

Julie Finley

The United States View of the OSCE in 2007: Looking Back and Moving Forward on an Enduring Partnership¹

Introduction

When United States President Gerald Ford signed the Helsinki Final Act on 1 August 1975, his words to the newly vested Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) were sobering, if hopeful:

Peace is not a piece of paper. But lasting peace is at least possible today because we have learned from the experiences of the last 30 years that peace is a process requiring mutual restraint and practical arrangements. This Conference is part of that process – a challenge not a conclusion [...] Our peoples will be watching and measuring our progress. They will ask how these noble sentiments are being translated into actions that bring about a more secure and just order in the daily lives of each of our nations and citizens.²

Today, more than 30 years later, it is even more apparent how insightful the president's words were. Although the geopolitical environment of Europe and its issues of concern are quite different, the same dynamic still remains – a group of nations, now the OSCE, up against sweeping challenges and seeking to meet lofty goals by undertaking many small, significant, interconnected, and concrete actions. Though it may be easy to see that fundamental principles have remained constant in the OSCE's mission – we have sustained our commitments to the Helsinki Final Act and our work is still best described as responding to a challenge rather than serving as a conclusion – it is illuminating to examine just how far we have come since that day in 1975. It is also useful to place our engagement in the year 2007 within this context. Looking back briefly on our institutional history and in depth on our most recent work, the process of examination itself comes to hold an invaluable utility, for it is only by looking at where we have been that we can fully appreciate where we are and, thus, best assess where it is that we need to go.

¹ This contribution was written in early 2008.

² *Address by US President Gerald R Ford to the third stage of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, Helsinki, 30 July to 1 August 1975, at: http://www.osce.org/documents/osce/1975/08/15775_en.pdf.

2007 in Perspective

At the time of the CSCE's inception, the United States' view of the Conference was at once optimistic and a little doubtful, given both the deep-seated divisions that Europe faced and the pressing need to resolve these differences. When President Ford addressed the Conference in Helsinki, he directed separate parts of his speech to the nations of the West and the nations of the East. Indeed, given the tensions of the time, it was hard to contemplate a Europe that would be peaceful, democratic, and undivided – as we all hope that Europe is well on its way to becoming today. Springing forth from the Cold War, the CSCE was originally utilized as more of a hesitant forum for East-West diplomatic dialogue than the comprehensive rights and security organization it has become. However, a brief survey of its history reveals that it, and later the OSCE, was up to the challenges posed by the Cold War, and even more broadly, that it has continued to rise to all the challenges to European security that have followed since. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns put it very well during his intervention at the 15th Ministerial Council on 29 November 2007:

Finally, Mr. Chairman, let me just say that the OSCE and the CSCE have been through a lot in the last 30 to 35 years. We have been through the height of the Cold War, the end of the Cold War, through the Balkan Wars of the 1990's, and now into this millennium. There were tough times before, but we are currently experiencing tough times as well now. There are serious disagreements around this table about the future of this organization, but we have always been able to find ways through cooperation and compromise to build on the Helsinki Final Act [...] As we face the current difficulties and disagreements, we should be inspired by the work of our predecessors in the past. The United States intends to take the higher road of cooperation, compromise and dialogue as we continue to try and build a democratic peace in Europe, which is our overarching strategic ambition.³

During its brief but rich existence, the OSCE has continually refined itself to meet the demands of its time, and what has emerged is an organization that is at once current, comprehensive, expert, and specialized. The OSCE has been responsible for a great deal of the progress that has been made in European security in recent decades – progress that once seemed untenable, but has been accomplished so thoroughly that now, looking back, one is tempted to see it as inevitable. In its recent work, the OSCE has embodied the legacy of

3 R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, *Intervention to the OSCE Ministerial Council*, 15th OSCE Ministerial Council, Madrid, Spain, 29 November 2007, at: <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/95922.htm>.

its past while tailoring itself to the evolving contemporary demands of its mandate. This is the perspective in which our efforts in 2007 need to be considered and it is with an equal eye to obstacles overcome and hurdles that still remain that one can best appreciate the vantage point from which the US views the OSCE.

