
The United States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: A Partnership for Advancing Freedom

**By
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I am pleased to be here in this year marking the 30th anniversary of the *Helsinki Final Act* to discuss the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its role in advancing not only the interests but the values of our nation. I am grateful for the leadership and support you and other members of the commission have given to the Helsinki principles and OSCE over the years.

In his second Inaugural Address, President Bush declared a policy of promoting democracy and freedom throughout the world. The OSCE, Mr. Chairman, is the premiere institution for advancing freedom in the Euro-Atlantic region. On human rights and support for democracy, the so-called human dimension, its expertise and accomplishments are unparalleled. Its election observation methodology represents the gold standard in this field. And the OSCE's efforts have been instrumental in advancing democracy.

The organization has undertaken groundbreaking work in the promotion of tolerance and in combating anti-semitism and other forms of intolerance. The OSCE is a valuable partner in our efforts to promote basic freedoms and human rights, including religious freedom and freedom of the media. Its field missions are vital to the OSCE's work in many areas, and we strongly support their works in promoting security through good human rights, strong civil societies, and democratic practices.

The OSCE also performs important work in the security and economic spheres; it is a key instrument in helping solve regional conflicts, in countering terrorism, and combating trafficking in persons. The significant role the OSCE in promoting democracy and freedom was well illustrated during the last year in the impartial election observation missions it conducted, most notably in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Citizens of these countries demanded their leaders' adherence to OSCE commitments and to principles of freedom and democracy. They said "enough" to fraudulent elections. OSCE helped them voice their opinions and give them a legitimate vote. Moreover, initial fraudulent elections in Ukraine bore witness to the importance of thorough and objective election observation, observation which provided both the international community and domestic citizens with a credible assessment on which to base demands for a legitimate outcome. The OSCE is continuing to work with the governments and civil society in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and other countries to help them create and maintain democratic and open societies based on the rule of law, which will make them stable and secure neighbors.

Another success this year was the OSCE Cordoba Conference. This well-attended event successfully drew high-level attention, not only to the problems of anti-semitism and intolerance, but also to best practices for combating them. We believe that the OSCE should follow up on the 2004 Sofia Tolerance decision and the 2005 Cordoba conference, through regional seminars or expert-level meetings on implementation in 2006. These will generate even more enthusiasm among governmental and non-government experts for implementing OSCE commitments and focus attention on specific Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) projects and national best practices. We support having high-level conferences along the lines of Cordoba and its predecessors every other year, to ensure high-level political attention to fulfillment of commitments. Also successful was our effort last year, together with non-government organizations partners, to have the OSCE establish three personal representatives on tolerance. Throughout

2005, these representatives have traveled widely to raise awareness of OSCE commitments and to support projects to assist OSCE states implementation of these commitments. We strongly support the work of the personal representatives and support their reappointment in January 2006.

Similarly, we have provided significant political and financial support to the activities of the OSCE's ODIHR in these areas of preventing hate crimes and discrimination. We recently seconded an expert to the post of legal adviser on hate crimes for ODIHR's Tolerance Program.

As with Cordoba, U.S. goals for this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, held in Warsaw, September 2005, were successfully met. They included the following

- Reinforcing our commitments to human rights and democracy;
- Showing support for non-government organizations working in these fields;
- Generating political will among states for implementing OSCE commitments;
- Responding accurately to criticisms of the U.S. about media freedom and human rights and the war on terrorism;
- Building support for U.S. positions on tolerance conferences; and
- The three personal representatives on tolerance, OSCE reform, and other issues.

In addition to delegations from participating states, a record number of over 300 non-government organizations also participated in this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, showcasing the OSCE's special ability to promote civil society through active cooperation. I am grateful for the participation of the Helsinki Commission staff, some of whom I have had the pleasure of working for more years, I am we would like to recall, participation of your staff as part of the U.S. delegation.

Notwithstanding the OSCE's successes, the OSCE should continue to adapt, but not at the expense of its effectiveness. One of the key tasks facing the OSCE this fall is the question of reform. This process got under way with the recommendations made by the Eminent Persons Panel earlier this year. We are closely examining these proposals that might and are looking especially at those that might enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization, without undercutting its work in the human dimension. We are working with the Slovenian Chair, the European Union, and all other participating states to find ways to do just that.

The OSCE's work, through ODIHR and election monitoring, is rightly recognized as superb. Unfortunately, there have been calls by some states to review and even question election-related commitments and methodology. We are amenable to review in areas where ODIHR's effectiveness could be enhanced; however, we are strongly against any proposals that would undermine election commitments or impinge on ODIHR's autonomy or effectiveness. We see no need to change something that works so well. The issue here is not methodology but rather marshalling the political will among participating states to ensure implementation of existing commitments, thus allowing the voice of the electorate to be heard.

One of the OSCE's most important assets is its institutions and the seventeen field presences, from the Balkans to Central Asia. We strongly support OSCE field work and believe that field offices are critical to promoting OSCE commitments, especially democratic values and international human rights standards. In their work with host governments, non-government organizations and the public, field missions perform vital work in numerous fields, from institution-building, promotion of democracy and development of civil society, to coordinating international efforts at conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation, and conflict resolution.

At the Ljubljana Ministerial in December 2005, we highlighted the accomplishments of the OSCE in this anniversary year, while we built support for the important work which still lies ahead

While there has been some progress in negotiations between Georgia and Russia, we will again strongly urge Russia to fulfill its Istanbul commitments. We expect the ministerial to endorse OSCE work on promoting tolerance, gender equality, shipping container security, small arms and light weapons, man-portable air defense system (MANPADS), and the destruction of excess stockpiles of ammunition and weapons.

The issue of how the OSCE funds itself is still unresolved, but we hope by the ministerial to have agreement on new OSCE scales of assessment. Russia is seeking a dramatic reduction in its contributions to the OSCE and remains the lone holdout among OSCE's fifty-five participating states on new scales. The United States stands behind the criteria for adjustment of the scales adopted in 2001 and 2002.

In November, 2005, the Department of State co-sponsored a conference held in Vienna, which brought together high-level officials from capitals to discuss new ways of combating terrorist financing. Over the past year, the OSCE has continued to expand and strengthen its efforts on combating the modern-day slavery called trafficking in persons. In addition to establishment of the special representative on combating TIP, the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit got up and running, headed by a very effective U.S. expert, Michele Clark. We want to see this unit and the special representative focus OSCE activities on strategic priorities in the area where OSCE can make a difference.

The OSCE took the lead in the international community in establishing a code of conduct for its mission members to ensure that they do not contribute to trafficking in persons. And this fall, the United States will again introduce a draft ministerial decision to strengthen this work and have OSCE States agree to take responsibility for their own peacekeeping troops and mission members.

This year, we updated it to include the issue of preventing sexual exploitation by peacekeepers and international mission members. I would like to note the Parliamentary Assembly's declaration in Washington in support of this ministerial decision and thank Congressman Smith, express my thanks to Congressman Smith for his leadership on this initiative.

The OSCE has value and has demonstrated its value in achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives and in the promotion of our common values. In promoting democratic development and respect for human rights, the OSCE is a lead organization in the Euro-Atlantic area. On economic development, the OSCE promotes good governance and helps countries put systems in place to fight corruption.

On political-military issues, such as the fight against terrorism, border security, small arms and light weapons, and excess stockpiles, the OSCE fills crucial gaps. It has proven itself an effective tool. It complements our bilateral, diplomatic and assistance efforts throughout Europe and Eurasia.