

Statement by Deputy Press Secretary Popadiuk on United States Participation in International Human Rights Conferences

January 4, 1989

President Reagan has authorized the U.S. delegation in Vienna to support, in cooperation with like-minded allies, U.S. participation in an agreed schedule of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe follow-on conferences dealing with human rights. The first conference will be in Paris in 1989, the second in Copenhagen in 1990, and the third is scheduled for Moscow in 1991.

The President decided to agree to this schedule, including the Moscow conference, as a means of encouraging continuation of the significant progress in human rights that has taken place in the Soviet Union over the past 3 years. That progress has included the release of hundreds of political prisoners and exit permission for many people long refused the right to emigrate. Emigration rates from the Soviet Union are substantially higher. And jamming of the Voice of America, Radio Liberty, and other Western broadcasts have ceased. New laws respecting individual liberties have been promised to the world by President Gorbachev in his recent speech to the United Nations.

Such new laws, the institutionalization of reform, are crucial; and the President recognizes that there is much yet to be done in the Soviet Union before that nation meets acceptable and universal human rights standards. We will make it clear to the Soviet Union that the lack of future and institutionalized progress or a reversal of progress made to date will cause us to reconsider our decision to attend a Moscow conference in 1991. At present, we believe that Western concurrence in principle in such a Moscow conference may be the best way to encourage and support future improvement in Soviet human rights performance. The Soviet Union now has a unique opportunity to take further action to demonstrate its continuing and irreversible commitment to achieve commonly accepted human rights standards.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1989/010489b.htm>