



**YEARBOOK
OF SLOVAKIA'S
FOREIGN POLICY
2008**

**RESEARCH CENTER
OF THE SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION**

BRATISLAVA 2009

© RESEARCH CENTER OF THE
SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

HVIEZDOSLAVOVO NÁMESTIE 14
811 02 BRATISLAVA
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
TEL.: + 421 2 5443 3151
FAX: + 421 2 5443 3161
www.sfpa.sk

EDITOR
PETER BREZÁNI

EDITORIAL BOARD
VLADIMÍR BILČÍK, PETER BREZÁNI, JURAJ BUZALKA, ALEXANDER DULEBA,
JURAJ MARUŠIAK, LUCIA NAJŠLOVÁ, ELIŠKA SLÁVIKOVÁ, TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY,
JÁN ŠOTH

REVIEWERS
VLADIMÍR BILČÍK, PETER BREZÁNI, JURAJ BUZALKA, ALEXANDER DULEBA,
JURAJ MARUŠIAK, LUCIA NAJŠLOVÁ, TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY

TRANSLATION
MARTIN FIRÁK, MARTIN CHOVANČÍK, REBECCA MURRAY, PAVOL SZALAI

PROOF-READING
CATRIONA MENZIES

FIRST EDITION, NUMBER OF PAGES 232

PRINTED BY
ACADEMIC ELECTRONIC PRESS, S.R.O.

THE PUBLICATION IS PUBLISHED IN COOPERATION AND WITH THE KIND
SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC.

THE OPINIONS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS
EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT
THOSE OF THE PUBLISHER.

ISBN 978-80-89356-07-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	5
----------------	---

Miroslav Lajčák

Slovak Foreign Policy in 2008 through the Eyes of the Slovak Foreign Minister ..	9
--	---

I. The Slovak Republic in the International Environment

Vladimír Bilčík

Slovak Priorities in the European Union.....	23
--	----

Matúš Korba

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Slovakia in 2008	39
---	----

Martina Hrvolová

Slovakia's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe	51
--	----

II. Priorities of Slovakia's Foreign Policy

Radomír Boháč

Slovak Economic Diplomacy and the Economic Crisis.....	65
--	----

Ján Petrovič

Energy Security in the Slovak Republic	73
--	----

Július Lőrincz

Slovakia and the Western Balkans. The Year 2008 – Before and After	83
--	----

Tomáš Strážay

Visegrad 2008: A Dynamic Regional Platform with Added Value for the EU.....	95
---	----

Alexander Duleba

Slovakia's Relations with its Eastern Neighbors in 2008.....	106
--	-----

III. Institutional Framework and Slovakia's Foreign Policy Tools

Marcel Peško

Modernization of the Slovak Foreign Service – From Analysis to Implementation	125
---	-----

Vladimír Benč, Peter Brezáni

The Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic in 2008.....	143
--	-----

Annexes

Chronology of the Important Events in Foreign Policy in 2008.....	165
List of Treaties Concluded between Slovakia and Other Countries in 2008.....	173
Selected Documents with Foreign Policy Impact Submitted to Sessions of the SR Government in 2008	177
Structure of the State Administration Authorities Acting in International Relations and European Affairs	192
List of the Embassies of the EU, NATO Countries and Some Other Countries	200
List of Consulates in the Slovak Republic	209
List of the Embassies of the Slovak Republic, Permanent Missions, Consulates General and Slovak Institutes Abroad.....	211
List of the Consulates of the Slovak Republic Headed by the Honorary Consul ..	216
Numbers of the Members of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in Peace Missions.....	222
Authors	223

FOREWORD

The very first Yearbook of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic, published in 2000 and mapping the year 1999, outlined the aim of this unique project as follows: “The demand of society to regularly publish a Yearbook containing opinions and assessments of the state’s foreign policy stemmed from the need to record the development of foreign policy, during a crucial period in the country’s development, in a form accessible to the expert public [...] In Slovakia, the requirement to publish the Yearbook is further bolstered by two factors: by an excessive dependency of foreign policy trends upon the current government coalition [...], as well as the lack of an official almanac of foreign policy documents. From this perspective, it is a shame that the first issue of the Yearbook is only being published in the eighth year of Slovakia’s existence. We can only take solace in the motto – ‘better late than never’.

Probably the best evidence that this aim has been successfully fulfilled is the fact that this year, the Yearbook celebrates its tenth anniversary. During the first decade of its existence, it built and maintained a specific position in public discussion on foreign policy and remained a unique and original source of information, opinions, knowledge, experience, viewpoints, and arguments of the actors themselves, academics, analysts, or journalists with the goal of improving the quality of the decisions made in foreign policy, in order to best serve the interests of this country. We are still convinced that it is necessary to maintain this tradition of regularly evaluating, in book form, where Slovak foreign policy currently is, which important events occurred the preceding year, and what challenges lie ahead of Slovakia in the near future. These were, and still remain, the main goals and objectives of this edition as well and we believe that they will be the same in future ones.

In the course of its 10 year life, the Yearbook has undergone a number of changes. It started out as a publication from the foreign policy review conference and then

gradually became a publication in its own right, with its own clearly defined structure and base of authors. The Yearbook has had two publishers, three editors, and six different colors on the cover with two graphic motifs. It has been published 10 times in Slovak and 9 times in English. Both language variations came to 3,771 pages, with the contributions of 93 different authors in 139 analyses filling 1,227 pages in the case of the Slovak version and 1,161 pages in the English one. The annexes 'filled' 637 or 606 pages respectively. Among the authors were two presidents of the Slovak Republic, four speakers of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, one prime minister of the Slovak Republic, four deputy prime ministers, three ministers of foreign affairs, five ministers of defense and one minister of finance of the Slovak Republic, one high representative and EU special representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one representative of the World Bank, eleven opposition and governing coalition MPs and chairmen of the Committees of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, eight academics, twenty-eight analysts, twenty-seven representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one of the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, and two journalists/publicists, while some appeared in the Yearbook more than once holding different posts. Eight proofreaders, ten reviewers, and fifteen members of the editorial board cooperated on the Slovak version. The English version was compiled by sixteen translators and seven different proofreaders.

This year's Yearbook assesses the year 2008 and Slovak foreign policy in an already established thematic structure. It evaluates our conduct in the international environment, the realization of the priority areas of our foreign policy, as well as the efficacy of its instruments and the institutional framework required for its implementation. Based on positive feedback from readers, this year we have also included the insights of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the introduction. The Minister looked back over the past 12 months from the perspective of the person bearing responsibility for the formulation and implementation of foreign policy in this electoral term. The text evaluates the problems and aspects of Slovakia's foreign policy, which are analyzed in depth by other authors in the Yearbook. Thus, the reader is given a unique opportunity to peruse the same 'issue' from different angles in one publication.

The expert section of the Yearbook opens with a contribution by Vladimír Bilčík from the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFPA) who provides an overview of the fulfillment of the main political, economic, and institutional priorities of the Slovak Republic as a member state of the EU. He analyzes Slovakia's international behavior, offering a cross-section analysis of the fundamental political priorities of the Slovak Republic in the EU, and also assesses the ability of the country to formulate and promote its interests within the EU. The security policy aspects of our foreign policy are analyzed by Matúš Korba from the Center for Security Studies. In his analysis, he identifies how Slovakia was able to cope in the first five years of its membership in NATO with the challenges of actively participating in the political activities of the Alliance, the military operations of crisis management and the tasks it is currently fulfilling within a transforming NATO. The section focusing on Slovakia's performance within the international environment is concluded by the text by Martina Hrvolová from the Human Rights, Council of Europe, OSCE, and Minorities Depart-

ment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, who analyzes our first chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

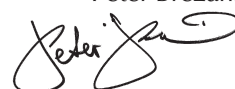
The second part of the book, devoted to the priorities of our foreign policy, opens with a contribution by the Director General for Economic Cooperation and Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Foreign Ministry, Radomír Boháč. In his analysis, he focuses on the fulfillment of the re-established priority of Slovak foreign policy – the economic dimension of Slovak diplomacy – in the context of the global financial and economic crisis and the challenges stemming from it. Ján Petrovič, Director of the Energy Policy Department of the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, concentrates on an area that is crucial to Slovak policy and that of the European Union – energy security. Freelance journalist Július Lőrincz offers a perspective on Slovak activities in the Western Balkans in 2008 in three areas – economic diplomacy, development assistance, and the issue of Kosovo. The analysis of Slovakia's Central European activities was, as always, written by Tomáš Strážay, analyst of the RC SPPA, who summarizes the priorities of two Visegrad presidencies – the Czech and the Polish, and focuses on the problematic points of the agenda as well as Slovakia's contributions during both presidencies. The Director and Head of the RC SPPA Eastern Europe research program, Alexander Duleba, offers a 'picture' of the key events, in addition to a brief analysis on the development of Slovakia's relations with three eastern neighbors – Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus in 2008.

The final expert section of the book is devoted to the institutional framework and foreign policy instruments, and opens with a contribution by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Marcel Peško. In his chapter, he looks back at the year the institutional reform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was implemented. The expert section of the Yearbook concludes with a contribution by Vladimír Benč and Peter Brezáni from the RC SPPA, who concentrate their attention on the state of the most important bilateral instrument in Slovak foreign policy in 2008 – development assistance. The authors offer their perspective on the institutional and legislative changes, and attempt to provide a summary of the activities concerning Slovak development assistance in 2008.

The expert chapters are traditionally supplemented by annexes, such as the chronology of important foreign policy events, selected political documents, a list of international treaties, information on the structure and representatives of the state bodies operating in foreign policy, a list of the diplomatic missions and representatives of the Slovak Republic abroad, the diplomatic corps of the Slovak Republic, information on military missions abroad, and so on.

We firmly believe that the tenth edition of the Yearbook will once again find a readership and serve all those who are interested in the past, present, and future of Slovakia and Slovak foreign policy. In conclusion, we would like to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic for its cooperation on this project and its support, and for the fact that thanks to this cooperation we are able to continue building this much needed tradition.

Peter Brezáni



SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY IN 2008 THROUGH THE EYES OF THE SLOVAK FOREIGN MINISTER

MIROSLAV LAJČÁK

For Slovak foreign policy, the year 2008 was both a year of continuity in terms of fundamental priorities and goals and a year which marked the beginning of significant change within the external environment in which Slovak diplomacy operated. On the international scene, Slovakia backed solutions based on effective multilateralism and adherence to international law. Slovakia was able to fulfill its main foreign policy objectives and the external conduct of the country strengthened its international position.

Slovak diplomacy clearly, and with a certain amount of foresight, included the main strategic priorities and objectives of foreign policy in the strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); the structure of which was also used in drafting the *Report on the Fulfillment of Slovak Foreign Policy Tasks in 2008* and *Foreign Policy Orientation for the Year 2009*. Strengthening diplomatic activities in support of Slovakia's prosperity, issues of energy security, and the overall stability of Europe proved to be key agendas within the strategy. Protecting the interests of Slovak citizens abroad also received greater focus in foreign policy.

We also perceive 2008 to have been a year of increased uncertainty in international relations and international law. It was the year of the Russian-Georgian conflict, the unilateral declarations of the independence of Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the year of the beginning of the global financial and economic crisis.

SUCCESS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The fifth year of our membership in the EU was undoubtedly exceptionally successful. Following the abolition, in December 2007, of border checks on territorial borders,

integration into the Schengen area continued with the removal of border controls relating to domestic airspace on March 30, 2008. Once again Slovakia proved that it had not underestimated the preparations required for Schengen and that it is able to participate effectively in protecting the common European zone. Furthermore Slovakia finalized the ratification process of the *Treaty of Lisbon*, thus opening up a new dimension in which the Union can make greater use of its capacities and its ambition to play a more significant and confident role within the international arena. Slovakia was the first of the Visegrad Four (V4) countries to succeed, after several years of hard work, in meeting the demanding Maastricht criteria for the adoption of the euro on January 1, 2009. Doubts over Slovakia's early accession to the Eurozone disappeared in the second half of 2008 when, as a result of the financial crisis, the international financial sector started to lose confidence in some national currencies including those of the Central and Eastern European states. Accession to the Eurozone

Doubts over Slovakia's early accession to the eurozone disappeared in the second half of 2008 when, as a result of the financial crisis, the international financial sector started to lose confidence in some national currencies including those of the Central and Eastern Europe states.

therefore represented a move towards creating a stable and secure currency environment for the country at a time of international financial and economic crisis. Slovakia supported the coordinated approach of the EU in mitigating the impact of the global crisis. The measures adopted by the Slovak government such as the amendment on deposit protection of up to 100% of the deposited amount for natural persons and other eligible entities from October 2008 and the government package of 26 anti-crisis measures adopted at the beginning of November 2008 all fully complied with the recom-

mendations of the European Union.

Slovakia also participated in the agreement of the European Council on the EU climate and energy package, whose implementation should lead to the fulfillment of EU commitments on climate protection and energy security. In particular, the Slovak Republic contributed both to the fact that the previous efforts already made by individual countries in reducing greenhouse gas emissions were taken into consideration and to the steps designed to minimize the risk of energy-intensive industries relocating from the EU to third countries.

The fact that the year 2008 also brought new elements into the external policies of the EU was welcome. Slovakia continued to actively support the continuation of the Union enlargement process. The Slovak Republic widely shared its experience of the pre-accession preparations with other candidate countries, in particular Croatia. EU negotiations on the possibility of strengthening integration links between Western Balkan countries and the Union continued throughout the year and contributed to the stability in this region. The establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean was also an exceptional project in terms of strengthening European Neighborhood Policy. Using its own experience, Slovakia contributed fully to formulating the Eastern Partnership policy, which is to create the institutional conditions required to strengthen cooperation between the EU and its East European neighbors, with particular emphasis on Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.

SLOVAKIA IS A TRUSTWORTHY AND RESPONSIBLE PARTNER

Slovak foreign policy is based on the premise that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the main guarantor of Slovakia's security. Through its activities, its determination to strengthen the transatlantic bond and its consistent fulfillment of alliance commitments, the Slovak Republic has presented itself as a trustworthy partner and a fully involved ally. Slovakia was an active participant both in international crisis management operations under NATO command and in the build-up of NATO and EU Rapid Response Forces.

In compliance with NATO policy, the Slovak Republic continued to assist Afghanistan. It supported the ISAF operation in Afghanistan by transferring its multifunctional engineer unit to the south of Afghanistan and by implementing the decision to double the Slovak contingent in 2008. Slovakia's participation in this operation, the territorial incorporation of the Slovak contingent, and the fact that it continues to take on more demanding tasks with relatively higher levels of responsibility all serve as proof of Slovakia's determination to participate in increasing the action readiness of the Alliance. The number of Slovak soldiers in the Kosovo mission (KFOR) was also increased in 2008.

The Slovak Republic unequivocally voiced support for the findings of the NATO Summit held in Bucharest in April. Our aim is to increase the effectiveness of the Alliance and its ability to face global challenges. That is why we also strive for its further enlargement. Slovakia has been particularly active in this regard as well. In 2008, for the second year running, the Slovak Embassy in Kiev continued its intensive work related to its function as the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Ukraine. Its activities included presenting the Alliance to the general public and experts in the field, and creating a platform for discussion on Ukraine's security policy and the alternatives.

Slovakia's position on the US missile defense system in Europe helped ensure the inclusion of this issue on the Alliance agenda. In the internal NATO debate on the Alliance's role, held against the backdrop of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of NATO, Slovakia supported the idea emphasizing that a crucial element of both the reforms and the new NATO strategy must lie in the ability to continue implementing a security policy that inspires confidence. This policy must include the security guarantees outlined by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which forms the cornerstone of NATO's collective defense.

Besides the activities carried out within NATO, the security policy of the Slovak Republic is also realized through active engagement, along with European partners, in fulfilling the aims of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Security and Defense Policy of the EU, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Through its activities, its determination to strengthen the transatlantic bond and its consistent fulfillment of alliance commitments, the Slovak Republic has presented itself as a trustworthy partner and a fully involved ally.

In 2008, the OSCE military-security agenda primarily focused on the Russian-Georgian conflict, the issue of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia's position on the *Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe*, the complications relating to the status of the OSCE mission in Kosovo, and the initiative of the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, on the formulation of a new *European Security Treaty*. Slovakia discussed and coordinated its positions on these issues with the allies.

Slovakia actively discussed its position on specific security issues in international organizations dealing with disarmament. In this way, for example, the Slovak Republic chaired the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague, from May 2008. Through its chairmanship, Slovakia contributed to increasing the effectiveness of OPCW decision-making processes especially in implementing the *Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)* on the disposal of chemical weapons, on strengthening dialogue with the industry, and on international assistance to countries for the effective monitoring of the use of chemical substances.

CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Our six-month chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe continued up to May 2008, when Slovakia handed over the chairmanship to Sweden. While holding the chair, Slovakia was able to direct the attention of Council of Europe Member States and other partners to optimizing the organization's work. Slovakia's chairmanship focused particularly on the education and upbringing of Roma children and youth, local and regional self-government, the work of the European Court of Human Rights, and the *European Landscape Convention*. On March, 11 2008 Slovakia organized a separate international conference in Strasbourg, as part of its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* and the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* coming into force. Professional cooperation was also established with the representatives of the Belarus executive and civil society in accordance with the goals of our chairmanship.

THE NEED FOR ACTIVE ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Slovakia is a country with a very open and export-oriented economy, very limited raw materials, and a small internal market. This means that the economic growth of the country is highly vulnerable to global economic change and crisis. The current global economic crisis accelerated Slovakia's strategic decision to make better use of the tools

of foreign policy in supporting the economic development of the country. In 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a number of activities in this field in order to strengthen dialogue with representatives of business associations and organizations on their expectations and ways of strengthening the economic dimension of diplomacy. It should be emphasized that similar initiatives must be implemented in close synergy with domestic and foreign economic policy and in close collaboration with the relevant departments of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in accordance with its strategic aim of supporting the prosperity of Slovakia and promoting its economic interests abroad, began to alter the orientation and focus of the diplomatic missions so that the economic agenda would become one of the main undertakings of their operations. The embassies should thus also serve both as monitoring stations for collating data on the most positive experiences of the countries in which they operate and as priority contact points for representatives of the business sector – to assist them in finding opportunities to develop their business activities, including launching Slovak products on foreign markets. The most commonly discussed themes at the diplomatic missions have become supporting exports, scientific and technological cooperation, and working with current and potential investors.

Our activities in international organizations with an economic focus have primarily concentrated on utilizing the opportunities offered by these organizations.

In accordance with the strategic aim of supporting the prosperity of Slovakia and promoting its economic interests abroad, the embassies should also serve both as monitoring stations for collating data on the most positive experiences of the countries in which they operate and as priority contact points for representatives of the business sector.

THE ENERGY SECURITY OF SLOVAKIA

Recent developments in energy security have confirmed the importance of external, foreign policy and the security dimension. Slovakia, on the basis of its experience and in keeping with its interests, advocated a more effective external energy policy within the Union, based on respecting the security of producers and ensuring the security of energy resource supplies, their transit, and their consumers. This concept is still in the early stages and Slovakia will continue to be an active participant in this process.

In 2008, Slovakia devoted particular attention to the negotiations on the climate and energy package and the Third Energy Package. Along with a group of similarly minded EU countries, Slovakia was able to push for the effective unbundling of vertically integrated energy companies (managing production, transit, and distribution), which is in the interests of the Slovak Republic and does not decrease its competitiveness.

In its long-term strategy on energy security Slovakia, like the EU, seeks available means to diversify its sources and transit routes. Besides actively participating in the

dialogue between the EU and Russia (Slovakia's main partner in the energy sphere), the Slovak Republic was also involved in forming EU energy initiatives with new partners, with whom there is good potential for further cooperation. Strategic EU materials on energy security and communication with EU partners – Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asian countries – fully reflected the position and interests of the Slovak Republic in terms of energy supply and transit.

The Slovak Republic promoted the subject of energy security within all bilateral political negotiations including those of the V4 and the EU. Slovakia initiated an 'energy dialogue' with its regional partners (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Austria, and Ukraine) on the issues of the energy sufficiency of Slovakia and the region, on alternative sources, energy transit routes, and mutual interconnections. The dialogue facilitated further communication with our neighbors in defending joint cross-border energy projects within the EU platform.

The cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy resulted in the successful promotion of the idea of institutionalizing the inter-departmental consultation mechanism between the main actors involved in Slovakia's energy security in the *Energy Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic*. The Government of the Slovak Republic entrusted the Ministry of Economy with the creation of this permanent consultation platform.

Supporting the development of the safe utilization of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is exceptionally important to the Slovak energy sector. It has the potential to enable the fulfillment of EU energy policy goals and has a role to play in the transition to a low-carbon economy. Slovakia and the Czech Republic hosted the European Nuclear Forum, which introduced a broader platform for open discussion on nuclear energy in the light of current global challenges, such as climate change or energy security.

THE WESTERN BALKANS: A REGIONAL PRIORITY

Over the past few years, the Western Balkans has remained one of the top priorities of Slovak foreign policy.

Slovakia has been both bilaterally and multilaterally active in the region of the Western Balkans. Our primary aim has been to strengthen the ties between Western Balkan countries and the EU and NATO thus assisting the European integration process in the region. We made extensive use of our own experiences gained from the transition process prior to our accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures. A specific step reflecting Slovakia's policy in the Western Balkans region was the ratification of the NATO accession treaties of Albania and Croatia. The ratification revealed broad political consensus in the Slovak Republic on support for the integration of Western Balkan countries into the Euro-Atlantic structures. The bill was voted for by 136 of the 137 National Council of the Slovak Republic deputies present. Social and economic reform in the region also represented one of the priorities of Slovakia's official development assistance. In

Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia, Slovakia supported projects totaling approximately 2.5 million euros.

In 2008 Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina both took a step closer to EU integration by signing the *Stabilization and Association Agreement* with the Union. Slovak diplomacy supported the positive developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina by cooperating with the Office of the High Representative where I strived to communicate Slovakia's positive experience from the transition process. Slovakia also supported the liberalization of the visa regimes between EU Member States and the Western Balkan countries once the technical criteria had been fulfilled. In the interest of creating better conditions for strengthening the Slovak presence in the region, preparations were begun in 2008 for the establishment of new embassy offices in Skopje in Macedonia and Tirana in Albania.

In 2008, the Slovak Republic did not join those countries that recognized Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from February onwards. Slovakia has been promoting the idea of finding a solution to Kosovo's status by means of an agreement between the parties concerned and with the UN Security Council playing a decisive role.

Nonetheless, Slovakia continues to participate in the EU police and justice mission to Kosovo (EULEX), whose objective is to help improve the security situation in Kosovo and the adjacent region.

Slovakia has been both bilaterally and multilaterally active in the region of the Western Balkans. Our primary aim has been to strengthen the ties between Western Balkan countries and the EU and NATO thus assisting the European integration process in the region.

ACTIVE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Good neighborhood relations remain pivotal in Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. It is clearly in Slovakia's interest to maintain these relations at a positive and pragmatic level and develop them in as wide a range of areas as possible. Neighborhood relations also intensified due to the enlargement of the Schengen area in 2008. Our strategic partnership with the Czech Republic was also strengthened in anticipation of the first Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

A considerable part of Slovak foreign policy was devoted to relations with the Republic of Hungary. The bilateral Slovak-Hungarian political dialogue lagged behind the overall positive dynamic of general cooperation within this relationship. However, due to pressure from the Slovak side, the dialogue became more active and contributed to an improvement in communication at the end of 2008. In relations with Ukraine, Slovakia's only non-EU neighboring country, emphasis was placed on economic and cross-border cooperation and on supporting Ukraine's integration ambitions. Relations with Austria focused on the pragmatic aspects of mutual and regional cooperation – assistance with regard to the Slovak Republic joining the Schengen area, the adoption of the euro in Slovakia, and cooperation on road and energy infrastructure projects.

The Visegrad Group has traditionally occupied an exceptional position in Slovakia's Central European regional activities. The Summit of V4 Presidents organized by the Slovak President, Ivan Gašparovič, and held in Piešťany in September 2008, contributed to the dynamics of the V4 activities. The introduction of a new type of flexible V4 project (Visegrad+) in relation to Belarus, focusing on areas such as supporting the Belarus media industry, increased the effectiveness of the International Visegrad Fund.

THE EASTERN DIMENSION

The eastern dimension of Slovakia's foreign policy is constantly growing. This is a logical development given that the situation in the regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia has the potential to markedly influence the overall situation in the Central European region. It is sufficient to mention the damage caused by the cessation of natural gas

supplies from Russia via Ukraine in January 2009.

The bilateral dispute between these countries negatively affected the economic security of Slovakia.

The Slovak Republic must therefore be more active both bilaterally and within the integration structures, where it has member status. The Slovak Republic is aware of the strong and weak points in relations with these countries and therefore strives to maintain permanent political dialogue and strengthen

cooperation, involvement, and mutual trust. Economic cooperation remains a priority area in these relations.

Over the past year, relations with the Russian Federation evolved in this manner. They were based on pragmatic dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation. For Slovakia, relations with the more ambitious Russian Federation were also important, due to its position as a strategic partner of the European Union. Russia represents a significant long-term partner for the Slovak Republic both in terms of energy and resource security and in the fight against new threats and current global problems. However, this did not prevent Slovakia from taking a negative position on the unilateral declaration of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Our position stems from long-term respect and support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We also adopted this position in the debates leading to the decisions adopted by NATO and other security organizations.

Bilateral relations with Ukraine were dominated by Slovakia's efforts to develop a positive neighborhood agenda. Economic and cross-border cooperation, supporting integration processes regarding the EU and the WTO, and discussions on the possibilities of deepening relations with NATO all received special attention. Within the EU, Slovakia promoted a more ambitious Eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy, which would confirm its open door policy. The implementa-

Russia represents a significant long-term partner for the Slovak Republic both in terms of energy and resource security and in the fight against new threats and current global problems.

tion of the annual target plan of Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation to meet EU standards was also one of the important activities of the department in this regard. A similarly positive common approach to Ukraine was also adopted by the Visegrad Group. The scholarship program of the International Visegrad Fund, in which Ukrainian students showed exceptional interest, is one such example.

Cooperation with Belarus was one of the priorities of our chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Obtaining the approval of the Belarusian side for the opening of a Council of Europe Information Centre in Minsk was one of the ways in which this goal has been fulfilled. The Council of Europe itself could be a partner for Belarus in building democratic institutions and instituting the rule of law. Slovakia also supported the development of EU-Belarus cooperation by the inclusion of this country in the Eastern Partnership concept – a new initiative within the strengthened European Neighborhood Policy.

In relation to the Central Asian countries, Slovakia participated in the formulation and implementation of the new EU strategy on this region. The energy dialogue represents a significant part of this strategy because this region has the potential to increase the supply and diversification of natural gas and crude oil sources to the EU. The fact that Slovak diplomat Miroslav Jenča assumed the post of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Central Asia and Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy (UNRCCA) in this region, based in Ashgabat, is indicative of the high regard in which Slovak diplomacy is held.

IMPLEMENTING THE MFA REFORMS

The MFA responded to the ever more demanding challenges facing the Slovak foreign service and the continual need to increase work efficiency with a thorough modernization of its organization and working practices. The two year process of analyzing, formulating proposals, and adopting systemic solutions continued throughout 2008 with the commencement of the implementation phase of the reforms. Once the strategy *A Successful Slovakia in a Safe World* had been adopted in February 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced a new system of management through a combination of strategic, project and process management. It developed the strategic priorities and goals of the MFA, producing specific operational steps with allocated responsibilities. An important element in strategic management is coordinating strategic aims with the economic management of the department, i.e. allocating budget resources for the fulfillment of specific goals supported by individual projects.

The new organizational structure of the MFA saw a reduction in the number of management levels to three. The new MFA *Personnel Code* has been adopted, incorporating, for the first time, all the rules and regulations concerning the long-term professional orientation of employees, thereby contributing to the transparency and effectiveness of the foreign service, and establishing the rights and obligations of MFA employees.

Part of an effective budgeting system and the efficient use of human resources is the continual re-evaluation of the network of diplomatic missions abroad. Due to changing priorities, Slovakia closed the Consulate General in Brno and opened a new embassy in Hanoi. At the same time, the MFA is preparing to upgrade the branch offices in Addis Ababa, Skopje, and Tirana to embassies.

SLOVAK DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic (ODA) has become an integral component of Slovak foreign policy. Up until 2008, this was delivered according to the *Medium Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance: 2003-2008*. The Act on Official Development Assistance, confirming the role of the MFA as the national ODA coordinator, came into force in February 2008. In 2008, Slovakia focused particularly on increasing stability, pursuing good governance in the regions and states of priority interest to the Slovak Republic (including in economic terms), and on development as a means of reducing poverty and famine in developing countries. The MFA continues to take an interest in increasing the effectiveness of development assistance; the implementation of the innovative *Medium Term Strategy for the Official Development Assistance: 2009-2013* should contribute towards this.

In 2008 the program countries of Serbia, Montenegro and the project countries of Albania, Afghanistan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan were priority countries for the allocation of ODA. Alongside other multilateral and bilateral development assistance schemes, Slovakia thus supported 34 development projects of Slovak organizations in 14 countries to a total of 4.31 million euros (130 million Slovak crowns). In the course of 2008, Slovakia also provided humanitarian assistance to the citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Myanmar, Sudan, China, Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Haiti, Cuba, and Palestine amounting to 1.97 million euros.

Despite the above assessment, it would still appear that the level of public awareness on the significance and necessity of ODA is still low throughout Slovakia. This therefore provides an opportunity to ally the educational operations of the MFA and Slovak non-governmental development organizations. Prior experience shows that where financial resources are limited, more attention must be devoted to quality management and the distribution of ODA as well as to its more effective utilization.

CONCLUSION

The year 2009 will not be any simpler for Slovak foreign policy. The international financial crisis has developed into a crisis affecting both the economy and market demand

and as such has also hit the economy of the Slovak Republic. It is unclear when the recession will bottom out. We can expect that the deepening recession of the world economy will have a detrimental impact on various negative global phenomena – the energy and food crisis, uncontrolled migration, and it will hinder and obstruct the efforts being taken to prevent and mitigate the impact of climate change on the environment. The struggle against the aforementioned non-military threats will require substantial investment, which is neither immediately available nor sufficient. Furthermore there is an unequal allocation of resources in terms of easily accessible information and unevenly distributed resources and wealth throughout the globe. This may continue to induce political tensions and uncontrolled migration. Pessimistic scenarios derive from the accumulation of negative factors which may make it difficult to control development and lead to spiraling instability and conflict.

That is why it is all the more important that over the past few months the most economically prominent countries in the world have shown that they are willing to cooperate and find joint solutions rather than opting for individualistic paths of voluntaristic and protectionist policies. Slovakia continues to support this approach. In these times of weakening confidence, Slovakia will continue to promote the authority of international law and the search for solutions within this framework. This premise will prevail in the fulfillment of all foreign policy goals and priorities.

A number of challenges face Slovak foreign policy in the year 2009. Firstly, it will have to deal with the consequences of the world financial and economic crisis and minimize its impact on Slovak citizens. A foreign policy that is active, focused, and able to predict future developments can significantly contribute to this process, especially through the coordination of measures within the EU and the Eurozone, but also through strengthening the economic dimension of our diplomacy. The increased dynamic of international relations, the possible growth of instability, and perhaps even extremism mean that greater effort will be required in improving the stability of the Central European region. Slovakia will focus on the development of neighborhood relations and cooperation within the Visegrad Group. We have many projects and common goals. Practical, versatile cooperation will be imperative.

It is in Slovakia's interest, as an active and responsible member of the international community, to develop an intensive dialogue with the new government of the United States of America. Slovakia will continue to support the strengthening of the transatlantic bond and cooperation between the USA and the EU. In relation to the Russian Federation, Slovakia will take into account the fact that Russia is a strategic partner of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in determining its activities and that dialogue between these political integration structures and Russia is prerequisite in the search for common answers to the development and security challenges facing the globalized world today.

The year 2009 will not be any simpler for Slovak foreign policy. The international financial crisis has developed into a crisis affecting both the economy and market demand and as such has also hit the economy of the Slovak Republic. It is unclear when the recession will bottom out.

**I. THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

SLOVAKIA'S PRIORITIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

VLADIMÍR BILČÍK

The year 2008 brought the successful fulfillment of the main integration priorities which the Slovak Republic defined at the time of its accession to the European Union in May 2004. It was a year dominated by Slovakia's successful entry into the Eurozone and the successful ratification of the *Treaty of Lisbon*. On the other hand, we can discern a series of trends which cast the Slovak Republic in the role of a cautious and introverted actor in the area of European integration. In the case of the Schengen border with Ukraine, the Slovak Republic takes a stricter approach to local border traffic between Eastern Slovakia and Western Ukraine than neighboring Hungary. The issue of access to postal services or retail chains represents a serious problem for Slovakia, due to the fact that the European Commission (EC) took steps requiring the Government of the Slovak Republic to adopt a more liberal approach to the free movement of capital and services. It is clear that the current government is trying to protect the domestic energy, telecommunication, and postal market even at the cost of violating EU commitments.

The aim of this contribution is to offer an analytical perspective on the fulfillment of the main political, economic, and institutional priorities of the Slovak Republic, as a member state of the European Union, while simultaneously analyzing the conduct of Slovakia and the particular positions adopted by the country's politicians on European integration. It offers a cross-section analysis of the core political priorities of Slovakia in the EU, while also evaluating the ability of the country to formulate and promote its objectives within the Union. In addition to focusing primarily on Slovakia's performance within the EU in 2008, in the conclusion, the contribution also attempts to offer a broader assessment of the first five years of Slovakia's membership in the European Union.