How the United States Views the OSCE

In the spirit of two pragmatic principles that have long been central tenets of the OSCE – that a task should be carried out by those with the best expertise to perform it and that one should avoid re-doing something that has already been done well – it seems appropriate to once again borrow the words of Under Secretary Burns at the 15th Ministerial Council in summarizing the US assessment of the OSCE today:

There's no question that over the years the OSCE has gained international prominence for the pioneering work it has done on the concept of cooperation and cooperative security. The concept links security among nations with respect for human rights within nations. This has been the secret of the OSCE, and that is what made it unique.⁴

The United States and the OSCE have shared key goals from the very beginning. This is even evident in the pillars that comprise the March 2006 United States National Security Strategy: promoting freedom, justice, human dignity, and effective democracy – pillars which also form the foundation of the OSCE. The United States, like the OSCE, believes that it is through guaranteeing these fundamental human freedoms that we can best build a safe and secure Europe, and, more broadly, that we can best build a safe and secure world. During its partnership with the Organization, the United States has come to believe that the OSCE represents a valuable opportunity for the country to promote its shared interests collectively, co-ordinating actions rather than inadvertently duplicating them, and thus maximizing success. The United States has come to rely on the OSCE as a powerful instrument for progress for several reasons.

First, we believe that the OSCE is an important vehicle for “effective multilateralism”, one that operates on the basis of an equal partnership and strength in consensus. The OSCE is one of a kind, functioning as the only Eurasian security organization in which all of the states comprising the Euro-Atlantic region, Central Asia, and the Caucasus have an equal voice and responsibility. As a forum for political dialogue, it is all inclusive, and as a

4 Ibid.

body that operates on consensus, its actions must fundamentally represent the commitment of all. This is especially significant, because although we as participating States have all attached ourselves to the values put forth in the Final Act, our broad membership represents diverse national situations and perspectives, lending even more value and import to our collective agreements and action.

Second, the United States values the OSCE for its cross-cutting approach. The issues surrounding rights and security are all interconnected and draw upon one another. Therefore, to be effective, it is necessary that the response to these issues does the same. The OSCE is not only effective but unique because it is able to engage states across all three dimensions of security. Recent work has only further proven that efforts and progress in one dimension are inextricably tied to efforts and progress in another. For example, we have seen that one of the best ways to make meaningful headway in the economic dimension is to ensure an open society in which individuals and institutions are vested with certain fundamental freedoms. Similarly, it is our belief that another goal of the OSCE, promoting energy security, can be approached by developments in the economic dimension, namely by working towards a foundation in which market forces are able to operate transparently and under commonly accepted norms. One of the OSCE's greatest strengths in promoting security and co-operation in Europe is its recognition that such a mandate requires much more than attention to solely traditional "security" issues.

Third, the United States believes that the OSCE fills a unique niche. Although the Organization's particular role has been questioned by some in the past, it is clear today that the OSCE has found its place. While co-operation with other international organizations and avoiding duplication of efforts will always be an ongoing consideration, it is evident that the OSCE has amassed a great deal of specialized, focused technical and organizational expertise in a number of areas. States within the OSCE region, as well as many partner states, face a wide array of concerns – concerns that have been met by concerted efforts within the OSCE. In responding, the Organization has been able to make tangible, substantive progress on major issues by playing to its strengths and taking up those concerns that it is best or even uniquely suited to address. The OSCE has many accomplishments to its name and an unparalleled repertoire of expertise on key issues, and when setting the priorities for actions that the United States would like to encourage within the OSCE, we consider those areas where the Organization can bring particular institutional knowledge and issue-specific experience.

