, and the world has changed significantly since then. The OSCE is also reviewing its activities and taking a hard look at itself through the Corfu process, in the hope of making its work more relevant to the 21st century. As it does, the OSCE has increasingly been compelled to shift its attention from threats to security within the region to threats from outside the region where a common and coordinated response is required, such as terrorism and nuclear security.

In my view, the success of this multilateral diplomatic effort hinges not only the ability to achieve consensus on these matters among the 56 participating States, as difficult as that is alone to accomplish. It also hinges on the actions and policies of the OSCE participating States themselves, as compared to their freely undertaken OSCE commitments.

If OSCE States ignore or violate their own freely undertaken commitments to respect human rights and each others' borders, then what credibility can the OSCE have as it seeks to respond to global threats and enhance European security? The reality is that many countries, including those of Central Asia and some in the

heart of Europe like Belarus, make little if any pretence of respecting OSCE norms. Russia blatantly invades Georgia and recognizes breakaway regions. Claiming to seek to advance the OSCE process through their initiatives, Russia and several other countries seek instead to re-negotiate existing commitments that may mean less power for those in power.

The challenge before us, therefore, is not an easy one, and it necessitates active engagement with those with whom we disagree but also a strong defense of what we have achieved so far and hold dear to our democratic values.

Appearing before us today is the Honorable Joao Soares, a member of the parliament of Portugal and, for the next few weeks, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. While an active leader in the past two years within the OSCE, Joao Soares came to his current position already well versed in the issues and challenges I just described. His biography is available, so I will not repeat his accomplishments here. Instead, I want to use this introduction to thank Joao Soares for his generous use of his political skills to engage the OSCE and its States on a variety of fronts, and for his friendship toward the United States and those of us in the U.S. Congress who have come to know him. Mr. Soares, let me welcome you here today.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH,
RANKING MEMBER, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND CO-
OPERATION IN EUROPE**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning and welcome to everybody—welcome especially to our witness, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, Mr. Joao Soares, and also to Spencer Oliver, General Secretary of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, you and I have been active in the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE for over ten years. We have seen the value of the Parliamentary Assembly in the fight against human trafficking and anti-Semitism, to mention two issues on which I have focused much of my work within the Parliamentary Assembly—and I thank you for being right there with me, leading on these issues. And in regard to both of these terrible scourges, trafficking and anti-Semitism, it was the Parliamentary Assembly that put these issues on the forefront of the OSCE agenda.

The Parliamentary Assembly has been a vital part of the OSCE, and in recent years perhaps it has been the most vital part. Consistently it has been the Parliamentary Assembly that has pushed human rights issues to the top of the OSCE agenda. The governments of most OSCE participating States have usually been reluctant to put human rights first. They have criticized so-called “parliamentary interference” in OSCE policy, but they have been quick to take the credit for the PA’s human rights initiatives.

One of my chief concerns at this hearing will be to learn how the Parliamentary Assembly can be even more effective in promoting human rights within the OSCE. Few people know the OSCE as well as President Soares and, Mr. President, I very much look forward to your testimony. I am sure we will all benefit from it immensely.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOÃO SOARES, PRESIDENT, OSCE
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT,
PORTUGAL)**

I am very happy and deeply honoured to appear here today before the Helsinki Commission of the U.S. Congress. I would like to thank the members of the Commission for inviting me, in particular the Commission's Chairman and Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Senator Benjamin Cardin, as well as the Commission's Co-Chairman, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings. I'm proud to follow in the footsteps of Congressman Hastings, who served as President of the OSCE PA for two years, and who now continues to lead the Assembly's work on Mediterranean issues.

I would also, with great pleasure, like to note the fact that I am accompanied here today by Spencer Oliver, the Assembly's Secretary General since its founding, and who was the first Staff Director of the Helsinki Commission.

The work of the Helsinki Commission and the participation of the United States in the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly have been, and continue to be, invaluable to our organization. The OSCE is the only regional organization in which North America, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Europe are all members. That makes it not only unique but also absolutely indispensable. It is vital that we continue to strengthen the important transatlantic link in order for the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly to meet the numerous challenges in the OSCE area.

The robust participation of Members of the Congress and Senate in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's activities has been critical to the success of the Assembly throughout the years. Your active participation in our meetings provides important opportunities for parliamentarians, particularly from the former Soviet Union, to interact with their parliamentary colleagues from this side of the Atlantic. Understanding the extra travel burden placed upon you to come to Europe, your active participation in OSCE PA events is recognized and appreciated.

