

OSCE: PROMISES MADE AND PROMISES TO KEEP

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Remarks
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Professor Raimo Vaynen, thank you for that kind introduction. It's a pleasure to be here in Finlandia Hall to join others in this celebration of the Helsinki Final Act 30 years after its signing.

I appreciated the opportunity to listen to the speeches of President Halonen,¹ Chairman-in-Office Rupel,² and Foreign Minister Tuomioja.³ Also I want to acknowledge three of my colleagues from the Panel of Eminent Persons who are here today: Ambassador Wilhelm Hoyneck, Ambassador Vladimir Shustov and Minister Kuanysh Sultanov. All three brought experience, knowledge and wisdom to our deliberations. It is good to be with them again today.

The United States' Helsinki Commission is very active. Led by Senator Sam Brownback and Congressman Christopher Smith, the Commission ensures sustained interest in and active involvement with the OSCE by a broad spectrum of members of Congress.⁴ The other day it hosted an event on Capitol Hill to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. Of particular note were the remarks of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Dr. Kissinger recalled that "when the Soviet Union first proposed a conference for security . . . we thought it was a Soviet maneuver following the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops to make themselves acceptable again or more legitimate again. And, also, we thought it was a maneuver to undermine NATO. And so (America's) first attitude toward the security conference was essentially defensive."⁵

But as the talks progressed, gradually the United States became more interested in the possibilities. Kissinger recalled that out of the Helsinki discussions "came a really novel idea, which was the so-called Basket III, namely to try to implement an acceptance of certain human rights principles as part of an international agreement. That was . . . an absolutely novel approach." And Kissinger noted, "A lot of credit for this has to go to our European allies who were very committed to it."

So the Helsinki Final Act was ground-breaking. It was important at the time. But, I suspect Dr. Kissinger was not alone when he recalls that at the time “I did not expect . . . these provisions would reach the scope and the impact that they now have.”

When 35 nations gathered here in Helsinki to sign the Final Act, it was the largest gathering of European heads of state since the Congress of Vienna in 1815.⁶ Among them was United States President Gerald Ford.

Late in the afternoon of August 1, 1975, it was President Ford’s turn to speak. He said, “To my country these principles are not clichés or empty phrases. We take this work and these words very seriously. We will spare no effort to ease tensions and to solve problems between us, but it is important that you realize the deep devotion of the American people and their government to human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus to the pledges that this conference has made regarding the freer movement of people, ideas, information. 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.”⁷

The value of establishing broadly accepted standards of behavior is very important. Standards of human rights. Standards of the rule of law. Standards of free and fair elections; of accountability to the people. And the Helsinki Final Act made a profound contribution to establishing the international standards on human rights and democracy so widely accepted today. The commitments made through the Helsinki Process, by some commitments initially made more in form than substance, helped set a platform on which champions of freedom could stand to seek accountability, to seek change, to seek the fundamental dignity that was their birthright. And standards that all OSCE participating states could and did require of one another.

The world has been remade. The Cold War ended. Millions of people were liberated and now live in freedom. The Community of Democracies grew. And the world is safer and more secure as a result. The East/West confrontation is over. A new optimism rose up. Some even proclaimed the end of history. Liberal democracy and human rights had prevailed. Totalitarian communism had lost.

Of course, the past 30 years have witnessed extraordinary change. The world has been transformed. Freedom, democracy and human rights have been on the march. Totalitarianism and authoritarianism have been in retreat.

The front line of heroes in this advance of freedom were the brave men and women long subjected to authoritarian rule who had the imagination and courage to envision a life in liberty, dignity and justice. Names such as Sakharov, Walesa, Havel and millions more who are less renowned but no less brave and consequential. They kept hope alive. They made the world anew.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe played a role. Among other things, the OSCE commitments on human rights and democracy empowered champions of freedom in authoritarian countries to take these provisions not just as values of foreigners, but as principles to which their own government had subscribed.

When the Cold War ended, freedom spread like a prairie fire. The old dichotomy was gone.