While the OSCE is both effective and accomplished, it is important to note that its work is far from complete and its commitment to shared values far from invulnerable. The common commitments that participating States made long ago through the Organization, and indeed the very principles that hold us together, are being challenged in new ways in some parts of the

OSCE region. Much has gone on in the past year, and we will be confronted by continuing challenges in coming years. The United States believes in the OSCE, and, as a result, we do not accept that now is a time to pare down our existing commitments; nor is it a time to merely rest on our accomplishments of the past. Rather, we and our OSCE partners should reaffirm our faith in the core principles of the Organization and forge ahead. In this context, the following review of key elements of United States goals and objectives for OSCE engagement in 2007 uncovers two very important things. First, such a survey of key OSCE activities serves as testament to the strength and importance of the Organization, highlighting US participation and involvement on a number of fronts. Second, it reveals opportunities for further future efforts, several of which the United States has itself suggested through statements made within the Permanent Council and other important forums.

United States Goals and Objectives

United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made the following remarks when she addressed the Permanent Council on 31 May 2007:

I know, too, that the OSCE has its past, it has its present, but it also has its future. And if I look at the important work that is being done in the support of elections, in the support of peacekeeping, in support of human rights, and in support of the security architecture that is the basis on which a Europe whole, free and at peace is emerging, I want to pledge to you that the United States will remain active with this organization, intending to continue to play a leadership role and to use the good offices of this institution for the important tasks ahead.⁵

In 2007, the United States devoted a great deal of effort towards continuing to translate Secretary Rice's pledge into action.

Countering Terrorism

The OSCE has begun to assume an important and focused role in countering terrorism – a battle which, fought within the OSCE region, can contribute to human security throughout the world. It has been a key goal of the United States to encourage and support this emerging work. We commend the *Decision on OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan* adopted at the 15th Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in November 2007, which allows for the OSCE to

5 Secretary Condoleezza Rice, *Remarks at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*, Vienna, Austria, 31 May 2007, at: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/may/85853.htm>.

go into Afghanistan with a mission that will help promote border security with neighbouring Tajikistan, as we believe this action will fill a crucial gap in existing Eurasian security. The border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan has been a point of vulnerability, allowing not only terrorist activity but also a range of other security threats, ranging from organized crime to drug smuggling, and to put it quite simply: The Afghan government needs the help of the international community in countering these problems. The co-operation fostered by the OSCE on this issue is essential to the future security of Afghanistan, and the agenda for OSCE engagement in Afghanistan is a prime example of how the Organization can shape its efforts to be at once singular and complementary, taking up a new issue that has not been adequately addressed while co-ordinating with existing efforts in the region undertaken by NATO, the UN, and the European Union.

The United States believes that the OSCE holds even more potential in efforts to counter terrorism and that this is an issue of great import for all participating and partner States. In line with this priority, the United States has expressed the belief that border security is one of the most pressing issues that the OSCE faces, an issue that relates not only to terrorism, but also to illegal migration and illegal trafficking in goods and persons. Thus, working together to build stable, lawful borders throughout the OSCE region represents one of the most daunting and yet most rewarding objectives before us, and this issue stands as an opportunity to increase the participation of Central Asian states within the Organization.

The US recognizes that the OSCE is not only able to promote security within OSCE States, but can also serve as a model for the world around it. Actions taken by participating States can function as a source of knowledge and a standard for other regions seeking to address instability and to promote freedoms that contribute to security. Through the Organization's work in arms control – including efforts related to small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition – and its initiatives on border and travel document security, OSCE participating States have started to shape a regional response to the serious threat of terrorism. They have wisely begun to chart their course using tried-and-tested OSCE expertise. In addition, by promoting freedom, security, and prosperity on all fronts, the OSCE has done much in its other activities to combat the negative conditions that allow terrorist organizations to take root. In this spirit, the US worked closely with the Russian Federation and the OSCE's Action against Terrorism Unit to organize the Conference on Public-Private Partnerships in Countering Terrorism in the summer of 2007. This was a highly successful and informative event and was well attended by a wide range of government officials, NGOs, and private sector individuals – emphasizing the great importance of society as a whole in addressing the global threat of terrorism.