This research has been supported by the grant scheme of the Agency VEGA No. 1/4665/07 *Integration Strategies of the New EU Member States: Emerging Forms of EU Membership*.

THE FULFILLMENT OF ACCESSION PRIORITIES¹

In 2008, the Slovak Republic focused on successfully completing the final stages of its full-fledged membership in the EU, particularly in the form of the country's entry into the Eurozone. In the first half of 2008, the greatest obstacle to Slovakia's adoption of the euro was presented by the dispute that emerged over whether the country would be able to continue fulfilling the Maastricht criteria after its entry into the Eurozone. On January 30, 2008, the European Commission published an analysis of Slovakia's convergence program, in which it considered the growth of inflation to be the greatest danger for Bratislava.² Skeptics, especially on the part of the EC, which prepared the report for the member countries of the Eurozone and recommended Slovakia's entry into the common currency area in 2008, referred for example to the high inflation experienced in Slovenia after the euro was adopted there in 2007. The EC, therefore, recommended that the Slovak Government adopt a stricter budget policy. However, the Slovak government objected, stating that it was making sufficient savings. In the spring of 2008, the final decision of the European Commission was therefore influenced by the assessments on inflation and fiscal trends in Slovakia.

In the final months of 2008, the country's preparation for the introduction of the common European currency became the dominant item on the domestic integration agenda.

Despite the question-marks over Slovakia's ability to sustain its fulfillment of the criteria, on May 7, 2008 the European Commission recommended that the euro be introduced in the Slovak Republic as of January 1, 2009.³ This decision was made in spite of the doubts about the abilities of the current

coalition to maintain fiscal discipline. The conclusions of the European Council from June 19-20, 2008 brought definitive and formal confirmation of Slovakia's membership in the Eurozone. The conversion rate of 30.126 Slovak crowns to one euro was set on July 8, 2008.

In the final months of 2008, the country's preparations for the introduction of the common European currency became the dominant item on the domestic integration agenda. The activities of the Information Campaign on the Euro, which represented a crucial means for the government to communicate with the citizens on the new currency, peaked during this period. This was by far the most expensive public information campaign in Slovakia; the government allocated approximately 180 million Slovak crowns (approximately 6 million euros). According to the Flash

¹ The analysis relating to Slovakia's entry into the Eurozone, its performance in Schengen, the energy priorities of the country in the EU, and competition issues are derived from: V. Bilčík, "Slovenská republika a Európska únia", M. Bútor, M. Kollár, G. Mesežnikov (eds) *Slovensko 2008. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2009), pp. 369-379.

² V. Fidlušová, K. Šafaříková, "Bratislava oponuje Bruselu", *Sme* (January 31, 2008); <http://dennik.sme.sk/c/3705083/bratislava-oponuje-bruselu.html>.

³ "Slovensko od eura delí 239 dní", *EurActiv.sk* (May 7, 2008); <http://www.euractiv.sk/verzia-pre-tlac/clanok/slovensko-od-eura-deli-239-dni>.

Eurobarometer 249 survey of September 2008, 80% of the sample of Slovak citizens responded that they were either very well or well informed about the euro, while in September 2007 only 47% of citizens had considered themselves to be very well or well informed.⁴ From this perspective, the campaign can be considered to have been successful.

It should be underlined that there were at least two other factors contributing to the positive perception of the common European currency. The first is the broad political consensus between the government and the opposition on Slovakia's entry into the Eurozone. Paradoxically, the greatest question-mark over this consensus was the attitude of the current Prime Minister, Robert Fico, who even in 2006 repeatedly contested the intention to adopt the euro in the Slovak Republic on January 1, 2009. Prime Minister Fico only adopted a clear and positive position on the entry of Slovakia into the Eurozone during 2007. The second factor significantly contributing to the positive image of the euro in Slovakia was the timing of the decision taken by the members of the Eurozone on accepting the Slovak Republic into their ranks. This decision was made just a few weeks before the first reports of the ongoing global financial crisis. Once the conversion rate was set at 30.126 Slovak crowns to one euro on July 8, 2008, Slovakia's membership in the Eurozone *de facto* ensured unprecedented stability for the Slovak crown in the latter half of 2008, when the value of, for example, the Czech crown or the Hungarian forint decreased rapidly in comparison to the euro. The Slovak Republic is adopting the euro at a time when the Eurozone represents an area of relative financial stability, when compared to the European countries which are not part of the common currency area. This experience may play a positive role, not only in the first months of 2009, when the citizens of Slovakia will experience the euro at first hand, but also in the future, if the Eurozone itself faces its own financial crisis. The adoption of the euro is the result of the political efforts of the three different governments which have led the Slovak Republic since the parliamentary elections of 1998. In recent months, however, the adoption of the euro in Slovakia has been supported more as a result of the circumstances concerning the world economic crisis rather than the efforts of politicians.

On January 1, 2009 Slovakia became the 16th member state of the Eurozone and, after Slovenia, the second former socialist republic to adopt the common European currency. This prepares the way for the gradual integration of other Central and East European countries into the Eurozone, since the potential rejection of the Slovak Republic by the EC would have probably put a long-term stop to the spread of the euro into new member countries. On its journey to adopting the euro, the Slovak Republic created a number of precedents. Perhaps the most significant is that relating to the long-term strengthening of the domestic currency, which appreciated twice since its entry into the exchange rate mechanism ERM II on November 28, 2005.⁵

⁴ "Introduction of the Euro in Slovakia", *Flash Eurobarometer 249*.

⁵ Since entering the ERM II, the value of the Slovak crown increased in relation to the euro by 27.6472%.

IN THE SCHENGEN AREA

The Slovak Republic became an official part of the Schengen area on December 21, 2007. Border checks at Slovak airports were completely abolished in March 2008. As of this date, the citizens of Slovakia, along with the other citizens of the Schengen area, can fully benefit from the advantages of the Schengen regime, which has brought new opportunities regarding free movement within the EU member states for Slovak citizens. On the other hand, Slovakia's membership in the Schengen area has brought new expenses and potentially negative consequences relating to the new external EU border. Border checks on the Slovak-Ukrainian border are stricter and a new security system has been installed along its length to combat illegal immigration. The Slovak Republic has started issuing standard Schengen visas, which require a higher standard of technical equipment and increase demands on the Slovak Consulates especially in

Ukraine – our largest neighbor. There are realistic concerns that Schengen might hinder the development of cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine.

Slovakia's membership in the Schengen area has brought new opportunities regarding free movement within the EU member states for Slovak citizens, but, on the other hand, there are also expenses and potentially negative consequences relating to the new external EU border.

The only rather symbolic compensation, thus far, is the Agreement on Local Border Traffic between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and Ukraine, Ján Kubiš and Volodymyr Ohryzko, on May 30, 2008. The parliaments of both countries approved this Agreement and it is officially valid as of September 29, 2008. However,

by mid-November 2008, less than 50 Ukrainian residents had applied for the local border traffic permit.⁶

The low number of applications submitted for local border traffic permits is related to the strict criteria laid down by the Slovak Republic. Ukrainian applicants must, for example, provide a credible reason for their trip to the Slovak Republic or give proof of family ties, which, according to the Consul of the Slovak Republic in Uzhgorod, Jitka Fischerová, is often very complicated.⁷ In comparison, it is necessary to state that Hungary has a similar agreement on local border traffic with Ukraine. However, when applying for a permit at the Hungarian General Consulate not all Ukrainians – it is not just a case of those of Hungarian nationality – have to give proof of the purpose of their visit. The Slovak Republic has taken a potentially important step in partially miti-

⁶ “Malý pohraničný styk sa vzťahuje na obce vzdialené do 50 kilometrov od štátnej hranice”, ČTK (November 16, 2008). According to the estimates of the Consulate General of the Slovak Republic in Uzhgorod, this area is inhabited by approximately 400 thousand people. The local border traffic regime allows for a visit to the territory of the Slovak Republic for a maximum of 30 days and the total duration of the stay cannot exceed 90 days in a six month period. For more details see www.minv.sk.

⁷ ČTK (November 16, 2008).

gating the negative impacts of the Schengen area on Slovak-Ukrainian cross-border cooperation, but this step has brought more restrictions than benefits for the residents of Western Ukraine.

THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE

The Slovak Republic backs the complete abolishment of transition restrictions on the free movement of the work force within the EU. Slovakia does not apply restrictions toward other member states and the Slovak Republic was one of the first EU states to open its labor market to the citizens of Romania and Bulgaria, after the accession of these countries to the EU on January 1, 2007. As of June 2008, five EU member countries were still applying transition restrictions toward the Slovak Republic – Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and Denmark. France abolished its restrictions at the beginning of its presidency of the European Union in July 2008.

The Slovak Republic continued its efforts to have the remaining transition restrictions removed by May 2009, when the old EU member countries have the last opportunity to prolong the application of restrictions to 2011 at the latest. Denmark and Belgium lifted their restrictions as of May 1, 2009. On the other hand, Germany and Austria have been signaling for some time that they wish to keep the restrictions in force until 2011.⁸ In accordance with the Treaty of Accession to the EU, member states can only continue to apply restrictive measures on the free movement of people for another two years after April 30, 2009 if there is a serious disruption or the threat of a serious disruption to their domestic labor market.

On November 18, 2008 the European Commission published an analytical report on the transition restrictions on the free movement of people, in which it argued, drawing on empirical data, that the free movement of the work force is beneficial to the European economy. When outlining the findings of the EC, the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities, Vladimír Špidla, stated that “the right to work in another country is a fundamental freedom for people in the EU.” According to Špidla “lifting restrictions now would not only make economic sense, but would also help reduce problems such as undeclared work and bogus self-employment.”⁹ In its report, the European Commission argued that the free movement of workers did not disrupt the labor markets of the EU countries. On the contrary, it contributed to economic growth, due to the fact that workers from new EU member countries targeted those areas of the labor market where older

⁸ SITA (July 19, 2008).

⁹ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1729&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=sk> (IP/08/1729). The summary of the analysis can be found at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/718&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=sk> (MEMO/08/718).

member states were suffering shortages in certain occupations. The Commission also brought attention to the data which shows that many mobile workers from new member countries leave the older member states and return home, when working in other EU countries becomes unprofitable. It also remains a fact that the majority of mobile workers in the older EU member states come from countries outside the EU itself. In relation to the economic crisis, the EC underlined that the fall in demand for workers will lower the flow of mobile workers to the EU. At the same time, these workers display a relatively high level of flexibility in moving to work in the dynamically developing areas.

Despite the fact that the European Commission promoted the abolition of the remaining transition measures and that this issue was the priority of the Czech Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2009,¹⁰ it is necessary to emphasize that the decision to abolish these measures is first of all a matter for each individual member state. In the context of the ongoing economic crisis, Germany and Austria have decided to open their labor markets to Slovak citizens only in 2011.

DEEPENING AND ENLARGING THE EU

In spite of the fact that the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, hoped that Slovakia would be among the first countries to successfully

On April 10, 2008 the Treaty of Lisbon was approved by 103 Members of the Slovak Parliament. The representatives of the government coalition were supported by SMK MPs.

ratify the Treaty of Lisbon, at the beginning of 2008 approving this document became distinctly problematic. As was the case with the unsuccessful *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*, the ratification of the *Treaty of Lisbon* proved to be the most politically problematic aspect of the process in the Slovak Republic. In spring 2008, it was unclear when and how the Slovak Republic would approve the *Treaty of Lisbon*. The approval

of this treaty required the votes of at least 90 of the 150 Members of Parliament in the National Council of the Slovak Republic: the constitutional majority. However, the coalition government of Robert Fico can only claim the support of 85 MPs. At the January session of the National Council, the opposition parties, the SDKU-DS, SMK, and KDH petitioned the Speaker of Parliament, Pavol Paška, to remove the *Treaty of Lisbon* from the agenda of the session until such a time that the government and coalition MPs would modify the draft Press Law of the Slovak Republic, which according to former Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda did not meet the required democratic standards and criteria.

¹⁰ For more information see www.eu2009.cz.

Ratification was not possible without the votes of the MPs of the opposition parties. At the end of 2007, the representatives of the SDKU-DS and SMK openly supported the *Treaty of Lisbon*, while KDH MPs consistently opposed it. However, at the beginning of 2008, the opposition MPs decided to use the vote on the *Treaty of Lisbon* to change the content of the *Press Law*, which they strongly opposed. The efforts of the opposition MPs lasted just three months – on April 10, 2008 the *Treaty of Lisbon* was approved by 103 MPs.¹¹ The representatives of the government coalition were supported by SMK MPs. Despite the attempts of the opposition parties, the coalition representatives did not change the content of the *Press Law* in any significant way. Furthermore, the representatives of the SDKU-DS in particular, as long-term supporters of European integration, sent very mixed signals to their voters and potential supporters by abstaining from the vote on the *Treaty of Lisbon*. The cohesion of the opposition in domestic political affairs was shattered for a long time after the approval of the *Treaty of Lisbon*.

On June 24, 2008 the President of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, signed and sealed the ratification of the *Treaty of Lisbon*.¹² In mid 2009, the fate of the *Treaty of Lisbon* remains uncertain. The *Treaty* awaits ratification in the Czech Republic, which is presiding over the European Union in the first half of 2009. However, the question of how Ireland will cope with its promise to repeat the referendum on the *Treaty of Lisbon*, which was rejected by the Irish voters in the public plebiscite of June 2008, is much more serious.

In addition to the principle of the gradual deepening of integration, the Slovak Republic also generally supports the principle of the gradual enlargement of the EU. It thus joined the middle-ground group of countries which does not seek to encourage a fundamental discussion on the political and geographic limits of integration. Slovakia supports the process of the Union's further enlargement for the Western Balkans in particular.¹³ However, in the course of 2008, politicians were not particularly active on the subject of EU enlargement, except for displaying explicit support for Croatia and Serbia. In contrast to the previous government, the current coalition does not openly discuss the possibility of Ukraine's membership in the EU.

NEW TOPICS

In addition to the existing main viewpoints that Slovakia holds on the future of the EU and the fulfillment of the goal of its full-fledged membership in this organization, Slovakia also anticipates a new discussion on the strategic direction of the European Union. In the

¹¹ For details of the vote see [www.nrsr.sk](http://www.nrsr.sk/Default.aspx?sid=schodze/hlasovanie/hlasklub&ID=22734), Session No. 20, voting No. 165; <http://www.nrsr.sk/Default.aspx?sid=schodze/hlasovanie/hlasklub&ID=22734>.

¹² For more information on the issue see E. Láštic, "S vylúčením verejnosti a menšiny", *Zahraničná politika* No. 2/2008, pp. 21-22.

¹³ Thus far, the Slovak Republic has not recognized the independent state of Kosovo.

Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2007 we argued, in relation to Slovakia's conduct in the EU, that the priorities of the Slovak Republic are often defined without coordination, *ad hoc*, and without broader public or parliamentary discussion. This trend did not change in any significant way in 2008. However, in the same breath, we must add that 2008 was dominated by the efforts of the government and the National Bank of Slovakia to oversee the successful adoption of the European currency. In this respect, throughout 2008, even the Prime Minister, who usually only focuses his attention on European affairs relating to the short-term domestic situation in Slovakia, energetically and successfully applied himself to persuading the leaders of the EU that the Slovak Republic will be a reliable partner for the member countries of the Eurozone.

Nonetheless, with the exception of the euro, we can only talk of Slovak politicians as having a conceptual approach to European integration in limited terms. As far as the central themes are concerned, Slovakia's current priority is to utilize the financial and investment stimuli in the form of the EU structural funds available until 2013. In

With the exception of the euro, we can only talk of Slovak politicians as having a conceptual approach to European integration in limited terms.

this regard, the Slovak Republic is under gradually increasing scrutiny from the European Commission, as has been shown, for example, by the case of the bulletin-board tender at the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic. The tender highlighted, in broader terms, the question of the meaningfulness and legitimacy of the utilization of financial resources from the EU

budget. On the other hand, the economic crisis provided the circumstances required to make it easier to draw on EU assistance, when Parliament passed the amendment of the Law on Assistance and Support Granted from European Community Funds to the second reading via a shortened legislative procedure. The amendment should allow for the expenses incurred by large projects which have not yet been approved by the European Commission to be included in the expenses statement submitted by states to the EC.¹⁴

With reference to other political themes of recent years, Slovakia has clearly distinguished itself as a supporter of nuclear energy. In 2007, the Slovak Republic, along with the Czech Republic, initiated the formation of the European Nuclear Energy Forum in order to launch a debate within the EU on the future use of nuclear energy within the European Union. During the second European Nuclear Energy Forum meeting in Prague on May 22-23, 2008¹⁵ representatives of the Slovak company JAVYS and the Czech company ČEZ, Inc., signed an agreement on the construction of new blocs for the nuclear power plant at Jaslovské Bohunice.¹⁶ Along with Slovenia and Romania, Slovakia competed for the seat of the newly formed Agency for the Cooperation of

¹⁴ TASR (June 17, 2009).

¹⁵ For more details see http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/forum/bratislava_prague/2008_05_22/index_en.htm.

¹⁶ "Jadrové fórum spečatilo dostavbu Bohuníc", *EurActiv.sk* (May 29, 2008); <http://www.euractiv.sk/energetika/clanok/jadrove-forum-specatilo-dostavu-bohunic-012928>.

Energy Regulators (ACER). Furthermore, the Government of the Slovak Republic would like to see its candidate succeed as future EU Commissioner for Energy.

EU SCRUTINY

Slovakia's entry into the Eurozone marks the end of the first phase of Slovakia's membership in the European Union, which, from May 2004 to the beginning of 2009, was characterized by the country's efforts to fulfill the main commitments stemming from the Treaty of Accession to the EU. This period was primarily about catching up to the existing level of integration on the part of Slovakia.

In the upcoming years, we can expect to see a change in the nature of Slovakia's priorities in the EU. They will no longer be defined by the Union, but by the attitudes our country holds toward the EU, emanating from the specific interests of the government or influential interest groups within the state. Slovakia will thus begin to resemble the old member countries that openly declare and promote their own interests in particular political areas.

A good example of these conflicting attitudes is the negotiations on the climate and energy package, in the context of which, Prime Minister Fico stated that "we cannot adopt an energy and climate package which will kill our economy"¹⁷. The political agreement on the climate and energy package was finally forged at the European Council Summit on September 11-12, 2008. All the member countries left the Summit relatively satisfied, despite Italy and Poland threatening to veto on the first day if the climate restrictions were to endanger their industries. The new member states, including Slovakia, obtained concessions which will not threaten their economic production or the consumer price of their electricity. Energy companies gained long-term concessions – they will not have to purchase all the emission permits until 2020.¹⁸ The Prime Ministers and Heads of States of the EU, including the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, adopted a decision which will postpone the actual implementation of the climate and energy restrictions until such a time when the current leaders of the EU will almost surely be retired politicians.

In relation to the new character of Slovakia's priorities in the EU, the question remains as to what extent, in the future, Slovakia will be able to reach the broad political consensus that has been typical in European affairs, at least since 2000, when all the relevant parliamentary political parties promoted EU membership, and afterwards, when the clear majority of these parties supported the successful fulfillment of integration goals following Slovakia's accession to the European Union. In comparison

¹⁷ "Prepis tlačovej konferencie Roberta Fica po skončení prvého dňa rokovania summitu EÚ" (December 11, 2008); <http://vlada.gov.sk/13045/prepis-tlacovej-konferencie-po-skonceni-prveho-dna-rokovania-summitu-europskej-unie.php>.

¹⁸ Š. Hudec, "Únia sa vyfarbila. Na svetlozeleno", *Sme* (December 13, 2008).

with the Czech Republic, Poland, or Hungary, an exceptional consensus has existed over the past ten years in Slovakia between the coalition and the opposition on all the strategic priorities of the Slovak Republic in the EU. It will be significantly harder to find a similar political consensus in relation to Slovakia's position in the EU today. This is already visible in the areas of social policy or the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, where the current government displays a tendency to promote greater regulation on the part of the Union than the previous government. The coalition and the opposition already have differing opinions in terms of the priorities on how to allocate funding from the European Union budget even over such strategic priorities as making the best use of EU structural funds.

Having become a full-fledged integrated member of the EU, Slovakia also has a qualitatively new relation with European institutions. The first years of membership were characterized by the EC's more benevolent approach regarding Slovakia's respect for the rules of the Union. Shortly after the enlargement in May 2004, the European Commission took into consideration the fact that the new Union members required time to adapt and refrained from issuing strict judgments. However, the EC now regards the Slovak Republic just like any other Member State and this is also clearly visible in two public policy areas. The first concerns the utilization of resources from the structural funds. A good example from the latter half of 2008 is found in the critical remarks emanating from the EC on the use of EU funding in the construction of freeways in Slovakia. The Slovak Republic will have to get used to the European Commission regularly evaluating the meaningfulness of domestic projects financed from the Union budget. The second area

The events of 2008 suggest that the current government is interested in regulating financially interesting services, such as those provided by the Slovak Post or chain stores even at the cost of coming into conflict with EU institutions. This trend may well increase throughout 2009, in the light of the financial and economic crisis.

of more intensive EC scrutiny is related to the growing number of official warnings on Slovakia's violation of Community rules.¹⁹

These violations primarily relate to adhering to EU rules on economic competition. In the autumn of 2008, the dispute between Slovakia and the European Commission on the liberalization of postal services in Slovakia openly escalated. In October 2008, the European Commission demanded that competition be reinstated in the hybrid mail sector, since the amendment of the *Law on Post* from spring 2008 made Slovak Post a monopoly in the delivery of mail. The Slovak Republic did not react to the EC decision so the European Commission initiated legal proceedings against Slovakia on December 17, 2008. At the same time, Slovak Post lodged an appeal against the EC decision before the Court of First Instance.²⁰ A similar case is emerging in relation to the *Law on Chain Stores*. In the past, the EC has objected to the current coalition's approval

¹⁹ Author's interview with a Slovak diplomat, Brussels (October 16, 2008).

²⁰ TASR (December 17, 2008).

of this act, and the government can expect the Commission to initiate further steps to improve this matter. Besides these specific examples, the European Commission has also been criticizing specific clauses of the Act on Protection of Competition for some time. In June 2008, it issued an initial warning to the Slovak Republic arguing that Article 2 Paragraph 6 of the *Law of the Slovak Republic on Protection of Competition* limits the competencies of the Antimonopoly Office of the Slovak Republic to implement the law on monopolization in the telecommunications, energy, and postal sector. On February 2, 2009 the European Commission once again asked the Slovak Republic to harmonize its *Law on Protection of Competition* and gave Slovakia two months to issue a statement on the matter and adopt corrective measures. In the worst case scenario, the Slovak Republic would find itself in front of the European Court of Justice for discrepancies between its domestic legislation and EU competition rules.²¹

The events of 2008 suggest that the current government is interested in regulating financially interesting services such as those provided by Slovak Post or chain stores even at the cost of coming into conflict with EU institutions. This trend may well increase throughout 2009, in the light of the financial and economic crisis. Today the relationship the Slovak government has with the EU is one of politically pragmatic calculation, in the form of rather short-term gains and advantages. Such a government position is in no way exceptional in the life of the EU. However, it is a new position from Slovakia's perspective. In relation to the EU, the current Slovak political representatives place emphasis on protecting the state interests of Slovakia. At the same time, their political dialogue lacks a parallel emphasis on the values of the personal, business, or consumer freedoms that the common European market – despite its imperfections – offers to Slovak citizens.

CRISIS SCENARIOS FOR 2009

The political behavior of the Slovak Republic in the EU during the first few months of 2009 was significantly influenced by two external factors. Firstly, by the cessation of the natural gas supply from Russia. The stoppage of natural gas supplies to Slovakia from January 7-18, 2009 represented the most immediate security threat to the country since 1993. The playing out of the crisis, which stemmed from the Russian-Ukrainian bilateral dispute, had a negative impact on Slovakia's official position on the possible accession of Ukraine to the EU and NATO. The majority of government representatives as well as the Slovak public blamed Kiev for the crisis in natural gas supply.²² In a public debate, the Head of the Political Affairs Directorate General of the MFA, Igor Slobodník, stated that in 2009 it is unclear whether Ukraine can be considered

²¹ TASR (February 2, 2009).

²² SITA (February 8, 2009).

a trustworthy and responsible ally.²³ Officially, Slovakia continues to support the ambitions of our eastern neighbor in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; nonetheless, Igor Slobodník emphasized that Slovakia will be more critical in evaluating Ukraine's abilities to accept technical assistance from the EU. At a time when the EU is launching a new initiative – the Eastern Partnership – and, on the basis of the declaration of March 23, 2009 is preparing to invest significant financial resources into the repairs to the natural gas pipelines in Ukraine, the Slovak Republic is, at the very least, sending guarded signals to its largest neighbor. Slovak politicians made a greater attempt to find the culprit responsible for the natural gas crisis than to find ways of being better prepared to avoid a similar crisis in the future. This position weakens the ability of the Slovak Republic to play an active role in future political and economic EU projects in Ukraine. The gas crisis also revealed a broader problem concerning energy supply in the country. Prime Minister Fico and Minister of Economy Jahnátek repeatedly threatened to restart the decommissioned blocs of the nuclear power plant at Jaslovské Bohunice. By doing so, the Slovak Republic would have violated the commitments defined in the Accession Treaty. However, the fact that Robert Fico was supported in his position by the representatives of the opposition parties SDKU-DS and KDH is evidence of a long-term underestimation of energy security issues in the Slovak Republic by all governments hitherto. The conclusions of the March EU Summit represent a first step toward the diversification of energy supplies. The Summit approved financial support for Slovakia to connect to the natural gas pipeline network with Hungary and Poland as well as to prepare to allow for the reverse flow of natural gas, which helped Slovakia obtain natural gas from the Czech Republic, when the Russian supply ceased.

The deepening financial and economic crisis represents the second factor influencing Slovakia's priorities in the EU. As a small and open economy, the Slovak Republic faces protectionist pressures, as expressed most audibly by the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, when he stated that within the EU, French cars should not be produced outside France. However, the reaction of Prime Minister Fico was equally confrontational when he declared that we will oust Gaz de France as a shareholder in SPP (Slovak Gas Industry) if Sarkozy starts applying preferential measures.²⁴ The Foreign Minister, Miroslav Lajčák, issued a more diplomatic statement saying that managing the impacts of the financial and economic crisis through national egoism or by taking individual steps is the path to perdition.²⁵ Due to its dependency upon foreign trade, the Slovak Republic must rely on the framework of the EU common market and the rigorous implementation of the four freedoms of the European Union. This fact is acknowledged even by Prime Minister Fico, who stated that foreign workers are not a threat to our workers on the labor market.²⁶ However, on the other hand, the priority of the Slovak

²³ "Sobotné dialógy", Slovak Radio (March 7, 2009).

²⁴ SITA (February 9, 2009).

²⁵ TASR (February 11, 2009).

²⁶ TASR (February 10, 2009).

government during the crisis period has been to maintain employment. The government's natural reflex thus tends to lead to the adoption of supportive and protective measures for selected domestic producers, such as US Steel, which has been offered a contribution from the government for the obligatory tax payments paid on behalf of employees. However, such an approach is not only selective, but also undermines the agreed commitments of Slovakia, and EU market principles, since US Steel is already benefiting from certain concessions from EU competition rules based on the *Accession Treaty*.²⁷ At a time of ongoing economic crisis, we can thus expect the attitude of the Slovak Government to EU rules to be more *ad hoc* than principled.

In 2009, Slovakia is faced with the important task of creating a new European Commission. The mandate of the current EC officially expires on October 31, 2009. However, in October a repeat referendum on the *Treaty of Lisbon* will be held in Ireland and if the referendum is successful, a number of member states wish to see the new EC formed in accordance with the new EU Treaty. In the conclusions of the European Council on June 18-19, 2009 the Heads of state and government of the EU declared their intention to nominate the current EC President, J. M. Barroso, as president of the new European Commission. However, the problem for Barroso is that it is as yet unclear whether he will be supported by the majority of the Members of the new European Parliament.

In terms of the composition of the new European Commission, the debate in Slovakia has revolved around the candidates for future commissioner and the nature of the portfolio that the commissioner will bear responsibility for within the EC. The future Slovak member of the EC will be nominated by the Government and so far the name of Maroš Šefčovič, the current Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the European Union, has been mentioned the most. Since the new European Commission will continue to respect the principle that each member state is entitled to nominate one EC member, the distribution of portfolios amongst the 27 commissioners will become the subject of complex negotiations between the future President and the member countries. Prime Minister Fico has repeatedly declared that Slovakia's priority is to obtain the post of the Commissioner for Energy; however, it is extremely likely that other member countries will also be interested in gaining this post.

Nevertheless, from Slovakia's perspective, as a smaller state with one of the most open economies in the EU, discussions on the future composition and running of the EC should focus on other priorities rather than just personal issues. A recent analysis of Barroso's handling of the current EC pointed to undesirable shifts in the balance of power within the EU. The position of the European Commission is more precari-

If Barroso gains the approval of the Members of the European Parliament, his second Commission must be freer, stricter, and more consistent in the defense of the common rules of the economic and trade policies of the Union. Otherwise Slovakia will lose the comparative advantages it has gained from being a full member in the EU.

²⁷ "Fico hasí v Bruseli Košice", *Sme* (March 9, 2009).

ous than it was in the past. Maintaining its independence from the Member States is complicated by the fact that the larger states, such as Germany or France, wield significant influence on its initiatives and decisions.²⁸ Since the role of the European Commission is to safeguard the fundamental treaties and rules of the EU and operate as an independent arbiter in disputes between member states or companies within the common market, Slovakia's primary interest must be directed at ensuring that the EC maintains a strong and autonomous position within the institutional architecture of the EU. Especially during the financial crisis, the Slovak Republic needs a respected arbitrator on competition rules and on implementing the four basic freedoms of the EU. The success of the integration project rests on the economic, political, and civic advantages provided by an EU common market that has no internal borders and is free from the self-serving interests of individual EU member countries. If Barroso gains the approval of the Members of the European Parliament, his second Commission must be freer, stricter, and more consistent in defending the common rules of the economic and trade policies of the Union. Otherwise, Slovakia will lose the comparative advantages it has gained from being a full member of the EU. That is why, at this stage in establishing the new European Commission, all the political entities in the Slovak Republic should particularly emphasize the need to renew trust in the status of the EC and only then, can we begin to search for the right person to help ensure this trust.

The June European Council gave political assurances to Dublin to pave the way for the second Irish referendum on the *Treaty of Lisbon* to be held in October 2009. The ongoing economic crisis increases the chances for the success of this plebiscite, since in these uncertain economic times, the Irish are beginning to realize the significance and advantages presented by European integration, in ever greater numbers. The potential success of the Irish referendum will once again bring the need to discuss the practical implications of the *Treaty of Lisbon* in Slovakia. If this treaty does in fact come into force, then in the first few years, its impact will be most visible in the running of the EU institutions. Slovakia's foreign policy will have to prepare, for example, for the functioning of new institutions related to the President of the European Council and *de facto* to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the EU, and in addition to the functioning of the External Action Service – the diplomatic corps of the EU – in practice. The way in which these changes are envisioned has brought to the fore the question of how Slovakia will successfully fill all the administrative positions allocated to it in EU institutions, especially in the European Commission and EU Council, which will form the core of European diplomacy. According to the June report of the Government, Slovakia will be able to fill 279 permanent positions within the European Commission by 2010. As of December 31, 2008 there are 222 Slovak citizens working in the EC. The priority of the Slovak Republic should be to focus on the management positions, ideally at the level of directors, as at this level they can exert real influence on the formulation and application of EU rules.

²⁸ See "The European Commission 2004-09: A politically weakened institution? Views from the National Capitals", *EPIN Working Paper* No. 23/2009.

FIVE YEARS IN THE EU

Five years after the accession of Slovakia to the EU, we can observe that rather than being a strategic goal, the European Union is becoming an important extension of Slovakia's public policy. In certain areas such as the currency or visa policy, the influence of the EU on events in the Slovak Republic is significant. In other areas such as energy or the current economic crisis, the European Union has a supplementary role to play alongside domestic political solutions. Between 1998 and 2004, domestic policy was subordinated to the goals of European integration; today, Slovak politicians approach the EU more pragmatically and tactically. The current Prime Minister displays open boredom at the Union summits dealing with institutional issues.²⁹ Furthermore, the Maastricht criteria are no longer anything like as sacred as they once were for Prime Minister Robert Fico. However, former Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda exhibited a similar pragmatism, when he proved willing not to vote for the Treaty of Lisbon in relation to the demands for changes to the Press Act. Despite the fact that the SDKU-DS is a long-term supporter of the institutional reform of the EU, its Members of Parliament did not vote for the new *Treaty* in the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

Slovak politicians have relatively quickly learned how to use the EU for short-term domestic goals. The Prime Minister is primarily interested in EU affairs in relation to domestic issues. If, however, the Prime Minister calls on the EU to take an active role in solving the economic crisis, on the one hand, and is against the significant transfer of competencies to the level of the Union in safeguarding the financial market, on the other hand, he should specify what exactly is expected of the EU during the crisis. The fact is that the Slovak Republic successfully joined the EU because it had effective administrative structures and a clear political goal, which was supported by a broad cross-party consensus at the beginning of this decade. However, five years after Slovakia's accession to the EU, the politicians of the Slovak Republic are sending mixed signals toward the EU, which must be confusing, not only for the administrative bodies of the state, but also for our partners in the EU, and especially for the citizens of this state.

REFERENCES

- Bilčík, V., "Slovenská republika a Európska únia", Bútor, M., Kollár, M., Mesežnikov, G. (eds) *Slovensko 2008. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*. (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2009).