But, of course, it was not so simple, it never is. The threat of nuclear Armageddon may have receded, but man's capacity for inhumanity remains. Some authoritarian governments stubbornly hold on to power.⁸ Some new democracies struggle to establish the institutions and habits to sustain freedom.⁹ Some fledgling democracies backslide.¹⁰ And even as the Community of Democracies has grown providing broader stability and improved security, new threats have emerged. 30 years after the Helsinki Final Act, the challenges and opportunities for the OSCE remain considerable.

Today the OSCE has an active work program. In the area of economic development, the OSCE promotes good governance and helps countries put systems in place to fight corruption. In the political-military areas the OSCE is contributing to the fight against terrorism, border security, shipping container security, small arms and light weapons, policing, and destruction of excess stockpiles of ammunition and weapons, among other things. The OSCE is in the forefront of combating intolerance and anti-trafficking efforts.¹¹ The OSCE promotes human rights, democracy and provides election observers who work from well-established and publicly available standards.¹² And the OSCE has proven to be an effective diplomatic tool that complements participating states' bilateral diplomacy. All of these endeavors benefit all OSCE participating states.

And like any process that has gone on for 30 years, especially during a time of revolutionary change such as took place these past 30 years, the Helsinki process can be retooled and improved. Some reforms already have been implemented. For example, systems have been put in place to track budget allocations and expenditures more efficiently, providing more transparency and accountability. The Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, on which I sat, examined the organization to develop other ideas. Our report, "Common Purpose: Towards a More Effective OSCE," outlines many other suggestions dealing with strengthening the OSCE's identity and profile, improving consultations and decision-making processes, clarifying the roles of the Chairman-in-Office and Secretary General, enhancing field operations, strengthening operational capacities and other matters.

I'm confident a number of reforms will be adopted and the OSCE will be better as a result.

But more important for the OSCE going forward than any particular work program is the participating states' fidelity to the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

In a seminal speech on democracy [delivered at Westminster Hall London, in June, 1982,] President Ronald Reagan said, "Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few but the inalienable and universal right of all human beings."

President Reagan went on to say, "The ultimate determination in the struggle now going on for the world will not be bombs and rockets, but a test of wills and ideas - a trial of spiritual resolve, the values we hold, the beliefs we cherish, the ideals to which we are dedicated . . . the

great civilized ideas: individual liberty, representative government, and the rule of law under God.”¹³

The struggles now going on in the world also will test our wills, our resolve and our values. And going forward we must remain dedicated to the great civilized ideas: ideas that the OSCE commitments bind us to, ideas and values that animate OSCE’s work.

Today the Cold War is over, but we are still engaged in a great struggle. In the war on terror, there are those blinded by hopelessness, fanaticism and hate who target innocent civilians to advance their extremist cause. The hope and opportunity that comes from freedom crowds out these evil-doers. And the struggle continues between the few who benefit from authoritarian rule and the many who long to live in freedom; with dignity, liberty and under the rule of law.

The OSCE’s core mission remains helping to foster democratic change. By helping strengthen democratic institutions and civil society, the OSCE helps to defeat the underlying causes of instability. That was the OSCE’s novel idea, the concept of comprehensive security. While far more widely understood and more broadly accepted today than 30 years ago when the Helsinki Final Act was signed, there still are millions of people who do not know freedom.

Among these numbers are heroes like Sakharov, Walesa and Havel who dare to dream that they too can someday live in freedom with dignity. They too hope that OSCE participating states will keep fidelity to our core values.

Some OSCE members now claim that political dialogue on human rights and democracy are internal affairs of concerned states.¹⁴ That is factually inaccurate. All participating states have joined in commitments that are clear and unequivocal. The Moscow Document states, “The participating states emphasize that issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern, as respect for these rights and freedoms constitutes one of the foundations of the international order. They categorically and irrevocably declare that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating states and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.”

The core value of the Helsinki Process has been the recognition that human rights and democracy are fundamental to stability and the security stability brings. This core value has animated the work of the OSCE for 30 years. Much has been achieved. More remains to be done.¹⁵ But by allowing this core value to animate the work of the OSCE going forward, we will ensure the continuing relevance of the Helsinki Final Act.

We will build on the sterling legacy already achieved by the Helsinki Final Act. We will further project human rights, democracy and freedom.

