



Ilkka Kanerva

**President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Head of Finland's Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

Opening Remarks

"Helsinki +40: Implications for the Transatlantic Relationship"

18 November 2014
Washington, D.C.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends and colleagues,
Distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure to be here in Washington for the second seminar of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Helsinki +40 Project. I would like to offer my warm thanks to President Karen Donfried and everyone at the German Marshall Fund who has done such an excellent job in bringing this seminar together. We are happy to be partnering on this ambitious project with GMF, which has for more than four decades served as a living memorial to post-World War II Marshall Plan assistance to Germany and continues striving to strengthen transatlantic relations.

I would also like to thank the U.S. Helsinki Commission, whose experts and members are joining our discussion today, for providing support to this initiative.

What brings us together today is the upcoming 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE's founding document, which was signed in August 1975 as part of the Cold War détente efforts between East and West. The months leading up to this milestone provide a unique opportunity to take stock of the commitments undertaken and to develop concrete action lines for the OSCE and its participating States in the coming year, especially in light of the dire challenges faced by the entire OSCE area and the Organization itself due to the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Looking towards the future and capitalizing on the past, the Helsinki +40 Project seeks to promote reform and reaffirm the Organization's institutional and conceptual framework in the spirit of that landmark document. Drawing on a rich cross-section of the OSCE's many interlocutors, this seminar-based initiative seeks to help the Organization reflect on what has been accomplished over the years and identify where changes are needed in order to stay relevant and effective. Today, we will try to find together concrete responses to questions such as: What should be done to overcome the dividing lines and sclerosis that have emerged stronger than ever in the Organization over the past 20 years? How to make the participating States live up to their commitments and account for transgressions of the OSCE's founding principles? And, in general, what mechanisms need to be developed to make the OSCE's soft power a little harder and to prevent the Organization's 40th anniversary from becoming a "final act" for the Helsinki Final Act? Concrete, result-oriented solutions need to be developed.

As the OSCE's democratic backbone, the Parliamentary Assembly is uniquely suited to take on this ambitious initiative. Led by Members of Parliament, the OSCE PA's Helsinki +40 Project is conceived as a concrete, goal-oriented process. The governmental side's Helsinki +40 process, consisting primarily of informal ambassadorial working group sessions, has seen its activities significantly diminished due to the current political developments in the OSCE area. This is why it is very important that the Parliamentary Assembly's project is going ahead at full speed. Our third session on Capitol Hill will also provide us with an opportunity to discuss how to reinforce the role of the OSCE parliamentary dimension within the Organization and in which spheres parliamentary engagement can best serve the Organization.

In addition to providing a chance to reflect on the OSCE's past and future, the project itself is an important confidence-building measure between the various institutions of the OSCE, as well as between the nations that make up the Organization, with seminars taking place in Russia, the United States, Sweden and Finland. The Project is also designed to increase awareness of the OSCE and its work, including among Members of Parliament, academia and youth. The student forum at Georgetown University tomorrow will be an excellent opportunity to open up our discussion to a wider audience.

It is a privilege to be here, and I appreciate the contribution of so many eminent individuals whose participation demonstrates the value that we all attach to the future of the OSCE as its 40th anniversary approaches. I look forward to hearing all the views and expertise of the distinguished speakers here in Washington.

Thank you all for participating.