Almost two years have gone by since I was honoured at the Seventeenth Annual Session in Astana, Kazakhstan by being elected President of the OSCE Assembly. And last year, in Vilnius, Lithuania, I was honoured again by the renewed confidence from my colleagues in the Assembly. I ran for the office of President because I believe deeply in this organization. My focus has been on democratization and to always remember to be loyal to the spirit of Helsinki. I have tried to find a balance for the activities of the Organization between the "East and West of Vienna." I have striven to ensure full respect for the principles of the OSCE in an inclusive, not exclusive, manner, involving all participating States in the OSCE and its Assembly. And I have striven to involve as many members as possible in the work of the Assembly—both during our meetings and out in the field.

These two years have brought positive as well as negative developments. My biggest disappointment has been the war between two participating OSCE States, Russia and Georgia, and the closing of the OSCE Mission in Georgia. The unrest in Kyrgyzstan has also been most worrisome, and the OSCE needs to lend all its efforts,

expertise and knowledge to try to help Kyrgyzstan overcome the present crisis and return to the path towards an improved democracy.

I have spent much of my two years trying to encourage increased participation from the members of our Parliamentary Assembly in Central Asia. Kazakhstan is presently setting a high standard by its high participation. But, unfortunately, we have not managed to persuade Uzbekistan to start participating in our Assembly again, as it once did, and I am sad to see the recent decreasing participation by parliamentarians from Turkmenistan—I sincerely hope that this changes in the near future. I am also disappointed that the OSCE efforts on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including those by our President Emeritus and Special Representative Goran Lennmarker have not yet born fruit. I agree with him that we have a golden opportunity to reach an agreement in this old and stubborn conflict, and we need to continue in our efforts.

On the positive side, I would like to mention the peaceful transition of power in Ukraine after two rounds of impressively democratic elections, and the positive political development in Moldova after last year's elections, in spite of the intransigence of the Transnistrian issue. And in the Balkans, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, their political situations are encouraging. Our parliamentarians, through observation missions, the work of our special representatives and the special teams such as the one on Moldova, have all played important contributory roles here.

During my time as President, it has also been important for me to continue the Parliamentary Assembly's role as a forum for debate on the most urgent issues of our time. And we have done so by focusing important discussions on the conflict in Georgia, European security architecture, climate change, the war in Afghanistan, and the crisis in Kyrgyzstan.

As an integral part of the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly must be involved on many fronts—contributing to the dialogue, assisting the OSCE in trying to solve conflicts and preventing new ones from erupting; increasing the respect for human rights; fighting against human trafficking; and strengthening OSCE election observation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My two years as President have made it even more clear that the OSCE is in need of revival. While I remain a strong believer in the work of the Organization, much of the flexibility, which was one of the main advantages of the OSCE, has been lost—the bureaucracy in Vienna is stifling the organization. Both dialogue and our work in the field suffer as a result.

The OSCE's flexibility has been its strongest asset, but unfortunately, I have noticed an increasing tendency for OSCE activities to get bogged down in bureaucracy and in the cumbersome decision-making process in Vienna. I am concerned with the lack of political relevance of the OSCE, which is largely due to the current decision-making processes. Our diplomats go through a ritual of routine decisions on purely administrative issues such as agreeing on dates of conferences for annual meetings—all of which are subject to a veto by any country. This opens up a serious potential for

abuse of power, and given that the consultations take place in secret, we have virtually no way of holding our diplomats to account.

The weekly Permanent Council meeting in Vienna in which ambassadors read out pre-written statements instead of holding an actual debate on a real and specific topic is the opposite of constructive dialogue. Even these fully scripted meetings take place without any press or public access.

Given this situation, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a lack of high-level political interest in the OSCE. It has been over ten years since a summit was held. In few countries, if any, the OSCE is seen as a priority. Any organization will continue on 'auto-pilot' unless political leadership takes an interest to provide real guidance.

As President, I have worked to try to raise awareness of this problem, but the problem persists. The Parliamentary Assembly can and should continue to play a role in fighting this, but it is an uphill battle—immobility is a strong force.

We also do not make any friends in Vienna by raising these issues publicly. However, we must continue to criticise the fact that all decisions happen by consensus and behind closed doors. This lack of transparency means that we have no evidence of how, or WHETHER, things actually work in Vienna.

At the very least, I am sceptical that they work the way they should. With no accountability, the relevance of OSCE decisions has sharply declined. Decisions about key political issues often do not even reach the table in the OSCE, because there is the fear that one delegation might object. The courage to make bold decisions, demonstrated so well by our leaders in 1975, has been lost in the OSCE's secrecy.