The Continuing Importance of the CFE Treaty

Another priority for the United States in the OSCE is to work towards enhanced security across the OSCE region, and it has engaged on this objective in several critical areas. Chief among these is the disagreement surrounding the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the Russian Federation's decision to "suspend" this instrument at the end of 2007. The US believes that it should be apparent to all that the CFE Treaty is the most successful arms-control instrument of its kind. It has not only led to the verified destruction of more than 69,000 pieces of military equipment, but more broadly, through a regime of mutual information exchange and more than 5,500 on-site inspections of military forces, it has helped promote a secure Europe that operates on a foundation of openness and transparency. We deeply regret Russia's decision on this issue, and we are disappointed in a move that has made it more challenging to find co-operative solutions and to move forward toward the Adapted CFE Treaty. However, we have continued to urge Russia to fulfil its Istanbul commitments and have since engaged Moscow in focused dialogue regarding the Treaty and the proposal of a "parallel actions package".

The United States and our allies have made it clear that the commitments Russia made at the Istanbul Summit, particularly those regarding the withdrawal of forces in Georgia and Moldova, worked to create the conditions that allowed the agreement on the Adapted CFE Treaty to come about. Thus, it is through the parallel actions process, with Russia fulfilling its remaining commitments, that treaty members will, in turn, be able to move forward towards ratifying the Adapted CFE Treaty. The treaty has truly changed the face of European security, replacing uncertainty and mistrust with information and confidence, and it continues to be highly relevant today. In the United States view, it is essential that concerted co-operation continue on the CFE Treaty in order to avoid a reversal of progress and of everything that this valuable instrument has accomplished.⁶

Enhanced Security Across the OSCE Region

On a broader note, the United States has focused on promoting the full compliance of all participating States with all their politico-military commitments. We continue to support the Vienna Document 1999 and the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security as valuable means to this end. In recent years, OSCE participating States have been met with a number of particular challenges in the security arena. It is also important to note that the United States believes that the OSCE has amassed solid exper-

⁶ Further underlining the importance of the CFE Treaty, the United States Mission to the OSCE has produced a "CFE Treaty Fact Sheet", which can be viewed at the US State Department website, at: <http://www.state.gov/t/vci/rls/prsr/2008/99743.htm>.

tise on a range of security issues. It has, for instance, run successful policing programmes at five of its Balkan field missions, and the United States has put forth the idea that the OSCE expand these successful activities further into Central Asia and the Caucasus. It has also been an important component of the United States' strategy to encourage the OSCE to enhance some of its other activities in this region. We believe that regional co-operation on a number of issues including border security, counter-terrorism, and the promotion of key democratic reforms and human rights is a vital element of larger security and well-being for all OSCE participating States. The OSCE has the potential to fill crucial gaps in these areas.

Engaging All OSCE Participating States

Another key goal has been to encourage the Organization to expand its efforts in engaging all OSCE participating States. The United States has been particularly supportive of increasing the OSCE's further engagement with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and of increasing outreach to partner countries such as Afghanistan. The United States places great value in the partnership process to foster greater co-operation between participating States and Partners for Co-operation in order to better address shared concerns about security and stability. At the November 2006 Mediterranean Seminar, the United States offered suggestions for tasks that would benefit from increased co-operation, identifying three priority areas: counter-terrorism, the management of multi-ethnic societies and strengthening democratic institutions and practices. We worked to promote this further development throughout the year and will continue to do so in the coming year.

It is important to note that these are especially opportune areas for increased co-operation, not only because they are fields in which both participating States and OSCE partners have a collected, vested interest, but also because these are fields in which the OSCE has particular expertise and technical tools that Mediterranean partners can make valuable use of. Additionally, in expanding co-operation with Afghanistan, the United States recognizes that there is great collective benefit to be had for all when the OSCE chooses to put its expertise to use not only for border management efforts, but also for programmes promoting ethnic and religious tolerance and for contributing to the further development of strong democratic and civil society institutions.