²⁹ At the European Council Summit on June 19-20, 2008 Prime Minister Fico expressed his disappointment that after the unsuccessful referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU focused on institutional issues "which mean nothing to the people" instead of addressing the problem of "the unprecedentedly high prices of crude oil and food", TASR (June 20, 2008).

- "Fico hasí v Bruseli Košice", *Sme* (March 9, 2009).
- Fidlušová, V., Šafaříková, K., "Bratislava oponuje Bruselu", *Sme* (January 31, 2008); <http://dennik.sme.sk/c/3705083/bratislava-oponuje-bruselu.html>.
- Hudec, Š., "Únia sa vyfarbila. Na svetlozeleno", *Sme* (December 13, 2008).
- "Jadrové fórum spečatilo dostavbu Bohuníc", *EurActiv.sk* (May 29, 2008); <http://www.euractiv.sk/energetika/clanok/jadrove-forum-specatilo-dostavu-bohunic-012928>.
- Láštic, E., "S vylúčením verejnosti a menšiny", *Zahraničná politika* No. 2/2008.
- Malová, D., Láštic, E., Rybář, M.: *Slovensko ako nový členský štát Európskej únie: Výzva z periferie?* (Bratislava: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005).
- "Malý pohraničný styk sa vzťahuje na obce vzdialené do 50 kilometrov od štátnej hranice", *ČTK* (November 16, 2008).
- "Prepis tlačovej konferencie Roberta Fica po skončení prvého dňa rokovania summitu EÚ" (December 11, 2008); <http://vlada.gov.sk/13045/prepis-tlacovej-konferencie-po-skonceni-prveho-dna-rokovania-summitu-europskej-unie.php>.
- "Slovensko od eura delí 239 dní", *EurActiv.sk* (May 7, 2008); <http://www.euractiv.sk/verzia-pretlac/clanok/slovensko-od-eura-deli-239-dni>.
- "The European Commission 2004-09: A politically weakened institution? Views from the National Capitals", *EPIN Working Paper* No. 23/2009.
- "The Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic" (Bratislava: Government of the Slovak Republic, 2006); <http://www-8.vlada.gov.sk/1672/the-manifesto-of-the-government-of-the-slovak-republic.php>.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION AND SLOVAKIA IN 2008

MATÚŠ KORBA

September 2008 marked ten years from the parliamentary elections which transformed the internal political relations in the Slovak Republic and created the conditions for Slovakia's integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This arduous and complicated process was launched in autumn 1998 and it bore fruit five years later in the shape of full-fledged membership in NATO. In March 2004, the Slovak Republic gained not only security guarantees, but also joined the politically most significant and militarily strongest alliance in the world today, while taking on its own share of the responsibilities for maintaining international security. The past decade represents a sufficiently long time-frame not only to assess the integration process, but also to evaluate the subsequent adaptation of Slovakia to NATO structures.

Between 2004 and 2008, the Slovak Republic faced the challenge of actively participating in both the political activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and in its military operations relating to crisis management. The analysis presented below describes how Slovakia coped with this challenge and outlines the tasks that it is currently fulfilling within a transitional NATO. The first decade of the 21st century forced the Alliance to face the challenge of adapting to the rapidly changing security environment in Europe and the world. The dynamism of these changes was also reflected in the regular NATO Summits held every other year with a regularity unprecedented in the previous history of this organization, stretching back more than half a century. The past six years have shown that there is a broad plurality of opinions on the role of the Alliance in international security within NATO. On the one hand, this fact underlined the democratic character of the organization, but on the other it simultaneously decreased its action readiness, which was reliant on the consensus of all member states.

NATO SUMMIT IN BUCHAREST

Achieving compromise on political issues remains a demanding and lengthy process, and this was reflected in the findings of the last NATO Summit, which took place in Bucharest on April 3-4, 2008. The meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) at the level of Heads of State and Government focused on three main points in the agenda. First, the issue of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, which required more military reinforcements. Alliance member countries agreed to increase the number of soldiers in the ISAF mission in order to step up the fight against the radical Taliban movement. In a document entitled *ISAF Strategic Vision* they committed themselves to mutual support in sharing the burden in Afghanistan. At the same time, the politicians of the NATO member states promised to provide their military commanders with the tools required to achieve success and ensure the maximum possible flexibility in the use of the armed forces.¹

Through its President, Ivan Gašparovič, Slovakia confirmed that it would double the expedition contingent of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic (AF) in the ISAF

Slovakia confirmed that it would double the expedition contingent of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in the ISAF mission. By the end of 2008, 176 Slovak soldiers and officers had been deployed in Afghanistan.

mission. By the end of 2008, 176 Slovak soldiers and officers had been deployed in Afghanistan, while Resolution No. 901 of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, from June 19, 2008, allows for the deployment of a total of 246 AF members in the ISAF mission. They were deployed in the operationally exposed area in the south of Afghanistan. They assumed responsibility for the protection of the Tarin Kowt base in the Oruzgan province of Afghanistan, which is under Dutch command. In

cooperation with Canada, a Slovak Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) began operating in Kandahar Province and a security detachment commenced duty at Kandahar Airport. Referring to these events, Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič declared that "Slovakia is gradually expanding its participation in ISAF in such a way as to try and maximize its potential for solidarity. The south of Afghanistan has clearly become the centre of operations".² The second point on the agenda of the NATO Summit in Bucharest was the issue of the Alliance's further enlargement. The leading political representatives of the Member States decided to invite Croatia and Albania to begin negotiations on their accession to NATO. Macedonia, the third candidate country, did not receive an invitation, as Greece was against it. The inclusion of the new members represents the third wave of NATO enlargement since the end of the Cold War; however, that does not mean that it will be the last, since the North Atlantic

¹ *ISAF Strategic Vision*. (Bucharest: NATO, 2008); <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-052e.html>.

² "Gašparovič: V provincii Uruzgan preberá SR zodpovednosť za ochranu základne" (2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3731/gasparovic-v-provincii-uruzgan-prebera-sr-zodpovednost-za-ochranu-zakladne.php?pg=1>.

Council has adopted the decision to leave the door open for Ukraine and Georgia as well.³ Nonetheless, it has not set a time frame for their integration nor indeed for their participation in the Membership Action Plan (MAP) due to the influence of France, Germany, and other countries. It was a difficultly negotiated compromise between this group of member countries, on the one hand, and the USA, Great Britain, and other member countries, on the other. President Ivan Gašparovič, who represented Slovakia at the Bucharest Summit, declared that Slovakia supports Ukraine's future membership in NATO, but that it remains a question of how prepared Kiev is. The Slovak President stated that "From the start, the Slovak Republic has promoted the enlargement of the Alliance, because the larger the Alliance, the stronger and more capable it will be".⁴ In practice, this official declaration is based on the efforts of Slovak diplomacy, which have enabled the Slovak Embassy in Ukraine to function as the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Kiev since 2007.

The issue of military capabilities was, in keeping with tradition, the third point on the agenda of the NAC negotiations.⁵ The leading political representatives of the NATO member countries were able to find common ground on the issue of the components of the American ballistic missile defense to be deployed in Central Europe on the territories of Poland and the Czech Republic. They stated that the American missile defense shield would be able to protect Europe from a missile threat, especially from the Middle East. They deemed the proliferation of guided ballistic missiles to be an increasing threat to all member countries of the Alliance. For these reasons, NATO decided to evaluate the possibility of connecting the American ballistic missile defense shield with similar future missile defense systems in other parts of the world.⁶

The Slovak Republic supported the position of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and President Gašparovič welcomed the fact that consultations were begun within NATO on the project of the American ballistic missile defense system. Slovakia takes into account that the Central European components of the American ballistic missile defense system may contribute significantly to the protection of NATO's European members from the threat represented by long-range ballistic missiles. Ivan Gašparovič's statement indicated that Slovakia unequivocally supported the plan to produce an in-depth study by the next Summit in 2009, which would evaluate the strategic benefits of the US project for NATO.⁷ The positions held by the Slovak President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak

³ *Bucharest Summit Declaration* (April 3, 2008); <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html>.

⁴ "Gašparovič: Slovensko je za členstvo Ukrajiny v NATO", *SITA* (April 3, 2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3672/gasparovic-slovensko-je-za-clenstvo-ukrajiny-v-nato.php?pg=1>.

⁵ At the NATO Summit in Bucharest, President Nicolas Sarkozy announced the return of France to NATO military command; President Charles De Gaulle pulled France out in 1966. This very important shift in French security and defense policy was roundly welcomed by all members of the Alliance.

⁶ *Bucharest Summit Declaration* (April 3, 2008); <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html>.

⁷ "Slovensko je a zostane plnohodnotným členom NATO", *SITA* (April 3, 2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3710/gasparovic-slovensko-je-a-zostane-plnohodnotnym-clenom-nato.php?pg=1>.

Republic on the issue of the US ballistic missile defense system differ from the position of Prime Minister Robert Fico, who has openly criticized the plan to deploy the missiles in the Czech Republic and Poland. As a result, the Slovak Republic sent contradictory signals abroad, which our neighbors and allies find very inconsistent.

While the leading representatives of the NATO Member States search for complicated compromises over political issues, greater mutual understanding can be found over the Alliance's military issues. There is a consensus that the reliability and effectiveness of the Alliance are based upon its military capabilities. North American and European politicians work from the universally valid rule that diplomacy is much more effective if it is backed up by adequate military force.⁸ However, this understanding and consensus is more theoretical than practical. This is attributable to the fact that most NATO member countries lack sufficient military capability. Their armed forces have low combat readiness and they are unable to allocate a sufficient number of units to be deployed in crisis management operations.

The situation should improve as a result of the agreements reached at the meeting of the Ministers of Defense of the Alliance member countries from October 10, 2008 in Budapest. The Ministers of Defense agreed to increase the number of deployable units as a percentage of the total number of land forces units. In the future, the current ratio of 40% (of units deployable in crisis management operations) should be increased to 50% of deployable land forces in NATO member countries.⁹ The Alliance's military capabilities will, of course, only be improved if these shared commitments are in fact implemented properly.

In this respect, the domestic expert and political debate on the future direction of Slovakia's security and defense policy should, therefore, bring answers to specific questions relating to the political and military transformation of NATO. With a certain amount of generalization, it can be said that where the political transformation of NATO is concerned, the Slovak Republic must assess whether it is in its interests to support the transformation of the Alliance into a political-security organization operating throughout the world. The strategic task of such an Alliance would be to ensure global stability through partnerships, military and non-military interventions, and if necessary through its further enlargement. In the case of NATO's military transformation, Slovakia must evaluate whether it is in its interest to support NATO's ambition to conduct all types of crisis management operations, from humanitarian aid to high intensity combat operations, wherever member states and their citizens are threatened. In order to fulfill this ambition, further improvement of the operational capabilities of military and civilian crisis management instruments is required. It is only by answering these questions that the Slovak Republic can formulate its

⁸ J. Shea *NATO Going Global – or Almost, Transatlantic Security Issues Project*; http://www.ataedu.org/article_new.php?id=109.

⁹ *Informal Meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, Budapest, October 9-10, 2008*; <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2008/0810-budapest/0810-budapest.htm>.

position on the European Security and Defense Policy and the role of the EU as a security actor.¹⁰

Discussions on these issues should be ideologically neutral. Transforming the North Atlantic Treaty Organization does not mean transforming NATO into a 'global policeman' or a 'global humanitarian service'. The Alliance will remain, as it did for the last four decades of the Cold War and the two decades at the turn of the 20th and 21st century, an exclusive organization based on shared democratic values and shared security interests. Strengthening the military capability of the armed forces of the Member States does not represent the militarization of those societies. It is simply a natural response to the unstable and turbulent changing security environment in Europe and the world that is the source of serious threats. Maintaining the global military superiority on the side of the democratic countries should be of vital interest to the Slovak Republic and other members of NATO and the EU. Despite perhaps seeming politically incorrect, this statement is surely strategically correct and at the same time, the only realistic one.¹¹

The Alliance's military capabilities will only be improved if these shared commitments are in fact implemented properly. In this respect the domestic expert and political debate on the future direction of Slovakia's security and defense policy should bring answers to specific questions relating to the political and military transformation of NATO.

NATO POLITICAL-MILITARY PRIORITY: AFGHANISTAN

Since, objectively speaking, the Slovak Republic is limited in terms of the potential power, international influence, and human and economic resources that it wields, it is not able to set the priorities of the Alliance. Like most NATO member countries, it can only influence their formulation and subsequently decide whether to participate in realizing those priorities. The participation of the Slovak Republic in military operations outside the territory of NATO Member States is a characteristic example of this interaction. By adopting resolution No. 497/2007 on June 6, 2007, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the *Evaluation of the Performance of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in Operations of International Crisis Management in 2007 with Projections for 2008-2010*. This document is the result of an in-depth analysis undertaken by experts at the Slovak Ministry of Defense in 2006-2007 on the previous participation

¹⁰ The primary position of NATO as the most important guarantor of Slovakia's security is defined in the currently valid conceptual documents (the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic and the Defense Strategy of the Slovak Republic). The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should represent the main platform for the realization of Slovak security and defense policy, while the EU should be a secondary, complementary platform.

¹¹ J. Lindley-French, "Big World, Big Future, Big NATO", *NATO Review*; <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue4/english/opinion>

of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in foreign operations. This analysis and the subsequent political decision led to a re-evaluation of the participation of the AF in foreign missions and a new strategic goal was set: that the Slovak Republic should only participate in two or three selected operations of international crisis management. The NATO and EU operations in the Balkans, the NATO mission in Afghanistan, and the UN mission in Cyprus have been selected as the priorities.¹²

This political decision eliminates one of the most serious problems previously encountered during the operation of Slovak Armed Forces in foreign missions – the territorial and operational dispersion of Slovak soldiers. In the past, relatively small contingents of the AF were simultaneously deployed in a greater number of missions. The formulation and approval of the new strategic goals has meant that Slovakia has been able to start providing militarily significant and politically relevant contingents to a limited number of selected missions. The government decision of June 2007, and its consequent implementation, brought visible results in the course of 2008. The participation of the AF in the UN mission in the Golan Heights (UNDOF) was terminated in June 2008 and the Slovak military contribution to the NATO operation in Afghanistan (ISAF) was strengthened.

The Slovak Republic thus fulfilled the commitments it adopted, along with other NATO member countries, at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008. The ISAF Strategic Vision specified an increase in the number of NATO soldiers in Afghanistan, with the goal of making the fight against the radical Taliban movement more effective and it bound the countries to mutual support in sharing the burden represented by operational deployment.¹³ By adopting Resolution No. 901/2008 on June 19, 2008 the National Council of the Slovak Republic approved a change in mandate and an increase in the number of AF members in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan to 246 soldiers and officers. The twofold increase in the numbers of the Slovak expedition contingent and the expansion of the mandate allowing for deployment in the operationally exposed southern provinces represented a decisive qualitative shift in the participation of the AF in Afghanistan.

As of December 2008, a total of 176 AF members were deployed in the ISAF mission in the following structures: a multi-functional engineering company (57 members) in Kandahar, a security detachment (50 members) in Kandahar, a national support element (NSE) (11 members) in Kandahar, an operational mentor and liaison team (11 members) in Oruzgan, a security detachment (45 members) in Tarin Kowt, and a provincial reconstruction team (4 members) operating throughout Afghanistan. Last, but not least, five Slovak officers are operating at the ISAF Command.¹⁴ In 2009,

¹² “Vyhodnotenie pôsobenia ozbrojených síl Slovenskej republiky v operáciách medzinárodného krízového manažmentu za rok 2006 s návrhom predpokladanej účasti v rokoch 2007-2008” (Bratislava: The Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 2007); [www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/9438FA16C9C90D8CC12572F0002ED4FF/\\$FILE/vlastnymat.doc](http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/9438FA16C9C90D8CC12572F0002ED4FF/$FILE/vlastnymat.doc).

¹³ *ISAF Strategic Vision*. (Bucharest: NATO, 2008); <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-052e.html>.

the numbers of the Slovak contingent in Afghanistan should reach 226 officers and soldiers. The deployment of another security detachment of 50 AF members to protect and defend the ISAF Hadrian Camp in Deh Rawood in the Oruzgan province is anticipated.¹⁵

THE POLITICAL PRIORITY OF SLOVAKIA: THE BALKANS

In the course of 2008, the Slovak Republic also participated in the second crisis management operation under NATO command: the KFOR mission in Kosovo, which AF members have been serving in since 1999. As of February 2002, an AF mechanized company, stationed at the shared military base of Sajkovač, has been operating in the KFOR mission, based on the agreement between the Ministries of Defense of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It is tasked with preventing ethnic unrest, criminal activities, and any disruptions to the peaceful political process in Kosovo. To this day, a total of 2,995 AF members, 26 of whom were women, have participated in the KFOR mission.¹⁶

In 2008, within the range of the operative responsibility of the company, a total of 139 Slovak soldiers and officers regularly patrolled civilian structures and safeguarded the local infrastructure. The company secured the continuous protection of the Serbian minority, provided support for the activities of humanitarian organizations operating in Kosovo, and strived to create the conditions required for re-establishing the peaceful cohabitation of Kosovar Serbs and Albanians within the operational radius of the Czech-Slovak battalion.¹⁷ The political implications of Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 and the refusal of the Slovak Republic to recognize it have not reflected on the activities of the AF contingent in the KFOR mission.

During 2008, Slovakia's military presence in Kosovo was increased by the adoption of Resolution No. 672/2007 of the Government of the Slovak Republic, approving the deployment of a transport helicopter unit along with 35 soldiers and officers to the KFOR mission. Two modernized transport helicopters Mi-17 ensured the transport of personnel and supplies, and carried out reconnaissance and monitoring flights. In

The political implications of Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008, and the refusal of the Slovak Republic to recognize it, have not reflected on the activities of the AF contingent in the KFOR mission.

¹⁴ "Operácia ISAF v Afganistane" (2008); <http://www.mod.gov.sk/330/operacia-isaf-afganistan.php?mnu=181>.

¹⁵ "V Afganistane by malo pôsobiť 246 vojakov", *SITA* (May 27, 2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3829/v-afganistane-by-malo-posobit-246-vojakov.php?pg=1>.

¹⁶ "Operácia KFOR v Kosove" (2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/328/operacia-kfor-kosovo.php?mnu=182>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16.

the six month period, they undertook 222 operational tasks and 1,031 flights, during which they transported 3,789 persons and 67 tons of supplies. The AF helicopter unit terminated its operation in the KFOR mission on June, 16 2008.¹⁸

The EU Althea mission ran parallel to the NATO mission in the Western Balkans. EUFOR military units operated in Bosnia and Herzegovina under European Union command. The Slovak contingent was also part of these forces. The aim of the Althea mission is to offer assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina in progressing towards European integration, within the context of the stabilization and unification process. In 2008, the Slovak military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina was represented by four officers in staff positions at EUFOR HQ in Sarajevo, who carried out logistics, air operations, civil-military cooperation, and record-keeping and monitored the import and export of munitions. The core of the AF contingent consisted of 35 members of the Military Police security unit, whose tasks included safeguarding the internal security of the EUFOR Budmir Camp in Sarajevo.¹⁹ In the second half of 2008, European Union Member States discussed the termination timeframe of the Althea mission, which could be replaced by a non-military EU mission, employing civil instruments of crisis management. However, the Slovak Republic belongs to a group of member countries which opposes the termination of the Althea mission, since the Western Balkans is one of the priority areas of Slovak foreign policy and security interests.

In May 2008, the Slovak Republic celebrated the 15th anniversary of the operation of its Armed Forces in multinational operations of crisis management. On May 1, 1993 the first Slovak engineering detachment of 90 soldiers and officers left the military base in Sereď in readiness for deployment. The destination was the Croatian cities of Lipik and Daruvar, where the detachment was to operate under UN command as the vanguard of the Slovak contingent in the UNPROFOR mission. It was the first independent foreign operation since the separation of Czechoslovakia and the creation of the Slovak Republic. In the past 15 years, AF members have participated in over twenty foreign missions under NATO, EU, UN, or OSCE command, as well as in allied *ad hoc* coalition operations. More than 11,500 Slovak soldiers and officers have been deployed in expedition crisis management operations. Of that figure, 53 lost their lives in carrying out their duties abroad.²⁰

¹⁸ "Ocenení příslušníci vrtulníkové jednotky KFOR" (June 23, 2008); <http://www.mod.gov.sk/813/oceneni-prislusnici-vrtulnikovej-jednotky-kfor.php?pg=9&PHPSESSID=5a6cb7148a7e1b2cc4b092bd3be112db>.

¹⁹ "Operácia 'Althea' v Bosne a Hercegovine" (2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/321/operacia-althea-bosna-a-hercegovina.php?mnu=184>.

²⁰ "Slováci v zahraničných misiách už 15 rokov" (May 2, 2008); www.mod.gov.sk/732/slovaci-v-zahranicnych-operaciach-uz-15-rokov.php?pg=1&PHPSESSID=13245e287a20dcec7bbee1352601f82a.

THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC AND NATO – FUTURE PROSPECTS

During 2008, a number of significant events took place in international relations which had a direct impact on security and stability in Europe. In February 2008, the Serbian province of Kosovo, which was under UN and NATO administration, declared independence. This step was supported by most Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, who established diplomatic relations with Prishtina. For the first time since the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the signing of the (Helsinki) Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975, the international recognition of a new state led to the violation of the territorial integrity of another state, without its political approval. The Slovak Republic is in the minority group of NATO and EU member countries which did not recognize the independence of Kosovo and continues to respect the formal sovereignty of Serbia over its former south-west region.

The change of state borders realized in this manner created a grave security precedent, which was then utilized by the Russian Federation in its conflict with Georgia in August 2008. Not only did the European countries become spectators of the first local war of the 21st century, which took place in their eastern neighborhood, but they were also spectators of the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Moscow. The violation of the territorial integrity of Georgia and the secession of its separatist regions contributed to increased geopolitical tensions in Europe. Alongside the Kosovo precedent, they mark the beginning of a new phase in security relations on the old continent.

This phase will be characterized by complicated issues which will not be solved within the Euro-Atlantic area alone. NATO and EU member states will be faced with the challenge of solving a growing number of security issues in association with the Russian Federation. Depending on the situation, this interaction may range from a power struggle to pragmatic cooperation. In the near future, the complex network of mutual relations will manifest itself most in solving issues relating to the internal political and foreign policy orientation of Ukraine. This also opens up a wide range of possible activities for Slovak diplomacy, which has been ensuring the operation of the Slovak Embassy in Kiev as the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Ukraine since January 1, 2007. In December 2008, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization commended the conduct of the Slovak Republic in this role and decided to prolong its mandate by another two years.²¹

The individual NATO member states and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as a whole will have to respond to current challenges and trends. It is no secret that

²¹ "NATO ocenilo prácu SR na Ukrajine" (December 17, 2008); http://www.foreign.gov.sk/servlet/content?MT=/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_6FFF9C70EDE5659CC125705A00334878_SK&OpenDocument=Y&LANG=SK&HM=250-&PAGE_AKTUALNESPRAVYVIEWVSETKYTESY-6HHAPV=68&DS=Y&TG=BlankMaster&URL=http://www.mzv.sk/App/WCM/Aktualit.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_8DB124FBA2475946C125752200589E0C.

the Alliance is striving to solve serious internal problems that have the potential to lessen its significance and increase the strategic importance of the EU. This was held true by the complicated negotiations and arduous search for compromises, many of which were incomplete, before the NATO Summit in Bucharest. The significance and trustworthiness of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization relies on the ability of member countries to reach a consensus, not only in pinpointing security threats, but also in the methods and manners employed to neutralize those threats. Throughout the 1990s, there existed a political consensus on the need to adapt NATO to the new post Cold War environment, which manifested itself in the unanimous position all member countries adopted on the question of the Alliance's enlargement and on the question of military intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. However, in the first decade of the 21st century, NATO members are much less able to reach a mutual consensus on key issues of international security.

At the political level, the Alliance experienced an acute internal crisis over the issue of Iraq and at the military level, a latent crisis arose over Afghanistan. The inability

It is in the interest of the Slovak Republic not to allow the significance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to become marginalized or the vitally important security guarantees related to it to be weakened.

of the Member States to agree upon the method of neutralizing Saddam Hussein's regime brought the political transformation of NATO into a global security actor to a halt. The current inability of most European members to effectively participate in the ISAF mission is, in turn, causing the military transformation of NATO to stagnate. If these internal problems are not resolved within the next two or three years, the international significance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will gradually

be marginalized. From a political perspective, NATO would remain only as a formal regional structure and the crucial issues of Euro-Atlantic security would be solved bilaterally by the USA and the individual European powers. From a military perspective, NATO would remain only as a collective defense structure on the territory of member states under the threat of foreign intervention; however, this is very unlikely to occur either now or in the near future.

It is in the interest of the Slovak Republic not to allow the significance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to become marginalized or the vitally important security guarantees related to it to be weakened. The current status of the European security infrastructure, based on the transatlantic alliance within NATO and the military presence of the USA on the continent, is most beneficial to the smaller European countries. This category includes most of the EU/ NATO member states whose strategic orientation is formed by a lack of confidence in the ability of France, Germany and Great Britain to take over political and military responsibility for security in Europe. For objective political and military reasons, the security infrastructure on the continent cannot be based solely within the European Union; it must have a broader dimension. That is because the full involvement of the USA and constructive cooperation with the Russian Federation remain prerequisite to European security and stability. Solving this "geostrategic equation with three unknowns" represents a challenge, which all the

states of the European security complex²² from Vancouver to Vladivostok will have to face in the upcoming years.

REFERENCES

- "Ocenení príslušníci vrtuľníkovej jednotky KFOR" (June 23, 2008); <http://www.mod.gov.sk/813/oceneni-prislusnici-vrtulnikovej-jednotky-kfor.php?pg=9&PHPSESSID=5a6cb7148a7e1b2cc4b092bd3be112db>.
- "Gašparovič: Slovensko je za členstvo Ukrajiny v NATO", *SITA* (April 3, 2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3672/gasparovic:slovensko-je-za-clenstvo-ukrajiny-v-nato.php?pg=1>.
- "Gašparovič: V provincii Uruzgan preberá SR zodpovednosť za ochranu základne" (2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3731/gasparovic:v-provincii-uruzgan-prebera-sr-zodpovednost-za-ochranu-zakladne.php?pg=1>.
- "NATO ocenilo prácu SR na Ukrajine" (December 17, 2008); http://www.foreign.gov.sk/servlet/content?MT=/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_6FFF9C70EDE5659CC125705A00334878_SK&OpenDocument=Y&LANG=SK&HM=250-&PAGE_AKTUALNESPRAVYVIEWV-SETKYTESY-6HHAPV=68&DS=Y&TG=BlankMaster&URL=http://www.mzv.sk/App/WCM/Aktualit.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_8DB124FBA2475946C125752200589E0C.
- "Operácia 'Althea' v Bosne a Hercegovine" (2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/321/operacia-althea-bosna-a-hercegovina.php?mnu=184>.
- "Operácia ISAF v Afganistane" (2008); <http://www.mod.gov.sk/330/operacia-isaf-afganistan.php?mnu=181>.
- "Operácia KFOR v Kosove" (2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/328/operacia-kfor-kosovo.php?mnu=182>.
- "Slováci v zahraničných misiách už 15 rokov" (May 2, 2008); www.mod.gov.sk/732/slovaci-v-zahranicnych-operaciach-uz-15-rokov.php?pg=1&PHPSESSID=13245e287a20dcec7bbea1352601f82a.
- "Slovensko je a zostane plnohodnotným členom NATO", *SITA* (April 3, 2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3710/gasparovic:slovensko-je-a-zostane-plnohodnotnym-clenom-nato.php?pg=1>.
- "V Afganistane by malo pôsobiť 246 vojakov", *SITA* (May 27, 2008); <http://www.mosr.sk/3829/v-afganistane-by-malo-posobit-246-vojakov.php?pg=1>.

²² In the context of the Euro-Atlantic area, the Russian Federation represents a significant regional power which borders with members of NATO and the EU in Northern and Eastern Europe and on the Black Sea. On the opposite side of the hemisphere, it shares borders with NATO members at the point where the Asian and American continents meet. From a geostrategic perspective, the Russian Federation and EU/NATO member states also share the region of the Arctic Ocean. These factors, along with the potential power of Russia mean that the Russian Federation has the greatest influence on the Euro-Atlantic area of all the other states which are not an integral part of NATO and the EU. The member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, along with the Russian Federation, constitute a "security complex". It is a theoretical construct, defined as a group of states with interconnected and mutually interdependent security. The security problems of one of the countries in this complex cannot be analyzed or solved separately from the problems of the other countries which are part of the complex.

“Vyhodnotenie pôsobenia ozbrojených síl Slovenskej republiky v operáciách medzinárodného krízového manažmentu za rok 2006 s návrhom predpokladanej účasti v rokoch 2007-2008” (Slovakia: The Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 2007); [www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/9438FA16C9C90D8CC12572F0002ED4FF/\\$FILE/vlastnymat.doc](http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/9438FA16C9C90D8CC12572F0002ED4FF/$FILE/vlastnymat.doc).
Bucharest Summit Declaration (April 3, 2008); <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html>.
Informal Meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, Budapest, October 9-10, 2008; <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2008/0810-budapest/0810-budapest.htm>.
ISAF Strategic Vision. (Bucharest: NATO, 2008); <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-052e.html>.
Lindley-French, J., “Big World, Big Future, Big NATO”, *NATO Review*; <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue4/english/opinion.html>.
Shea, J. *NATO Going Global – or Almost, Transatlantic Security Issues Project*; http://www.ataedu.org/article_new.php?id=109.

SLOVAKIA'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

MARTINA HRVOLOVÁ

In 2007 and 2008, the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic in the field of human rights was dominated by two major events. Firstly, the preparations required for Slovakia's chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the consequent act of chairing the Committee and secondly, the campaign for the successful candidacy of Slovakia in the UN Human Rights Council.

In assessing the significance of these events, we should note that in the history of the independent Slovak Republic this signaled the beginning of a period in which Slovakia started to focus on human rights on an institutional basis within its foreign policy. Slovakia continues to do so both intensively and systematically.

The aim of this contribution is to offer different perspectives on Slovakia's chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. This was the very first time that Slovakia had held the chairmanship of a regional international organization with such an exceptionally broad array of member countries.

PREPARING FOR CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

The Council of Europe (CoE), founded on May 5, 1949, is the oldest European regional intergovernmental international organization and it currently has 47 member states. At this level, it is the most elaborate regional mechanism and has more than 200 international intergovernmental agreements regarding the protection of human rights and basic freedoms. The Committee of Ministers, composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states, is the executive body of the organization. It meets in Strasbourg once a year. The Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent

Representatives of the Member States to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg meet at the Committee of Ministers' Deputies each week. Through its decisions, the Committee of Ministers adopts legally binding conventions and recommendations for Member States. The Committee approves the budget of the organization, decides on the allocation of financial resources, and supervises the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is a consultative body comprising members of national parliaments.

The Slovak Republic undertook its first rotation as chair of the Committee of Ministers from November 2007 to May 2008. Rather symbolically, this occurred at exactly the same time as both the 15th anniversary of Slovak independence and Slovakia's membership of the organization.¹

Since 2006, for a number of reasons, particular attention has been paid to Slovakia's preparations for taking up the chair of the Committee of Ministers, and its ensuing

The fact that the Slovak Republic was confronted with skepticism (albeit not explicitly declared) over its performance as chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on account of its membership in the European Union is also an important and relevant issue from an international political perspective.

performance as chair. However, in 2006, which can be seen as a year of preparation, in terms of the philosophy and administration associated with the chairmanship, parliamentary elections were held in Slovakia which significantly changed the composition of the government coalition. At the time, Slovak diplomacy faced heightened expectations over its performance in the international arena in relation to its membership in the UN Security Council as well as in relation to the preparations for the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. Furthermore, the Slovak Republic had no experience in holding such a post due to the fact that in the previous

period it had primarily been focused on tasks relating to integration into the EU and NATO.² Given the situation, Slovak diplomacy was faced with the task of prioritizing its foreign policy with respect to the extensive catalogue of human rights. The fact that the Slovak Republic was confronted with skepticism (albeit not explicitly declared) over its performance as chair of the Committee of Ministers on account of its membership in the European Union is also an important and relevant issue from an international political perspective. The Slovak Republic took over the chairmanship following San Marino (November 2006 – May 2007) and Serbia (May 2007 – November 2007), neither of

¹ The Member States hold the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers on a rotating basis according to the English alphabet for a six-month term. During the six-month period, the Committee of Ministers is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the given state, who represents the member states at government level. The Permanent Representative of the chairing state presides over the meetings of the Ministers' Deputies. From May to November 2007, the Slovak Republic (the Permanent Representative in Strasbourg) also chaired the meetings of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe, who supervise the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

² The Slovak Republic applied for membership of the UN Commission of Human Rights in the 1990s; however, this attempt was unsuccessful.

which are member states of the European Union, and therefore the expectations on the part of both EU and non-EU member states were naturally high.³

In order to prepare for and assume the responsibilities associated with the chairmanship, an inter-ministerial committee was established under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, charged with coordinating the fulfillment of tasks related to the chairmanship.⁴ In addition to the coordinating role held by the MFA and given that the activities of the Council of Europe concern almost all the ministries and many other relevant bodies, there is a whole host of other bodies with key roles to play in carrying out the duties associated with the chairmanship.⁵ Key tasks of the MFA included coordinating the promotion of the Slovak Republic as the chairing state abroad, coordinating the promotion of the Council of Europe in the domestic arena, coordinating the organization of accompanying events, and setting up and coordinating the fulfillment of Slovakia's priorities as chair of the Committee of Ministers.

