



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **OSCE PA President Hastings speaks out against Islamophobia**

WASHINGTON, 3 February 2006 – The President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, US Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, spoke out strongly yesterday against the misrepresentation of Islam in European press in recent days.

“I am deeply troubled by recent ‘political’ cartoons in the mainstream European press which mock the Prophet Muhammad and suggest that Islam is a religion of war. I am an outspoken defender of free speech. These newspapers certainly have the right to print such cartoons, however doing so is reckless and irresponsible. The cartoons are not only offensive and untrue, they debase the marketplace of ideas in the name of free speech. This is abhorrent and should be denounced as such. A responsible press should report the news, not incite hate or inflame hostility. In this instance, the publishers of these newspapers have failed miserably on both counts. As the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, an organization which has never failed to excoriate xenophobia in all its ugly forms, I reject totally the inferences made in these cartoons and beseech the press to stop running them.”

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*The Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, created by the CSCE Summit in Paris in 1990, is the parliamentary dimension of the 55-nation Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The primary task of the 317 member Assembly is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue, an important aspect of the overall effort to meet the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area.*