



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Response to PA President Bruce George

Delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 2, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

We welcome President Bruce George here to the Permanent Council and thank him for his very comprehensive and excellent report on the annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Rotterdam, as well as future PA activities and priorities. I might add also we extend our thanks for him spending part of his holiday in Chicago.

I myself attended the annual session, accompanying a very strong U.S. delegation of 8 members of Congress, who I might say in my many years of experience in working with members continue to impress me by working intensively over a whole weekend and then immediately turning around flying back to the states and doing at all as a reflection of their commitment to the business of OSCE.

We welcome the involvement and input from our parliamentary colleagues. In fact, today, within a matter of hours, the Chairman-in-Office Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, will testify before the U.S. Congressional Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe concerning the Dutch leadership of the OSCE. And to us this illustrates again just how important the OSCE is to our Congress.

We are also pleased to have a representative of the Parliamentary Assembly, Ambassador Nothelle, resident here in Vienna. And I want to say that his participation in various meetings has greatly contributed to the flow of information between the PA and the PC. We look forward to a continuing close working relationship with him.

We support increased involvement of parliamentarians in OSCE activities. Parliamentarians have been particularly involved in election observation. The PA Democracy Teams and Ad Hoc Committees have also been very useful. We believe we should look at even more types of activities in which we can benefit from the experience and expertise of our parliamentarians.

As we said when Ambassador Nothelle briefed the Permanent Council on the results of the Rotterdam meeting, the U.S. delegation sponsored several supplemental resolutions, and additional amendments to the committee resolutions, that we hope will further OSCE action. These items concern IDPs, combating anti-Semitism, welcoming Afghanistan as a Partner for Cooperation, and combating trafficking and exploitation of children.

Congressman Smith introduced amendments concerning internally displaced persons (IDPs), which were adopted, recommending that the OSCE look at what can be done to improve the situation of IDPs in our region. We look forward to discussion of this issue in the coming months, as we prepare for Maastricht.

We also look forward to discussion of how we can increase involvement of Afghanistan as an active OSCE partner taking advantage of the many meetings this fall, including the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and the Ministerial in Maastricht.

I would like to note that our Congressmen used the opportunity presented to them in Rotterdam to continue follow-up concerning combating anti-Semitism. They continue to gather signatures from fellow parliamentarians in support of a U.S./German parliamentary action plan on the subject. We look forward to discussion of how to follow up recommendations coming out of the Anti-Semitism Conference and the special topic day devoted to this - as well as tomorrow's Conference on Racism, Xenophobia, and Discrimination - all during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We hope that we can address these issues as we look toward the Maastricht Ministerial.

We also welcome the adoption in July of the Anti-Trafficking Action Plan. We take note of the Parliamentary Assembly's endorsement of a possible new OSCE mechanism to make our efforts at combating this scourge even more effective; and look forward to further discussions on this as we prepare for the Ministerial.

Finally, I would like to note that in keeping with the commitment Congressman Smith made in Rotterdam to visit detainees in Guantanamo, he led a delegation from the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation to Guantamo on July 26. I understand that a short report on the visit will be sent to Mr. George in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.