

LITHUANIA'S LEADERSHIP OF THE OSCE

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

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LITHUANIA'S LEADERSHIP OF THE OSCE

February 16, 2011

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

[The hearing was held at 3:30 p.m. in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.]

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

Witness present: Audronius Azubalis, Chairman-in-Office, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

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

Mr. SMITH. The hearing will come to order. And I first of all want to say to the Foreign Minister and to my colleagues, sorry for being late. Got off to a later start than I wanted to. So I do apologize for that.

Mr. CARDIN. It's a long walk over to the Senate side.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, but Alcee got here.

Today, I'm pleased to welcome Foreign Minister Azubalis to share his views with the Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship as it gets underway. And I want him to know that he is very, very welcome. We are so grateful to have him here today to give his view, his vision going forward as the Chair-in-Office. And it's especially important that we meet as Lithuanians at home and abroad celebrate Lithuanian Independence Day, the restoration of their national independence after decades of brutal Soviet domination.

We join them in this celebration, and in doing so honor the many Lithuanians who made great sacrifices to rid their country of Communist repression. Of course, many paid the ultimate price. And we honor also those who were killed in the January events of 1991.

I will never forget my visit to Vilnius, joined by my colleagues here, two decades ago—it was the largest delegation, I think, ever to travel. Just weeks after the January events, the tension was palpable as we entered the capital in Vilnius and met President

Landsbergis at the heavily fortified parliament while Soviet troops occupied nearby buildings.

I'll never forget when we went to the TV tower where men and women were mourning those who had been gunned down by the Soviet troops. Candles were lit all over on the ground marking where people had fallen after being murdered by the Soviet troops. And there was much prayer; there was much concern, fear, but above all, courage. And you could see it in the eyes of people, that despite the threat that they faced, they were going to—they were resolved. They had a never-quit attitude that was very inspiring.

Certainly, Lithuania has come a long way since that time. And now as a solidly democratic country, a respected member of the E.U. and NATO, it is the OSCE Chair-in-Office for 2011, an honor it received the old-fashioned way: you earned it. Lithuania is one of the great success stories of the post-Soviet states: democratic, free, prosperous and with an impressive record of accomplishments within Europe and Eurasia.

And so we welcome your testimony today, Mr. Foreign Minister. And just like I said, we're very, very pleased to have you and members of your delegation with you.

I do want to emphasize a concern that we have on this commission, and that is your neighbor Belarus. One of the greatest challenges the OSCE faces is the increasing repression in Europe's last dictatorship. As author of the Belarus Democracy Act and sponsor of a newly introduced bill for 2011, I and my colleagues are deeply concerned over the crackdown against dissent in that country, and the fact that so many people that we know personally are languishing in prison and face a very uncertain future. And the use of torture, which we're all concerned about, that has been deployed by Lukashenka's henchmen raises deep concerns. And of course, the manipulation of the media, including cyberspace, to achieve Lukashenka's totalitarian ends continues to be a real issue.

The full range of fundamental freedoms, the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of religion, the right to freedom of assembly and others as we all know are under assault in a number of troubling—a number of OSCE countries today, with leaders in several bent on maintaining their offices through blatant manipulation, intimidation and worse.

So we look forward to your work. I also want to welcome the OSCE's continuing attention to the issue of anti-Semitism, which we in this commission have championed for a lot of years. And we note the great work that Rabbi Andy Baker has done as Personal Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office.

Finally, I am confident that against the backdrop of your own country's national experience, you'll use your leadership position to speak out on behalf of these human rights issues. I know it—I mean, your record before precedes you. And all of us here in this room greatly admire it. And again, I want you to know that we pledge our cooperation and whatever support we can provide to your tenure as Chair-in-Office. Please count it, as we're a phone call away.

I'd like to yield to the Co-Chair, Mr. Ben Cardin.

**HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, CO-CHAIR, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. CARDIN. Well, thank you, Congressman Smith. And I join you in welcoming the Foreign Minister to our hearing, the first hearing of the Helsinki Commission this year. And I think it's appropriate that a Chair-in-Office be our first witness. And we very much appreciate you being here. We'd also like to welcome the Ambassador to our committee room. And thank you for the leadership that Lithuania will be using in regards to the work of the OSCE.

As Congressman Smith said, 20 years ago I was in Vilnius as the Soviet tanks were in the city. We did go to the TV towers and saw the oppression of the Soviet Union. And when we—our visit there did not meet much pleasure from the Soviets.

We went—but we expressed ourselves. And I was proud of our commitment to an independent Lithuania. We had never recognized the Soviets' takeover of the country. And I'm very proud of the role that the Lithuanian-American community has played in speaking out for a free Lithuania.

So it was very satisfying to return to Vilnius for the OSCE parliamentary assembly and see just a vibrant country, a vibrant city, a free country, and the progress that has been made in such a short period of time to be one of the leaders in Europe. So it's with pride that we welcome you here. And we look at Lithuania as a true friend of the United States and one of the countries that has represented the type of commitment to the OSCE principles that we believe is a model for other countries to follow.

Having said that, I do want to specifically mention the issue that I spoke to the President, the Speaker, and the Foreign Minister when I was in Vilnius in 2009. And that was the need for Lithuania to enact laws to resolve long-standing claims regarding wrongfully confiscated property. Unfortunately, notwithstanding some movement on this issue last year, legislation has not yet been passed.

