Public Law 101-69
101st Congress

Joint Resolution

Aug. 2, 1989
[S.J. Res. 150]

To designate August 1, 1989, as "Helsinki Human Rights Day".

Whereas August 1, 1989, will be the fourteenth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) (hereafter in this preamble referred to as the "Helsinki accords");

Whereas on August 1, 1975, the Helsinki accords were agreed to by the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Yugoslavia;

Whereas the participating States have committed themselves to balanced progress in all areas of the Helsinki accords;

Whereas the Helsinki accords recognize the inherent relationship between respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the attainment of genuine security;

Whereas the Helsinki accords express the commitment of the participating States to "recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and cooperation among themselves as among all States";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States on whose territory national minorities exist to "respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law" and that such States "will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and

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fundamental freedoms and will in this manner, protect their legitimate interests in this sphere";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "constantly respect these rights and freedoms in their mutual relations" and that such States "will endeavor jointly and separately, including in cooperation with the United Nations, to promote universal and effective respect for them";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "conform the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms to "act in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and to "fulfill their obligations as set forth in the international declarations and agreements in this field, including inter alia the International Covenants on Human Rights, by which they may be bound";

Whereas the Helsinki accords by incorporation also express the commitment of the participating States to guarantee the right of the individual to leave his own country and return to such country;

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "facilitate freer movement and contacts, individually and collectively, whether privately or officially, among persons, institutions and organizations of the participating States, and to contribute to the solution of the humanitarian problems that arise in that connection";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "favorably consider applications for travel with the purpose of allowing persons to enter or leave their territory temporarily, and on a regular basis if desired, in order to visit members of their families";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "deal in a positive and humanitarian spirit with the applications of persons who wish to be reunited with members of their family" and "to deal with applications in this field as expeditiously as possible";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitments of the participating States to "examine favorably and on the basis of humanitarian considerations requests for exit or entry permits from persons who have decided to marry a citizen from another participating State";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "facilitate wider travel by their citizens for personal or professional reasons";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "facilitate the freer and wider dissemination of information of all kinds, to encourage cooperation in the field of information and the exchange of information with other countries";

Whereas all the participating States, including the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, in agreeing to the Helsinki accords, have made a commitment

to adhere to the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms as embodied in the Helsinki accords;

Whereas, despite some significant improvements in some of these countries, the aforementioned Governments still have the worst performance records and have failed to fully implement their obligations under Principle VII of the Helsinki accords to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and under Basket III of the Helsinki accords to promote free movement of people, ideas and information;

Whereas representatives from the signatory States convened in Vienna on November 4, 1986, to review implementation and address issues of compliance with the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki accords;

Whereas representatives from the signatory States reached consensus on the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting on January 19, 1989, a document which has added clarity and precision to the obligations undertaken by the States in signing the Helsinki accords; and

Whereas by agreeing to the document, the signatory States "reaffirmed their commitment to the CSCE process and underlined its essential role in increasing confidence, in opening up new ways for cooperation, in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus strengthening international security": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That—

(1) August 1, 1989, the fourteenth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereinafter referred to as the "Helsinki accords") is designated as "Helsinki Human Rights Day";

(2) the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation reasserting the American commitment to full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki accords, urging all signatory nations to abide by their obligations under the Helsinki accords, and encouraging the people of the United States to join the President and Congress in observance of the Helsinki Human Rights Day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities;

(3) the President is further requested to continue his efforts to achieve full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki accords by raising the issue of noncompliance on the part of any signatory nation which may be in violation (in particular, the Governments of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania);

(4) the President is further requested to convey to all signatories of the Helsinki accords that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a vital element of further progress in the ongoing Helsinki process; and

(5) the President is authorized to convey to allies and friends of the United States that unity on the question of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential means of promoting the full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki accords.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of the Senate is directed to transmit copies of this joint resolution to the President, the Secretary of State, and the Ambassadors of the thirty-four Helsinki signatory nations.

Approved August 2, 1989.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 150:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 135 (1989):
June 9, considered and passed Senate.
July 31, considered and passed House.