Not only does the chairing state preside over the main body of the organization, but it also brings new impetuses to the organization in the form of chairmanship priorities, which it strives to implement throughout the course of its chairmanship with the help of the other member states and the organization's secretariat. Slovakia focused on defining its priorities in chairing the Committee of Ministers in the first half of 2007. In order to reflect the needs of the organization and to achieve maximum synergy in cooperation with other international organizations, the MFA consulted its draft priorities with various partners including the Secretariat of the Council of Europe and the upcoming presidencies of the EU and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Based on the initiative proposal of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted the following chairmanship priorities in March 2007⁶:

- a citizen's Europe: the rapprochement of the international community and the citizen;
- a transparent and efficient Council of Europe: the coordination of the Council of Europe activities with other international institutions such as the OSCE, EU, UN, with the objective of extending the dialogue and practical cooperation and eliminating the ongoing duplication of activities;

³ Relations between the Council of Europe and the EU, which are determined by a formalized agreement can be termed as good. The European Union is one of the most important partners of the Council of Europe, both in terms of it being a financial source for the activities of the organization and because the number of EU members in the Council of Europe is higher than the number of non-EU members.

⁴ "Rámcový návrh zabezpečenia príprav a výkonu predsedníctva SR vo Výbore ministrov Rady Európy (november 2007 – máj 2008)" (Bratislava: Government of the Slovak Republic, 2007).

⁵ Especially the National Council of the Slovak Republic, which is represented by the Permanent Delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and bodies of local and regional self-governance which are represented at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

⁶ "Priority predsedníctva SR vo Výbore ministrov Rady Európy" (Bratislava: Government of the Slovak Republic, 2007).

- respect for and promotion of core values: human rights, rule of law and democracy.

By defining and then implementing these priorities of the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, the basis of the current foreign policy orientation of the Slovak Republic in human rights was *de facto* formulated. It consists of implementing the universal norms, principles, and regulations which form the cornerstone of the international legal order. This approach was also adopted given the fact that, in international and political terms, the role of the chairmanship of any international organization or institution is not to drastically reform that organization or institution, but most of all to serve its best interests and the interests of the member countries. However, there is always a limited space for the realization of “national ideas” and Slovakia made use of this space especially when it had to critically assess whether or not it possessed the necessary expertise in individual priority areas of the organization’s activities. In general, it can be said that Slovak diplomacy utilized the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers to confirm its interest in a unified and democratic Europe and to prove that Slovakia has the potential to play its part in achieving this goal.

The Slovak Republic perceived the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in terms of performing a service, but it was also able to create sufficient space for the realization of its own vision of international events.

Slovakia's chairmanship focused on increasing citizen participation, bringing together the activities of international actors, and supporting multiethnic and multicultural societies.

While the priorities of the chairmanship were being formulated, Slovakia specifically built upon the fact that it is still a young state that has only recently undergone significant changes concerning the renewal of democratic institutions and can therefore serve as a source of inspiration for other transitional countries in the world. This philosophical basis was expressed in the aforementioned thematic priorities

of the Slovak chairmanship; in other words, Slovakia focused on increasing citizen participation, bringing together the activities of international actors, and supporting multiethnic and multicultural societies (the fight against discrimination, national minority rights, and issues concerning the Roma and the holocaust). This short list of items also shows that Slovakia did not avoid issues. On the contrary, it also started to focus thematically on areas in which its own domestic scene has shortcomings.

Domestically, Slovak diplomacy was concerned with its own traditional foreign policy priorities, in this case, particularly with Belarus. This priority also became part of the official document on the priorities, not only because of the special relationship between this state and the Council of Europe, but also because of its former international political position and its special relationship with the EU.⁷

⁷ Slovakia's chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe took place before the European Union sanctions against Belarus were lifted, suspending the visa sanctions towards the end of 2008.

SLOVAKIA'S REPUTATION

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, assumed the post of the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on November 12, 2007 at the meeting of Ministers' deputies in Strasbourg. The full text of the priorities and the calendar of the major events of the Slovak chairmanship were unveiled at this occasion.⁸ From the moment the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic assumed chairmanship, he presented regular updates on the standpoints on the individual political and legal points of the organization's agenda and visited a number of member states. As Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, he delivered reports on the activities of the Committee to the plenary sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In addition, with the aim of contributing to the coordination of activities, the Slovak Republic introduced the new practice of holding regular Council of Europe presentations at the Permanent Council of the OSCE and the UN Human Rights Council.

Slovakia's chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers also served as an opportunity for us to provide expert and socio-cultural presentations. In conjunction with other departments, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, foreign partners, and civil society, the MFA organized a number of expert events integral to the chairmanship. They were thematically connected to the priorities specified and were attended by the corresponding Ministers of the Government of the Slovak Republic as well as leading representatives of the Council of Europe.

WORKING TOWARDS THE PROMOTION AND EXPANSION OF A SECURE AND DEMOCRATIC WORLD

Even though the period during which Slovakia could benefit from the various financial advantages relating to its accession into the most important integration structures has come to an end, we still maintain a keen natural interest in actively participating in the undertakings of the Council of Europe. The most positive aspect of membership in the Council of Europe is that it presents an opportunity for member states to draw upon its information database and 'rent' its expert infrastructure, which can provide assistance in the formulation and implementation of legal and other national norms. Given the situations of the individual member states, the creation of such an infrastructure would be counterproductive and, due to the individual circumstances of each state, often unviable. For that reason, in its dialogues with Council of Europe representatives, Slovak diplomacy strives to support activities, whose aim is to support the expansion of

⁸ "Priorities of the Slovak Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe" CM/Inf(2007)46.

the area of the secure and democratic world, especially in the regions of geographical and political priority to us. This approach was also taken during our chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

As one of its priorities, Slovakia chose to assist Belarus, the only European country which is not a member of the Council of Europe, in re-evaluating its previous approach and fulfilling the criteria necessary for accession to this organization. Therefore, during its chairmanship, the Slovak Republic conceived of several projects, which were approved by all the Council of Europe member states and which also found support in Belarus. One such project was the expert seminar of the Venice Commission and the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Belarus on the Use of International Instruments for Protecting Individual Rights, Freedoms and Legitimate Interest through National Legislation and the Right to Legal Defense in Belarus. The event took place following more than four years of stagnation in the cooperation between the Venice Commission and the Belarusian representatives, thanks to the complicated, but successful negotiations led by Slovak diplomats. A particularly significant aspect of this event was the fact that on April 24, 2008 at the Belarusian National Library the debate between the Secretary of the Venice Commission and other international legal experts included not only the official representatives of Minsk, but also representatives of civil society. This event resulted in the Venice Commission's proposal to expertly assess selected provisions of the Belarusian criminal code.

Slovakia continues to emphasize, through dialogue, the need to ensure the presence of the Council of Europe in Belarus. While holding the chair, Slovakia speeded up the negotiations on establishing a Council of Europe Information Centre, with the aim of promoting the activities, and especially the advantages, associated with Council of Europe membership for both the state and its citizens (e.g. the possibility of appealing to the European Court of Human Rights). Slovakia donated a financial contribution⁹ to the Council of Europe Information Centre, based at the Belarusian State University in Minsk, which ceremonially opened its doors in June 2009. One of its functions will be to provide an arena for expert events.

It should be noted, in relation to Belarus, that the efforts of diplomacy always come to an end when partners display unwillingness. That is why at the handing-over of the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic did not hesitate to express concerns over the politically motivated trials and the detention of opposition representatives in Belarus which took place in 2008. He also repeatedly reminded civil society that our country sees it as an equal partner no matter what the attitudes of the rest of the world are.

⁹ To be precise, while holding the chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Slovak Republic contributed 50 thousand euros to the activities of the Council of Europe, well above the level of the mandatory membership contribution (this was the case for both Belarus and for the activities of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and for local democracy in Moldova).

THE CITIZEN AS THE FOCUS OF INTEREST

The socio-political conditions relating to the activities carried out by civil society in terms of previous historical development are fairly well-known. It is the case that in the struggle over the democratic nature of the political regime, civil society becomes an important and irreplaceable actor. However, the requirements for true democracy are much stricter today. It is necessary to stimulate the interest of civil society, cooperate in promoting innovative solutions, and inspire civil society to develop its own financial capacities and promote the creation of a legal and social environment for a viable non-governmental sector.¹⁰

The activities of the MFA in relation to Belarus are an example of good and effective cooperation with the representatives of civil society. Some of the results of this cooperation include projects implemented as part of Slovak official development assistance and the participation of Slovak experts in international projects designed to support civil society in Belarus. Together with the Slovak projects listed above, undertaken whilst Slovakia occupied the chair of the Committee of Ministers, these activities form a compact body. However, the cooperation of non-governmental institutions at an international level is equally important, because the capacities and expert potential of Slovak institutions can thus be multiplied and put to further use.

It should be emphasized that our non-governmental organizations do not participate significantly in the activities of the Council of Europe, and civil society is still only represented on an institutional basis by a particularly low number of organisations.

With the aim of promoting contact between the representatives of Slovak civil society and their partners at the European level – particularly international non-governmental organizations with participatory status in the Council of Europe – the MFA organized, in cooperation with Slovak civil society, a seminar entitled Non-governmental Organizations and Civil Society: Supporters of Democracy and Active Citizenship, as part of its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The seminar was held on April 25-26, 2008 in Bratislava and it confirmed the ability of Slovak civil society to debate important issues. On the other hand, we should also mention that even today our non-governmental organizations do not participate significantly in the activities of the Council of Europe. Slovak civil society is still only represented on an institutional basis by a particularly low number of organizations.

¹⁰ L. Sedláková, M. Hrvolová, "Občianska participácia v kontexte európskych súvislostí", *Európske siločiahy: Zborník z medzinárodnej konferencie*. (Nitra: Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University, 2006).

SUCCESSES...

The mandate of the Slovak chairmanship expired on May 7, 2008. Slovakia handed the chairmanship over to Sweden at the 118th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The meeting was held according to the new and more effective format initiated by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia and Sweden. Almost twenty foreign affairs ministers and/or state secretaries of Council of Europe Member States participated in the meeting at the personal invitation of both Ministers.

The handling of the meeting itself and a number of subsequent international political assessments of Slovakia's chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers indicated that the Slovak Republic dealt with the chairmanship well.¹¹ Slovakia's performance whilst holding the chair thus became part of the manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic and, in addition, represented the successful fulfillment of a new and important foreign policy task, for which Slovak diplomacy, in particular, bore responsibility.¹² Slovakia's success in chairing the Committee of Ministers stemmed not only from the support of the Secretariat and other member states, but also from the realistic expectations held and the ability of Slovak diplomacy to set achievable goals.

...AND SETBACKS

Despite all the positive aspects, it is with sadness that we have to state that neither the Council of Europe, nor the activities of the Slovak Republic within it, have received much attention from the broader Slovak public in general. Despite the heightened publicizing campaign of the MFA and the specialized seminar held by the Bratislava-based Council of Europe Information Office for the Slovak media, on the eve of the chairmanship, they went almost unnoticed. Paradoxically, this was also the case for the minor imperfections, which the otherwise successful Slovak chairmanship could not avoid; particularly, the fact that even as Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, Slovakia could not overcome the existing obstacles in cooperating with international organizations and institutions. In April 2008, the MFA organized a European conference on the Education of Roma Children in Bratislava. Even though attendance was fairly high, greater cooperation between the relevant actors (CoE, EU, and OSCE) was absent. This can be attributed to administrative obstacles, but also to the lack of real willingness out of fears for their own existence...

¹¹ This was also confirmed by the findings of the meeting of leading representatives of the Council of Europe and the European Union which took place at the behest of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Brussels in March 2008. The conclusions acknowledged that it was also due to its balanced approach to all negotiated issues that the Slovak Republic was successful in conducting its chairmanship.

¹² "Informácia o priebehu a výsledkoch predsedníctva Slovenskej republiky vo Výbore ministrov Rady Európy" (May 28, 2008).

WE CARRY ON...

As a regular member of the Council of Europe, the Slovak Republic continues to promote the priorities set for the period of the chairmanship. However, fulfillment of these goals has been complicated by shortcomings on the domestic scene, which were suppressed during the period of the chairmanship by concerns about its potential international failure at the very least. These shortcomings mainly include the lack of quality personnel with sufficient expertise and historical knowledge of the given area in state administration. The fact that the geopolitical situation, and not only in the European region, is being tested by new challenges including issues arising from the right to self-determination or the current economic crisis is also significant. In these circumstances, it is not easy to keep in mind the words of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities – human rights are not for sale. The policy towards Belarus, whose relations with the EU were renewed at the highest political level during 2008, is an example indicative of the effort made by the Slovak Republic to maintain continuity and to continue building on fundamental values. Slovakia is convinced that developing economic relations and supporting human rights in Belarus are compatible, and therefore, supports the participation of Belarus in both the Eastern Partnership project and in the activities of the Council of Europe, providing that Belarus adopts certain specific measures, particularly a moratorium on the death penalty. Abandoning the human rights angle, especially at a time when Belarus is displaying a pressing interest in cooperating more closely with the EU, would be pointless and counterproductive.

THE BEGINNING OF A TRULY AMBITIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY?

As was outlined in the introduction, the conclusion should at least briefly emphasize the fact that the year 2007 can be perceived as signaling the beginning of a period of a systematic human rights policy, due, in no small part, to taking on the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers at the same as the decision was adopted, by Slovak diplomacy, to apply for candidacy in the most important human rights agency of the UN – the UN Human Rights Council.

This is only further underlined by the fact that after successfully completing this several month long project, the Slovak Republic became a member of the UN Human Rights Council on May 21, 2008. Slovakia's membership starts in 2008 and continues for the following three years. In the elections of the 62nd UN General Assembly session in New York, Slovakia gained strong support from 135 countries from all the regions of the world.¹³ This diplomatic success once again confirmed that the Slovak Republic was already profiting from its positive reputation, even in dealing with

¹³ Membership status allows us to participate in formulating and voting on all resolutions and other decisions adopted by the UN Human Rights Council.

such undoubtedly sensitive issues as respect of and support for human rights and basic freedoms. However, at the same time, if we compare, for example, the Slovak priorities within the UN Human Rights Council¹⁴ with those which dominated the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, we can admit, somewhat self-critically, that the actual standing and intentions of Slovak foreign policy in the human rights area may sometimes seem hard to interpret. We should not forget, however, that in assessing the human rights activities of Slovak diplomacy as well, that the nature of its role in this area, in the various posts, is very specific and diverse.¹⁵

REFERENCES

- “Informácia o priebehu a výsledkoch predsedníctva Slovenskej republiky vo Výbore ministrov Rady Európy” (May 28, 2008).
- “Priorities of the Slovak Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe” CM/Inf(2007)46.
- “Rámcový návrh zabezpečenia príprav a výkonu predsedníctva SR vo Výbore ministrov Rady Európy (november 2007 – máj 2008)” (Bratislava: Government of the Slovak Republic, 2007).
- Sedláková, L., Hrvolová, M., “Občianska participácia v kontexte európskych súvislostí”, *Európske siločiar: Zborník z medzinárodnej konferencie*. (Nitra: Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University, 2006).

APPENDIX

MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS ORGANIZED DURING SLOVAKIA'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

- Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, organized by the National Council of the Slovak Republic (Bratislava, November 22-23, 2007)

¹⁴ The priorities set by the Slovak Republic for its membership in the UN Human Rights Council include the promotion of the equality of all human rights categories in particular and, naturally, the promotion of the common positions and initiatives of the EU, which coordinates human rights issues in relation to third countries through its Common Foreign and Security Policy.

¹⁵ For example, in comparing the Slovak chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers with that of its membership in the UN Human Rights Council, one of the main factors is the differing mandates, but also the differing set of members; furthermore the European Union is currently represented in the UN Human Rights Council by only 7 out of the 47 members

- 8th conference of European Health Ministers, *People on the Move*, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic (Bratislava, November 22-23, 2007)
- Conference on *Children and Antisocial Activities*, organized by the Office of the Ombudsman of the Slovak Republic (Bratislava 29 November 2007)
- International workshop on the European Social Charter, organized by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (Bratislava, February 12, 2008)
- Meeting of state representatives before the European Court of Human Rights, organized by the Ministry of Justice of the SR (Bratislava, April 3-4, 2008)
- International conference on the *Education and Training of Roma Children and Youth*, organized by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic, the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities and the MFA (Bratislava, April 8-9, 2008)
- International educational seminar *From Sport to Knowledge*, organized by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (Bratislava, April 17-18, 2008)
- International conference *Improving Governance at the Local Level: Tools and Strategies*, organized by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (Piešťany, April 17-18, 2008)
- International expert seminar, *The Use of International Instruments for Protecting Individual Rights, Freedoms and Legitimate Interest through National Legislation and the Right to Legal Defense in Belarus – Challenges and Outlook*, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Venice Commission and the Constitutional Court of Belarus (Minsk, April 24-25, 2008)
- 7th meeting on the workshops of the Council of Europe on the implementation of the *European Landscape Convention Landscape Concepts and Management: Integrated Space Management*, organized by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (Piešťany, April 24-25, 2008)
- International seminar on the role of non-governmental organizations and civil society, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with Slovak non-governmental organizations (Bratislava, April 25-26, 2008)

II.

**PRIORITIES OF SLOVAKIA'S
FOREIGN POLICY**

SLOVAK ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

RADOMÍR BOHÁČ

The global economy now finds itself in its worst state since the Great Depression of 1929 – 1934. The current crisis, however, – unlike the financial crises of the 1990s in Asia, Russia or Latin America – is a global crisis. This factor means that problems are rapidly transferred from country to country. The majority of the European Union member states are in recession. Packages of stimulation measures are being adopted at historically unprecedented financial levels with the primary goal of stabilizing and restarting the frozen banking sector, reviving consumption, business and investments, maintaining employment rates, and thus creating the key nodes for future economic growth. Fundamental, and in many ways, non-standard measures are changing the architecture of financial market management as well as the rules governing international trade and business.

The global economic and financial crisis is also determining the priorities of the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic – a country with an open, export-oriented economy with very limited natural resources and a small internal market, but, which has the comparative advantage of membership in the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and other significant international institutions. Compared to the EU average, Slovakia's situation is complicated by its higher energy consumption per unit of GDP and lower work productivity.

THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The key factor in successfully overcoming the crisis in the shortest possible time is considered to be the coordinated reaction of the international community. In this

regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFA) as the central body of the state administration possesses all the necessary capacities, whether in terms of infrastructure (the network of diplomatic missions), know-how, influence or its extensive network of contacts. Despite having limited responsibility and opportunity, in terms of being directly involved in the management of the Slovak economy, and for implementing measures designed to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis, the MFA is actively and systematically engaged in the search for effective solutions. The MFA is making full use of its own network of diplomatic missions abroad and the individual trade and economic sections at the diplomatic missions, which come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic (ME). Within its own organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducts regular news analyses, which it uses to provide up-to-date and accurate information on all countries of interest. At any one time, the Slovak Government has at its disposal complete information on the approaches chosen by other countries and governments and can thus use this effectively in adopting its own decisions.

Two years ago, the MFA unveiled a process of fundamental organizational and conceptual change, including an internal audit (TREFA project), which resulted in the optimal setting of strategic priorities, with an emphasis on substantially strengthening the economic dimension of diplomacy. An anticipated and logical outcome of these changes was the establishment of the Section for Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance (SHSR) in autumn 2008. This was not just a case of fulfilling the requirements of the program

The main function of the SHSR is to improve the quality of Slovak economic diplomacy, making coordination between all the government's economic departments more effective.

laid out by the Government of the Slovak Republic, but it also confirmed the position and significance of this agenda in the overall context of the department's activities.

The main function of the SHSR is to improve the quality of Slovak economic diplomacy, making coordination between all the government's economic departments more effective. We see its role primarily in terms of defining and realizing the most immediate goals facing the Ministry in implementing the economic dimension of diplomacy. The MFA perceives this dimension as a complex of activities coordinated by governmental and non-governmental institutions and businesses, which aim to create the necessary conditions for the promotion of Slovak economic interests abroad.

Thus, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is drafting an open-dated document, *The Concept of Modern Economic Diplomacy*, which, taking into consideration the substantial changes brought about by the recession in the global financial and economic system, aims to define the key points, assess previous practice, suggest new approaches, and create opportunities for more effective cooperation and dialogue between government institutions and the business sector, including economic organizations and associations, in order to strengthen the unity of the foreign service in promoting Slovakia's goals. It is the ambition of this document to significantly assist the Slovak Republic in the need to shift its attention to a knowledge-based economy.

The nature of Slovakia's foreign economic activity has not adequately reflected the real needs and potential of the country. It has not taken into account structural changes in the Slovak economy, the existence of powerful foreign investors in the Slovak Republic with their own marketing policies. Nor has it reflected the fact that small and medium enterprises have insufficient capacities to allow them to compete on export markets. It has not ensured a unified representation of Slovakia abroad nor made adequate use of the potential offered by official development assistance to the private sector and in creating job opportunities. Many of the trade opportunities available abroad were not utilized because Slovak companies were unable to reach their potential customers.

The crisis itself has forced Slovaks actively engaged in foreign economic policy to think in new terms and to work together in the search for effective solutions. The dominance of economic topics in international relations is generally transforming the content and the method of foreign policy implementation. The SHSR is particularly keen to emphasize that both the MFA and the ME should collaborate together fully and that active dialogue with the business sector should be increased. Clear progress has been made especially in terms of effectively coordinating the activities of both departments in fulfilling their goals. Recent activities that deserve attention include, for example, the issuing of joint instruction letters to the Heads of Slovak diplomatic missions and employees of the trade and economic sections, the joint drafting of the government's fundamental strategic document on the implementation of state foreign economic policy – *Concept of the Economic Dimension of the Slovak Republic*, and the cooperation of both departments during the crisis at the beginning of 2009 caused by the cessation of natural gas supplies to the Slovak Republic.

In March 2009, the MFA organized a conference, entitled *Increasing Cooperation in Foreign Economic Relations in Overcoming the Consequences of the Economic and Financial Crisis in Slovakia*, attended by the President and Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic and key representatives of the business sector, which sent a very clear signal regarding the anticipated role of the MFA and calling for the need to adopt a new approach in economic diplomacy. Although many of these activities are not new to the foreign affairs department, their institutionalization gives them a greater significance and quality. Alongside the usual activities undertaken by the SHSR, such as: supporting Slovak exports; attracting investment in areas with a higher return; supporting current investors; utilizing its membership in international organizations to more effectively represent its economic interests, for instance, in making maximum use of the development funds available in order to ensure sustainable economic growth, the SHSR is now looking to concentrate on its activities within the domestic sphere. A particular challenge facing the MFA is the need to intensify dialogue with the Slovak business community and its interest groups, with the aim of converting their expectations into actual departmental policies. The diplomatic department actively strives to gather information on the expectations entrepreneurs currently have of the department and on the areas that are of particular concern to them; (round tables, opinion polls and the continued dialogue with the leaders of interest groups, such as – SOPK, AZZZ, RÚZ, Klub500, National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, Eximbank, SZRB

were all utilized for this purpose). Our new principle is to be as accommodating as possible in dealing with the requests of our entrepreneurs in terms of supporting their activities abroad, and during this exceptional period of world economic crisis to go beyond the usual call of duty in offering assistance.

Slovakia's membership in the EU, OECD, IMF, WB, and WTO enables Slovak diplomacy not only to identify global trends and their relevancy to the Slovak economy, but also to participate in the initiatives and projects organized by these international institutions. At the same time, it offers Slovakia the opportunity to make full use of its potential in ensuring sustainable economic growth and the competitiveness of the Slovak economy in the global environment. Membership both confirms and underscores the importance of the mechanisms used in ensuring economic and social stability and security. The MFA is therefore not only concerned with adopting measures to limit the consequences of the economic crisis, but also with the uneven balance of the economic system within the country. Slovakia cannot

Slovakia cannot simply rely on its geopolitical position; therefore, one of the means of competing successfully in the global economy is having an in-depth knowledge of the ongoing processes and the way in which they are managed and utilized.

simply rely on its geopolitical position; therefore, one of the means of competing successfully in the global economy is having in-depth knowledge of the ongoing processes and the way in which they are managed and utilized.

Slovakia was particularly active, within the EU and other international organizations, in promoting the need for a common approach to the adoption of stimulation measures for the automotive and energy industries, and innovation and employ-

ment. In cooperation with other departments, we are striving to make maximum use of European funding in accordance with the priorities set out by the *National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013*.

Our priority is to make sure that we benefit from all the stimulation measures offered by international institutions, including the financial ones, and to ensure that Slovak businesses are involved to a high degree. Initial success has already been achieved, particularly as part of the *European Economic Recovery Plan*, which has already brought specific projects to Slovakia amounting to tens of millions of euros. The steps and measures other countries comparable to the Slovak Republic have adopted also provide a source of inspiration in our efforts to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the Slovak economy and society in general. The MFA and its network of diplomatic missions represent an important gateway to this information.

INEVITABLE CHANGES

The economic crisis has fully exposed the vulnerability of Slovakia's one-sided export orientation towards EU markets (in 2008, exports to EU countries accounted for 85.2%

of Slovakia's export trade and the EU share of the total trade turnover of the Slovak Republic was more than 70%). Trade with the EU has now reached its limits in terms of its structure and development, making further expansion impossible. In the long-term, the Slovak Republic must inevitably focus on finding new territories and new trade and investment opportunities. This will, however, be dependent upon Slovakia's ability to adapt production capacities to new market demands. Researching new markets is essential and that is where economic diplomacy plays an indispensable role. Despite the size and opportunities offered by the non-European market, the volume of Slovak exports is low – less than 15%. Export to non-European countries is disproportionately low even when compared to other similar countries, despite the growing absorption potential of most of these markets. For example, in relation to the BRIC phenomenon (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China), which is continually increasing in significance, Slovakia's exports in the year 2008 only reached 2,434 million euros (4.91% of the total).¹ The goal of the MFA is to double this figure within three years. Other economically significant non-European territories with which Slovakia has a high trade deficit should also be flagged: the Korean Republic, Japan, and Taiwan (in 2008, exports totaled 4,296 billion euros, while imports amounted to only 181 million euros).

With the aim of strengthening the export capabilities of Slovak companies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy are implementing a series of steps designed to significantly

simplify the whole process for Slovak companies competing on foreign markets, from the initial set up to the running and promotion of the company. This will include the creation of information portals and a comprehensive catalogue of the free and paid services our embassies offer to Slovak companies, and so on. The MFA is also preparing a new initiative to provide export support in the form of a trade and investment opportunity fair for the Slovak business sector, which is to take place at the meeting of the Heads of the diplomatic missions of the Slovak Republic in July 2009.

It is equally important, in terms of the crisis, to follow and evaluate developments in international political security and the economy. The crisis is aggressively testing political and economic models of integration and leading to an increased nervousness within international relations, caused most of all by political instability in many European and overseas countries.

The diplomatic department (in cooperation with other departments) considers one of its primary tasks to be increasing the competitiveness of the Slovak economy, by strengthening the knowledge economy and promoting technologically-based economic growth. Special emphasis is therefore placed on actively identifying the kinds of investment in the Slovak economy that would contribute to the diversification of the

However economic diplomacy should be equally dedicated to taking care of the investors already operating in the Slovak Republic, particularly given that 21 of the largest foreign investors already operating in the Slovakia account for more than 55% of our exports.

¹ Data from the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic.

various segments of the economy – particularly in those sectors commanding higher returns and those seeking to upgrade to modern technologies. In addition to supporting investment in highly cyclical industries (the automotive industry, for example), where production output is linked to the development of new products within the Slovak Republic, it is also necessary to focus on investment in information and communication technologies, biotechnologies and renewable energy sources, investment into applied research, specialized and highly professional services for the private sector, etc. The government is actively engaged in attracting further investment into our country. The government has charged the departments of economy and foreign affairs with the task of drafting the *Concept of Managing Foreign Investment in the Context of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis* – it is anticipated that it will be submitted for approval at the beginning of June 2009.

However, economic diplomacy should be equally dedicated to taking care of investors already operating in the Slovak Republic, particularly given that 21 of the largest foreign investors in Slovakia account for more than 55% of our exports.

There is also a need to keep a systematic eye on the investment potential of foreign investors, so that they can then be actively approached, and information regarding the business environment in the Slovak Republic can be passed on, and presentations held. Following the onset of the global financial and economic crisis, representatives from our diplomatic missions were quick to engage those foreign investors who had already finalized investment schemes in Slovakia with the aim of encouraging them to implement their projects. This approach led to the finalization of a number of larger investment schemes, for instance, that of the Danish company, VULEX, in Partizánske (which invested 36 million euros and created 100 new job opportunities). Somewhat paradoxically, this, the largest Danish investment in Slovak history, was carried out at a time of economic recession. The “housing reconstruction package” adopted by the Danish government in April 2009 represented an important stimulus for this investment. This only highlights the importance of being aware of the anti-crisis measures adopted by the governments of other countries and the need to evaluate them. Similarly, knowing that some foreign companies were planning to make redundancies at their Slovak branches, representatives of some of our diplomatic missions organized talks with the relevant parent companies. Discussions focused on ways of preventing job losses and drew attention to the opportunities provided by the measures adopted by the government to increase flexibility in the labor market. In working with the investors who already operate in Slovakia, there is a need to ensure that, once the initial investment has been made, regular dialogue is maintained and that the suggestions and requests of the investors are handled carefully, in order to ensure that their businesses in Slovakia runs smoothly.

Attracting foreign investment at a time of global recession requires a more creative and vigorous approach. In cooperation with the business sector, the diplomatic and economic departments are preparing a series of steps to deal with the changing economic conditions. While maintaining traditional European partners is important, particular attention should be paid to investment capital from Asia and the Persian Gulf

region. These are the regions where the largest volume of surplus capital is expected to accumulate in the next 10 to 15 years.

Slovakia's international dependency is underlined by the dominance of foreign capital in the banking sector, although this sector has actually been least affected by the crisis. One reason for this may be its low exposure to risk activities and the adoption of the euro on 1 January 2009. So far the Slovak Republic has also been insufficiently geared towards the opportunities for economic cooperation made available by the existence of state funds especially from outside the Euro-Atlantic area.

THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF SLOVAKIA

Through its integration into the most significant structures of the democratic world, the Slovak Republic has taken on a moral commitment to participate in eliminating the direst social, medical, economic, and environmental problems in less developed countries. In 2008, Slovakia contributed 65.4 million euros (1.97 billion Slovak crowns) of official development assistance, representing 0.102% of GNP.² Providing development and humanitarian aid is also important in terms of gradually introducing Slovak products and services to new territories, especially those with limited market access. For Slovakia, development and humanitarian aid (both in bilateral and multi-lateral terms) may represent a valuable means of creating new export and job opportunities, not only in cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations, but also on a more intensive scale with small and medium enterprises. A document outlining the different way of linking the use of Slovak development assistance to the promotion of foreign economic interests would allow Slovak enterprises, exclusively, to utilize financial resources of up to several million euros (from the anti-crisis package) in realizing Slovak development projects in Slovak Aid priority countries. This approach would open up possibilities for economic growth in the target countries, create opportunities to establish long-term trade and investment links for Slovak companies; provide support for the pro-export activities of Slovak businesses; make Slovak products, services, technologies, and know-how available on the markets of other countries; and create job opportunities in the Slovak Republic.

Each crisis brings with it new opportunities, possibilities, and solutions. That is why today it is essential that all spectrums of society join forces not only in the search for solutions, but also in creating the key nodes for the future economic growth and prosperity of Slovakia.

² *Informácia o oficiálnej rozvojovej pomoci poskytnutej Slovenskou republikou v roku 2008*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, 2009. <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/389/1/1>.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Recent developments confirm that the overwhelming role of economic diplomacy is its ability to promptly identify and react to the main trends in the development of the global economy which might impact on the economy of the Slovak Republic. At the same time, it must also incorporate these trends into domestic economic policy, which means enabling the Slovak government, businesses, and other sectors to react swiftly and effectively. With regard to the probable long-term character and negative impact of the current global recession on the world economy, that is no easy task. However, it is equally true that each crisis brings with it new opportunities, possibilities, and solutions. That is why, today, it is essential that all the different spheres of society across the political, social, economic, business and academic spectrums join forces not only in the search for solutions, but also in creating the key nodes for the future economic growth and prosperity of Slovakia.

ENERGY SECURITY IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

JÁN PETROVIČ

Energy has recently become a key issue in European Union politics. This is one of the reasons why, in January 2007, the EU published a draft energy policy, in which it clearly defined the strategic goals of this policy for Europe so that sustainability, the security of energy supplies, and competitiveness are all interconnected and that their attainment is mutually contingent. The road map to achieving these goals is constituted by a complex of activities in multiple fields – from market liberalization through renewable energy sources and energy efficiency to nuclear energy and foreign energy policy. The energy policy of the Slovak Republic is also based on these pillars.

At the EU level, the representatives of the Slovak Republic actively participated in drafting and formulating the legislative and conceptual documents relating to the climate and energy package, the liberalization package, and the energy security and efficiency package.

While 2007 represented the year in which the Union adopted firm and ambitious commitments in energy and climate policies, in 2008 the legislation required to fulfill these commitments was drawn up. The crucial challenge in this area will be to ensure that the transition to a secure and sustainable low-carbon economy is realized in accordance with sustainable development, competitiveness, energy supply security, food security, healthy and sustainable public finances, as well as economic and social cohesion.