And I know there are difficult political and economic factors. But the longer it takes to get this done, the more difficult it is. And time, to me, is critically important. These issues have been left unresolved for too long. And every year, it makes it more complicated and more difficult to resolve these property issues. I would just urge you particularly in your leadership role to set the right example and to see that that legislation, in fact, is enacted in your country.

As you assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE amid a full range of challenges especially in the human dimension, given the mandate of the Helsinki Commission, we are particularly focused on this aspect of the OSCE's work—that is, the human rights dimension. We know there are a lot—they are multidimensional. We know there are a lot of issues that are interrelated; when you're dealing with trafficking of humans or combating corruption, it very much affects all three baskets of the OSCE.

In that regard, I'd like to mention an initiative that this commission has taken a very high priority and that's the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. There's been a lot of progress made and in our Parliamentary Assembly, we have adopted resolutions encouraging all states to fully participate.

But I want you do know that the United States, through the work of this Commission, has taken a leadership role on transparency. Last year, in the Dodd-Frank legislation, an amendment that was authored by Senator Lugar and myself was incorporated that requires all mineral companies that are listed on the U.S. Stock Exchange to file their transparency on mineral contracts.

This is an effort to make sure that the mineral wealth of a country is not the mineral curse. So many of the poor nations of the world that are mineral wealthy find that their mineral values go to funding corruption rather than helping the people of the nation.

I mention that to you because I think during this year, we can make strong progress towards transparency and good governance, which I think is a critically important part of the OSCE work.

And let me also echo Chairman Smith's remarks regarding the important work of OSCE in combatting anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. As you may be aware, the Helsinki Commission was the first to raise concerns of the spike of anti-Semitism and related violence in the OSCE region back in 2002 and we continue to closely monitor this issue and urge you to do so as well.

We think this is a year of opportunity within the OSCE and we pledge that our Commission wants to work very closely with the chair, with the Parliamentary Assembly and with the Permanent Council to do what we can to advance the principles.

Let me apologize in advance. I'm not going to be able to stay through the hearing. There's an event that was scheduled in the White House that I need to be at and I apologize for not being able to stay through the hearings.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Cardin, thank you very much. I yield to Ranking Member Hastings.

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

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And Ben, we don't feel sorry for you, going to the White House. I mean you know—no sympathy here. [Laughter.]

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE. Find out what they're serving. [Laughter.]

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Chairman, before we go forward, if protocol would allow, could we invite the Foreign Minister to come to the table? He's seated at the back. Yes, sir. OK.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to extend a personal welcome to our colleague, my good friend from Georgia, Phil Gingrey to the Commission. I keep trying to get away from Phil. We served together on the Rules Committee and now, here we are again. But we had fun and we'll have fun.

Mr. Foreign Minister, I'm so pleased to welcome you and especially as Chairman-in-Office. You certainly are no stranger to many of us who are mindful of your leadership on the Lithuanian delegation to OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meetings. I think we first met at the Seimas and I am ever grateful for the gracious hospitality, the number of years that I came to Lithuania.

The only exception I have is on too many occasions, I ate too much blynai and I brought it back with me and it's showing in my middle. My responsibilities as the PA President brought me to the far corners of the expansive OSCE region from the five Central

Asian countries and from the Balkans to the Baltic. Our counties and just about countries and just about every place in between.

It's been my privilege, as you would know, to head a number of international election observations along with Lithuanian colleagues on behalf of the OSCE. And I've also had the pleasure of visiting most of the OSCE field missions and appreciate your commitment, Mr. Minister, to do the same to get out into the field, where the real work of the OSCE is accomplished.

The Western Balkans continue to be the primary focus of the OSCE field resources. And as the situation in the region improves, the organization may wish to look for ways to streamline and downsize its activities, freeing some resources that perhaps could be directed elsewhere. At the same time, other international actors like the United Nations are also moving their missions and personnel from the Balkans to other areas around the globe. And OSCE might be considered a useful last presence until stability, democracy and integration are assured.

We also know of lingering problems in the region such as the political turmoil in Albania. And I did the Albanian elections with OSCE observers and found it particularly difficult. But your chairmanship effectively responded to discourage further violence and I'm deeply appreciative of that, as are my colleagues and hope that you continue as they approach their next critical local elections.

The situation in Kosovo and Bosnia also remain of particular concern and official corruption and organized crime both plague all the countries of the region. I hope today, that you will give us an assessment of the OSCE's potential to deal with these regional issues during the course of your Chairmanship.

And I would point out, additionally, Mr. Minister, as the Assembly's Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, many of us have pursued extensive engagement with the countries of the broader Middle East region. Against this backdrop, I will be especially interested in your assessment of the upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt and their implications for security in the Mediterranean region and beyond.

Now, Chairman Smith and myself and Mr. Aderholt, who isn't with us right at this moment. I know the three of us will be in Vienna next week and I'm mindful that there are preparations for interaction with our Mediterranean partners.

Finally, while I comment the ongoing work of the OSCE in promoting tolerance and combatting anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination and racism, too often, commitments on paper have yet to be translated into action, Mr. Minister. And I would note that the year 2011 has been designated the International Year for People of African Descent by the United Nations.

