



To the Parliamentary Assembly of the
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE ALCEE L. HASTINGS
TALKING POINTS FOR 2011 OSCE PA WINTER MEETING
SPECIAL DEBATE: CURRENT ISSUES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

FEBRUARY 25, 2011

- I thank my friends Vice Presidents Riccardo Migliori of Italy and Isabel Pozuelo of Spain for requesting that our special debate today consider the current state of affairs in the Mediterranean.
- This debate is inspired by the courage and dignity of the people in Tunisia, Egypt, and throughout our Mediterranean Partners. Others in the region are motivated as well and are making their voices heard – from Tehran to Tangier to Tripoli.
- We respect that current evolutionary processes among some of our Mediterranean Partners leave us without their parliamentary delegations today. Yet, it is imperative that we discuss how the OSCE can help their States to prompt their expeditious return to our activities.
- These are challenging and uncertain times but also hopeful in their opportunity. I believe it is incumbent upon all of us, the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly, to reach out to our Mediterranean Partners and offer assistance, not only in election organization and monitoring, but regarding democratic institution building as well.
- In what has become a standing tradition for OSCE PA Winter Meetings, I met yesterday with the diplomatic missions and Parliamentarians of our Mediterranean Partners. In this meeting co-convened with the Chair of the Contact Group, Irish Ambassador Eoin O’Leary, I recommended that participating States and the Lithuanian Chairmanship should be proactive in drafting proposals for support before being asked.
- In our discussion, Partners emphasized the creative energy on the streets and recognition of local expertise with a newly attained ability to engage in political process. The OSCE can and should have a strong role in equipping this new creative energy.
- The path forward should be informed by the inseparability of security and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean region. What happens in Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and other actors with interests in the region has a direct bearing on Euro-Mediterranean and OSCE region

cooperation. We face dire circumstances of regional food insecurity and energy unreliability if we do not act decisively.

- I recently met with the Tunisian Ambassador to the United States Mohamed Salah Tekaya to discuss the situation in his country. On a side note, I serve as co-chairman of the Tunisia Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives and remain active in all friendship organizations affiliated with our Partners. I encourage my colleagues to pursue similar bilateral partnerships in this time of regional transition.
- I expressed to Ambassador Tekaya my concern about scheduling elections within six months in Tunisia because I believe that it is critical to ensure that the people of the country feel that they have been part of the process of reform and that they are stakeholders in crafting a democratic future for their country. Developing functional political parties, independent civil society, and true democratic pluralism takes time. This is true for Egypt as well.
- Having said that, we should understand the sense of urgency on the part of change agents to move forward as quickly as possible.
- Clearly, one cannot have a democracy without free and fair elections. But an election does not by itself a democracy make. What is needed is the rule of law, an independent judiciary, free media, respect for the rights of minorities, and conditions that encourage economic investment.
- These principles are enumerated by functional expertise in what the Lithuanian Chairmanship has referred to as the “OSCE Toolbox.” I commend their forward-leaning leadership in seeking to make this toolbox accessible to our Partner States. The OSCE PA can and must contribute expertise to this toolbox through election observation, direct connections with our constituents, as well as through the work of our committees and Special Representatives.
- I must emphasize that taking advantage of this toolbox is not about imposing values. OSCE institutions can offer professional methodology and expertise for institutional development to facilitate the values of a given State. We have seen from the demands in recent demonstrations that core fundamental freedoms are the common denominator of citizen expectations in the expanded OSCE region.
- It is my hope that the people, political leaders and interim governments of both Egypt and Tunisia will ensure that their revolutions are sustainable. This can only be achieved through removing restrictions on the development of democratic institutions and a strong civil society.

- Clearly the elections to be scheduled in Tunisia and Egypt are critical. Perhaps even more critical will be the second elections.
- I intend to work hard both in the United States Congress and as President Efthymiou's Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs to provide any assistance needed by our colleagues in Egypt and Tunisia – and all of our Mediterranean partners – as they seek to meet the aspirations of their people.
- We all have an instrumental role to play in supporting our Mediterranean Partners. We must be there. I will be there.