Slovakia has played an important role in promoting these goals. The representatives of the Slovak Republic actively participated in drafting and formulating the legislative and conceptual documents relating to the climate and energy package, the liberalization package, and the energy security and efficiency package. Slovakia also participated in the EU decision-making process on all Council levels through the direct participation of experts from the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic

(ME) and the Nuclear Regulatory Authority of the Slovak Republic (UJD) at the meetings of Council working groups, as well as in the European Commission (EC). In the year 2008, Slovakia adopted all the necessary measures and created the conditions to enable it to participate fully in the activities of the specialized OECD agency – the International Energy Agency (IEA).¹

THE CLIMATE AND ENERGY PACKAGE

The climate and energy package is one of the most important documents representing an ambitious project in the energy field, which aims to fulfill the commitments adopted by the European Council in March 2007. It consists of the following four proposed legislative measures:

- a directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources²;
- revision of the emissions trading directive;
- a decision on determining the effort of individual member countries to reduce emissions in sectors which are not subject to emissions trading and;
- a directive concerning carbon capture and storage.

The climate and energy package was the subject of a political agreement in December 2008, and in 2009 it was approved by the European Parliament and officially adopted by the Council. Its implementation is planned for the years 2009 through 2012. With the aim of coordinating its implementation in Slovakia, the government established a Commission for the climate and energy package under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment and the ME in June 2008.

THE THIRD LIBERALIZATION PACKAGE

The EU effort in combating climate change goes hand in hand with decisive action aimed at strengthening energy security, including the energy interconnections of its member states. An effective, fully functional, and interconnected internal energy market is one of the fundamental conditions for secure, sustainable, and competitive energy

¹ By acceding to the Agreement on an International Energy Program (November 30, 2007), the Slovak Republic adopted a commitment to implement joint measures to achieve oil supply security and coordinate its energy policies including energy efficiency policies.

² Amongst other things, the Directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (RES) sets national RES targets to be achieved by the year 2020. Our national target, which we consider to be ambitious although achievable, is set by the aforementioned directive so that by 2020 the share of RES will constitute 14% of the gross energy consumption of the Slovak Republic.

supplies in Europe. At the meeting of the Council of Ministers for Transport, Energy and Telecommunications in October 2008, political agreement was reached on the issue of the third liberalization package for the internal electricity and gas markets. It is currently in the process of being officially adopted by the Council. The final version of the package is an example not only of the deepening liberalization of the energy and natural gas market, but also of how Slovakia's interests can be promoted in coordination with other EU member countries.

In relation to the third liberalization package, it should be noted that at the meeting of the Council of Energy Ministers in December 2008, Slovakia announced its bid to locate the headquarters of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators in Bratislava. Bratislava is strategically located, highly accessible, and fulfills all the conditions required for the complex operation of this institution.

ENERGY SECURITY

Even though the measures on climate change, the internal energy market, and new technologies will undoubtedly significantly contribute to the security of energy supplies, work should continue carefully on the further formulation of the foreign dimension of the energy policy for Europe.

Energy security is a key priority which must be strengthened through improvements in energy efficiency and the diversification of energy suppliers, sources, and supply routes as well as through the support of the Union's energy interests with regards to third countries. In the interest of achieving energy security, the EU as a whole and each Member State, including Slovakia, must be prepared to combine solidarity with responsibility.

At the EU level, the framework document, *The Second Strategic Energy Review - Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan*, forms the basis for discussion on energy security. It focuses on 5 fundamental areas crucial to the improvement of energy security:

- infrastructure and the diversification of energy supplies,
- external energy relations,
- oil and gas crisis response mechanism,
- energy efficiency,
- better use of indigenous energy resources.

The recent gas crisis underlined the need to rapidly create adequate crisis response mechanisms in the EU and to strive to acquire explicit guarantees from suppliers and transit partners to avoid gas supplies being disrupted.³

³ Further proposals for the revision of legal regulations on the security of gas supplies will be examined during the course of the year 2009.

The *Second Strategic Energy Review* also contains a package of legislative proposals on energy security and efficiency. These proposals are being discussed at Council level and should be adopted by the end of 2009.

THE EUROPEAN NUCLEAR ENERGY FORUM

The *Energy Package* that the European Commission (EC) presented in 2007 also included the *Nuclear Illustrative Program*. This program changes the general view of nuclear energy and serves as a basis for broad discussion on the security of nuclear facilities and the protection of the public. The fact that the EC confirmed the role of nuclear

energy as a significant component of the EU energy mix through this document is an important aspect. As part of this program, the EC acknowledged the need to establish a forum to serve as a platform for discussion on the future development of nuclear energy in the enlarged EU.

Based on the initiative of the Slovak and the Czech Republic, the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF), which is an important platform for discussion on all the relevant issues of nuclear energy, is held alternately in Bratislava and Prague.

Based on the initiative of the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF)⁴ is held alternately in Bratislava and Prague. It is an important platform for discussion for the representatives of EU member states,

the European Parliament, and other important actors from industry, finance, state and public administration, including the third sector on all the relevant issues concerning nuclear energy, and which allows for the finalization of joint efforts designed to find solutions to many important questions relating to nuclear energy in the European context.

THE ENERGY SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Slovakia, like other countries, faces several fundamental challenges, such as:

- climate change and its impact,
- high energy demands,
- high level of dependency on the import of primary energy sources and the need to ensure the reliability of energy supplies.

As an EU member state, the Slovak Republic participates actively in the endeavors designed to mitigate the negative consequences of the aforementioned challenges.

⁴ ENEF meetings were also held in May and November 2008.

In response to these, the ME drafted a proposal entitled *Energy Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030*, which was approved by the government on 15 October 2008.

The main objective of the strategy is to secure a competitive energy industry, which would ensure the safe, reliable, and effective supply of all forms of energy at acceptable prices, taking into consideration consumer protection, environment protection, sustainable development, the security of supply, and technical security. The following are necessary in achieving this goal: an adequate energy mix, an appropriate level of electricity production capacity, a suitable balance between the supply and demand of energy, a decrease in the economy's energy demands, a secure and reliable energy network, the diversification of sources and transit routes, and an adequate number of cross-border connections.

With respect to the need for a greater synergy between the activities of Slovakia's ministerial departments and the foreign service in the interest of Slovakia's energy security, the strategy also deals with the establishment of an interdepartmental consultation and coordination mechanism under the auspices of the ME. This mechanism is based on the continual communication between the main relevant departments and other key actors in Slovakia's energy sector. It will take on a supportive role in the form of expert consultations for the departments concerned as well as for crisis management of the energy policy agenda of the Slovak Republic.

Slovakia is considered to be a country with a significant share of nuclear energy in its energy mix and it sees nuclear power as offering good prospects in terms of its continued use in the future as well. Nuclear power plants will continue to form the basis of the electricity-generating network as an important element in ensuring the security of electricity supply and sustainable development. Without doubt, the production of nuclear energy has its economic and technical justifications and solves a variety of problems. It allows energy producers to lower the risk of being dependent upon certain fuel sources and prices for long periods, the production technologies are available, and using nuclear energy assists in limiting the CO₂ emissions responsible for global warming. An important advantage regarding the use of nuclear energy in Slovakia is that the public is widely accepting of this form of energy source. If we add to that the fact that the Government of the Slovak Republic has clearly declared its support, then Slovakia has all the requirements to continue using nuclear energy as a secure, reliable, environmentally acceptable, trusted, and economical source of electricity generation. Plans to ensure the future utilization of nuclear energy include increasing the output of existing blocks and also constructing new capacity.

Completing the construction of the third and fourth blocks of Mochovce nuclear power plant is a basic requirement in ensuring a sufficient supply of electricity. The Government of the Slovak Republic therefore viewed the statement issued by the EC in July 2008 regarding the finalization of the construction of the third and fourth blocks, which officially started on November 3, 2008, very positively. It is expected that the third block will start operating in November 2012 and the fourth block in June 2013.

In the mid to long term, it is proposed that a new nuclear power plant will be constructed in the vicinity of Jaslovské Bohunice.⁵ It is anticipated that this new source of nuclear power will be launched in 2020.

Important factors influencing the acceptability of nuclear power at all stages of the decision-making process include nuclear security, responsibility for nuclear accidents, and issues relating to depleted nuclear fuel and nuclear waste management.

Therefore, in 2008 the government discussed and approved the *Strategy for the Back End of the Nuclear Cycle*. The strategic objective in solving the issue of the back end of the nuclear cycle is to ensure that the decommissioning of nuclear facilities and that the handling of depleted nuclear fuel and nuclear waste in Slovakia is carried out through the effective use of technical, technological, and financial resources so as to guarantee that the population and the environment are protected against the consequences of utilizing nuclear energy in the generation of electricity – that is in

Slovakia is considered to be a country with a significant share of nuclear energy in its balanced energy mix and it sees nuclear power as offering good prospects in terms of its continued use in the future as well.

nuclear power generation – as well as in other areas involving the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy in the Slovak Republic. The Strategy for the Back End of the Nuclear Cycle complies with the *Energy Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic* and respects the recommendations of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency, as well as all the legal documents of the EU institutions.

Preparations for drawing up the conditions and regulations for day-ahead electricity trading and access to cross-border capacity on the Czech-Slovak interconnector were also commenced in 2008. The aim of interconnecting the national electricity markets is to allow actors in both national markets to bid for and offer electricity on the national marketplace while maintaining sovereignty in managing the individual national transmission systems and control zones. As a result the liquidity of the daily electricity market will increase, electricity will be more accessible, and it will eliminate the risks associated especially with the trade in electricity and with this particular cross-border capacity profile.

In terms of national energy legislation in 2008, the Act on the Energy Sector and the Act on the Regulation of Network Industries were amended. They both transposed the Directive of the Council and the European Parliament on the Security of Electricity Supply and Infrastructure Investment. The approved energy efficiency act also transposed the corresponding directive on this issue. Intensive work continued on drafting the bill on renewable energy sources support and the high-efficiency cogeneration of heat and electricity, which should be approved in 2009.

⁵ On December 17, 2008, the government approved a document on the new nuclear power source near Jaslovské Bohunice and on May 29, 2009 the representatives of the corporations JAVYS, Inc. and ČEZ, Inc. signed a shareholder agreement that will allow for the establishment of a joint venture to construct a new nuclear power plant at Jaslovské Bohunice in Slovakia.

At the beginning of January 2009, as a result of the dispute between Ukraine and Gazprom, there was a gradual slowdown in gas supplies from Russia, which eventually led to a complete cessation in Russian gas supplies and the shutdown of the gas pipeline supplying Austria and the Czech Republic as well as that supplying gas through Ukraine.

For the first time in the history of gas supplies and the history of Slovakia's gas industry, Slovakia found itself shut off from all cross-border natural gas imports. This was an extreme situation, which arose from the ongoing dispute between Russia and Ukraine and the unfortunately low temperatures experienced during the days of the crisis. As a result of these events, the Minister of Economy of the Slovak Republic organized a crisis response meeting with representatives of the departments involved and the energy companies. All the decisions taken at this meeting were to ensure that should the worst case scenario arise, gas supplies for domestic households, for those producing heat for homes, schools, medical facilities, and for those supplying the services required for the essential running of the state would be secured until the end of the heating season.

Given the way in which the gas crisis developed and especially the negative development of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, the activities of the highest state representatives and those operating in the commercial sphere were geared towards finding alternative means of supply. Once gas supplies were secured via the Czech Republic – gas flow in this direction was achieved for the first time in history – restrictions on gas consumption could be lifted. An agreement was signed after the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine were completed and gas supplies from Russia were renewed. Following an analysis of the gas crisis, short-, medium-, and long-term measures were adopted to resolve similar situations. The short-term measures are designed to reduce the risk of gas supply outages in such a way that Slovakia would be able to weather even as unfortunate an incident as that caused by the now resolved gas crisis without the need for regulatory action. These measures are aimed at finding ways to transport emergency supplies from other directions, immediately activate reverse flows, re-evaluate the state of emergency mechanism, and increase gas storage supplies through gas supply security norms. An amended Energy Act was adopted in relation to this measures. The medium- and long-term measures are primarily focused on increasing competition within the gas market, on constructing interconnections, diversifying supplies, and building gas storage facilities.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Increasing energy efficiency and decreasing the energy demands of the economy are important components of the energy policy. Energy efficiency would potentially contribute most significantly to fulfilling all three goals of the European energy policy – environmental sustainability, energy security, and competitiveness. Energy efficiency

must be realized in all the links of the energy chain, from production, through transmission and distribution, to the consumption of energy.

The *Concept of Energy Efficiency of the Slovak Republic* and the *Energy Efficiency Action Plan for the years 2008 – 2010* were approved in 2007 and the Act on Energy Efficiency was approved and adopted in 2008. The aims of the legal modification are to create a framework for the rational utilization of energy; to define energy efficiency requirements in the transformation, transmission, transport, distribution, and consumption of energy; to monitor and support energy efficiency; and determine the obligations of private individuals, commercial entities, legal entities, and bodies of the state administration in the utilization of energy. Its goal is to increase the efficiency of final energy utilization and support the development of energy services.

CONCLUSION

The energy sector remains one of the highest EU priorities and its sustainable development, whilst maintaining competitiveness and ensuring the security of supply, is one of the fundamental conditions for economic growth.

In the interest of diversifying energy sources and transit routes in Central Europe, we consider it to be extremely important that adequate financial resources are allocated, at the European level, to projects interconnecting the infrastructure to ensure that the north-south and west-east transEuropean routes are sufficiently well connected; this reflects the needs of the Slovak Republic as well.

In the short to medium term, attention must be focused on the ongoing negotiations over the energy security and efficiency package, which consists of the Directive imposing an obligation on member states to maintain minimum stocks of crude oil and/or petroleum products, the Directive on indication by labeling and standard product information of the consumption of energy and other resources by energy-related products, the Directive on labeling of tires with respect to fuel efficiency and other essential parameters, and the Directive on the energy performance of buildings. These proposals will be linked to work modifying the Directive concerning measures to safeguard

the security of natural gas supply – the final legislative proposal will be submitted in mid 2009 – and the Council Directive (Euratom) setting up a Community framework for nuclear safety. In the short term it will also be necessary to focus on utilizing the financial assistance linked to the *Draft Regulation Establishing a Program to Aid Economic Recovery by Granting Community Financial Assistance to Projects in the Field of Energy*.

The implementation of the climate and energy package will be another important issue in the upcoming negotiations at the EU Council level and in terms of energy policy, there is a need to draw up an evaluation of RES target fulfillment and prepare a Renewable Energy Sources Action Plan.

It is also necessary to continue with the measures aimed at maintaining a secure energy supply on both international and national levels. On the national level this will primarily mean ensuring that measures adopted in relation to the gas crisis are fulfilled. While on the international level proposed solutions have also been defined, which would ensure that all EU member states will in the future have an opportunity to fully diversify, with an emphasis on those countries which are significantly dependent upon one supplier. In the interest of diversifying energy sources and transit routes in Central Europe, we consider it to be extremely important that adequate financial resources are allocated, at the European level, to projects interconnecting the infrastructure to ensure that the north-south and west-east trans-European routes are sufficiently well connected; this reflects the needs of the Slovak Republic as well.

REFERENCES

- "Decision No. 406/2009/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the effort of Member States to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to meet the Community's greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments up to 2020"; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:140:0136:0148:EN:PDF>.
- "Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC"; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:140:0016:0062:EN:PDF>.
- "Directive 2009/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 amending Directive 2003/87/EC so as to improve and extend the greenhouse gas emission allowance trading scheme of the Community"; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:140:0063:0087:EN:PDF>.
- "Directive 2009/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the geological storage of carbon dioxide and amending Council Directive 85/337/EEC, European Parliament and Council Directives 2000/60/EC, 2001/80/EC, 2004/35/EC, 2006/12/EC, 2008/1/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006"; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:140:0114:0135:EN:PDF>.
- "Energy Efficiency Plan Action Plan for years 2008-2010" (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2007); http://ec.europa.eu/energy/demand/legislation/doc/neeap/slovakia_en.pdf.
- "Konceptia energetickej efektívnosti" ("Concept of Energy Efficiency of the Slovak Republic"), (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2007); <http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/95862F2C6A12F360C12573060024243E?OpenDocument>.
- "Nuclear Illustrative Programme. Presented under Article 40 of the Euratom Treaty for the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee, COM(2006) 844 final"; http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0844en01.pdf.
- "Stratégia energetickej bezpečnosti SR" ("Strategy of the Energy Efficiency of the Slovak Republic"), (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008); <http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FB11425C0A0BFE5FC12574DD0042B8AD?OpenDocument>.

“Stratégia záverečnej časti jadrovej energetiky” (“Strategy of Back-End of Nuclear Cycle”), (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008); <http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F67ED564186B1135C125744E002C195F?OpenDocument>.

“Zákon č. 476/2008 Z.z. o efektívnosti pri používaní energie (zákon o energetickej efektívnosti) a o zmene a doplnení zákona č. 555/2005 Z. z. o energetickej hospodárnosti budov a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení zákona č. 17/2007 Z. z.”; <http://www.zbierka.sk/zz/predpisy/default.aspx?PredpisID=208513&FileName=zz2008-00476-0208513&Rocnik=2008>.

SLOVAKIA AND THE WESTERN BALKANS. THE YEAR 2008 – BEFORE AND AFTER

JÚLIUS LŐRINCZ

It is hard to categorize Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans and the issues related to the development of this region in South East Europe, in terms of a specific time or space, defined by a date or border. In this portrayal of Slovak activities in 2008, the following text will focus on three sets of issues which transcend these limits – economic cooperation, development assistance, and the status of Kosovo. Why focus particularly on these issues?

Through its active foreign policy and diplomatic activities, the Slovak Republic has gained authority and a trustworthy position in the Western Balkans. This is evidenced by the three exceptional tasks entrusted, in recent years, to Slovak diplomats operating at a multilateral level as responsible representatives of the international community.¹ At the same time, Slovakia has developed good mutual political relations with all the successor states of former Yugoslavia. However, in the long term, this has not been reflected in economic and trade relations, which lag behind the political sphere, nor in our economic and trade positions, compared to those of our neighboring or partner countries.

Slovakia has performed extraordinarily well in providing development assistance to the Western Balkans over the long term, especially when Slovakia's potential is taken into

¹ Firstly, after the termination of the NATO air operation in Serbia and Kosovo in 1999 and the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1244, Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan delegated the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Eduard Kukan, to the position of UN Special Envoy for this region; secondly, the EU entrusted Slovak diplomat Miroslav Lajčák with the organization and overseeing of the referendum on the independence of Montenegro; and thirdly, Miroslav Lajčák served in Sarajevo in 2007 and 2008 as the High Representative of the international community and EU Special Representative.

account. In the 1990s and later, this assistance included the not insignificant activities of non-governmental organizations in cooperating with local activists in the struggle to pave the way for the democratization process and create civil society structures, particularly in Serbia, but also in other states. These activities are continuing today in the form of various projects, in the economic area as well, and with the use of the instruments of official development assistance (ODA), as was confirmed by 2008.

The declaration of the independence of Kosovo on February 17, 2008 added a new state to the political and geographic map of Europe. This event was not a surprise, but rather the anticipated result of a long-term process – a dramatic and bloody result, which was not welcomed with a heady general euphoria, but often met with disconcertment; the result of an irreversible development, which Europe could not quite handle, but which it must gradually come to terms with. Slovakia numbers among the minority of 27 member states of the European Union which have not yet recognized the independence of Kosovo (along with Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Spain). This is also the case with the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The fact that this issue occupied Slovak diplomacy quite extensively is demonstrated by the fact that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ján Kubiš, visited Belgrade three times in one year (April, July, and October 2008) and participated in a number of other activities in this context.

THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF FOREIGN POLICY

The question is just how long will what is basically an empty and unused space remain behind the political and diplomatic activities in the Western Balkans. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák, repeatedly pointed to this fact even before his departure from Sarajevo. He saw Slovak diplomatic activities as being ‘incomplete’ on two levels. Firstly, Slovakia’s insufficient participation in the military and political structures at an expert level, which has a role to play in solving Balkan issues. This was also true in 2008 when, as in the past, the motivating factor in this direction was the enthusiasm of a group of people, whose approach must be both commended and appreciated, but at the same time, we should point out that, in the long-term, this cannot replace a comprehensive and long-term concept of what is to be achieved. Secondly, we are not able to make use of our diplomatic and political positions in the economic sphere. Other countries, including our partners within the Visegrad Group, are much better at discovering and utilizing local economic potential and trade opportunities; they participate more in the privatization process and actively co-sponsor promising development projects.

As department minister, Miroslav Lajčák particularly emphasized the economic dimension of diplomacy and foreign policy, in general, and, along with the Minister of Economy, Ľubomír Jahňátek, he submitted a proposal to the Government on both ministries adopting a joint approach in this regard (June 2009). In this case, the urgency of this step was caused by the consequences of the global financial and economic

crisis, which raise hopes that some action may well be stirred up in this area. However, at the same time, it is hard to avoid a certain skepticism, especially given that the call to incorporate an economic dimension into diplomacy is by no means new; it has basically been repeated often since the creation of independent Slovakia in 1993, so far without tangible results.²

The Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and the SFPA organized an international conference on Economic Opportunities in the Western Balkans: Regional and European Perspectives on June 12-13, 2008 in Bratislava, at which Peter Jesenský from the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO) spoke of the fact that the representatives of the Slovak business sector "have very little knowledge of the economic environment, especially, economic-trade legislation; the banking and finance sector; customs, duty, and tax policies, and so on."³

The question is how and why is this possible, when today the information and data from this sector is largely publicly accessible, when Slovak diplomatic missions and their economic advisors operate in the main cities of the region, when there is a diplomatic mission of the Western Balkan states (Croatia and Serbia) in Slovakia, or at the very least, in the immediate vicinity, in Vienna and Prague (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia)?!

How is it possible that countries which are comparable to us have astronomically different results in mutual trade, economic cooperation, and direct investment in the countries of the Western Balkans, even from our worm's eye view? If we evaluate 2008 by comparing some of the results of Slovakia's performance and the performance of Slovakia's economic and financial sector to these countries, the findings are rather alarming and depressing.

For example, according to the statistics of the National Bank of Serbia, Slovakia ranks 35th in terms of direct investment in the country, for the period of January – December 2008, with a balance (investment inflow and outflow) of 1.47 million US dollars. The Netherlands lead with (510 million US dollars), followed by Italy (458.8 million US dollars), Austria (475.6 million US dollars), Croatia (143 million US dollars), Switzerland (122.5 million US dollars), and Slovenia (112 million US dollars). Of our

However, in the long term, Slovakia's good, mutual political relations have not been reflected in economic and trade relations, which lag behind the political sphere, nor in our economic and trade positions, in comparison to other neighboring or partner countries.

² Due to disagreements in the government coalition of the second government of Mikuláš Dzurinda (2002-2006), the legal reforms which were to facilitate the coordinated approach of the departments of diplomacy and economy in promoting Slovak economic interests abroad collapsed, and this, despite the fact that they had already been prepared and submitted to parliament.

³ P. Jesenský, "Aktivity Slovenskej agentúry pre rozvoj investícií a obchodu v krajinách západného Balkánu"; www.sfpa.sk/dok/zapbalkan-12jun2008/Peter%20Jesensky.pdf.

neighbors, Hungary comes 14th with 31 million US dollars and Poland 15th with 24.8 million US dollars.

In the first few months of 2009 (January – March), Russia, despite having somewhat surprisingly lagged behind in investment, climbed to first place with 511 million US dollars, due to its purchase of the Serbian oil and natural gas company NIS. The next four positions were occupied by Serbia's traditional partners – Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Hungary. Slovakia dropped to 54th place, although it must be said that far-reaching conclusions should not be drawn from this, given that the results only include the first three months of the year; nonetheless, the tendency is sadly clear.

The situation is similar in relation to Croatia, which is also one of our privileged partners, in political terms. According to the data of the Croatian Ministry of Economy, Labor, and Entrepreneurship, following the 2008 analysis, Slovakia came 28th in the ranking, expressed in euros, of Croatia's partners in terms of the volume of long-term direct investments (thus not simply over one year). The volume of these investments reached 19.9 million euros. The leading country is, as always, Austria posting 5.8 billion euros, followed by the Netherlands, which invested 3.27 billion euros in Croatia; Germany 2.1 billion; France 1.3 billion; Luxembourg 1.1 billion; Italy 921 million; Slovenia 852 million; Great Britain 416 million; and the investments of both Switzerland and Belgium, in 10th and 11th position, still amount to almost 400 million euros.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they organized a forum for the entrepreneurs of the hosting country and Slovakia during the official visit of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico, to Sarajevo in June 2008, is similar to the previous cases. According to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia features in 27th place in the table of foreign investors.

We, therefore, should not be surprised to learn that, at the conference, Peter Jesenský characterized Slovak business activities in the region as being 'on a very low, almost stagnant level'. In 2008, the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO) presented a worthy initiative with the aim of kick starting the rather stagnant economic dimension of Slovakia's policy in the region. In cooperation with the Slovenian Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign investments JAPTI, SARIO offers opportunities for Slovak businesses to enter into the markets of the Western Balkans. Slovenian companies are very active in this region and they are also willing to create opportunities for Slovak companies and businesses to participate as suppliers and subcontractors of Slovenian projects, especially in the production sectors in the energy, transport, and machinery industry.

The Slovak Republic has traditionally been perceived very positively in the region. However, so far, this has not been adequately reflected in the economic sphere, where the economic potential of both sides, that is, Slovakia and the countries of the Western Balkans, has been left untouched. This naturally raises questions over the frequently repeated statement that the Western Balkans is one of the long-term priority interests of Slovak foreign policy and Slovakia in general; ultimately, however, it weakens the position of the Slovak Republic in the region, in the long-term.

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Slovakia's development assistance (Official Development Assistance – ODA), which as a result of its extent and effectiveness has become an integral part of Slovakia's image-building, plays an important and positive role in the Western Balkans. The activities of many non-governmental organizations in this direction are extremely praiseworthy and almost heroic, but they cannot replace the institutional background of foreign policy. However, it falls short of the activities carried out by our neighbors, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in the Western Balkans. It cannot replace the absence of the economic dimension in realizing the strategic goals of Slovak foreign policy.

In 2008, a total of 35 projects were launched, that is, implemented, in the countries of the Western Balkans. Of these, 29 of them were launched in Slovak ODA program countries – Serbia (24) and Montenegro (5). In the remaining countries of the region, which feature among the 14 priority countries of Slovak Aid, three projects were launched or continued in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and three in Macedonia. Albania is the only country in the region, where no Slovak Aid projects have been realized. Some of these projects are being implemented in coordination with the development agencies of Canada (CIDA) and Austria (ADA). This trilateral format has been employed in implementing 13 projects in cooperation with Canada and another three with Austria. The Slovak development assistance projects focused on building democratic institutions, implementing good governance, creating a market environment, consolidating stability, protecting the environment, and solving agricultural problems, and issues of food security.

A new form of assistance is represented by 'micro-grants' for smaller development projects. These are offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Embassies, and specifically through the Ambassadors, – although, so far, only in Belgrade and Sarajevo. The 24 micro-grants provided so far have proven to be effective, especially due to the flexibility with which they offer various projects to applicants in need. This assistance strengthens Slovakia's image and the position of the Slovak Ambassador in the country of his/her accreditation. For this reason, this form of assistance should also be extended to other Slovak Aid countries in the course of 2009.

In 2006, the Slovak Republic decided to contribute annually to the Western Balkans Fund. This resource supports the development of enterprises and infrastructure. Slovakia's single contribution of 500,000 euros was paid in two installments – the first, in 2007, amounted to 250,000 euros and was followed by a second installment of 250,000 in 2008. Due to previous experience with the fund's operations, Slovakia will additionally contribute a further 200,000 euros this year (2009).

THE KOSOVO QUESTION

The unilateral declaration of the independence of Kosovo on February 17 was a key event in the development of the Western Balkans in 2008. It not only influenced the stability

of relations in the entire region, but also meant that Slovak foreign policy was faced with a problem in the European and regional context, which has still not been resolved.

Slovakia's position on this development has evolved since 2007. First, there was the altogether realistic acceptance of the unfavorable, but logical outcome of the Kosovo issue, this was then followed by a period of waiting, then there was the final rejection of Kosovo's independence that initially had an emotional underpinning, and now the current search is for a legal justification for the official negative position on Kosovo's independence.

A year before the declaration of independence, the Slovak minister of Foreign Affairs, Ján Kubiš, and Peter Burian, the Slovak Permanent Representative in the UN Security Council, (which we were a non-permanent member of for two years), both spoke of the inevitability of Kosovo's progression to independence. On the crucial day of February 17, 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic issued a declaration in which it emphasized that the Slovak Republic was not considering the possibility of recognizing

A year before the declaration of independence, the Slovak minister of Foreign Affairs, Ján Kubiš, and Peter Burian, the Slovak Permanent Representative in the UN Security Council (which we were a non-permanent member of for two years), both spoke of the inevitability of Kosovo's progression to independence.

the independence of Kosovo, because Slovakia had always argued that the status of Kosovo should be solved by means of an agreement between the parties concerned, with the UN SC playing a decisive role: "The Slovak Republic will monitor the development of the situation in Kosovo and the region as well as the approach of the international community. Only after evaluating the development of the situation will it decide on how to proceed on this issue."⁴

Although, at that time, Foreign Minister Ján Kubiš referred to the 120 day period which the government reserves for final decisions on such matters, the following week, on February 24, Prime

Minister Robert Fico was already declaring on a televised STV debate that "Slovakia will never recognize the independence of Kosovo".

He repeated that the declaration of Kosovo's independence violated the fundamental principles of international law – the right to self-determination and the sanctity of national borders. He stated that "Kosovo is not an independent territory, Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia", thus emphasizing that Serbs and members of the Albanian national minority cohabited together in this province. According to Robert Fico, the situation where one ethnicity, the Albanians, has two independent states – Albania and now Kosovo is unique.⁵

The position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was vaguer and, most of all, it left the door open – "the Slovak Republic will monitor the development of the situation", "only once the situation has been evaluated, will it decide" – and the Minister of Foreign Affairs also kept referring to the fact that the government reserves 120 days, the time limit of the EU protective measures, to deliberate and decide. The Prime Minister's position, however, inclined more to radically rejecting Kosovo's independence.

⁴ "Mimoriadny brífing Jána Kubiša ku Kosovu", *SITA* (February 17, 2008).

⁵ "Robert Fico: Kosovo možno vôbec neuznáme, nikdy", *SITA* (February 24, 2008).

THE LACK OF A MORE OBJECTIVE VIEW

These viewpoints came as no surprise, as they were not formed in sudden reaction to the moment Kosovo declared independence. They were preceded for almost a year by the unanimous calls of the representatives of both the government coalition and political opposition including Mikuláš Dzurinda, Pavol Hrušovský, Ján Čarnogurský and others, that the independence of Kosovo cannot be recognized. This position was basically legalized at the highest level by the declaration of the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted by 123 Members of Parliament on March 28, 2007, when negotiations on Kosovo were still pending. The declaration emphasized that the "solution to the future status of Kosovo must respect the legitimate demands of Serbia as well as the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal norms..."⁶ At the same time, the Members of the Slovak Parliament expressed the belief that "the declared will of the NC SR will contribute to stabilizing relations in the given region".

Thus, a large section of the political elite in Slovakia (excluding the Party of the Hungarian Coalition – SMK, which is being unreasonably accused of reckoning with the secession of southern Slovakia) is warning of the possible consequences of Kosovo's independence and stressing that it is vital to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. This, in their words, complies with the UN Charter, the *Helsinki Final Act* of 1975, and the UN SC Resolution No. 1244 dating from 1999. It sounds convincing.

But an informed observer of the events and developments in the Western Balkans will have no problem realizing that this is a completely one-sided perspective, which purposefully selects certain facts from reality and international documents, which deflect from a truly objective assessment of the situation. There is not a word about the tragic fate of the Albanians in Kosovo, or an attempt to examine more closely the UN Charter and other documents of this organization, or even the text and meaning of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The problem presented by Kosovo in the 1990s was indeed mainly a problem of human rights and their massive violation by the regime of Slobodan Milošević, who was in power in Belgrade at the time.

Which European country treated their own citizens after the Second World War as brutally as Milošević's Serbia treated the Albanians in Kosovo? Naturally, at the same time, it would not be wise to underestimate the separatist tendencies in the political environment of the Kosovo Albanians. However, the attitudes of the governing regime towards the citizens of Albanian nationality in Kosovo played a central role. The approach taken by the Belgrade leadership in Kosovo at the beginning of the 1990s in fact led to the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia, which is now returning full circle back to Kosovo, where it will all eventually end.

The drama of Serbian-Albanian relations surely began long before Milošević. A look back at the year 1968 will suffice, to the time when the later Yugoslavian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mirko Tepavac, in debate with the author Dobric Čosić, who defended the

⁶ "Vyhlásenie NR SR k riešeniu budúceho štatútu srbskej provincie Kosovo", *SITA* (March 28, 2007).

'loyalty to Serbia' in Kosovo and Vojvodina in contrast to other nationalities, criticized him for not giving the Albanians any option "but to feel like subtenants in the Serbian national state, to acknowledge that they are second class citizens, and understand that, given Serbian majoritarianism, they can only remain living in the regions where they are".⁷ Tepevac's words are still relevant as is his warning of the consequences of the superiority felt by the majority nation towards the minority nationalities.

In a discussion on the regular Radio Free Europe program Bridges in March 2008, the historian Ivo Banac said: "Serbia lost Kosovo precisely because it did not know how to manage this province, or better put, because it could not find a solution for the Kosovo Albanians which would also be acceptable to them. It was the very intensive repression of an almost colonial regime, which went bankrupt in the same way all other colonial regimes have. This is the true cause of why Serbia lost Kosovo and all the talk about Yugoslavia, autonomies, borders, etc., is secondary. The situation in Kosovo was one of a regime forced upon the people and which was ultimately unsuccessful."⁸ It is unpleasant, but sadly accurate.