I—participating with Congressman Smith and Senator Cardin—have fought very actively in the arena in the OSCE sphere with regard to anti-Semitism. And more recently, I, along with others, have begun efforts to address racism in the arena. And I would urge that you give consideration to that subject as well.

Our work here at the Helsinki Commission is to get countries to live up to their commitments and our shared commitments. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, Chairman Smith and welcome, again, Minister.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Hastings. I'd like to now yield to the newest member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, a medical doctor and a very good friend, Dr. Phil Gingrey.

**HON. PHIL GINGREY, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. GINGREY. Well, Chairman Smith, thank you very much and Co-Chairman Cardin and my good friend, Alcee Hastings. It is an honor to be selected by my speaker to have an opportunity to serve on this Commission, to be 1 of 9 House members and to join with our Senate colleagues and Department of State, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense on being on this Commission.

I look forward to your Chairmanship. I have also visited your country and your capital city. I look forward to listening very carefully to your presentation today. I, too, might not be able to stay for the entire presentation because of other commitments. But just let me just say that I'm happy to be here. I plan to be a very active member and I look forward to it. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Dr. Gingrey. Let me, before going into our very distinguished Foreign Minister, Mr. Ažubalis, let me introduce Mark Milosch, our Chief of Staff for the Commission. Mark got his J.D. from the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. in European history from the University of Iowa and he's here with us today.

And Mr.—Foreign Minister, we really look forward to working with you going forward, that we have a very, very productive year. So the floor is yours, sir.

**AUDRONIUS AŽUBALIS, CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE, ORGANIZATION
FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Amb. AŽUBALIS. Chairman Smith, Co-Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hastings, Mr. Gingrey: You know, the possibility to be here, of course, could be measured also by your actions 20 years ago, by your solidarity.

Today, I have a privilege and honor to be here and to witness you—our efforts and our achievements and our view on the world, which has not become a more easy place than it was 20 years ago. But at least my country, and some others to whom you helped so much, lives a normal life, sometimes maybe even a dull one. But I think there's nothing wrong with that.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, 35 years ago, in 1976, following the signing of a final act, a Helsinki committee was formed in Vilnius. I need not remind you that Lithuania was not free at that time. I associated myself with the members of that new Helsinki committee. In 1976, for this action, the state authorities had me similarly removed from university.

Today, I have an honor to appear before your Commission as Lithuanian Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. In this capacity, I recently visited Moscow, where I met with my old friend, Mrs. Lyudmila Alekseeva, Chairwoman of a Moscow Helsinki group. I was reminded that 35 years ago, physicist Yuri Orlov established the public group to promote fulfillment of the Helsinki Accords in the U.S.S.R., Soviet Union. On 11 and 12 May this year, Russia

will commemorate this event and pay tribute to those courageous individuals who stood against totalitarianism and oppressions.

A little later, the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the birth of Andrei Sakharov will provide another occasion. I draw the attention of respected senators and representatives to the significance of those grassroot organizations and private individuals who continue the vision of Helsinki. Individuals like these paved the way at the beginning.

The continuous engagement of the United States with the Helsinki process and OSCE activities was always essential to the organization's success. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the United States and, in particular, the unique institution of the Helsinki Commission for their support to the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship on the follow-up to the Astana summit.

The OSCE participating States have made progress, individual and collectively, toward the goals of the Helsinki process. Today, however, we still see individuals facing challenges in securing basic human rights, ensuring there are fair elections, protecting freedom of speech and the safety of journalists and ensuring that antiterrorism measures comply with international human rights standards.

Mr. Chairman, as the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE, I have set goals that will further the key principles of the Helsinki Decalogue. Support implementation of the commitments undertaken in Paris, Istanbul and Astana. And realize the vision of the security community throughout our shared OSCE area. In this endeavor, I have already visited Vienna, Brussels, Moscow, Kiev, Moldova, Chisinau, and Tiraspol. And now, I am here. Yesterday, I was in New York.

The Chairmanship has engaged over the situation in Belarus and the OSCE presence in Minsk. OSCE's Secretary General, Mr. Brichambaut, or [inaudible] Director Janusz Lenarczyk and OSCE representative for freedom of the media, Dunja Milatovic remain in close contact with me coordinating actions in relations to Belarus.

But I must say here that what I've got, the last news today from my vice minister who is now in Belarus that the Belarusians—one goal just to keep the open OSCE presence and to monitor—with a possibility to monitor the situation in this country, to monitor possible trial processes and of course, sadly—but I must say that we got the Soviet-style nyet, no. [Inaudible].

In close coordination with the United States and European Union where chairmanship conducted preventive diplomatic efforts to help the government and opposition get out of dangerous political gridlock in Albania. [Inaudible]. My special representative for protracted conflicts together with the United Nations and E.U. co-chairs of the Geneva discussions visited key capitals and talked to key parties in preparation for the next round of the Geneva talks in March.

The resumption of the formal 5+2 negotiation format has become my key preoccupation in the last weeks. My interlocutors, High Representative Ashton, Foreign Ministers Lavrov of Russia, Gryshchenko of Ukraine and Leanca of Moldova have sent me signals of the need to move ahead. Lithuania is under no illusions about the enormity of the tasks that face us this year.

As the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, I plan to focus our attention on specific key outcomes, which we will pursue on a step-by-step basis. Our key goals: register tangible progress in addressing protracted conflicts, significantly improve our record of implementation of media freedom commitments, promote tolerance education throughout the OSCE area in order to combat hate crimes and discrimination, address transnational threats including border management and other projects involving Afghanistan, drug trafficking, cyber threats, and, last one, enhance the OSCE's role in energy security dialogue.