Promoting Respect for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

A key objective for the OSCE, one that is of great importance to the United States, is to continue to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Much work remains to be done in this field, and it has become apparent that major efforts are necessary to prevent a reversal of progress al-

ready made. With regard to strengthening democratic institutions and practices, the United States has taken the view that the major focus of work should be on better implementation of existing commitments within participating States, especially in adherence to existing OSCE election standards. In this area, we believe that ODIHR is an invaluable contributor. In 2007, ODIHR conducted an ambitious programme of sixteen election observation and assessment missions, once again affirming that its efforts represent the “gold standard” in this field internationally. ODIHR has done much to advance sound principles of democracy, encouraging all OSCE participating States to ascribe to the highest election standards, and offering concrete constructive criticism when they do not.

The United States is a great supporter of innovation and of assessing the need for improvement in existing practices, but we also believe in making sweeping changes only if such changes are necessary and beneficial. With respect to ODIHR, this is not the case. We are firm in the conviction that proposals to reform ODIHR made by some states in recent years, such as the resolution proposed at the 15th Ministerial Council in Madrid, would instead work to undermine the Organization’s ability to do a job that it has thus far been doing very well. Rather, the United States believes that 2007 in the OSCE has underlined a different need – a need for all participating States to live up to their existing OSCE commitments in the area of democracy. It is of great importance that governments assemble the political will to not only allow, but to encourage, free and fair elections, where ODIHR is able to periodically provide expert, independent monitoring of these activities. When elections have not fully met international standards, ODIHR is able to provide assistance, and when elections have been conducted freely and fairly, ODIHR provides a mechanism for proclaiming such a laudable accomplishment to the world.

In 2007, the United States in particular exercised its support for ODIHR and a commitment to democratic principles. For example, in addition to our usual contribution to ODIHR’s election monitoring efforts, the United States Embassy in Albania contributed 22 monitoring teams to the observation effort during Albanian elections in February. This gave United States personnel an opportunity to witness firsthand the high degree of professionalism and expertise with which ODIHR conducts its activities and the importance of its work. We experienced ODIHR’s election monitoring from the other side in November of 2006, when we invited the Organization to observe our Congressional elections. The United States, like all of its colleagues in the OSCE, has committed itself to invite ODIHR to observe its elections and to take ODIHR’s recommendations into focused consideration, a commitment which we take seriously. In addition to taking pride in ODIHR’s determination that the United States “has a longstanding democratic tradition” and that Congressional elections “were held in a competitive political environment underscored by freedom of speech and broad access to the media”, our government

has also taken steps to ensure that the 25 specific recommendations for improvement outlined in ODIHR's report are adequately taken into account.⁷

The United States has continued to support ODIHR in its activities and will continue to encourage Russia and other CIS countries to increase their participation in election observation missions, as all OSCE participating States benefit from such participation. In this area, one of the greatest disappointments of 2007 occurred when ODIHR was forced to cancel its plans to observe the 2 December Duma elections in Russia as a result of what were deemed "unprecedented" restrictions imposed on its mission. While the United States supports ODIHR's decision in view of the overly narrow limits in which the Organization would have been forced to operate, we particularly regret that this was a decision that needed to be made in the first place. In this regard, we urge Russia, and all participating States, to live up to OSCE commitments and to support ODIHR without imposing any barriers that undermine the integrity of the Organization and its ability to carry out its important work effectively.

Preserving the OSCE's Effectiveness

One of our most important goals for the OSCE has been to preserve its effectiveness. The United States has actively pointed out that, in several cases, some OSCE participating States have chosen to question or disregard human-rights commitments that form the core of the Organization's identity. Our participation has and will continue to include actions to encourage these countries to live up to the commitments that they have made to themselves, their people, the OSCE, and by extension, the world. The United States is committed not only to upholding its own obligations to free and fair elections, freedom of association, and freedom of speech and media, but also to working with other OSCE States in order to ensure that they fulfil their commitments as well.