The President of the Liberal Democratic Party, Čedomir Jovanović, belongs to the very small minority of Serbian politicians who openly spoke of the inevitable independence of Kosovo, considered to be a 'great and historical defeat'. In the parliamentary debates on the resolution declaring that Kosovo will remain a part of Serbia, he said: "This resolution cannot change the past, which you are not responsible for, but it may destroy the future, for which you – the President of the Republic [Boris Tadić], the government coalition [at the time the PM was Vojislav Koštunica] and the parliamentary majority which supports this text – are responsible."⁹

So far the independence of Kosovo has been recognized by a minority of UN member states, even though this includes the clear majority of NATO and EU members. However, the fact that it has been recognized by both neighboring states of Serbia and Kosovo – Montenegro and Macedonia is symptomatic and says a lot about the situa-

⁷ D. Jović *Jugoslavija – država koja je odumrla*. (Prometej 2003), p. 191. D. Jović is a younger generation Serbian historian and this publication was published in Belgrade and by Samizdat B92 at almost the same time.

⁸ Banac's comments were aired on March 8, 2008 in a Bridges televised debate entitled Kosovo – The Last Stop of SFRY Disintegration with the Belgrade historian, Čedomir Antić, as partner in the discussion. Since 1994, the presenter of Bridges has been the former commentator of Radio and Television Belgrade, Omer Karabeg. Over this 15 year period, approximately one thousand well-known people from all spheres of social life in former Yugoslavia have appeared on his show. These dialogues have also been published in book form twice – 70 Serbian-Albanian dialogues in a book called *A Dialogue on a Barrel Full of Gunpowder*.

⁹ "Rezolucija o Kosovu" (December 26, 2007); www.b92.net. This resolution was adopted by the 250 member Serbian Parliament by 220 MPs; 14 were against, and 3 abstained from voting. The same number of MPs then voted for the resolution rejecting the declaration of independence of Kosovo, which was adopted at an emergency parliamentary session on February 19, 2008. Also, on this occasion Č. Jovanović addressed Parliament with a statement revealing the causes of the humiliating failure of Serbia, which was unable to change anything substantial regarding Milošević's policy towards Kosovo. The liberal and rational circles of Serbia referred to his statement as the only statesman's address at a critical time.

tion. Given their own experiences, they know best the reality and development in the region. In 2008, Slovakia's position on the issue was summed up by the Head of the Political Affairs Directorate General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Igor Slobodník, who stated in the *Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. Foreign Policy in 2008* that: "Our reasoning on the issue of not recognizing Kosovo has been based on the principal that (in our opinion) this step is in conflict with international law. As a relatively small country, we must emphasize the integrity of the international system. Our approach included supporting Serbia's right to demand, at the vote of the United Nations General Assembly in autumn 2008, that the International Court rule on the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence. We will determine our next steps by considering developments in Kosovo and the region as well as the overall situation on the status of Kosovo (including the aforementioned ruling of the International Court of Justice), and this will be done with the closest cooperation of other EU countries."

SLOVAKIA IS NOT CLOSING ITS DOOR TO KOSOVO

It is commendable that despite its negative position on the independence of Kosovo, Slovak foreign policy is not shying away from this problem and is striving to maintain contact and contribute to the stabilization of relations in the region, even within the rather limited space it has.

In September 2008 during the Session of the UN General Assembly in New York, the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ján Kubiš, met with the President of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Skënder Hyseni, who both thanked him for Slovakia's involvement in the Western Balkans. Minister Kubiš emphasized that despite the fact that Slovakia does not recognize the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence, it wishes to continue participating in strengthening the stability and development of the region. Both parties expressed a common interest in the swiftest possible reconfiguration of the international presence of the UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the effective functioning of the European Union civil mission EULEX, which Slovakia is participating in. According to Ján Kubiš, the Slovak Republic will continue to support development assistance projects through its branch office in Prishtina.¹⁰ Slovakia's decision to recognize Kosovan passports was also an important shift.

A MORE DYNAMIC APPROACH WOULD BE APPRECIATED

So what was 2008 like in terms of Slovakia's foreign policy towards the Western Balkans? An unambiguous and categorical characterization would most likely be inadequate, since

¹⁰ "Ján Kubiš v New Yorku so Sejdiuom a Hysenim" (September 25, 2008); www.mzv.sk.

everything has its pros and cons. In general, Slovakia did not disappoint; it was a reliable partner to the states of this region and its contribution to the stabilization of the region was respectable, even though it appears that perhaps sometimes foreign policy was tied up too much by the Kosovo issue (almost as was the case with Serbia's foreign policy, however Serbia's situation was different for understandable reasons). A more dynamic approach seems to have been lacking in our policy towards the Western Balkans in terms of the developments and problems in that region and the broader European scene: the dynamic approach which was typical of the activities of the High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Miroslav Lajčák, not only at the elite level of political life in the region and the countries involved, but also in the systematic contact with the citizens of all three countries in debates, particularly where the subject was the key problems concerning the fate and future of that country.

The question remains as to whether Slovakia, as a result of its "intensive dialogue and accumulated expertise valued by our allies and partners" (Igor Slobodník), could not have been more active, for example, in mediating the dispute between Greece and Macedonia over the issue of the name of the independent state which was formed on the territory of former Yugoslavia or in settling the dispute between Slovenia and Croatia. Both of these problems are severely hindering the Euro-Atlantic integration process in the region, which is not good from the point of view of preventing potential conflicts (especially in the case of Macedonia, in the context of the fragile ethnic relations, and also in Kosovo's neighborhood) and the prospects for stabilization in this region. Sadly, neither the North Atlantic Treaty Organization nor the European Union have been sufficiently effective in this regard and it is a public secret that in the final decision on the membership of Croatia and Albania in NATO, the unwillingness expressed by Ljubljana towards Zagreb was only overcome by the United States' more energetic approach. However, we cannot expect the USA to continue mediating similar issues for its European allies every time.

THE WESTERN BALKANS NEEDS A NEW STIMULUS

A number of warnings were voiced last year at the Bratislava Globsec 2007/2008 conference (July 2008) suggesting that development in the Western Balkans requires a re-evaluation of the international engagement in the region, especially in the interest of ending the stagnation, in many cases, even political crisis, and finally start overcoming the long-lasting social and economic instability. Amadeo Watkins from the British Defense Academy, in particular, warned, in his rather expressive, but not unrealistic speech, that although "we have analysts and experts, reports and documents which come up with concepts such as assistance, the duplication of effort, overall implementation, consistency, and so on – all nice words...which come and go, but in the real world little is heard of them."¹¹ He added

¹¹ A. Watkins, "Balkán 2008: Výzvy a perspektívy", Contribution from the *Globsec 2007/2008* conference; <http://www.eaq.sk/page.php?doc=343>.

that in his opinion “the EU and other international organizations are rather slow to react to modern challenges”. Slovak foreign policy cannot afford to overlook these phenomena, not to consider them, and not to draw specific conclusions from them.

It seems that there is no need to be concerned that Slovakia will not do so in relation to the Western Balkans, because the arrival of Miroslav Lajčák in Bratislava from Sarajevo to take up the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic must surely be seen as a catalyst in this context. It is highly likely that we will witness the beginning of a renewal in Slovak foreign policy towards the Western Balkans and quite possibly even a significant Slovak initiative challenging the European Union and the USA to cooperate more actively in this region. This comes very specifically from the words uttered by Miroslav Lajčák in his address on European-American cooperation in the Western Balkans to the US German Marshall Fund in Washington in May 2009.¹² He warned that despite the efforts already expended and the partial successes achieved, the situation in the region “has not improved at the pace we would like to see” and that it is marked by widespread stagnation and, in some areas, even deterioration. At one stage in his speech he even stated that “this region has not yet fully lost its destructive potential”. In support of his statement he pointed to several facts:

- The unilateral declaration of the independence of Kosovo did not bring a rapid and simple solution to the Kosovo problem, as had been expected. Kosovo remains divided and there are signs of a potential attempt to make this temporary solution permanent, which could trigger new conflicts.
- The situation in Macedonia is peaceful and stabilized, but according to Miroslav Lajčák, this is a fragile stability, dependent on the nature of relations between the ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians, on developments in Kosovo and in the Preshevo valley in southern Serbia which has a numerous Albanian minority.
- The most problematic country continues to be Bosnia and Herzegovina, which epitomizes almost all the problems that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s – the reform process is stagnating, its integration processes have slowed, and secessionist tendencies continue to develop in Republika Srpska. Any attempt at secession would lead to attempts to create new ethnic boundaries and a new wave of ethnic cleansing. In short, the entire Western Balkans would be pushed back by many years.

According to Miroslav Lajčák, in this development phase the only approach that can help the Western Balkans is the close cooperation of the United States and the European Union and the synchronization of their efforts and instruments, which he would term “joint or shared leadership”. Miroslav Lajčák envisions that the combination of “US authority” (hard-power) and EU instruments (soft-power) would create optimum prerequisites for

¹² “Prejav ministra zahraničných vecí SR M. Lajčáka v US German Marshall Fund vo Washingtone” (May 7, 2009); http://www.mzv.sk/servlet/content?MT=/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_98823A123D718905C125705A00318778_SK&TG=BlankMaster&URL=/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_80CC3E302DF508F6C12570A8003F7BD7_SK&OpenDocument=Y&DS=Y&TV=Y&LANG=SK.

clearly directing the processes in the Western Balkans in a European direction. Euro-Atlantic reciprocity and cooperation is embodied and concentrated in a most tangible manner in the Western Balkans, thus sending out a positive message of the ability to take joint responsibility. At the same time, he sees that without internal reforms, which offer the best possible chance to build solid democratic foundations for statehood and to achieve stable development, there is no European prospect for the Western Balkans.

Slovakia undoubtedly has its place in this vision and conception, due to our long-term involvement and the fact that our country has a certain potential to contribute to the understanding of the region's problems and their solution as an attractive and acceptable partner. This is how we are perceived in the Euro-Atlantic structures and in the countries of this region. However, you cannot live off past triumphs; to maintain and improve our positions also means solving problems which have not even been mentioned here.

REFERENCES

- Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the SR. Foreign Policy in 2008.* (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2009).
- Jesenský, P., "Aktivity Slovenskej agentúry pre rozvoj investícií a obchodu v krajinách západného Balkánu"; www.sfpa.sk/dok/zapbalkan-12jun2008/Peter%20Jesensky.pdf.
- Jovič, D. *Jugoslávija – država koja je odumrla.* (Prometej 2003).
- "Ján Kubiš v New Yorku so Sejdiuom a Hysenim" (September 25, 2008); www.mzv.sk.
- "Mimoriadny brífing Jána Kubiša ku Kosovu", *SITA* (February 17, 2008).
- "Prejav ministra zahraničných vecí SR M. Lajčáka v US German Marshall Fund vo Washington" (May 7, 2009); http://www.mzv.sk/servlet/content?MT=/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_98823A123D718905C125705A00318778_SK&TG=BlankMaster&URL=/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_80CC3E302DF508F6C12570A8003F7BD7_SK&OpenDocument=Y&DS=Y&TV=Y&LANG=SK.
- "Rezolucija o Kosovu" (December 26, 2007); www.b92.net.
- "Robert Fico: Kosovo možno vôbec neuznáme, nikdy", *SITA* (February 24, 2008).
- "Vyhlásenie NR SR k riešeniu budúceho štatútu srbskej provincie Kosovo", *SITA* (March 28, 2007).
- Watkins, A., "Balkán 2008: Výzvy a perspektívy", Contribution from the *Globsec 2007/2008* conference; <http://www.eaq.sk/page.php?doc=343>.

SELECTED WEB SITES

www.hnb.hr
www.merr.gov.rs
www.nbs.rs
www.mvteo.gov.ba
www.slobodnaevropa.org
www.b92.net

VISEGRAD 2008: A DYNAMIC REGIONAL PLATFORM WITH ADDED VALUE FOR THE EU

TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY

The cooperation achieved by the Visegrad members in 2008 indicates that this organization can be considered a model of good regional cooperation and, at the same time, the most successful regional initiative in Central Europe. The position of the Visegrad Four (V4) as a respected regional platform within the European Union was, in addition, further strengthened by its fifth year of EU membership. This was also demonstrated by the continually expanding foreign policy dimension of cooperation within the V4. Although the Czech Republic entered the second half of its presidency of the V4 once the celebrations had died down for what can be considered one of the most significant successes of the V4 as a whole in the post-integration period – the Visegrad countries' entry into the Schengen system in December 2007, the year 2008 also brought with it new challenges and problems, which the individual Visegrad countries had to face, individually or as a whole.

Given the extensive and multilayered nature of the Visegrad agenda, this section mainly focuses on the most important issues or topics concerning the foreign policy dimension of Visegrad cooperation. The paper presents a summary of two Visegrad presidencies – the Czech and the Polish, and also focuses on the more problematic areas of the agenda, which either remain unfulfilled for now, or where the Visegrad countries did not manage to achieve a consensus. There is a special section focusing on Slovakia's merits during the two presidencies, while the conclusion presents a more general summary reflecting the development of Visegrad cooperation over the course of 2008.

THE DYNAMIC CZECH PRESIDENCY

The Czech Republic was occupied both with the entry of the V4 countries into the Schengen area at the end of 2007 and with dynamically fulfilling the goals of its

presidency in other areas. The Czech presidency was just as concerned to dissuade any concerns the EU had about cooperating with its Eastern neighbors as it was to clearly distinguish the southern and eastern dimensions of European Neighborhood Policy. These ambitions were fulfilled to a significant extent and, in addition, links were successfully established – via Visegrad – between the north of Europe and Eastern Europe by means of directly involving Sweden and Ukraine in the open V4 plus format.

Support for Ukraine's efforts to form closer ties with the EU was also reflected in several declarations¹ and significant attention was also paid to Georgia and Moldova in the Visegrad program. In relation to Belarus, the V4 countries, headed by the Czech presidency, proposed that the EU countries take the unilateral step of supporting a general decrease in the fees for Schengen visas for Belarusian nationals.² Success was also made in intensifying contact with other regional groupings, particularly the Nordic Council. In addition, the Czech presidency attempted to establish a consultation mechanism for the discussion of issues regarding energy security, through which the V4 countries would be able to contribute to the formulation of the EU's common energy policy. A further priority of the Czech presidency was the successful conclusion of talks with the US as part of what is known as the Coalition for Visa Equality, whose goal is to achieve a visa-free regime with the US.³ However, these were only partially successful in the two cases mentioned.

The Czech presidency also oversaw an intensification in relations within the V4 and the further delineation of the V4 and its member countries as universal regional players through the strengthening of mutual cooperation, but also through "cultivating mutual discontent" on the issues, where the V4 countries held different positions.⁴ Alongside the activities taking place on a political level, the Czech Republic also involved its Visegrad partners in expert consultations, thereby meeting one of the presidency's priorities, which was to increase the effectiveness of the mechanism of cooperation between countries.⁵ Hence, the Czech Republic, to a significant extent, took advantage of the opportunities offered by the role of the presiding country.

¹ See e.g. "Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries, Sweden and Ukraine" (April 23, 2008).

² This request was more broadly articulated in the so-called non-paper from June 2008; although a joint V4 non-paper on "EU Assistance to Belarus called EU Policy and Assistance to Belarus – General Overview" had already been presented in January 2008; <http://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/tema/tema-summit-predsedu-vlad-zemi-visegradske-skupiny-v-praze-16->.

³ "Program českého předsednictví Visegrádské skupiny (červen 2007 – červen 2008)"; <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=9497&ctag=articelists&iid=1>.

⁴ See "TÉMA: Summit předsedu vlád zemí Visegrádské skupiny v Praze 16. června 2008"; <http://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/tema/tema-summit-predsedu-vlad-zemi-visegradske-skupiny-v-praze-16-cervna-2008-36394/>.

⁵ Ibid.

UNEASE OVER THE POLISH PRESIDENCY

The Polish presidency adopted the slogan Solidarity in the Region: Together for Democracy. The first half of the slogan was supposed to reflect an emphasis on solidarity as the leading principle of the Visegrad Group, while the second half was to voice support for countries undergoing the complicated processes of transformation and democratization, amongst other things. The launch of the Polish presidency, however, departed somewhat from this slogan; the reason was the new Polish-Swedish initiative on deepening cooperation with the EU's eastern neighbors – the Eastern Partnership. Unease was created amongst the Visegrad partners by the way in which the joint Polish-Swedish initiative was formulated and presented, since Poland declined to consult any of its partners systematically on the initial draft of the concept of the Eastern Partnership. Regular consultations were not even held with the Czech Republic, which was to take over the role of EU presiding country on January 1, 2009. This was despite the fact that during its preparation phase, the Czech Republic was considering including the strengthening of what is known as the eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy amongst the priorities of its presidency. Even though the concept of the Eastern Partnership was later supported by all the Visegrad countries⁶, and made it onto the program of issues the Czech EU presidency wished to promote, Poland failed to satisfactorily explain the fact that there was no initial consultation with its V4 partners.

The chosen slogan was also integrated into the presidency's program, whose priorities were divided into three areas. Particular emphasis was placed on intensifying cooperation within the Visegrad Group, including the deepening of cooperation at the level of sectoral policies; at the EU level, the Polish presidency was especially keen to promote reinforcement of the consultation mechanism and closer coordination between the individual countries in regard to the EU decision-making processes.

In terms of cooperation with other regions and countries both within and outside the EU, the presidency established priorities including more intensive use of the V4 plus mechanism as well as greater engagement of the V4 in formulating the new dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy and in the negotiations on the new EU – Ukraine treaty.⁷ These priorities were also reflected in the positions taken by the V4 prime ministers and foreign ministers, which were also shared by their counterparts from Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and

Unease was created amongst the Visegrad partners by the way in which the joint Polish-Swedish initiative was formulated and presented, since Poland declined to consult any of its partners systematically on the initial draft of the concept of the Eastern Partnership.

⁶ See e.g. "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.

⁷ "Program Przewodnictwa RP w Grupie Wyszehradzkiej, lipiec 2008 – czerwiec 2009" (June 2008). <http://www.msz.gov.pl/Polska,na,czele,Grupy,Wyszehradzkiej,19033.html>.

Sweden.⁸ Different ways of dealing with the consequences of the financial crisis, the issue of energy security, the diversification of the supply of mineral resources, and the issue of what is referred to as the climate and energy package were also frequently discussed; however, the defining theme of the Polish presidency remains the concept of the Eastern Partnership, which laid the foundations for the evolution of a qualitatively new dimension in relations with the EU's eastern neighborhood countries, including the countries of the South Caucasus.

Even though it may be premature to judge the results of the Polish V4 presidency in its entirety (Hungary will take over at the end of June), Poland has not projected itself as a leader proffering new themes and solutions in the Visegrad space; hence, the first part of the presidency can be seen as rather mediocre.

SLOVAKIA'S ACTIVE CONTRIBUTION

In 2008, Slovakia manifested itself as a reliable partner with its own initiatives within the V4. One such initiative was Prime Minister Robert Fico's proposal to create a Visegrad development bank to fund or co-fund strategic projects

Slovakia's entry into the eurozone turned out to be inspirational particularly for Poland, since the Polish government showed an interest in adopting the common European currency within a specific timeframe.

in the energy sector.⁹ Slovakia also took the initiative in coming up with a compromise on the climate and energy package. The Slovak proposal was accepted by all the Visegrad countries, and in addition, by the Baltic countries and Bulgaria and Romania. This proposal would allow the countries which are dissatisfied with the European Commission's proposal on capping emissions to receive a few additional percentage points; thereby, ensuring that the impact of the climate

and energy package would not be so severe.¹⁰

The Slovak Republic also occupied a special position within the V4 in terms of its preparations for adopting the single European currency. Hence, Slovakia gained an opportunity to share her experience and offer valuable information to other Visegrad countries seeking to adopt the euro later on. Slovakia's entry into the Eurozone turned out to be inspirational particularly for Poland, since the Polish government showed

⁸ "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>; "Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries and of Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden" (November 24, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19715&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.

⁹ "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.

¹⁰ "Prepis brífingu predsedu vlády SR R. Fica po stretnutí premiérov V4, Pobaltia, Bulharska a Rumunska s francúzskym prezidentom N. Sarkozym v Gdansku"; <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/13015/prepis-brifingu-predsedu-vlady-sr-fica-po-stretnuti-premierov-v4-pobaltia-bulharska-a-rumunska-s-francuzskym-prezidentom-n-sarkozym-v-gdansku.php>.

an interest in adopting the common European currency within a specific timeframe. Slovakia's position in the area of energy, especially energy security can also be seen as distinct; of all the Visegrad countries, Slovakia is most dependent on importing strategic resources from Russia. The Republic's vulnerability in this area was confirmed by the January gas crisis resulting from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

Both the Czech and Polish presidencies share in common the fact that they achieved some successes, but did not fulfill expectations in other areas. On the one hand, some of these unfulfilled expectations can be categorized in terms of the different positions individual countries hold on key political issues or policies. In this context, the V4 countries continue to exhibit differences in opinion on a variety of issues including the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, on energy policies, on the means of guaranteeing energy security, or on the issue of Kosovo's unilaterally declared independence. On the other hand, expectations remain unfulfilled in areas where the V4 countries do not have conflicting opinions, but rather the topics themselves were not sufficiently aired and common interest was inadequately expressed. This particularly concerns the issues of further EU enlargement, cooperation with other regional initiatives, especially with the West Balkan region, and underestimating the significance of the Coalition for Visa Equality.

LISBON TREATY

In spite of the formal agreement given by the prime ministers of the Visegrad countries on the benefits of approving the *Lisbon Treaty*, two Visegrad countries find themselves, for various reasons, in the category of countries, including Ireland, which have yet to ratify the *Lisbon Treaty*. In both the Czech Republic and Poland, the *Lisbon Treaty* is being used as a domestic political football or in some cases as a symbol of the categorical disapproval some domestic political actors have on the deepening process of European integration. None of the abovementioned countries had succeeded in resolving the issue of approving the *Lisbon Treaty* by the close of 2008. Hence, despite the *Lisbon Treaty* having the formal support of all the Visegrad countries, the Czech Republic and Poland are for these reasons – somewhat unjustly – considered to be the bearers of Euroskeptic ideas.

ENERGY SECURITY

In spite of the Czech presidency's ambition to create a platform for the exchange of opinions and for the coordination of positions in the realm of energy security, the establishment of a permanent V4 Working Group on Energy was not achieved. The

Polish presidency also considers the issue of energy security and resource diversification a priority; however, expert consultations within the V4 format continue to take place on a rather *ad hoc* basis. Closer cooperation between the V4 countries in this area is also hampered to a certain extent by the distinct energy mixes. On the other hand, the common Czech-Slovak-European initiative for the European Nuclear Forum, which also enjoys the support of other Visegrad partners, can be praised as a positive example.

GEORGIA AND KOSOVO

The views of the representatives of the individual V4 countries also continue to differ on the situation regarding Kosovo's declaration of independence and on the issue of who provoked the Russia – Georgia conflict. In the case of Kosovo, Slovakia remains the only Visegrad country which has not recognized the independence of this former Southern

The conflicting opinions, however, did not prevent the Visegrad partners from finding a compromise on the issue of providing Visegrad scholarships to Kosovar students.

Serbian province. The conflicting opinions, however, did not prevent the Visegrad partners from finding a compromise on the issue of providing Visegrad scholarships to Kosovar students.

In seeking to establish the source of the Russia – Georgia conflict, the Slovak Republic inclined more to Russia's side, while Poland unambiguously supported the pro-Georgian standpoint. The Czech

representation was divided on this issue – while Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek accepted most of Georgia's arguments, President Václav Klaus sided more with the Russian side. The ruling Hungarian Socialist Party was relatively cautious – although it later voiced more support for Georgia; while the Hungarian opposition headed by the strongest party Fidesz can be seen as an unambiguous supporter of Georgia and a critic of Russia. Despite this difference in opinions, the Visegrad partners managed to agree to unambiguously support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.¹¹

EU ENLARGEMENT

The V4 countries continue to unanimously support the process of further EU enlargement, however, the declarations issued by the Visegrad summits directed scant attention to enlargement.¹²

¹¹ See e.g. "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.

¹² Remarks on the support for Western Balkan countries' integration ambitions can be found, for instance, in the press release by prime ministers from Prague June 2008. ("Press Release: Official Summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries" (June 15-16, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=16600&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>); or in the

An unequivocal declaration of the V4 countries articulating support for the integration ambitions of countries interested in EU membership would have been beneficial, especially in the era of 'enlargement fatigue' or the growing opposition of the so-called old member states to the further expansion of the EU. The format the V4 uses to communicate primarily with the West Balkan countries, which along with Turkey represent the most likely candidates for EU membership (Regional Partnership), follows the V4 plus format; however, it can primarily be considered an Austrian project, which has also languished to some extent. A greater initiative coming directly from the V4 would also be beneficial to Visegrad itself, and would enhance its reputation in South Eastern Europe.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The Czech and Polish presidencies also utilized the V4 plus format to develop cooperation between other regional initiatives, with the Nordic Council and Baltic Three in particular. However, the opportunity to intensify contact or cooperation with regional initiatives from outside the EU's borders was not taken up. An appropriate partner for interregional cooperation could be the Regional Cooperation Council based in Sarajevo, since the Visegrad model of regional cooperation appears to be inspirational for the West Balkan countries.

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

Despite the fact that one of the Czech presidency's priorities was to make significant progress in encouraging the US to abolish the compulsory visa regime towards the Visegrad countries, and which was partially achieved in the second half of 2008, the result was not entirely satisfactory. Poland, the largest of the V4 countries, was not included in the visa waiver program due to its failure to meet the technical criteria. The Czech presidency offered countries the opportunity to consult using the Coalition for Visa Equality as a platform; at the same time, however, it recommended that the countries continue negotiating with the US on an individual basis. Hence, the largest and, in this context, the most disadvantaged country was left abandoned. Although responsibility for canceling the US visa obligation lies exclusively with the United States government, the other three Visegrad countries could have expressed more symbolic support for Poland.

record of the summit of the Visegrad presidents in Piešťany in September 2008 ("The Presidents of the V4 countries discussed in Piešťany" (September 13, 2008); http://www.prezident.sk/?year=2008&news_id=7193); in both cases, however, expressions of support for the West Balkan countries were included in the broader text; its ranking in official statements also indicates that this subject was not an absolute priority.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the disparate positions held by the individual Visegrad countries on various political issues, the Visegrad Four proved that it is a lively platform not only for exchanging opinions, but increasingly for adopting common positions of strategic significance. Moreover, there are increasingly clear indications that the V4 tends to participate in an active manner, whether that be in formulating or influencing EU policies.

A positive aspect, which was unambiguously confirmed in 2008, is that the cooperation ceased to be significantly impacted by bilateral problems amongst the individual Visegrad countries. Although last year proved to be one of the most difficult in terms of Slovak-Hungarian relations, this did not manifest itself in the communication within the V4. Hence, compared to the nineties, substantial progress was made, which can be regarded as a positive example for the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly for the battle-scarred region of the West Balkans.

Despite the disparate positions held by the individual Visegrad countries on various political issues, the Visegrad Four proved that it is a lively platform not only for exchanging opinions, but increasingly for adopting common positions of strategic significance.

The past year also confirmed the growing interconnectedness between the efficacy of cooperation within the V4 and the presidencies of the different countries. Although, the presidencies' agendas are approved by all the Visegrad partners, the institution of presidency offers the individual country the opportunity to propose and carry out its own initiatives. Intensification of Visegrad cooperation in the future will require not only careful handling by the presidency, but also that the presidency be active in seizing the initiative; these pose a challenge not

only for the forthcoming Hungarian presidency, but also for the subsequent Slovak presidency.

An increasingly important role is being played by the International Visegrad Fund (IVM) within the V4 as well as in developing contacts with countries from beyond the Group's borders. The budget, currently totaling five million euros, provides support for projects focused on both cross-border and interregional cooperation. Scholarship programs are an increasingly important aspect of the IVM, particularly those aimed at students and experts from East European and West Balkan countries, which deserve special emphasis.

The year 2009 represents a new experience for the V4 countries, since one of them – the Czech Republic, is the first to preside over the Council of the EU. The Czech presidency program was conceived through the Czech Republic's intense consultations with its Visegrad partners; particular emphasis was placed, for instance, on the abovementioned reinforcement of the European Neighborhood Policy's eastern dimension, the issue of removing barriers and counteracting protectionism within the Union in economic and social areas, and on the issue of the climate and energy package. The approach taken by the Czech Republic deserves not only recognition, but should also be taken into consideration when the upcoming Hungarian and Polish presidencies prepare their agendas. The Czech Republic as presiding country does

not simply represent all the Visegrad Four countries in purely symbolic terms. It can thus be argued that the success of the Czech presidency will also be considered the success of the Visegrad Four. The same is also true of potential failure. Opportunities to represent the V4 at the highest European level, however, do not present themselves often enough for them to be thoughtlessly squandered.

REFERENCES

- "Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries, Sweden and Ukraine" (April 23, 2008).
- "EU Policy and Assistance to Belarus – General Overview"; <http://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/tema/tema:summit-predsedu-vlad-zemi-visegradske-skupiny-v-praze-16--cervna-2008-36394/>.
- "Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries and of Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Sweden" (November 24, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19715&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.
- "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.
- "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.
- "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.
- "Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers" (November 5, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=19376&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.
- "Prepis brífingu predsedu vlády SR R. Fica po stretnutí premiérov V4, Pobaltia, Bulharska a Rumunska s francúzskym prezidentom N. Sarkozy v Gdanskú"; <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/13015/prepis-brifingu-predsedu-vlady-sr-rfica-po-stretnuti-premierov-v4-pobaltia-bulharska-a-rumunska-s-francuzskym-prezidentom-n-sarkozym-v-gdanku.php>.
- "Press Release: Official Summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries" (June 15-16, 2008); <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=16600&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.
- "Program českého předsednictví Visegrádské skupiny (červen 2007 – červen 2008)"; <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=9497&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>.
- "Program Przewodnictwa RP w Grupie Wyszehradzkiej, lipiec 2008 – czerwiec 2009" (June 2008). <http://www.msz.gov.pl/Polska,na,czele,Grupy,Wyszehradzkiej,19033.html>.
- "TÉMA: Summit predsedu vlád zemí Visegrádské skupiny v Praze 16. června 2008"; <http://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/tema/tema:summit-predsedu-vlad-zemi-visegradske-skupiny-v-praze-16--cervna-2008-36394/>.
- "The Presidents of the V4 countries discussed in Piešťany" (September 13, 2008); http://www.prezident.sk/?year=2008&news_id=7193.

SLOVAKIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS EASTERN NEIGHBORS IN 2008

ALEXANDER DULEBA

In 2008, Russia dominated Slovakia's eastern policy. In comparison with the previous period, relations with Ukraine were not as intense as they had been and there is a glimpse of hope that relations with Belarus will develop more dynamically in the context of the shifting EU approach to this country.

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Prime Minister of the Slovak Government, Robert Fico, used the first available official opportunity in 2008, in terms of bilateral relations – the visit of the Russian Prime Minister, Viktor Zubkov, in April – to re-emphasize the main thrust of his government's policy towards Russia: "...There are no pending political issues between the Slovak Republic and the Russian Federation, therefore, we can direct all our energy to mutually beneficial economic cooperation and good relations..."¹ The official visit of the Russian Prime Minister in April and the visit of the Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Sechin, in September were the two main diplomatic events in Slovak-Russian relations in 2008.

¹ "Prepis videozáznamu vyhlásenia predsedu vlády SR R. Fica a predsedu vlády Ruskej federácie Viktora Alexejeviča Zubkova počas jeho oficiálnej návštevy SR" (Bratislava: Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 2008); <http://www.government.gov.sk/8720/prepis-videozaznamu-vyhlasenia-predsedu-vlady-sr-rfica-a-predsedu-vlady-ruskej-federacie-viktora-alexejevica-zubkova-pocas-jeho-oficialnej-navstevy-sr.php>.

OFFICIAL CONTACTS AND POLITICAL AGENDA

In assessing the key events in international affairs directly or indirectly concerning Russia, the Slovak Prime Minister always adopted a position which was practically identical to that of the Russian leadership. This included negative standpoints on the recognition of Kosovo's independence, on the deployment of components constituting the USA national missile defense system (NMD) in the Czech Republic and Poland, on the assessment of the causes of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, and the Russian-Ukrainian natural gas conflict at the beginning of 2009. For the sake of completeness it is necessary to add that in the case of Kosovo and the NMD, the Slovak Prime Minister was not the only leader of an EU and NATO member country to adopt a position identical to Russia's. Only on one fundamental issue in international relations did Robert Fico and the Government of the Slovak Republic not align themselves with the position of the Russian leadership – the Slovak Republic did not recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Slovak-Russian relations

were therefore dominated by issues of economic cooperation: the fate of the 49% share in Transpetrol, Inc.; the construction of a wide-gauge railway track across Slovakia to Vienna; cooperation on nuclear energy (the participation of Russian companies in the completion of Mochovce nuclear power plant and in supplying nuclear fuel); and, finally, the renewal of the natural gas supply from Russia through Ukraine.