During my recent visit to Russia, Ukraine and Moldova, I met with the governments involved in the 5+2 talks and with the political leadership on both sides of the river Nistru. We discussed ways forward in the settlement process, fully respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

I remain cautiously optimistic that the resumption of the official negotiations in the 5+2 format, that a full agenda is achievable. Meanwhile, I recognize the need for continued focus on restoring trust between the two sides throughout the implementation of various confidence-building measures.

I will shortly meet again with the co-chairs of the Minsk group. The threat of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has never been more dangerous in recent years. Minister Lavrov and I shared our deep concern over this at that recent meeting. Long agreed-upon confidence and security-building measures must be implemented immediately.

Snipers must be withdrawn along the line of contacts. I just want to remind you of a sad statistic that over the last year the snipers, from both sides, shot 36 people. The OSCE monitoring capacity must be beefed up. There is therefore a pressing need for mechanisms and for two-way communication channels about the peace process and about public reactions to it.

Progress on the conflict in Georgia will not be easy either. I will use the Geneva Process to rebuild trust and will work to restore a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia. I will work with the participating states to explore possibilities for extending the OSCE's activities in Georgia, including a meaningful OSCE presence on the ground. Full-fledged roles played by the United Nations and the E.U. remain essential and must not be diluted.

In March, I will visit Baku, Yerevan, and Tbilisi. In all of the capitals, I will talk to my counterparts, opposition, and civil society arguing that engagement and peaceful negotiated settlements and continuing on the democratic path are the best ways to fulfill their aspirations of these proud nations for freedom, liberty and prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen, when you look at the causes of the conflict in the OSCE area, you are repeatedly struck with how often discrimination against minorities lies at the root of the problem. Working quietly and discreetly with the higher commissioner on national minorities, our Lithuanian chairmanship will continue to seek ways to guarantee minority rights. The chairmanship will continue to encourage the work of the ODIHR in support of non-discriminatory treatment of Roma and Sinti. Equality for woman and man will remain a central tenet of our programs.

Together with well-known for all of us Rabbi Andrew Baker, who has happily agreed to continue his service as a Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for combating anti-Semitism, we will hold an event in Prague next month, specifically devoted to the struggle against anti-Semitism in public discourse.

I am also pleased to tell you that by the declaration of the parliament and decision of the Lithuanian Government, Lithuania will mark the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust with a yearlong commemoration featuring numerous activities, conferences, education in the schools and acts of remembrance.

And here, dear colleagues, I have with me the program translated in English. Later on, this program will be given to you. And if you will find appropriate time and place and activities, you are most welcome to come and to take part in these events.

My personal representative in combating discrimination against Christians and other religions will organize an event on this topic in Rome in May. My personal representative on combating discrimination against Muslims will roll out new guidelines for educational tools. Our community is safest when human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are upheld. Working with a representative on freedom of media, I will call an OSCE conference on the safety of journalists in Vilnius on 7–8 June. I am speaking out in support of the freedom of media.

We will look again at our individual electoral processes and work harder to see that commitments are lived up to. The follow-up process of implementing ODIHR election-related recommendation is an integral part of this process. Shortly, the ODIHR will present its report on the presidential elections in Belarus. Despite certain steps in the right directions, the people in Belarus were not given the opportunity to participate in elections that were consistent with OSCE commitments.

The decision by Belarus to close down the OSCE office in Minsk eliminates a valuable resource for helping the authorities in civil society in Belarus address the shortcomings. The activities that were within the mandate of that office should continue. And I will work through all concerned to make this happen. But as I said before, not much hope.

And of course, I have encouraged the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to continue cooperating with the election observation missions from ODIHR in monitoring elections with each of these borders bringing their own special talents and strengths to that essential task.

Dear members of the Commission, some of the greatest threats to our individual and collective security are transnational threats. I am speaking of challenges to cyber security, support for terrorism, the trafficking of human beings, weapons and drugs.

I am particularly satisfied to report, based on resultant travels and discussions, that there is broad E.U., United States, and Russian support to address transnational threats related to terrorism, cyber security and drug trafficking and to intensify OSCE engagement with Afghanistan; particularly through the border management and security programs and better coordination on the regional level and between different actors.

The OSCE cannot launch large-scale projects inside Afghanistan. But it can continue to bring Afghans to our programs and work with border-control programs. We are to make better use of our OSCE field operations in Central Asia as well as OSCE institutions in Dushanbe and Bishkek.

Lithuania has constantly supported strengthening energy security in the OSCE area. We will speak to promote energy dialogue as a factor for peace and cooperation. We will promote dialogue on energy security issues by using the OSCE's unique framework that involves some of the main energy producers, consumers and transit countries.

Summing up, throughout this year, the Chairmanship will be able to advance the OSCE agenda as long as key players, the United States, Russian Federation, and the E.U. support the relevance of and our commitment to the principles on which this organization is based, and maintain the level of cooperation and dialogue, which was evident at the Astana OSCE summit.

The OSCE remains the most inclusive and comprehensive regional security organization in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area. It will continue to provide a unique forum. I intend that we follow a pragmatic and constructive course. We must move forward one step at a time, promoting our ideals and commitments in issues and regions where we can make a difference.