The United States has thus made it an objective to work to ensure that the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) continues to be an effective forum for raising and exploring an array of issues, including dialogue on human-rights cases and support for human-rights defenders. The United States has also lent strong support in making sure that NGOs remain included in the OSCE's human dimension initiatives, including their full participation in the HDIM. In its 2007 report to Congress on "United States Policy and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe", the United States State Department also identified a need to combat the growing trend of some states curtailing civil society through the use of restrictive NGO legislation, and to develop more effective ways to help human-rights

7 Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *United States of America Mid-Term Congressional Elections 7 November 2006*, OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Report, Warsaw, 9 March 2007.

defenders. The United States Mission to the OSCE has worked on furthering these two priorities.

Advocating on Behalf of Freedom of the Media

Advocating on behalf of freedom of the media has been another important point of United States engagement within the OSCE. This is an area in which the OSCE has a great deal to offer. Not only does the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media fulfil a watchdog function, it boasts a great number of practical and technical services, providing accessible, substantive best practice guides on a range of relevant issues, as well as models for media-related legislation and direct consultation for countries undertaking legislative changes. The United States has made it a point to call out wrongs in this area, and we have expressed concern about the situation in some participating States where the lives and well-being of journalists have been threatened. The United States has also been particularly supportive of the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media on voluntary professional standards among media personnel, believing this to be far more beneficial than state-imposed alternatives. Finally, the United States helped to fund two successful regional media conferences during 2007 in the South Caucasus and Central Asia that centred on this subject.

Continued Effort on Unresolved Conflicts

The United States has also long held the view that the OSCE should make it a priority to resolve the unresolved or so-called “frozen” conflicts. In this vein, the US believes strongly in the importance of promoting final-settlement talks in the conflicts in Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Georgia. The United States has taken an active part in these processes, giving continuing political and resource support to the work of the OSCE Mission to Georgia and its projects in South Ossetia, serving in its role as an observer in the negotiation process for the Transdnistria conflict and working with other mediators to encourage settlement talks to resume, and engaging as one of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to resolve issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It has been a priority of the United States in 2007 to do its part in stepping up efforts to broaden international support for resolution of these conflicts.

Combating Human Trafficking and Countering Intolerance and Discrimination

In the area of combating trafficking in human beings, the United States has also made suggestions of ways in which the OSCE can direct its actions expertly and advantageously. We have put forth the idea that the OSCE can

take on a particularly useful role by acting to improve victim identification related to human trafficking, noting that the Organization could assist states in training relevant officials and personnel. This too is an area where the OSCE's cross-dimensional approach holds special value, as many of the Organization's efforts can work to combat trafficking, and the United States continues to promote implementation of the OSCE's Action Plan to Combat Trafficking.

It is also a major goal to ensure that existing OSCE commitments to combat intolerance and discrimination are fully implemented. Once again, it will take the sustained political will of all participating States to bring this about. Efforts to counter anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination should all be given serious attention. The United States has engaged with other delegations and relevant offices of the Secretariat to bring us closer to this goal.

Key Role of the OSCE Field Missions

A survey of what the United States believes to be key areas of OSCE engagement would not be complete without highlighting the importance of the OSCE field missions in achieving many of these goals. The field missions have been an integral part of the OSCE's work by promoting security, human freedom, and democracy. They perform vital on-the-ground tasks in institution building, co-ordinating conflict-prevention efforts, contributing to the development of civil society, and working towards conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.

One important belief in this regard, shared by the United States and the majority of its OSCE colleagues, is the continuing need for the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. We have repeatedly stated that it is important that the Mission continue its work there. The issue of Kosovo's status generated a great deal of dialogue within the OSCE. In our view, it became quite clear that Kosovo's independence, although difficult to come to terms with for a few of our participating States, was the only viable option in this case, given the unshakable differences that led to an impasse in status negotiations and the country's unique and turbulent history. Even the most basic examination of this situation and history will prove that Kosovo is also a very special case and that claims of it potentially serving as a precedent are inaccurate. The United States has continued to support the operation of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo because of the many valuable services it offers, particularly in its ability to monitor and report on the safety of minority communities.