Viktor Zubkov's visit, at the beginning of April 2008, was the first official visit, since that of Viktor Chernomyrdin in 1997, by a Russian Prime Minister

The Prime Minister of the Russian Government Zubkov emphasised that Russia is prepared to cooperate with the Slovak Republic in the energy sector concerning natural gas, crude oil, and nuclear fuel supplies, and commended Slovakia on its role as a transit country for Russian energy carriers.

to Slovakia for more than 10 years. The trip to Bratislava was the last foreign visit taken by Prime Minister Zubkov, who was replaced by ex-president Vladimir Putin following the Russian presidential elections. The Prime Ministers of both countries expressed political support for the negotiations on a new agreement between SPP, Inc. (Slovak Gas Industry) and Gazprom on long-term natural gas supplies; the previous agreement expired in 2008. The Slovak party confirmed its interest in cooperating with Russian companies in completing the third and fourth blocks of Mochovce nuclear power plant and in exporting depleted nuclear fuel to Russia. Cooperation over the implementation of the wide-gauge railway track project across Slovakia was also the subject of negotiations. The Slovak Prime Minister, Robert Fico, expressed hope that the project – valued at more than 4.3 billion euros – would commence in 2010. He informed his Russian partner of the continuing effort of the Slovak Government to regain control over the 49% share in Slovak Transpetrol held by the bankrupt Russian company Yukos. The Prime Minister of the Russian Government, Viktor Zubkov, declared his satisfaction at the way in which bilateral relations were developing and welcomed the fact that growth in mutual trade reached the record level of 6.5 billion US dollars in 2007. He emphasized that Russia is prepared to cooperate with the Slovak Republic in the energy

sector concerning natural gas, crude oil, and nuclear fuel supplies, and commended Slovakia on its role as a transit country for Russian energy carriers. According to Viktor Zubkov, the cyclotron destined for a new centre in Bratislava had already been built and was to be delivered by the end of 2008. He mentioned that prospects were good for military technology cooperation between Slovakia and Russia. The participation of Slovak companies in constructing the infrastructure required for the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, in 2014 was also the subject of the negotiations.²

Both Prime Ministers commemorated the 63rd anniversary of the liberation of Bratislava during the Second World War by laying wreaths at the Slavín monument to honor fallen Soviet soldiers. In his speech, the Slovak Prime Minister declared that "over the past two decades, we have seen attempts to consciously ignore Slavic reciprocity in Slovakia". He referred to the 19th century proponent of Slavic unity, Ján Kollár, and stressed that Slavic reciprocity is an integral part of the Slovak national tradition. During the negotiations with the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Pavol Paška, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov expressed his support for the initiative of the National Council Deputy Speaker, Anna Belousovová, which aims to coordinate cooperation between Russian and Slovak youth in protecting the memorials dedicated to fallen soldiers.³ A year later the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, awarded Anna Belousovová the state Friendship Award for her contribution in fostering Russian-Slovak relations.⁴

The second highpoint in Slovak-Russian relations was the working visit of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Sechin, to Bratislava on September 10, 2008, during which he held negotiations with the Prime Minister of the Slovak Government. The Russian delegation, consisting of representatives of the Russian Government, energy companies, and banks, visited Slovakia after the OPEC meeting in Vienna. According to a statement issued by the Slovak Prime Minister, the negotiations focused on an inventory check of joint projects, especially those in the nuclear energy sector and the construction of the wide-gauge railway track across Slovakia. Robert Fico deemed the outcome of the negotiations to be the conclusion of an agreement on increasing the work of the bilateral Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Scientific and Technical Cooperation. Given his position within the Russian Government, Igor Sechin became co-chairman of the Intergovernmental Commission for the Russian side. According to the agreement adopted, the commission will meet once every three months, rather than once every six months. In the final remarks of his statement delivered at the joint briefing, the Slovak Prime Minister emphasized that "this meet-

² Ibidem; "Návšteva predsedu vlády Ruska na Slovensku", *Hlas Ruska* (April 3, 2008). <http://www.ruvr.ru/main.php?lng=slo&q=604&cid=57&p=03.04.2008>; "Širšiu trať chcú stavať od roku 2010", ČTK (April 3, 2008); "Fico informoval Zubkova o záujme získať 49 % akcií Transpetrolu", TASR (April 3, 2008).

³ "Fico: Slavín by nemali devastovať skejtbordisti", ČTK (April 4, 2008); "Ob oficiálnom vizite Predsedateľa Pravitelstva Rossijskoj Federaciji V.A. Zubkova v Slovacckuju Respubliku" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008).

⁴ "Medvedev udelil Anne Belousovej Rad priateľstva", TASR (April 19, 2009).

ing did not touch on any political issues, nor did it concern itself with the international political situation".⁵

International political issues were discussed by the representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs of both countries. Talks between the Foreign Minister of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, and the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, took place at the NATO Bucharest Summit at the beginning of April 2008. The main items on the agenda were the reciprocal measures which the Russian Federation would adopt should the components of the American NMD be deployed in the Czech Republic (the radar) and Poland (the missile defense base). After the talks with Sergey Lavrov, Ján Kubiš stated that the Russian threat to target the Czech Republic and Poland with its missiles is real; therefore, Slovak diplomacy is striving to make the deployment of American NMD components in Europe the subject of negotiations between NATO and the USA, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other. Prime Minister Fico was far less diplomatic when he adopted a clearly negative position on the deployment of the American radar in the Czech Republic and the missile defense base in Poland.⁶

Russia's military operation was unequivocally rejected by the EU and NATO. Slovak Prime Minister Fico was the only official leader of a Member State to express understanding for the Russian side, accusing Georgia of provoking the war with Russia.

The use of Russian military force against Georgia in August 2008, the occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the recognition of their independence by Russia were some of the dominant issues in international relations in 2008. Russia's military operation was unequivocally rejected by the EU and NATO. Slovak Prime Minister Fico was the only official leader of a Member State to express understanding for the Russian side, accus-

ing Georgia of provoking the war with Russia: "I do not see the situation in black and white terms as some do, because one side provoked the situation and we know who that was." According to Fico, the deterioration in relations between NATO and Russia was caused not by Moscow, but primarily by NATO. The Slovak Foreign Ministry was much more diplomatic in its position: it did not cast blame on anyone, but it condemned the use of force in solving regional conflicts in general and emphasized the unacceptability of violating the principle of the territorial integrity of states. After the war in Georgia, the Foreign Minister, Ján Kubiš, referred to Russia as a "reliable, but complicated partner". There were clear differences in the positions of Prime Minister Fico, on the one hand, and both Minister Ján Kubiš and President Ivan Gašparovič, on the other, over the two crucial international issues of 2008 – the deployment of American NMD components in the Czech Republic and Poland; and the assessment

⁵ "Prepis spoločného brífingu predsedu vlády SR a vicepremiéra RF v Žltom salóniku Úradu vlády SR" (Bratislava: Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 2008); <http://www.government.gov.sk/12158/prepis-spolocneho-brifingu-predsedu-vlady-sr-a-vicepremierera-rf-v-zltom-saloniku-uradu-vlady-sr.php>.

⁶ "Kubiš: Rusko stále hrozí namierením rakiet", SITA (April 4, 2008).

of the Russian military intervention against Georgia.⁷ These issues were the subject of official consultations between the Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Titov, and both the Slovak Foreign Minister, Ján Kubiš, and State Secretary Diana Štrofová, which took place in Bratislava on September 16, 2008. The representatives of the foreign departments discussed relations between Russia, the EU and NATO, following Russia's military operation in Georgia.⁸

The Foreign Minister, Ján Kubiš, met with his counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, at the OSCE at the beginning of December 2008. The talks concerned the initiative of the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, on the formulation of a new European Security Treaty. Minister Ján Kubiš reported that Slovakia was evaluating the proposal. The two Ministers stated that the positions of both sides on most of the current international issues were very close, if not identical.⁹ This led Viktor Kolesnikov, the main specialist at the European Department of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs to make the following evaluation on relations between the two countries in 2008: "Slovakia is convincingly gaining the position of being one of Russia's most reliable partners in the Central and East European region. Even after its accession to the EU and NATO, this country did not allow itself to be dragged into a negative campaign against Russia, unlike, unfortunately, some other states of the former Eastern bloc. It is well known that Bratislava does not support the idea of the construction of a third USA NMD site and calls for consideration of Russia's interests in solving all major problems in European and world security."¹⁰

FOREIGN TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The trade turnover between Slovakia and Russia confirmed a growing trend in 2008. Its volume reached 5.6 billion euros in the first nine months of 2008. Slovak imports from Russia accounted for 4.2 billion euros and exports to Russia amounted to 1.4 billion euros. As a result of the increased share of automobiles as a percentage of Slovak exports in comparison with previous years, the Slovak Republic was able to significantly decrease its passive trade balance with Russia. Compared with the same period in 2007, Slovak exports increased by 84.2% and imports from Russia by 33.4%.¹¹ The

⁷ "Fico: Vojnu vyprovokovalo Gruzínsko", *Sme* (August 13, 2008); "Za zhoršenie vzťahov môže NATO, nie Rusko, povedal Fico", SITA (August 22, 2008); "Kubiš: Rusko je spoľahlivý, aj keď zložitý partner", SITA (September 4, 2008); "Kubiš: Nik nechce Rusko zahnané do kúta", SITA (October 9, 2008); R. Kotian, "Slovensko a rusko-gruzínsky konflikt", *Český rozhlas 6* (September 5, 2008); http://www.rozhlas.cz/cro6/komentare/_zprava/491716.

⁸ "O konzultáciach zamestiteľa Ministra inostranných del Rossiji V.G. Titova v MID Slovákij" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008).

⁹ "O vstreče Ministra inostranných del Rossiji S.V. Lavrova s Ministrom inostranných del Slovákij Ja. Kubišem" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008).

¹⁰ "Rusko – Slovensko: niektoré výsledky roka 2008", *Hlas Ruska* (December 23, 2008).

¹¹ "Zahraničný obchod SR – január až september 2008 (a rovnaké obdobie roku 2007)" (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008); www.economy.gov.sk/ext_dok-terit_september_dual-1524/112947c.

Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Scientific and Technical Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Russian Federation, whose activities were renewed at the initiative of the Slovak side in 2006, represents the main instrument of bilateral economic cooperation. The 13th meeting of the commission took place in Bratislava and Banská Bystrica on February 18-20, 2008. Throughout 2008, the commission worked on 20 cooperation projects between Slovak and Russian commercial entities in the industrial production sector. In 2008, there were 60 joint businesses with Slovak capital operating in Russia. Amongst the largest joint ventures in Russia are Matador-Omsk (tire production) and Grafobal-Don (packaging materials production). Slovak investments in Russia amounted to 150 million US dollars and Russian investments in Slovakia totaled 80 million dollars. So far the main result of the cooperation mediated by the Intergovernmental Commission has been the completion of the International Laser Center in Bratislava. The Cyclotron Center in Bratislava is also close to completion and construction work has started on the Center for Proton Therapy in Ružomberok.

In 2008, four issues of political significance came out of the economic agenda of Slovak-Russian relations: the interest of the Russian side in acquiring the 49% share in Transpetrol Inc., the construction of a wide-gauge railway track across Slovakia, cooperation over nuclear power generation and natural gas supplies.

Based on the agreement between Prime Minister Robert Fico and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin in September 2008, as of 2009 the commission is to meet in three monthly intervals instead of the previous six monthly meetings.¹²

In 2008, four issues of political significance came out of the economic agenda of Slovak-Russian relations: the interest of the Russian side in acquiring the 49% share in Transpetrol, the construction of a wide-gauge railway track across Slovakia, cooperation over nuclear power generation and natural gas supplies. After the Russian Prime Minister's official visit to Slovakia in April 2008, the Russian media

(the newspapers *Izvestia*, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* and the internet portal *Vremya novosti*) published the information that the Slovak Prime Minister had allegedly promised the Russian side that as soon as Slovakia gained the 49% stake in Transpetrol back from the Yukos subsidiary – Yukos Finance, it would immediately sell those shares back to another Russian company. The Slovak Government attempted to deny this information.¹³ Throughout 2008, there was no information available on developments between the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic and the representatives of Yukos Finance or the results of any negotiations which might have answered the question of when and whether the Government of the Slovak Republic would regain control over the 49% stake in Transpetrol. Slovakia regained control in 2009.

The issue of the construction of a wide-gauge railway track from Russia through Ukraine and Slovakia to Vienna was the subject of the April negotiations of Russian

¹² "Rossijsko-slovackije otnošenija. Spravočnaja informacija" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008).

¹³ D. Krajanová, "Fico dementuje ruské médiá.. No len u nás" *Sme* (April 11, 2008).

Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov in Bratislava. Slovak Prime Minister Fico expressed the hope that the construction could begin on Slovak territory in 2010.¹⁴ Negotiations on the implementation of the project were stepped up after the visit of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Sechin, to Slovakia in September. On September 25, 2008, the President of the Russian Railways, Vladimir Yakunin, visited Slovakia. He was received by both Prime Minister Robert Fico and the Minister of Transport, Post and Telecommunications, Ľubomír Vážny. The railway track is to begin in Čierna nad Tisou and continue to Bratislava and onward to Vienna. Construction costs are estimated to be around 4.3 billion euros. Besides Russia and Slovakia, the project is to be financed by Austria and Ukraine as well. On November 25, 2008, Ukraine added its signature to the memorandum of understanding on the realization of this project; Austria should follow later on. The aim of the project is to connect the Pacific coastline of Russia with Europe by a major wide-gauge railway. The construction of the railway in Slovakia should simultaneously be coupled with the modernization of the Trans Siberian mainline railway in Russia to be realized by Russian Railways in cooperation with Japanese investors.¹⁵

Cooperating with Russian partners in electricity generation and nuclear energy is one of the priorities of the government of Prime Minister Robert Fico. Specific cooperation projects were discussed at the Intergovernmental Commission in 2008. A Russian company, Silovye mashiny, is interested in cooperating on the modernization of the third and fourth blocks of Vojany power plant. FGUP VO Technopromexport expressed an interest in modernizing the existing structures and in

constructing new power plants in Slovakia. Rosatom formulated a cooperation program in the nuclear energy field and is currently a serious candidate to be involved in participating in the consortiums which will complete Mochovce nuclear power plant and build new nuclear reactors in Slovakia. On the basis of the decision taken by the Slovak Government on November 3, 2008, construction work on completing Mochovce nuclear power plant has already begun. A contract was consequently signed on November 17 between the Russian company, TVEL, and Slovenské elektrárne, a.s., on

The MF and the ME SR estimated the total losses incurred by the Slovak economy, as a result of production stoppages for the almost two week period when natural gas supplies ceased, to be more than 1 billion euros. Furthermore, as Bohunice nuclear power plant was shut down at the end of 2008, the gas crisis could also have threatened the stability of the production, supply and distribution of electricity throughout the SR.

¹⁴ "Fico: Širokorozchodná by sa mohla začať stavať v 2010", ČTK (April 3, 2008).

¹⁵ Ľ. Jančík "Odborový boss spochybňuje Fica", *Sme* (September 26, 2008); "Prokladka širokoj koleji v Jevropu budet stojit' \$4,3 mlrd", *Korrespondent.net* (November 25, 2008); "Prezident spoločnosti Ruské železnice Vladimír Ivanovič Jakunin o rozvoji nákladnej dopravy pre HN", *Hospodárske noviny* (interview) (October 1, 2008); "Vážny: Zohnať desiatky miliárd na širokorozchodnú nebude problém", SITA (September, 25 2008).

the supply of nuclear fuel for the nuclear power plants in Mochovce and Bohunice up until 2015.¹⁶

When the Slovak Foreign Minister, Ján Kubiš, characterized Russia as a “complicated, but reliable partner” following the Russian-Georgian conflict in August 2008, he based his statement on the reliability of Russia in supplying natural gas and oil to the EU.¹⁷ In September 2008 he could not have anticipated the fact that a few months later the natural gas supplies from Russia would stop for almost two weeks and that Slovakia would face a grave energy and economic crisis. In the more than 40 year history of the transit gas pipeline which transports natural gas from Russia through Ukraine to Europe, on January 7, 2009, for the first time, the pressure gauge at the compressor station in Veľké Kapušany on the border with Ukraine indicated zero. At the same time, on January 18, 2009 another historical event occurred. For the first time in history, natural gas started to flow to Slovakia, not from the East, but from the West – from Germany – thanks to an agreement between SPP, a.s., and the German companies, EON Ruhrgas and RWE Transgas, and the French company Gaz de France/Suez. As a result of the Russian-Ukrainian gas war, natural gas supplies to the Slovak Republic came to a complete halt and the Government of the Slovak Republic was forced to declare a state of emergency and announce a gas regulatory level of 8, which meant that gas supplies to large consumers were substantially reduced. Approximately a thousand Slovak companies were forced to completely halt or drastically reduce production. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic estimated the total losses incurred by the Slovak economy, as a result of production stoppages for the almost two week period when natural gas supplies ceased, to be more than 1 billion euros. Furthermore, as Bohunice nuclear power plant was shut down at the end of 2008, the gas crisis could also have threatened the stability of the production, supply, and distribution of electricity throughout the Slovak Republic, since natural gas was needed to start some of the backup sources of electricity production. European consumers of natural gas supplied by Russia were hostage to the Russian-Ukrainian gas war. The paradox is that the countries most affected were those who consider themselves to be Russia's greatest friends – Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Serbia.¹⁸ For the first time in Slovak history, the gas war from

¹⁶ “TVEL Corporation concluded a contract with Slovenske Elektrarne a.s. Slovakia”, TVEL (November 17, 2008); <http://www.tvel.ru/en/press/news/index.php?id4=528>; “Protokol z 13. zasadnutia MVK medzi SR a RF” (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008).

¹⁷ “Kubiš: Rusko je spoľahlivý, aj keď zložitý partner” SITA (September 4, 2008).

¹⁸ On the causes of the crisis and subsequent lessons for Slovakia see: K. Hirman “Rusi škrtia Európu”, *eTrend* (January 7, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>; K. Hirman, “Rusom nejde len o Ukrajinu. Diverzifikácia a zníženie podielu plynu je nevyhnutnosť”, *eTrend* (January 7, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>; K. Hirman, “Kto Slovensku pomohol s plynom?”, *eTrend* (January 18, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>; K. Hirman, “Prečo sa Rusi a Ukrajinci (možno) dohodli”, *eTrend* (January 18, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>; K. Hirman, “Ak sa dohoda Putina a Tymošenkovej naozaj zrealizuje, najhorší scenár nás nepostihne. Zatiaľ”, *eTrend* (January 18, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>; “O bezpečnosť dodávok plynu sa nemôžu starať zahraniční akcionári, ale vláda. Bývalý šéf SPP Demko: Toto je zlyhanie štátu”, *Sme* (interview – Ivan Štulajter, Ľuboš Jančík) (January 14, 2009).

the beginning of 2009 seriously discredited the steadfast perception among the Slovak political elite that Russia is a reliable partner in the supply of oil and natural gas.

UKRAINE

In 2008, Slovak-Ukrainian relations were dominated by three issues: the consequences of Slovakia's accession to the Schengen area on the travel arrangements of Ukrainian citizens, electricity imports from Ukraine, and the natural gas crisis at the beginning of 2009.

OFFICIAL CONTACTS AND THE POLITICAL AGENDA

The official meeting of the President of Slovakia, Ivan Gašparovič, and the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, in the border town of Uzhgorod on January 14 represented the most significant diplomatic event in Slovak-Ukrainian relations in 2008. Slovakia's accession to the Schengen area and its consequences for Slovak-Ukrainian relations, especially regarding citizen travel and the development of cross-border cooperation constituted the main subject of the talks between the Heads of State. Ivan Gašparovič confirmed Slovakia's support for Ukraine's integration efforts into the Euro-Atlantic structures, which Slovakia, as a member state of both the EU and NATO, backs. With respect to this fact, he commended the work of the Slovak Embassy in Kiev which served as the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Ukraine. Both Presidents supported the signing of the Agreement on Local Border Traffic, which complies with Schengen legislation and facilitates passage across the external EU border for citizens of non-member countries, with permanent residency up to 50km within the border region zone.¹⁹ Negotiations on the Agreement on Local Border Traffic were concluded in the first quarter of 2008. The Agreement was signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia and Ukraine, Ján Kubiš and Volodymyr Ohryzko respectively, on May 30, 2008. After ratification in both countries, the Agreement entered into force on September 27, 2008. According

The official meeting of the President of Slovakia, Ivan Gašparovič, and the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, represented the most significant diplomatic event in Slovak-Ukrainian relations in 2008. Slovakia's accession to the Schengen area and its consequences for Slovak-Ukrainian relations constituted the main subject of the talks between the Heads of State.

¹⁹ "Polityčni vidnosyny miž Ukrajinuju ta Slovackuju Respublikuju" (Bratislava: Embassy of Ukraine to Slovakia, 2008); V. Martyňuk, "Čy sviťat ukrajinciam Šenhenski vizey?", *Ukrajinska Pravda* (January 25, 2008).

to this Agreement, the citizens of Ukraine's border regions have the right to obtain a multiple entry Schengen visa for Slovakia for the period of one year up to a maximum of five years.²⁰

The Slovak-Ukrainian Intergovernmental Commission on cross-border cooperation discussed the implementation of the Agreement at its 7th meeting in June 2008 in Prešov. The Ukrainian side of the commission is headed by the President of the Transcarpathia state administration of Ukraine, Oleg Havashi, and the Slovak side by the State Secretary for public administration of the Ministry of Interior of Slovakia, Vladimír Čečot. During the negotiations, the commission primarily focused on the issue of further developing cross-border tourism; on joint projects on protecting the environment in the shared border regions; on strengthening the administrative capacities of the Consulate General of the Slovak Republic in Uzhgorod, due to the increasing number of applications for Schengen visas submitted by Ukrainian citizens; on cooperation between the regional chambers

After more than 14 years, Ukraine successfully finalized negotiations on its accession to the WTO. These were a necessary condition for negotiations on trade liberalization between the EU and Ukraine to commence and this is to become part of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

of commerce in improving the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises in the Slovak-Ukrainian border regions; and on the cooperation of both sides in opening the new border crossing Ulič-Zabrod'. Special attention was devoted to the employment of Ukrainian citizens in the tourist industry in Slovakia and to possible joint measures which would reverse the negative trend in the number of Ukrainian tourists to the Slovak Republic.²¹

The 8th meeting of the Slovak-Ukrainian Commission on National Minorities, Education, Cultural, and Scientific Relations chaired by the Director General of the MFA DG for Public Diplomacy, Vasil Grivna, and the Chairman of the Ukrainian State Committee of Nationalities and Religious Affairs, Olexander Sagan, was held in the village of Roztoky (Svidník County) on June 19-22, 2008. The commission discussed issues relating to the protection of the minority rights of the Slovak minority living in Ukraine and the Ukrainian minority living in Slovakia. Both sides agreed to continue their efforts to create adequate conditions for the preservation of the linguistic, cultural, and religious identities of persons belonging to both minorities, in compliance with the legislation of Slovakia and Ukraine. The protocol from the commission meeting contains a recommendation to the Slovak Government to support the establishment of a Ukrainian cultural center in Prešov and to the Government of Ukraine to support the establishment of a Slovak cultural center in Uzhgorod.²²

²⁰ "Ukrajincy uže mogut polučit' bezvizovoyj vjezd v Slovakiyu", UNIAN (September 29, 2008).

²¹ "Slovensko-ukrajinská medzivládna komisia rokovala o vydávaní víz", TASR (June 6, 2008); "S Ukrajinou o cezhraničnej spolupráci v turizme" (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008).

²² "Slovensko-ukrajinská medzivládna komisia vo hvezdárni v Roztokoch", *Podduklianske noviny* (June 23, 2008).

FOREIGN TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The foreign trade turnover between Slovakia and Ukraine amounted to 984 million euros in the period January-September 2008. Exports from Slovakia to Ukraine totaled 574 million euros and imports from Ukraine to Slovakia 410 million euros. In comparison with the same period of the previous year, Slovak exports increased by 32.3% and imports from Ukraine increased by 9.3%. Slovakia has maintained an active trade balance in mutual trade with Ukraine since 2006, when automobile production commenced at KIA in Žilina and PSA in Trnava.²³ The fact that after more than 14 years Ukraine successfully finalized negotiations on its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) is very positive news for the future of trade relations between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. On February 5, 2008 the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, signed a protocol on Ukraine's accession in Geneva, and on April 10, 2008, the Ukrainian Parliament ratified the accession protocol, and 30 days after the ratification, in May 2008, Ukraine became a member of the WTO.²⁴ WTO membership was a necessary condition for negotiations on trade liberalization between the EU and Ukraine to commence and this is to become part of their Association Agreement. Negotiations on a new enhanced agreement between the EU and Ukraine began in March 2007. Trade liberalization between both sides will bring qualitatively new opportunities for the further development of bilateral trade between Slovakia and Ukraine.

In relation to the decommissioning of the second block of Jaslovské Bohunice nuclear power plant at the end of 2008, Slovakia continued its efforts to secure an increase in the import of electricity from Ukraine, based on intergovernmental negotiations and preliminary agreements concluded in 2007.²⁵ From 2009 onward, Slovakia planned to import approximately 4 terawatt hours of electricity from Ukraine. However, the construction of a one-way connector required the investment of 7 billion Slovak crowns, which the Slovak side was unable to provide. In February 2008, the Executive Director of the Legal Support and Communication Department at SEPS, a.s., Igor Gallo, announced that the one-way connector project would not be realized and that new ways of importing electricity from Ukraine were being sought.²⁶

In a televised debate on STV 1 Prime Minister Fico stated that Ukraine's rejection of the swap operation may have political consequences in mutual relations..

²³ "Zahraničný obchod SR – január až september 2008 (a rovnaké obdobie roku 2007)" (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008); www.economy.gov.sk/ext_dok-terit_september_dual-1524/112947c.

²⁴ "Rada odobrila vstupenije v VTO", *Korrespondent.net* (April 10, 2008).

²⁵ A. Duleba, "Relations with the Eastern Neighbors in 2007", P. Brezáni (ed) *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2007*. (Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2008), pp. 62-78.

²⁶ "Slovensko chce viac elektriny z Ukrajiny", SITA (February 27, 2008).

The fact that on November 25, 2008 Ukraine added its signature to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Construction of a Wide Gauge Railway through the Territory of Slovakia to Bratislava and Vienna, which had previously been signed by Slovakia and Russia, represented more positive news for the Government of the Slovak Republic. Ukraine is interested in participating in the project, including the co-financing of the costs.²⁷

The complete shutdown of the natural gas supply from Russia to the Slovak Republic through Ukraine on January 7, 2009 was the reason for the special working visit of Prime Minister Fico to Kiev and Moscow on January 14, 2009. The Slovak side asked Ukraine to approve a swap operation between Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine to supply 20 million cubic meters of natural gas, which would help solve the acute problem of the natural gas deficit in Slovakia. This swap operation was to consist of Russia supplying natural gas to East Ukraine and for Ukraine to supply the same volume of natural gas to Slovakia. The Russian side agreed to this swap operation; the Ukrainian side did not. The Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko, stated that Ukraine was not capable of transferring natural gas from its own production, nor from the storage facilities in West Ukraine to Slovakia, because the natural gas transit network in Ukraine had been redirected to transport gas from West to East, following the cessation in supplies from Russia, and because Ukraine itself was suffering from a natural gas shortage. Directly after the negotiations with the Ukrainian Prime Minister, the Slovak Prime Minister accused Ukraine of being responsible for the cessation in the natural gas supply from Russia to Europe. In the television debate *O päť minút dvanásť* aired on STV 1 on January 18, 2009, he stated that Ukraine's rejection of the swap operation may have political consequences in mutual relations and he did not exclude the possibility that this might be reflected in a re-evaluation of Slovakia's ongoing support for Ukrainian integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures.²⁸

The Slovak Prime Minister adopted a unilateral position on the assessment of the causes of the gas conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which differed significantly from the position of the EU. While the EU, through the Czech Presidency and the members of the European Commission, called on both sides to come to an agreement, end the dispute, and renew the natural gas supply to the EU, and refrained from accusing one side or the other, the Slovak Prime Minister adopted the Russian interpretation of the causes of the gas conflict at the beginning of 2009.

²⁷ "Prokladka širokej koleji v Jevropu budet stožiť \$4,3 mlrd", *Korrespondent.net* (November 25, 2008).

²⁸ "Tymošenko: Ukrajina ne moźet pomoť Slovakiji sobstvennym gazom", *Korespondent.net* (January 14, 2009); M. Tóda, P. Procházková, "Slovenský premiér navrhol improvizované riešenie: výmenu ruského plynu s Ukrajinou", *Sme* (January 14, 2009); STV1 interview with the Prime Minister Robert Fico "O päť minút dvanásť" (January 18, 2009).

BELARUS

POLITICAL AGENDA

The main political agenda of Slovak-Belarusian relations in 2008 was predetermined by the agenda of Slovakia's chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE) (November 2007-May 2008). The most ambitious priority of Slovakia's chairmanship was to bring Belarus closer to membership in the CoE: "The Slovak chairmanship is interested in carrying out activities that would change Belarus' attitude with respect to meeting the criteria for membership of the Council of Europe".²⁹ While holding the chair of the CoE, the Slovak Republic organized 10 international events including an international expert seminar on the Use of International Instruments for Protecting Individual Rights, Freedoms and Legitimate Interest through National Legislation and the Right to Legal Defense in Belarus – Challenges and Outlook, which took place in Minsk on April 24-25, 2008. The seminar was organized by the MFA in cooperation with the Venice Commission and the Constitutional Court of Belarus.³⁰ The exhibition *The Magic Number '8' in the History of Slovakia* organized by the SNM Historical Museum in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was held on May 26, 2008 in Minsk. In his introductory remarks, the Chargé d' Affairs of Slovakia in Minsk, Ľubomír Rehák, emphasized the aspects of Slovakia's history which became the cornerstones of modern statehood and democratic development in Slovakia, with a clear message for Belarus today. More than 200 representatives of political and cultural life in Belarus, including the opposition, attended the exhibition.

Nonetheless, the domestic political situation in Belarus in the first half of 2008 did not favor a change in the position of European institutions, including the EU and the CoE, towards Belarus. Belarus state bodies suppressed a protest demonstration on March, 25 with the use of violence and imprisoned political representatives of the opposition and journalists alike. In his capacity as Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ján Kubiš, called on the Belarusian authorities to "respect international obligations regarding freedom of expression and to stop the unjustified violation of human rights and civic freedoms of the Belarusian citizens".³¹ A shift only occurred in the policies of the EU and the Council of Europe towards Belarus in the second half of 2008, after the release of Alexander Kozulin,

²⁹ "Priority predsedníctva SR vo Výbore ministrov Rady Európy", *Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 256*, (March 14, 2007); <http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/B19B674BF4-FA38C2C125729100314B16?OpenDocument>. See also A. Duleba, "Relations with the Eastern Neighbors in 2007", P. Brezáni (ed) *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2007*. (Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2008), p. 75.

³⁰ *Annual Report. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. Foreign Policy in 2008*. (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2009), p. 16.

³¹ "Vyhlásenie MZV SR k situácii v Bielorusku" (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2008).

Andrei Kim, Sergey Parsukievic, and a leader of the Belarusian opposition, and after the September parliamentary elections, which according to international observers "approached OSCE and Council of Europe standards".³² The EU response came in the form of a consensus among the member states on the inclusion of Belarus into the new strategic framework towards Eastern neighbors – the Eastern Partnership, which builds on the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Belarus was not part of the European Neighborhood Policy, as relations with the EU had been frozen since 1997. The Eastern Partnership will initially be implemented during the Czech Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2009.³³ The inclusion of Belarus in the Eastern Partnership represents a breakthrough in relations with the EU and, at the same time, also opens up new opportunities in developing relations with the Slovak Republic.

The main bilateral diplomatic event in Slovak-Belarusian relations was the visit of the Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, Ján Chrbet, to Belarus on December 14-17, 2008. During his visit, the Minister negotiated with his counterpart, Leontij Choruzhik, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Valery Voronetsky, and the Commander of the Ukraine Border Guard, Igor Rachkovsky.³⁴ It was the first visit of a member of the Government of Slovakia to Belarus in over ten years.

FOREIGN TRADE

In the past three years (2006-2008), the volume of foreign trade between Slovakia and Belarus has been growing strongly. In 2006, for the first time, mutual trade surpassed more than 100 million US dollars, eventually reaching 140 million dollars; in 2007 it totaled 182.2 million dollars; and in the first 9 months of 2008, the total was 223.2 million US dollars. This growth is mostly based on the increase of Slovakia's exports, which grew by 62.4% in 2006 in comparison with 2005. From Slovakia's negative trade balance of 8 million US dollars with Belarus in 2005, the Slovak Republic achieved a positive trade balance of 25 million US dollars in 2008. The dynamic growth in bilateral trade and the positive trade balance were primarily the result of the export of automobiles from Slovakia (especially models such as the Tuareg, Peugeot 207, and those manufactured by KIA). There are currently 21 joint enterprises based on Slovak capital operating in Belarus.³⁵ The fact that Belarus is not a member of the WTO is an obstacle to the further development of trade

³² "MZV víta prepustenie posledných politických väzňov v Bielorusku" (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2008); "MZV SR k bieloruským voľbám" (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2008).

³³ "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership, 3. 12. 2008, COM(2008) 823 final"; http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf.

³⁴ "Návšteva ministra životného prostredia SR Jána Chrbeta v Bieloruskej republike" (Minsk: Embassy of Slovakia to Belarus, 2008); <http://www.mzv.sk>.

³⁵ J. Mravík, "Exportný plán teritória" (Minsk: Embassy of Slovakia to Belarus, 2008).

relations. The financial and economic crisis, which hit the Slovak automobile industry in full force during 2008, presents another, much more serious obstacle.