Mr. Chairman, members of Commission, thank you for your kind attention. I would like to ask Mr. Smith, is it appropriate now to make some answers, which were raised by some of members of your Commission?

Mr. SMITH. Sure, we're very flexible. Please do.

Amb. AŽUBALIS. First of all, I would like to inform about—regarding the question, which was raised by Mr. Cardin—about fear, treatment of the past and compensation on lost properties. I just want to say that in November 2010, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania approved the first reading of a draft law on the compensation of the immovable property of the Jewish communities. The draft law was approved by vast majority of the parliamentarians from all political parties: 67 votes for and only 2 votes against.

Further legal procedures include the deliberations on the draft law in the parliamentary committees and commissions. And of course, I have no—I would say—responsibility to talk how this law will move. But let me express my belief—and I believe that during this spring session, which will start at March 11—we will move ahead.

And the last one was about our attitude—chairmanship attitude—toward the event in Tunisia and Egypt. Here, I just want to say one thing, very simple. The OSCE, as you know perfectly, has no economical leverages, has no military power. But the OSCE has a unique three institutions: ODIHR, the Office of the High Commissioner on national minorities, and of course, the office of Madame Dunja Milatovic on the freedom of the press.

And we are treating, of course, these two countries with all respect as partner OSCE countries. And if there would be such a small [deleted: smallest] request from one another country to share the expertise on consulting, how to organize future elections, how to organize observation of these elections, how to involve in this

processes civic society, I think no doubt I would use all my—I would say—powers as a Chair in office to urge these institutions to go and to help. But first of all, we should get the request.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Foreign Minister Ažubalis, thank you very much for your testimony, for answering those initial questions raised by Commissioners. Let me just get right to Belarus if I could. Earlier this week, I—and I'm sure several of the other Commissioners—met with several of the family members who are obviously in great agony over their loved ones being incarcerated.

And my question would be, what do you think the OSCE can do on the ground? I know that the Minsk OSCE mission has been obviously removed from the country or sent out. But what can we do—or what can you do—to ensure or try to ensure that the prisoners are not being tortured? Is there any coordination contemplated with the ICRC or any other organization?

And as you know, the Obama Administration and the EU both have initiated significant sanctions, ratcheted up those sanctions with regards to Lukashenka. Do you have any other ideas what might be done to further isolate this despotic regime and the cruelty that he practices everyday—that is to say, Lukashenka?

Amb. AŽUBALIS. You know, Mr. Chairman, it's a very tough question. [Laughter.] First of all, I would like to say that as you know, OSCE presence requires that host nation's consent.

Mr. SMITH. Right.

Amb. AŽUBALIS. And here, we failed to convince them because first time, they announced—I got the call from my counterpart Martynaw on the eve of a new year—on Christmas, sorry, on Christmas. And he just informed me that we are going to close. After that, I've sent a numerous number of our delegations from our diplomats trying to convince. I've received in Vilnius some of the officials from Minsk also trying to convince them. But it doesn't help.

Of course, I consulted all my partners, starting from German, Poles and others. And but it looks like this regime is going directly to self-isolation. But I must say that autonomous OSCE institutions will be encouraged to continue their efforts to get into this country and to witness—to help, all the possibilities that they could. But at present time, as I said, I got the message, till the—till the spring, there is not much hope to see.

But on other hand, what we could do—just—let's take CiO conference in Vilnius on June 7, 8 on the safety of journalists. The OSCE could do just one thing to highlight, to put the fire—light—to put the focus, international focus, on one or another issue and which is our strength, to show that something is going wrong, to invite a witness as now I'm witnessing in front of you, to invite those family members who are jailed, to invite international experts and just to give as much as possible international opinion pressure.

This is our main tool. And I'm not going to give up this and in all possible occasion, I will speak about these sad events in Belarus.

Mr. SMITH. I deeply appreciate this. This Commission will do likewise. I think what Lukashenka is counting on is for our angst

and anger and concern to abate, you know, to get displaced by what's happening in Egypt or some other hotspot. And he needs to know that the concern will only grow and the scrutiny will only increase and his isolation, if that is his choice, will only become more acute.

And frankly, the day will come when he will be held to account, like Milosevic, had he not died prematurely, at The Hague for crimes against humanity; because certainly, Lukashenka ought to be in the dock, the sooner the better.

Let me ask you very briefly and I'll just go through a few questions and then yield to my colleagues. With regards to the media freedom conference that you are contemplating on June 7th and 8th, I know this will be a part of it, but just to add the strongest emphasis and exclamation point to it, but the bigger the focus on the Internet and the new modes of media, the better.

We're seeing everywhere that that's what Lukashenka and others are using to break up—Ahmadinejad certainly did in Tehran and they're getting a great deal of aiding and abetting by the dictatorship in China. We have numerous reports that the Chinese are very active in Minsk as they are all over the world selling their tools of repression.

And to the extent possible to expose any complicity by U.S. corporations as well as European corporations in creating cybertools that are then used against the dissidents and human rights activists, I think that needs more emphasis rather than less going forward.

Let me also just ask you, we often recognize that this commission has—and I'm sure you have as well—that anti-Semitism often spikes concurrently with activities in the Middle East. And certainly, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt could be the harbinger of another Hamas and much more anti-Semitic and anti-Israel perspective.