All in all, the OSCE has made great strides in its efforts to build democratic institutions, to promote interethnic tolerance and protection of national minorities, and to fight organized crime and corruption. The field missions in the region have been an indispensable component of this process, and we recognize that work in this area continues. The OSCE can continue to make

important contributions in Kosovo. The United States also believes that all of the OSCE field missions and their host nations can best be served by a continuous evaluation of the size and workload of each mission as progress is made or as new issues arise. It is through this attention to the particulars of our work that we can most effectively allocate our resources and attention and best achieve our shared goals.

The United States and the OSCE: Our Future in the Context of Our History

On 24 May 2005, I made the following statement before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations during my confirmation hearing to become the United States Permanent Representative to the OSCE:

Sixteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we can all be proud of the OSCE's achievements, but we should also be mindful of unfinished business. A true transatlantic community of shared values is still a work in progress [...] There are no dividing lines in today's Europe. The OSCE has a single set of democratic principles adopted by all. The only way to defeat the underlying causes of instability is to ensure that people have a chance to freely choose their leaders, to live well and to live in peace. The OSCE can help us all advance toward that dream of a transatlantic community of shared values that is a better, safer place to live.⁸

Now, almost three years later, I have not only maintained this sentiment on a personal and professional level but have also become even more certain in my conviction that it indeed reflects United States involvement with the OSCE more largely, for it is not possible to fully appreciate the future of this relationship without considering it in the context of its history. The United States has been committed to the OSCE from the very beginning. Needs and priorities within the OSCE region have changed widely and often dramatically during the Organization's history, but like the OSCE itself, the United States' relationship with the Organization has become stronger and more refined as this history has progressed.

It is not uncommon for discussions of the OSCE to turn to focus on questions of the Organization's relevance and future. A brief survey of this very publication, *The OSCE Yearbook*, is a prime example. These are important questions, and, indeed, the Organization's awareness of itself has been one of its greatest strengths, with ongoing self-assessment of its efforts and progress serving as a catalyst for fine-tuning and further action. 2007 has

⁸ *Statement of Julie Finley before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, May 24, 2005*, at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2005_hr/050524-finley.pdf.

been no different. The United States and the other participating States and partners of the OSCE have been faced with many challenges – challenges that have shown us our strengths by allowing us to prove how much we are able to accomplish and challenges that have spurred our future agenda by reminding us how much work still remains to be done. The achievements of the past year and the ongoing areas of OSCE engagement are more than demonstrative of not only the Organization's relevance but its necessity.

As for the OSCE's future, perhaps the best answer to this question is to state quite simply: The future is now. While staying true to the principles laid out in the Helsinki Final Act and moving forward towards increased cooperation and more active promotion of comprehensive security, the United States joins its colleagues in working through the OSCE as an indispensable multilateral vehicle for upholding democracy, human rights, and security in 2008 and in the years to come. However, as partners in this effort, we must all remember that the very same values that have made this organization important and effective in the past are the values that are under siege today. Perhaps President's Ford's final words at the end of his 1975 address in Helsinki say it best:

History will judge this Conference not by what we say here today,
but by what we do tomorrow – not by the promises we make, but
by the promises we keep.⁹

Decades after the events in Helsinki, the United States continues to engage through the OSCE with the same conviction. The OSCE has a rich history, but it also has a great deal of work to do to ensure that its promises are kept. It is only through sustained commitments and efforts on the part of all participating States that the Organization, and, as a result, all of Europe, can have a bright and productive tomorrow.

⁹ *Address by US President Gerald R Ford to the third stage of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, cited above (Note 2).