Human rights and Democracy do bring stability. Advancing these values will ensure that 30 years from today more people will live in freedom and the world will be safer and more secure.

In this way we will have kept our promise, the promise of the Helsinki Final Act.

Thank you.

1. President of the Republic of Finland Tarja Halonen.
2. OSCE Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia Dimitrij Rupel.
3. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland Erkki Tuomioja.
4. The event was held on July 28, 2005.
5. Dr. Henry Kissinger, remarks at the "30th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act" event held by the United Nations Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), Washington, D.C., July 28, 2005.
6. For a concise history of the OSCE's first 30 years, see, Frank Evers, Martin Kahl and Wolfgang Zellner, *The Culture of Dialogue: The OSCE Acquis 30 Years After Helsinki* (Hamburg, Germany; Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg; 2005).
7. Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford* (New York, N.Y., Harper and Row Publishers; 1979, p. 305).
8. For example, see, Rustam Nazarov, "Tajik: Paper Suffers New Closure Blow," *Institute of War and Peace*, July 18, 2005. See also, Judy Dempsey, "Poland Recalls Envoy to Protest Belarus Raid," *International Herald Tribune*, July 29, 2005; "OSCE Office in Belarus Fails To Achieve Its Objectives," *Iftar Tass*, July 27, 2005; and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, "New Reality in Uzbekistan," *Washington Times*, July 21, 2005.
9. For example, see, "OSCE's Croatia Report Highlights Both Successes and Needs for Further Efforts," *Southeast Europe Times*, July 12, 2005.
10. "Mr. Putin and his ex-KGB allies seem intent on making sure democracy fails to put down roots." Editorial, "The Color Gray," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 2005. See also, Masha Lipman, "Preempting Politics in Russia," *Washington Post*, July 25, 2005.
11. Regarding the scourge of trafficking in persons, President George W. Bush has said, "There is a spiritual evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent, the most vulnerable of our fellow human beings. . . . And governments that tolerate this trade are tolerating a form of slavery." President George W. Bush, Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly, New York, N.Y., September ___, 2003.
12. Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons On Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, *Common Purpose: Towards a More Effective OSCE*, June 27, 2005. The other members of the Panel were Nikolay Afanasievsky/Vladimir Shustov (Russia), Hans vandon Broek (Netherlands), Wilhelm Hoynck (Germany), Kuanysh Sultanov (Kazakhstan), Knut Vollebaek (Norway), and Miomir Zuzul (Croatia).

For another analysis of OSCE activities and reform proposals see, Wolfgang Zellner, et al., *Managing Change in Europe: Evaluating the OSCE and Its Future Role: Competencies, Capabilities, and Mission* (Hamburg, Germany; Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg; 2005).
13. Ronald Reagan, Address to the British Parliament, London England, June 8, 1982.
14. See, for example, Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov Following Talks with Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Bot, The Hague, June 28, 2005. Released by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. See also, Aleksandr Yakovenko

(Russian MFA Representative). "Why Reform of OSCE is Needed," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, July 20, 2005. "There has also been a departure from one of the fundamental Helsinki principles -- non-interference in domestic affairs."

German political analyst Hanna Dietrich told RFE/RL the most important issue under study in the review is OSCE's role in supporting human rights, the rule of law and free elections in countries which Russia is considered to be within its sphere of influence. "Russia perceives the organization as acting against its interests," she said, "It wants less emphasis on human rights. . . ." In April, the Chairman of Russia's Central Election Commission, Alexander Veshnyakov, rejected the OSCE's custom of issuing a public statement about elections soon after the results are announced. He said OSCE election observer missions should not deliver what is called 'political judgments' immediately after elections are held." Ronald Egelston, "Europe: OSCE Begins Talks About Proposed Reforms," *Radio Free Europe*, June 30, 2005.

15. For example, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, a Vienna-based nongovernment organization, issued a 500-page report covering human rights developments in 2004 in 38 member states of the OSCE which identifies areas of human rights concerns. Antoine Blua, "OSCE: Helsinki Report Finds Human Rights Problems Plague Entire Region," *Radio Free Europe*, June 27, 2005.