I would hope—and I'm sure Rabbi Andy Baker is onto this, but as Chair-in-Office, whatever proactively can be done to mitigate, you know, the rising anti-Semitism that will surely flow, I believe, from activities in Egypt and in other places like in the Middle East. I mean crisis often leads to more anti-Semitic activities. And it gets whipped up by those who hate Jews.

So I would hope, proactively, whatever you could do. I will be abroad with you and Rabbi Baker. So I'm looking forward to that. Thank you for scheduling that and for taking the lead on that. It is certainly deeply appreciated.

And finally, on the issue of human trafficking, which you referenced in your statement, this commission, as well, has been leaders, I think, over the years on it. I would ask if we could look—if you would look at the increasing problem of runaways and younger and younger women who are trafficked.

We did a—we, the United States, some of our NGOs, Shared Hope International and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children was very much a part of this—looked at the runaway issue in the United States and found to our shock and dismay that at least 100,000 American girls who start out as runaways, within 24 to 48 hours, are often turned into—forced into prostitu-

tion by pimps who drug them and beat them. And the average age is 13.

And these young girls have not only their innocence and their lives and their bodies exploited by these traffickers, surely, that's not a phenomenon just happening here. And I think we all have to bring much more attention to that terrible exploitation.

Yes, we know that by force, fraud and coercion, many women in their 20s are compelled into modern-day slavery. But increasingly, it's getting younger. And so I act as the Special Representative for trafficking in the PA and would hope that, you know, we could coordinate even more in the coming year.

And one last best-practice idea that I would ask you to promulgate throughout the OSCE region and that is an idea that was thought up by our friends at American Airlines. And that is to train flight attendants to be the eyes and ears, especially the eyes, when especially women are on airline flights, to recognize what a trafficking victim looks like. Don't take action herself or themselves—the man or woman who happens to be the flight attendant. [Inaudible].

Let the pilot know and when the offloading happens at the point of destination, they can separate them and find out whether or not that's a trafficking victim. Numerous instances of trafficking have been busted by U.S. law enforcement as our airline folks get trained up in very simple procedures like that.

I would hope that would spread throughout the OSCE region overnight to stop this cruelty called human trafficking. So I just share that with you as a best practice and hopefully, you can do it. But any answers to any of those questions and then I yield to Commissioner Hastings. Thank you.

Amb. AŽUBALIS. Thank you, dear colleague. First of all, I would like say that of course, when you mention the freedom of electronic media, of course it's an inseparable part of any other media—there's more than one. And that's why we are going to discuss it, as I said in this conference.

And also, I would like to pay your attention that we are also going to discuss this question. It's on May 8 and 11 in Warsaw because in Warsaw, we are going to celebrate 20 years of ODIHR's activities. And it's a right place to discuss these questions because I think it's a right place and right institution. I'm also encouraging you to come or to send your experts.

Mr. SMITH. And please be looking at, with all due respect, at the Chinese connection. They have mastered the art—

Amb. AŽUBALIS. I got it. Okay, we—I mean it will be on the table. How successful it will be, we will see. Now, you touched very fundamental and very sad question. It's human trafficking. But you know, I think it's—I just could praise your initiative to train the stewardess, stewards in the airplanes.

But the most—and the trafficking mostly going on the ground. That's why I'm happy that we got—we're understanding with U.S. officials from Russians and from Central Asia countries to work closely during this Chairmanship and hopefully, the next one, on improving the border regime and border procedures and strengthening the border control because here, I would say, biggest chain—

if you are talking about such kind of events in the whole OSCE area. [Inaudible].

That's what I think—it's not just human trafficking. It's drug trafficking and all these other related things—guns trafficking and so on. That's why I think it fits to what you said and we are really—have intentions to work with the Central Asian countries. I've met during the General Assembly of United Nations this autumn in New York. I've met all my counterparts from Central Asia.

And we've discussed by our possible activities because as you know, you couldn't put a question on the table if you want real—to get the real success. You should inform the other side that you are going to do that and that. But I'm happy to inform you that all my counterparts from Central Asia countries, we agreed on that.

And we're—second thing about spreading anti-Semitism. I must say that not just anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity is also spreading. And here, I just want to say that we do not need even—of course, we do, to look somewhere. But in Europe, we see this also, there's some—not very, I would say, good tendencies.

If you would look to the report on Tel Aviv University, which was made regarding the anti-Semitism cases in 2010, you will see some discouraging numbers. But also, as I said, in Prague, we are going to address very strongly on anti-Semitism in public discourse because that's what—how it started—such events. And of course, in Rome, as I said, we are going to discuss the anti-Christian tendencies in current world. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Just to conclude, the—Pope Benedict has said that the greatest persecution of all is against Christians and that is absolutely true in most of the dictatorships like China, North Korea. But there is a growing, I believe, discriminatory attitude towards many Christians in Europe that as you pointed out, has really gone unfocused upon. So I'm very glad that you will be bringing light and attention to that. So thank you.

Commissioner Hastings?

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister. When I listened to you and your ambitious travel schedule, I get tired. [Laughter]. I know you must. And I also admire very much the ambitious goals you put forward in your presentation to us.