The OSCE's field missions, one of its strongest assets, are also being weakened. Already in 2005 during our Colloquium on the Future of the OSCE here in Washington, DC, we pointed to the danger of micromanagement of field work. Having personally visited almost every field mission, I have seen a draining of resources from the field towards the Secretariat headquarters in Vienna. Simply put, Vienna is becoming fat at their expense, and the OSCE's ability to maintain its excellent and proven field work is under threat.

Members of parliaments pass laws, approve national budgets and taxes, and scrutinize governments. Parliaments and parliamentarians also provide valuable assistance to international co-operation and development. Parliamentary oversight and accountability in international organizations—including the OSCE—is essential and oversight mechanisms need to be built in to the system. For example, during our most recent Vilnius Annual Session, the OSCE PA called for the Parliamentary Assembly to be given an oversight role in relation to the OSCE budget and for confirmation by the Assembly of the OSCE Secretary General, once nominated.

I will continue to push for greater transparency in the OSCE. There is a democratic deficit that remains to be addressed. The Helsinki process was about opening up societies and about dialogue. The secrecy with which the Permanent Council conducts its work is not in line with the spirit of Helsinki.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We also need to re-think the question—what is the added value of the OSCE? Where can we genuinely make a difference?

In the field of election observation, the OSCE has demonstrated its leading expertise, and the advantage of the political expertise of parliamentarians was clearly recognised in the 1997 Co-operation Agreement governing relations between the Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR (Organization for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights). While we have had problems in implementing this Agreement, it is an important agreement that should be upheld and to which the Assembly has always made a point of adhering.

Election observation is the most visible and politically relevant activity that the OSCE conducts. It is therefore also very sensitive, which makes the political judgement of parliamentarians absolutely crucial. At times, there have been attempts to erode the independence of OSCE election observation; leadership by parliamentarians who have personal legitimacy and are fully independent of the OSCE budget and bureaucracy is clearly the best way to maintain credible and independent observation.

The OSCE should also be a forum for exchanges and dialogue—it can be a place for those in transition to learn from the experiences of others. I believe that the OSCE PA's observation of the recent parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom was an excellent example of this possibility. Assembly members from participating States east of Vienna came to the UK to study the British system. There is pedagogy inherent in meetings and discussions that I have personally noted within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I am very pleased that OSCE missions similarly support international exchanges to this end.

Also in terms of field work, the OSCE's network in many of the countries where we have missions is unequalled. We do not have the resources of the EU or the UN, but the expertise and deep local knowledge exist. We must build on and solidify this through improved working conditions: lowering the reliance on secondments and changing or eliminating staff term limits. We must seek to avoid that we, as now, regularly lose our experts to other organizations. Everybody loses in this scenario—most notably the people in the countries in which the OSCE is working.

Unfortunately, as I noted, the recent trend has been to divert resources away from the field missions towards headquarters, and this simply must be reversed. The OSCE's most important work is done in the field. The need for work by our missions is as large as ever, and we cannot allow a further stripping of their already slim resources.

What then is the future for the OSCE?

When the Helsinki Final Act was signed in 1975, we had two major powers involved in a Cold War. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, we have a new situation where future security will have to take greater consideration of new powers and realities.

- The recent Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum in Almaty, organized jointly by the OSCE PA and the Parliament of Kazakhstan, included parliamentarians from Pakistan and Afghanistan, and it clearly demonstrated the advantage of greater inclusion in our discussions.

- The Mediterranean partner States are also part of our increased focus, and we must continue to work hard to bring the countries around the Mediterranean closer to us and engage them in the important discussions of our times. As the Assembly's Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, Congressman Hastings has continued to lead Assembly efforts in this regard—and I believe he is the only President of the Assembly to have visited all Mediterranean partner States. I was pleased to personally participate in a very successful seminar on this topic that he organised here in Washington last summer.

Last year we commemorated the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The CSCE has certainly made a major contribution to ending the Cold War. But there is still too much old East-West thinking in the minds of many. We have to revive the spirit of Helsinki.

It seems that the Corfu Process, started last year, has at least seen some good will in this direction. It effectively asks the question: 'where is the OSCE heading?' I hope that the result will be a stronger political role that enables the Organization to make a greater impact and to deal more effectively with the prevention and the resolution of conflicts. But for this to be the case, the OSCE will need to change. The reciting of dry statements by our diplomats in Vienna will have to be replaced by a genuine dialogue on political issues. Much greater transparency will be needed both in the dialogue that takes place, to provide credibility to the discussions, and in the Secretariat, to ensure that our resources are well utilised in the field.

The Parliamentary Assembly has regularly encouraged an increase in high-level political dialogue on the OSCE. I believe that 2010—as both the 35th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 20th anniversary of the Charter of Paris—is the appropriate moment to reinvigorate the OSCE through the convening of an OSCE Summit.

Thank you.



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