Thank you very much, Madam Chairman, and

welcome to our panel.

The relationship between the United States and Russia is a terribly

important one. It is not perfect. It is a work in progress. I believe

that Secretary Clinton and President Obama in setting the

reset button took a wise and pragmatic course. We need to continue

to put democratic pressure on institution building in Russia. We

need to insist on transparency and accountability, but at the same

time we must also recognize that its strategic location is unavoidable.

We must engage with Russia and they must engage with us.

One of the criticisms contained in some of the testimony today

has to do with, of course, arms limitations treaties. That is a long

tradition of American foreign policy on a bipartisan basis, and to

call it a cornerstone of President Obama’s dangerously naive policy

of unilateral disarmament is, in my opinion, entirely over the top,

unwarranted, and nothing but pure ideology, I look forward to

hearing the testimony today.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ambassador Sestanovich—and I welcome comments from the

other panelists as well. In the West, there is lots of speculation

about whether there really is this sort of a byplay between Prime

Minister Putin and President Medvedev or is it just sort of for

show, more of a good cop/bad cop routine but actually beneath the

surface nothing changes?

And I guess I would ask two questions about that. One is, do you

think that the differences between the two are real and perhaps,

over time, telling? And secondly and aside from that, were there

the course of democratic institution building, it seems to me that

in the last decade or so, we are seeing enormous retrogression—you

know, the appointment of governors rather than the election of governors,

the suppression of political parties, the suppression of the

media. It sort of starts to look like the old Russia, not only in the

Soviet times, but even in the czarist times, the lack of free expression

and free institution.

So I have every reason to be hopeful that over time we are making

progress, or is that just American naivete´ that doesn’t really

take into account the situation on the ground?

Dr. Cohen.

Absolutely, Madam Chairman. And I apologize to

Dr. Swett for the fact that she does not have time to respond. Perhaps

at the end of the hearing we will allow her to.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. My question was

sort of twofold. One was, what is your take on the ostensible differences

between Medvedev and Putin; and then, secondly, even

aside from that, are we seeing a healthy evolution, however slow,

in democratic institution building and democratic aspirations? Because

it would seem that over the last decade or so, we have actually

seen retrogression.

Madam Chairman, I want to thank you.