And I would only add that one of the things in the 15 years, now, that I have been working in the OSCE sphere, that I find continuously that change, almost like in this institution, is slow. And quite honestly, not because you're in office and I perceive you as a friend. I did almost every Chair-in-Office, know them in a previous way in their respective capacities in their countries.

But at the very same time, I don't think a year is enough to do the things that you—or any Chair-in-Office—ought to. But it seems to me that somebody needs to raise it inside on the OSCE and it may be something on your way out that you would do.

We have similar portions of our institution that I have disagreements with. I think that in our intelligence community, people should serve there 12 years. It takes 6 years to learn just about a little bit of everything and then it's almost time to leave. And so

that's the same thing. And I recognize that you'll be in Troika and all of that, but it might be something you may wish to consider.

Additionally, in your reply to your reply to the question that I raised—all of us have watched in amazement the dramatic changes in government that have occurred during the past several weeks in Tunisia and in Egypt. And you mentioned some of the tools that OSCE has to assist if a request is made by any of those countries.

I wish to make a commitment to you right now that I will do everything that I can as the representative to the Mediterranean partners from the Parliamentary Assembly to seek out such a request and no later than yesterday, meeting with Ambassador Tekaya, the Tunisian Minister—Ambassador to the United States. [Inaudible].

I raised that question with him and he assured me, one, that in their election, which is to take place inside 6 months and I think that's ambitious, the same as in Egypt. They're saying 6 months. I think that's pretty ambitious. It would seem reasonably that a year would be proper time for them to get lift. [Inaudible].

And I recognize the pressures that they are receiving from their populations. But their Ambassador assured me that he would make such a request, so I will be on the phone with him telling him about this hearing. And I ask him to have his Ambassador in Vienna to meet with me next week so that I can raise a similar question.

So I'm going to commit to you that I'm going to try to get that request at least from Tunisia. I serve as the Chair of the Tunisian Caucus here in the House of Representatives. I put that to the side, really hope that during your tenure, that you will do everything you can to enhance the engagement of the Mediterranean partners.

And I think it now is more significant than at other times, even from its beginnings. The one question that I have comes, again, from another visit. Day before yesterday, I met with Foreign Minister Gryshchenko. He's here in Washington doing work as are you in meeting with the State Department and other officials.

I didn't come away from that meeting too optimistic about Ukraine and human rights and the media. And I note from your travels—and I commend you—for example, when you were in Russia, you did meet with NGOs. I also know that you have been recently in Ukraine. And when you were there, gave us the benefit of your thoughts.

Mine are that Ukraine is moving more toward authoritarianism and that's my term. And if you had asked me when I left Lithuania—when I first met you on my way to Ukraine, if you had asked me then, after the Orange Revolution, I would have thought all of the bright aspects for democracy to bloom would have occurred.

And now, regrettably, I feel very strongly that there is a retrenchment there similar to the retrenchment that I witnessed in Russia. And if you would comment on both, I would appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Amb. AZUBALIS. Thank you. First, I would like to say that during my trip to Russia and to Ukraine and during the meeting with their state officials, including my counterparts, I raised the ques-

tions, which worries us, about the freedom of assembly, about human right defenders, about the fear trials.

And after that, I gave this—my evaluation of the situation to the media, which is, by the way, fairly reported, including from—starting from Russia and finishing with Ukraine. And of course, we see some place for improvement—no doubt. Nobody's going to say that everything is fine with all these issues in these countries.

But at the same time, I just would like to give you my personal belief. I believe that it takes time—it takes a very concentrated effort, chairmanship by chairmanship, including other institutions, other organizations. And we should be very persistent. We shouldn't give up. We shouldn't put under listed goals, let's say, that someone's saying—someone would say that our goal after 3 years to see this or this country fully democratic and so on.

I think it will be too naive. I think we should be in process. We shouldn't observe process. We should be in process. It means that we should be engaged in these countries. We should communicate. We should help the civic society to grow civic society. I think this is important.

I think to leave civic society aside—I think that the best example is Tunisia and Egypt. We left it. We must admit. We talk with leadership. That's what I think our primary goal is, to work in this direction. And to say that one country is going somewhere wrong—I think that only one way to secure—I would say the development toward the democratic changes, you should be present. [Inaudible].

That's what I just—could promise—that during my year, I will be—Lithuania will be present. And also, I would like just ask you, the United States, and your committee to be present, to support the civic organizations, to support the human right defenders. This is only one way—how we could [inaudible] things. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Gingrey?

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Chairman, thank you and Mr. Minister, let me ask you this question: In spite of repeated objections from the international community and the Government of Georgia, Russia continues to build up its military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Georgian territories.

Georgian displaced citizens also continue to be prevented from returning to their homes in these occupied territories. As many have pointed out previously, Russia's actions go against the August 12th, 2008 ceasefire agreement which ended the Russia-Georgia war and violate its Helsinki commitments.

How may the OSCE's conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation experience in Southeastern Europe further the rule of law and peace-building efforts in Georgia? I know that's a long question, but we would appreciate your response.

Amb. AZUBALIS. You know, during few last years, we lost two field missions, one in Georgia and now, the second one in Belarus. But I think that we shouldn't give up and I'm using any—every opportunity when I'm talking with my counterparts and counterpart from Russia to raise this question about the possibility and beneficial possibility for all sides to restore the OSCE presence, I would say, more gently in the region of conflict.

I also, am going to Georgia quite soon and I will urge the Georgian side to be supportive to implementing the confidence-building

measures along the administrative border. I think here, we should start from the scratch. But at the same time, as you know, you know, it's—our organization, which we are all members, have their own rules—have their limits.

But it would be—and fear if—it would be not advocate and not to participate actively in the Geneva Process. [Inaudible]. I see the Geneva Process as a very important one. I would say the starting point from—I don't want to say to the bright future—but to more peaceful and comprehensive settlement of this conflict, of this situation.

That's why I was quite happy that yesterday, when I presented our program to the Security Council, I got unanimous support from the members of Security Council for funding and continuing United Nations' participation in Geneva Process, which also shows that you know, we should consolidate our efforts. Thank you.

Mr. GINGREY. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Just one final question, if I could. With regards to Kyrgyzstan, as you know, after many months of negotiation, the OSCE has developed and deployed, I should say, police assistance mission to Kyrgyzstan. Could you just speak to that and how well you think that's going?

And in Central Asia in general, you know, one of thoughts of the—having the Kazakhstan chairmanship might be to increase OSCE engagement in Central Asia. It's not clear that that's happened. Do you have any plans to try to, you know, make some improvements in that region?

Amb. AZUBALIS. Thank you. I just want to say, first of all, that of course, the Kazakh's OSCE Chairmanship and with Astana Summit itself, brought new attention and momentum to OSCE activities in this region. And I think we should use this good momentum to strengthen the presence—OSCE presence.

And I think that the past 2 years—we also have seen a significant expansion of our practical work, of our field missions in the region, in particular, on broader management—border management and law-enforcement training. That's what I mentioned before. And in addition to the Bishkek academy, we have seen the opening of a separate customs training academy in Bishkek. Also, we will see participation in a Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. And we believe that there is a significant potential to build on these efforts.

And what I would like to say also to witness you, but then[incoherent] I've met the Tajik minister, my counterpart. He was so supportive to this kind of OSCE activities. Now, talking about Kyrgyzstan, I must say that of course, the OSCE always gets a lot of critics. But you should agree that last year, the OSCE reacted quickly to interethnic tensions and violence in Kyrgyzstan.

I think it's—it shows what—if you want [laughter] you could do something. And of course, its response included the engagement of ODIHR and this police deployment observation team and I just look forward to the report of an independent international commission of inquiry chaired by Kimmo Kiljunen at President Otunbayeva.

I think of first of all, if you want to remove the tensions, we should finish with this report, to look at this report and to start

to the reconciliation of this interethnic conflict. I'm also going to visit Kyrgyzstan after Kazakhstan in Osh as well. But to say more, before my trip [laughter] I just—I would like just to keep silent—we'll see. After that, maybe I will get more expertise.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Ažubalis, thank you so much for your testimony. And you know, the OSCE really is fortunate to have you at the helm. We're very grateful for your time and for your leadership. The hearing is adjourned unless Alcee, you want to—

Mr. HASTINGS. I just wanted to say one thing. I would be terribly remiss if I did not ask you to use the immense resources of the Parliamentary Assembly with reference to our matters as well as ODIHR. [Laughter.]

Amb. AŽUBALIS. I just—Mr. Chairman, if you allowed me just to respond to Mr. Hastings. I just want to say that today, I talk by phone with president of Parliamentary Assembly, Petros Efthymiou and I did it numerous number of times before. That's what I—I just—I'm convinced that political part of OSCE should be used, should be explored.

And I told earlier—I think it was in the beginning of—end of January, I talked to Petros, that look, you will be requested and politicians from Parliamentary Assembly will be requested to every—our event. It's up to you to be active or not [laughter]. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:42 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDICES

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

I am pleased to join my colleagues for this, the Helsinki Commission's first hearing of the 112th Congress. Like Chairman Smith, I recall vividly my first visit to Lithuania 20 years ago this month. We arrived at a time of great promise and potential peril, with the outcome of the moves to reestablish the country's independence far from guaranteed. Indeed, Soviet troops continued to occupy some key buildings in Vilnius. Most memorable was our visit to the radio and television tower, the scene of bloodshed just weeks before. The people of Lithuania have made tremendous strides in the years since, and I was pleased to visit your country in 2009 for the Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Mr. Minister, as I think you know, during that visit one of the issues I discussed with the President, the Speaker, and the Foreign Minister was the need for Lithuania to enact laws to resolve longstanding claims regarding wrongfully confiscated property. Unfortunately, notwithstanding some movement on this issue last year, legislation has not yet been passed. I know that there are difficult political and economic factors, but these difficulties should not be an excuse for inaction—every effort must be made now to overcome them and ensure that just compensation legislation is passed, prompted action is essential.

Minister, as you assume the chairmanship of the OSCE amid a full range of challenges, especially in the human dimension. Given the mandate of the Helsinki Commission, we are particularly focused on this aspect of the OSCE's work. At the same time, it is important to recognize that many of the challenges we face are multidimensional in nature, issues such as trafficking in humans and combating corruption. In this regard, I would mention an initiative that deserves support, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

I echo Chairman Smith's remarks regarding the important work of the OSCE in combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. As you may be aware, the Helsinki Commission was the first to raise concerns over the spike of anti-Semitism and related violence in the OSCE region back in 2002. We continue to closely monitor this issue and urge you to do so as well.

Thank you, and I look forward to your remarks.



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