CONCLUSION

In 2008, the Government of the Slovak Republic, headed by Prime Minister Robert Fico, strived to fulfill one of the priorities of its manifesto i.e. to increase economic cooperation with Russia. Success in this respect is indicated by the agreement on changing the interval between the meetings of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Scientific and Technical Cooperation to a three-monthly interval, i.e. convening four meetings annually instead of the previous two. The completion of the International Laser Center in Bratislava and the contract negotiated between the Russian company, TVEL, and Slovenské elektrárne, a.s., on the supply of nuclear fuel until 2015 must both be mentioned as tangible results of economic cooperation. In his public addresses, Prime Minister Robert Fico tried to distance himself as much as possible from the political issues which were the subject of the dispute between Russia, NATO, and the EU. Slovak positions on the crucial issues of international affairs were almost identical to the positions taken by Russian diplomacy (on Kosovo, NMD in Central Europe, the assessment of the causes of the Russian-Georgian war). In all these cases, the opinions of the Prime Minister were not always consistent with the positions publicly and internationally presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and in the case of the NMD, not even with the President of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič. This resulted in a certain duality and a decrease in the transparency of Slovak foreign policy in the eyes of the allies in NATO and the EU. At the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, Slovakia faced a grave energy crisis related to the almost two week complete shutdown of the natural gas supply from Russia through Ukraine. For the first time, the steadfast perception among the Slovak political elite of Russia's reliability as a strategic energy resource supplier was seriously doubted. The year 2009 will test the ability of Robert Fico's government to learn from the natural gas crisis and adopt specific measures to increase the energy security of the Slovak Republic. Given the situation in Slovakia, this can only mean one thing – decreasing energy dependency upon Russia as the sole supplier of strategic energy resources to Slovakia: crude oil, natural gas, and nuclear fuel.

In comparison with 2007, Slovak-Ukrainian relations in 2008 were more sporadic in terms of the level of contact at the governmental level, despite the meeting between the

The year 2009 will test the ability of Robert Fico's government to learn from the natural gas crisis and adopt specific measures to increase the energy security of the Slovak Republic. Given the situation in Slovakia, this can only mean one thing – decreasing energy dependency upon Russia as the sole supplier of strategic energy resources to Slovakia.

Presidents in Uzhgorod in January and the meetings of two Intergovernmental Commissions in June 2008. The main positive result of the year is represented by the signing of the Agreement on Local Border Traffic, which eases the consequences of introducing the Schengen regime on the Slovak-Ukrainian border for the residents of the border regions of Ukraine and allows for the further development of cross-border cooperation. However, at the beginning of 2009, this positive result was completely overshadowed by the negative tone emanating from relations between the countries as a result of the natural gas crisis and the almost two week shutdown of natural gas supplies from Russia to the Slovakia through Ukraine. The natural gas crisis and the accusations of the Slovak Prime Minister towards Ukraine brought about a state of deep political misunderstanding in bilateral relations, which may have a negative impact on their further development. A similar tone has not been heard from leading political representatives in Slovak-Ukrainian relations since 2001. At that time, both sides were able to overcome the misunderstandings that developed in 1999-2000 (over the contest for non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council; the introduction of a strict visa regime on the part of Slovakia towards Ukraine, despite it being unnecessary from the point of view of Slovakia's accession to the EU; support for the construction of the Jamal II pipeline circumventing Ukraine's territory, etc.). A new phase in bilateral relations began in 2004. The government of Mikuláš Dzurinda declared that after Slovakia's accession to NATO and the EU, relations with Ukraine would become the foreign policy priority of Slovakia and that Slovakia would support the integration of Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic structures. In its manifesto for the parliamentary elections in 2006, the government of Robert Fico aligned itself with the foreign policy priorities of the previous government of Mikuláš Dzurinda. To re-evaluate support for Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO, as the Slovak Prime Minister suggested was a possibility during the natural gas crisis, would be in contradiction to the manifesto of the government he is leading.

The year 2008 brought new prospects for renewing Slovakia's relations with Belarus, in the context of the significant shift in EU policy toward Minsk in the second half of 2008. The change in the EU approach came after the decision of the Belarusian authorities to release political prisoners and after the positive evaluation of the parliamentary elections in September 2008, which according to international observers "came close to OSCE and Council of Europe standards". Belarus was included in the EU Eastern Partnership, whose main objective is to assist the countries of Eastern Europe in implementing reforms in compliance with EU standards. This opens up new opportunities for the development of Slovak-Belarusian relations.

REFERENCES

- "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership COM (2008) 823 final"; http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/com08_823_en.pdf.
- "Fico informoval Zubkova o záujme získať 49 % akcií Transpetrolu", TASR (April 3, 2008).

- "Fico: Slavín by nemali devastovať skejtbordisti", ČTK (April 4, 2008).
- "Fico: Širokorozchodná by sa mohla začať stavať v 2010", ČTK (April 3, 2008).
- "Fico: Vojnu vyprovokovalo Gruzínsko", *Sme* (August 13, 2008).
- "Kubiš: Nik nechce Rusko zahnané do kúta", SITA (October 9, 2008).
- "Kubiš: Rusko je spoľahlivý, aj keď zložitý partner" SITA (September 4, 2008).
- "Kubiš: Rusko je spoľahlivý, aj keď zložitý partner", SITA (September 4, 2008).
- "Kubiš: Rusko stále hrozí namierením rakiet", SITA (April 4, 2008).
- "Medvedev udelil Anne Belousovej Rad priateľstva", TASR (April 19, 2009).
- "MZV víta prepustenie posledných politických väzňov v Bielorusku" (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2008).
- "MZV SR k bieloruským voľbám" (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2008).
- "Návšteva ministra životného prostredia SR Jána Chrbeta v Bieloruskej republike" (Minsk: Embassy of Slovakia to Belarus, 2008).
- "Návšteva predsedu vlády Ruska na Slovensku", *Hlas Ruska* (April 3, 2008). <http://www.ruvr.ru/main.php?lng=slo&q=604&cid=57&p=03.04.2008>.
- "O bezpečnosť dodávok plynu sa nemôžu starať zahraniční akcionári, ale vláda. Bývalý šéf SPP Demko: Toto je zlyhanie štátu", *Sme* (interview – Ivan Štulajter, Ľuboš Jančík) (January 14, 2009).
- "O konzultáciách zamestiteľa Ministra inostranných del Rossiji V.G. Titova v MID Slovákiji" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008).
- "O vstreče Ministra inostranných del Rossiji S.V. Lavrova s Ministrom inostranných del Slovákiji Ja. Kubišem" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, December 4, 2008).
- "Ob oficiálnom vizite Predsedateľa Pravitelstva Rossijskoj Federacii V.A. Zubkova v Slovackuju Respubliku" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008).
- "Polityčni vidnosny miž Ukrajinuju ta Slovackuju Respublikuju" (Bratislava: Embassy of Ukraine to Slovakia, 2008).
- "Prepis spoločného brífingu predsedu vlády SR a vicepremiéra RF v Žltom salóniku Úradu vlády SR" (Bratislava: Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 2008); <http://www.government.gov.sk/12158/prepis-spolocneho-brifingu-predsedu-vlady-sr-a-vicepremierera-rf-v-zltom-saloniku-uradu-vlady-sr.php>.
- "Prepis videozáznamu vyhlásenia predsedu vlády SR R. Fica a predsedu vlády Ruskej federácie Viktora Alexejeviča Zubkova počas jeho oficiálnej návštevy SR" (Bratislava: Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 2008); <http://www.government.gov.sk/8720/prepis-videozaznamu-vyhlasenia-predsedu-vlady-sr-rfica-a-predsedu-vlady-ruskej-federacie-viktora-alexejevica-zubkova-pocas-jeho-oficialnej-navstevy-sr.php>.
- "Prezident spoločnosti Ruské železnice Vladimír Ivanovič Jakunin o rozvoji nákladnej dopravy pre HN", *Hospodárske noviny* (interview) (October 1, 2008).
- "Priority predsedníctva SR vo Výbore ministrov Rady Európy", Resolution of the Slovak Government No. 256, (March 14, 2007); <http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/B19B674BF4FA38C2C125729100314B16?OpenDocument>.
- "Prokladka širokej koleji v Jevropu budet stojit \$4,3 mlrd", *Korrespondent.net* (November 25, 2008).
- "Protokol z 13. zasadnutia MVK medzi SR a RF" (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008).
- "Rada odobrila vstupenje v VTO", *Korrespondent.net* (April 10, 2008).
- "Rossijsko-slovackije otnošeniya. Spravočnaja informacija" (Moscow: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008).
- "Rusko – Slovensko: niektoré výsledky roka 2008", *Hlas Ruska* (December 23, 2008).

- “S Ukrajinou o cezhraničnej spolupráci v turizme” (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008).
- “Slovensko chce viac elektriny z Ukrajiny” SITA (February 27, 2008).
- “Slovensko-ukrajinská medzivládna komisia rokovala o vydávaní víz”, TASR (June 6, 2008).
- “Slovensko-ukrajinská medzivládna komisia vo hvezdárni v Roztokoch”, *Podduklianske noviny* (June 23, 2008).
- “Širšiu trať chcú stavať od roku 2010”, ČTK (April 3, 2008).
- “TVEL Corporation concluded a contract with Slovenske Elektrarne a.s. Slovakia”, TVEL (November 17, 2008); <http://www.tvel.ru/en/press/news/index.php?id4=528>.
- “Tymošenko: Ukrajina ne môžeť pomôcť Slovácku sobstvennym gazom”, *Korespondent.net* (January 14, 2009).
- “Ukrajinci už môžu polučit bezvizovij vjezd v Slovácku”, UNIAN (September 29, 2008).
- “Vážny: Zohnať desiatky miliárd na širokorozchodnú nebude problem”, SITA (September, 25 2008).
- “Vyhlásenie MZV SR k situácii v Bielorusku” (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2008).
- “Za zhoršenie vzťahov môže NATO, nie Rusko, povedal Fico”, SITA (August 22, 2008).
- “Zahraničný obchod SR – január až september 2008 (a rovnaké obdobie roku 2007)” (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008); www.economy.gov.sk/ext_dok-terit_september_dual-1524/112947c.
- “Zahraničný obchod SR – január až september 2008 (a rovnaké obdobie roku 2007)” (Bratislava: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2008); www.economy.gov.sk/ext_dok-terit_september_dual-1524/112947c.
- Annual Report. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. Foreign Policy in 2008.* (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2009), p. 16.
- Duleba, A., “Relations with the Eastern Neighbors in 2007”, P. Brezáni (ed) *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2007.* (Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2008).
- Hirman, K., “Ak sa dohoda Putina a Tymošenkovej naozaj zrealizuje, najhorší scenár nás nepostihne. Zatiaľ”, *eTrend* (January 18, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>.
- Hirman, K., “Kto Slovensku pomohol s plynom?”, *eTrend* (January 18, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>.
- Hirman, K., “Prečo sa Rusi a Ukrajinci (možno) dohodli”, *eTrend* (January 18, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>.
- Hirman, K., “Rusi škrtia Európu”, *eTrend* (January 7, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>.
- Hirman, K., “Rusom nejde len o Ukrajinu. Diverzifikácia a zníženie podielu plynu je nevyhnutnosť”, *eTrend* (January 7, 2009); <http://blogy.etrend.sk/karel-hirman/86400.html>.
- Jančík, Ľ., “Odborový boss spochybňuje Fica”, *Sme* (September 26, 2008).
- Kotian, R., “Slovensko a rusko-gruzínsky konflikt”, *Český rozhlas 6* (September 5, 2008); http://www.rozhlas.cz/cro6/komentare/_zprava/491716.
- Krajanová, D., “Fico dementuje ruské médiá.. No len u nás” *Sme* (April 11, 2008).
- Martyňuk, V., “Čy sviťat ukrajinciam Šenhenski vizy?”, *Ukrajinska Pravda* (January 25, 2008).
- Mravík, J., “Exportný plán teritória” (Minsk: Embassy of Slovakia to Belarus, 2008).
- Tóda, M., Procházková, P., “Slovenský premiér navrhol improvizované riešenie: výmenu ruského plynu s Ukrajinou”, *Sme* (January 14, 2009).

III. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND SLOVAKIA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOOLS

MODERNIZATION OF THE SLOVAK FOREIGN SERVICE – FROM ANALYSIS TO IMPLEMENTATION

MARCEL PEŠKO

The decision taken by the foreign ministry, back in 2006, to implement a project entitled Process, Economic, Organizational, Functional, Personnel, and Information Audit and the Establishment of the System for Continually Improving the Effectiveness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, which later became known as TREFA (TRvalá Efektivita Riadenia – Continual Effectiveness of Management), unambiguously proved to be correct and strategically far-sighted. The development of international and domestic factors, impacting on the performance, outreach, and effectiveness of the foreign service confirmed that it was high time to implement systemic measures aimed at substantially modernizing the processes of management, planning, and support, thereby increasing the foreign ministry's effectiveness and the quality of the management system and work organization. While 2007 was the year in which an in-depth process analysis was carried out with the aim of identifying and outlining the initial starting point, including pinpointing the most serious problems and opportunities for change, 2008 was the year in which the project itself was put into action.

A whole range of individual projects were implemented in 2008 which substantially influenced the management system at the ministry. As the employees gradually develop new working methods, these projects will have a positive effect on the work carried out by the whole ministry in terms of quality, effectiveness, and the results produced. Naturally, due to the limited time, capacity and finances, it was impossible to implement all the intended changes in such a short period of time. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that we succeeded not only in outlining the optimal state of the organization from the viewpoint of modern managerial approaches, but also in defining the tools and resources required to achieve this state in the form of specific projects, some of which have already been implemented and others which are planned for the near future. The fact that the modernization process is being carried out in a planned and

coordinated manner is the most important prerequisite for its successful realization and continuation into the future.

A GOOD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – THE CORNERSTONE OF A FLEXIBLE, EFFECTIVE, AND PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN SERVICE

The main objectives of the reform measures, as outlined prior to the implementation of the TREFA project, were to increase the quality of the management system and acquire the capacity to react flexibly to new developments, as well as tackle new tasks using the limited resources more effectively. The aim was to improve the management system on all levels, reduce bureaucracy, and unleash the capacities

The year 2008 saw the first-ever outline of the complete process model of the ministry and the creation of a new organizational unit responsible for outlining and analyzing the effectiveness of the processes as well as ensuring their optimal set up.

and resources for active diplomacy. There was also a need to systematically link the financial and human resources to current strategic priorities, to increase effectiveness in spending and finances, to further increase the quality and motivation of employees and, last but not least, to mobilize the entire ministry towards long-term improvement so that the culture of change becomes a natural part of the foreign service's work.

With this aim in mind, the main project was the establishment of a system of process management across the entire ministry. It is generally known that the process approach to management allows for the better identification of the dividing lines and common links between the different units. If rigorously applied, the organization can impartially adjust the number of employees in the organizational units dealing with the individual processes, thereby achieving a higher level of performance amongst employees within the units, and, in addition, directly linking the organizational units' activities to the internal regulations of the ministry. The year 2008 saw the first-ever outline of the complete process model of the ministry and the creation of a new organizational unit – the division of process management and quality management – responsible for outlining and analyzing the effectiveness of the processes as well as ensuring their optimal set up. All the major and minor processes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) were detailed, the owners of the individual processes were identified, and the software which enables all employees at the headquarters and diplomatic missions to access the process map, was purchased. Several dozen employees were trained in process management.

At the end of the year, the demanding job of updating and upgrading the process model was started and the performance indicators were drawn up, initially for the support processes. The individual processes are gradually being connected to the internal regulations as well as to the strategic objectives and indicators. This is a long-term task, in which it is not the results that are of utmost importance, but rather accepting that

there is a need to continually improve the work and management processes, put that idea into practice, and build up the expert capacity required for process management. And the MFA succeeded in doing this in 2008.

From a practical viewpoint, the ministry's process model, which has been in use since 2008, was the basic starting point for the best way to institute a new organizational structure. The MFA did not – as is sometimes the habit – launch the organizational change immediately after the new leadership took over after the election, but only after a rigorous process of analysis, after the approval of strategic priorities, and after a broad internal debate, during which most employees embraced the reasons for organizational change and had an opportunity to voice their opinions. The MFA's leadership decided to replace the classical organizational structure, characterized by multiple levels of management and asymmetrical responsibilities with a so-called flat pyramid, which clearly distinguishes between the main processes and the support processes. In practice, that meant reducing the levels of management from four to three, expanding the number of departments with a narrower focus in the political sections, and, simultaneously, eliminating all units in the political sections. Another objective was to create closer links between the management and executive units as well as substantially reduce the number of managers. Directors are now more flexible in using the limited human and expert resources to accomplish ongoing and priority tasks, in particular. The new organizational structure reflects the ministry's strategic priorities. Each of the political sections is sponsor of at least one of the strategic priorities. The structure also echoes the ministry's current international challenges, i.e. the economic dimension of diplomacy and public diplomacy. New bodies to support the project and process management were created. Naturally, the organizational structure is a dynamic management instrument and, in the future, it will have to respond to new challenges and changes in the external environment. The system at the MFA, however, was set up in such a way that further modifications should enable it to respond to any forthcoming strategic priorities, i.e. to new tasks and challenges of major importance. For instance, it is now evident that the MFA's organizational structure will have to be upgraded once the integrated system of crisis management is put into place. Naturally this will impact on the responsibilities of several sections. It will not, however, be necessary to change the philosophy or logic behind the organizational structure.

A simple, transparent, and, most importantly, up-to-date system of internal regulations is an indivisible part of quality system management in any organization. Such a system had not been established at the MFA, as is the case in many public administration institutions, and not only in Slovakia. Directives, rules and provisions did not cover all the activities and the way in which they related to each other had not been defined. This led to duplication, on the one hand and to regulations that did not sufficiently cover the existing processes, on the other. Many regulations were outdated and inapplicable in practice. Differences were found in the print and electronic versions of internal regulations. Units and diplomatic missions did not have complete copies of the regulations, and employees found it hard to deal with the confusing number of amendments and the different forms of the regulations. In 2008, a project designed to adjust the MFA's internal rules and regulations was successfully implemented, leading

to the application of a transparent, consistent, and standardized system for creating and registering the internal regulations linked to the processes at the MFA. An optimal structure and a transparent code of regulations were created in electronic and print form, with the idea that in the future, regulations will be stored exclusively in electronic form and that the latest version will be accessible to all employees via intranet. The MFA's new directive on internal regulations defines three kinds of regulations as compared to the former ten – it clearly defines the competencies and obligations of the authors and sponsors of the regulations.

Staff are now under obligation to tie the regulations to specific processes and to record only the fully revised versions in place of the amendments. The directive also requires that there be a single complete up-to-date electronic code for the headquarters and all diplomatic missions as well as specialized software, which will allow for a full-text search function and the online creation of the revised version of the directives.

The software is currently being put in place. The system of internal regulations will function optimally when all the internal regulations are tied to the processes identified within the process model. The Department of Process Management and Quality

It is project management that should be the main instrument for increasing the ministry's flexibility in reacting to new international challenges and tasks.

is involved in this Sisyphean task and is currently focusing on the support processes (financial management, human resources, administrative activities and so on) and on consular activities with the goal of "cleaning up" the system of internal regulations by the end of 2009.

The new system of project management is a constituent part of a good management system able to react flexibly to new challenges and to the external environment. Undoubtedly, no state administration body can handle the challenges and tasks currently facing it without constantly changing its organizational structure. Today, traditional line management cannot survive without having a project element to aid it in achieving cross-sectional and often time-limited goals. In the past, in order to solve major problems involving different departments and tight deadlines, the MFA also created a working group or a temporary team composed of representatives of several units. There are, however, more and more cross-sectional tasks and higher performing employees are nominated to work in several teams while the lower performing employees are happy to let the others do the hard work. In general, there was no real overview of all the working groups and teams and their tasks, indicating the progress being achieved at any one time. At the same time, teamwork was neither professionally nor financially motivated and was thus unattractive for the staff. Last year, in order to solve this issue systematically a directive on project management was drawn up and approved, defining the basic rules, range, control mechanisms and responsibilities of all those involved in the project management. That created a system prerequisite for the fulfillment of tasks which – because of their nature – demand the coordination of several units. The new rules introduced a more transparent and, for the staff, a more motivating system for accomplishing cross-sectional tasks, which had previously been carried out unsystematically without applying standard project tools. Naturally, the MFA environ-

ment did not allow for the application of project management as it is carried out in the private sphere or non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, the main elements were applied, giving the entire system an integrating framework. The new directive on project management defines the way in which proposals for achieving project goals are submitted, how they are approved on the basis of criteria given in advance, and how the projects are grouped according to their range and importance. It also includes a mechanism which defines whether a given project will have its own budget or not. It defines the responsibilities of the leaders and project team members, outlines a mechanism for establishing whether a project fulfills its objectives, and allows for the possibility of rewarding those involved in the project. The directive also lays down the entire system for preparing, implementing, and rejecting projects. To support the project processes a Department of Project and Operation Management was established, which not only processes the necessary documentation, but also methodically instructs other departments, something which turned out to be very beneficial in the introductory phase. A positive element has been that the leadership's intention to introduce project management provoked significant interest and active support for this conceptually new issue among the employees. By the end of 2008, more than 60 project proposals had been put forward for 2009 – 2010. These will be reviewed and selected according to the MFA's strategic priorities and considered on the grounds of personnel and financial costs. Today, the MFA is still not yet a project-managed organization, but in 2008, the systemic prerequisites were created so that it can become one in the foreseeable future. It is project management that should be the main instrument for increasing the ministry's flexibility in reacting to new international challenges and tasks.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING – A PRECONDITION FOR ACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE DIPLOMACY

The 2007 process analysis showed that although the MFA had the strategic documents (government manifesto and foreign policy focus for the specific year) at its disposal, it was not strategically managed in the sense of modern managerial techniques. The MFA lacked a transparent and straightforward mechanism which would enable it to standardize the process of drafting a strategy, updating it annually, linking it to the available financial and human resources, and allowing for its continuous evaluation and review. The framing of the ministry's basic strategic direction was too broad, with the result that operational tasks repeatedly dominated over strategic ones. A framework comprehensible to all staff and unambiguously identifying the direction of Slovak diplomacy and at the same time enabling the middle and top management to take part in drafting the ministry's strategy was lacking. Strategic priorities were usually not expressed in terms of specific and measurable goals, which could then be transparently reviewed, and so the MFA had no means of reviewing and then communicating

its results, successes, and failures. There was no control mechanism allowing for the regular and transparent evaluation of the fulfillment of tasks in the context of strategic priorities and ensuring that the review be reflected in the action plan for the next period. This was particularly evident in the diplomatic missions, which were not always able to use the limited human and expert resources effectively. The financial, human and material resources were not always priorities in accomplishing strategic objectives and tasks. The planning of budgets and the drafting of strategies were insufficiently linked. It was impossible to find out from the budget structure which financial resources had been used or which were earmarked to meet specific strategic priorities. The MFA did not have a simple and transparent instrument that it could use to present its strategic priorities and their status, i.e. to communicate its added value and the main activities, to the political leadership of the state or to the general public.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, the systemic introduction of strategic management and planning was a key project, upon which the success of the entire TREFA project depended. It was therefore given special attention and the required financial and human resources. The leadership of the ministry decided to introduce a system of strategic management using the Balance Score Card (BSC), which was pilot-launched in the second half of 2008. Its main aim was to create the systemic preconditions to create the ministry's mid-term strategy. This method – proved in practice – allows several levels of management to participate in creating the mid-term strategy and the specific measures required to achieve it. It also allows for the matching and effective monitoring of the fulfillment of the individual components in meeting the strategic priorities and objectives according to measurable criteria given in advance.

In the second half of the year, after a long and comprehensive debate, the ministry's leadership approved the final version of the foreign policy strategy drafted with reference to the government manifesto and the aims of foreign policy. The document, introducing five strategic priorities and 21 strategic goals, was entitled *A Successful Slovakia in a Secure World*. A brief illustration can be found below.

Thereafter, a new system of strategic planning using the BSC method was test-launched and the entire headquarters and 23 selected diplomatic missions participated in it. We nominated owners of the individual strategic goals, who then built micro-teams and converted the strategic goals to action steps (tasks) and their attributes, (expected measurable values, the time frame, and the unit responsible for meeting the goal). The ministry's leadership approved the so-called strategic map, which stipulated which goals the diplomatic missions would achieve, taking into consideration the fact that the size of the diplomatic mission would influence their number. The first review regarding the fulfillment of strategic goals took place in early 2009. Based on its findings, the ministry's leadership decided to slightly modify the MFA's strategy in order that it better reflect current international challenges and priorities. It also approved action steps and the resources needed to implement them in 2009 and 2010. The strategic priorities remained unchanged. It is assumed that they will only be modified when a new government takes over following parliamentary elections or if there is a significant change in emphasis in Slovak foreign policy. Due to the ministry's aim to actively participate in mitigating the effects of the economic and financial crisis,

Mission				
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs works for the benefit of a safe, thriving and successful democratic Slovakia. It advocates and pursues the rights and interests of the state and its citizens in an international environment, building on the values and interests of Slovakia as a member of the EU, NATO and the UN. It contributes to increasing security, promoting freedom, democracy, sustainable development and prosperity in the world. The Ministry coordinates cohesive action under Slovak foreign policy. It delivers professional and competent services for our citizens and partners at home and abroad.				
Strategic Priorities				
Slovakia in a Safe and Democratic World	A Prospering Slovakia and Sustainable Development	Slovakia's Interests in an Effective EU	Service to Citizens and Slovakia Opened up to the World	Modern Slovak Diplomacy
Strategic Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening bilateral cooperation and promoting an effective system of international relations • Strengthening security of Euro-Atlantic area • Combating global challenges and threats • Enlarging the zone of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and good governance • Regulating migration in line with Slovakia's interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting economic development and prosperity and promoting Slovakia's economic interests • Reinforcing neighborly relations, intensifying regional cooperation and strengthening Slovakia's international standing • Increasing volume of development and humanitarian aid provided by Slovakia • Improving Slovakia's energy security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving promotion of Slovakia's interests in the EU and its influence on the preparation of the EU's common policies • Supporting EU enlargement based on a strict compliance with pre-accession criteria • Contributing to strengthening effective operation of EU institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting interests of Slovak citizens • Improving communication on foreign policy objectives and their achievement within Slovakia and externally • Ensuring uniform presentation of Slovakia abroad • Promoting cooperation with the third sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimizing internal functioning of the organization • Ensuring technologically advanced communication • Optimizing financial management and budget structure • Improving professional qualification of foreign service personnel • Increasing number of Slovak personnel in the EU and international organizations

economic diplomacy received greater emphasis in the strategic goals. Last year saw the purchase and installation of the new software instrument QPR Scorecard, serving as a real-time communication portal for all staff in the headquarters and diplomatic missions. Within the new organizational structure, a department of operative planning and project management support was created, whose task is to ensure the functioning of the entire system in terms of administration and practice. It continuously monitors and reviews the achievement of goals, introduces new goals and tasks into the system, and provides procedural support for processing action steps and measurable indicators. In addition, it also prepares reports for decision-making at the leadership level. This way, the ministry is gradually becoming accustomed to working within a full-fledged strategic cycle of planning, implementation and review. Before the process becomes part of everyday routine, at least two to three planning cycles must be undergone.

In order to ensure the effective operation of the strategic planning and management system we had to create close links between financial planning and management. That was a very difficult assignment, because there has been little experience in budget drafting at the level of subprograms within the Slovak state administration. A large part of the TREFA project team's capacities were dedicated to solving precisely this problem. A new program structure of the MFA's budget for 2009, in which subprograms reflect strategic priorities and elements/projects, was created. The budget from 2009 onwards is planned not only in accordance with the standard accounting scale, but also in accordance with the strategic priorities which enable the leadership in the planning

phase to decide which financial resources will be allocated for individual priorities and to react, over the course of the year, to the shift in emphasis on the strategic priorities through the flexible transfer of resources.

The desired end state of full-fledged strategic management is to achieve the functional linking of strategic and financial planning. To achieve this goal, all the system and technical preconditions were created and the staff responsible were trained. Nevertheless, we will need to prove that the system works in practice and motivate all staff, so that they start using it in their daily work. We can, however, already observe that the MFA has a clearly articulated strategy, which has been converted into individual strategic goals and action steps and has been projected onto all ministry managerial levels. The ministry's leadership has at its disposal a flexible instrument for strategic management and unambiguously defined competencies and responsibilities. The extent to which the strategy has been accomplished is already being reviewed on the basis of output indicators and its fulfillment is tied to an employee motivation system. The ministry has

The MFA today has a clearly articulated strategy, which has been converted into individual strategic goals and action steps and has been projected onto all ministry managerial levels.

an effective, working and comprehensive platform for the communication of its strategy that forms the basis for allocating responsibilities and ascertains the extent to which they have been fulfilled by the employees (every employee in the headquarters and the diplomatic missions has access to the QPR portal and can inquire about the current state of tasks and their completion by his/her department as well as other departments and diplomatic missions),

with regard to the public, other state administrative bodies, deputies, and the political leadership of the state.

IMPROVING CITIZEN SERVICES

In summer 2008, the MFA Center for Assistance and Services to Citizens was launched. Its basic objective is to provide Slovak citizens and institutions with professional assistance and comprehensive travel information via a telephone hotline. The goal of the project was to enable citizens to contact the MFA on a 24/7 basis, with a high quality and standardized communication service, and, most of all, to ensure that their requirements are addressed quickly and professionally. These expectations were met and the fact that the Center received positive feedback is confirmed by the more than 4 000 phone calls requesting information which were dealt with by the employees between the launch of the Center and the end of 2008. In cooperation with other MFA bodies and diplomatic missions, the Center's professionally trained employees not only provide assistance to citizens who find themselves in need, who are caught up in war conflicts, involved in traffic accidents, who lose their travel documents, but also help in the search for missing relatives or provide assistance in the case of accident or death

to Slovak citizens abroad. In order to better promote the Center's services the ministry published several thousand copies of an information booklet, which is distributed by travel agencies directly to citizens and is to be found on the ministry's website along with a contact telephone number.

A TRANSPARENT AND WORKING SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT – A BASIC PREREQUISITE FOR MORE EFFECTIVE AND RATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND EXPLOITATION OF RESOURCES

As part of the TREFA project, we undertook an in-depth analysis of the ministry's economic-financial management, on the basis of which a strategy of economic-financial management was elaborated. The basic elements of this were put into practice over the course of last year. A lot of work was carried out which may not attract attention as, from a diplomat's point of view, the area it concerns is often seen as uninteresting and often onerous. Nevertheless, a new budget system was introduced, thanks to which the MFA has gradually become one of the most modernly and effectively managed institutions in the Slovak public administration.

The primary problem concerning financial management was the insufficient structure of cost centers and the book of accounts. The organizational units did not follow the same structure as the cost centers. Some of the headquarters' expenses were incorrectly hidden under one cost center. The newly-created cost center system is based on the principle of monitoring the costs of one level of the organizational unit, so that it ensures that the effectiveness of the invested costs is monitored. It is now possible to compare certain kinds of expenses between the cost centers as well as to monitor various kinds of expenses in greater detail. By using a more detailed system of analytical accounting in terms of economic classification, we achieved a better overview of the different kinds of expenses accumulated (e.g. security services, cleaning services, waste disposal, buildings revision, interpretation and translation services and so on), which laid the ground for introducing a new control system at the MFA, and thus also for adjustments in expenses according to the way in which they are used. A mechanism was developed to enable us to find discrepancies in the expenditure between individual cost centers, calculate possible savings and overspends, and identify weak points in funding. This mechanism also allows a standard level of expenditure to be set and this can then be regularly updated. Whereas in the past the MFA did not have a control system for the purpose of profitable financial resource management from a human resources point of view and the informative function

The newly-created cost center system is based on the principle of monitoring the costs of one level of the organizational unit, so that it ensures that the effectiveness of the invested costs is monitored.

of accounting regarding the expenses structure of cost centers was insufficient, today, the planning and control of planned expenditure utilized in meeting the given strategic priorities is ensured.

Introducing an effective internal control-based accounting system would have been impossible without a new robust Management Information System (MIS). This was installed and put into practice last year. The implementation of the MIS and its gradual expansion enables all employees to access online and in real time dozens of reviews, tables, and graphs. These are automatically processed in real time on the basis of structural and historical data from the MFA and diplomatic missions. They display economic and personal data, as well as the current budget spending up to the level of diplomatic missions and headquarters bodies. In contrast to the past, it is now possible to obtain the economic data without processing and sending dozens of reports to the headquarters, which was an administrative burden to the diplomatic missions and employees based at headquarters. Apart from reducing bureaucracy, the MIS also allows for free and transparent access to the data, which also increases the pressure for the more effective use of the entrusted finances and more modest expenditure. In 2009, the MFA will intensively train management employees as well as the staff of the newly established controlling department in working on the MIS reports.

While reviewing the changes in the area of economic-financial management, it is also necessary to mention the successful conversion of all financial and accounting systems to the euro, which required not only their practical modification but also amendments to dozens of directives. We were also successful in introducing international accounting standards and training the employees responsible for their application. The MFA signed a contract with Citibank, which has since last year provided banking services to the ministry all over the world, making the process significantly more transparent, simpler, and cheaper.

A NEW APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The employees filled in a questionnaire back in 2007, which indicated that personnel management at the MFA did not completely correspond to modern human resource (HR) management. The main problem was that the MFA lacked a clearly outlined strategy regarding the development of human resources; a system of work performance management tied to the designated tasks that arose from the ministry's strategy; and a modern system of professional development and training that takes employees' needs into consideration. Nor had the requirements of the ministry been sufficiently spelled out; these should have been linked to the work review. Equally, the ministry had failed in the long term to systematically deal with the employees' career development and personnel planning, which in a working environment, where employees circulate between headquarters and diplomatic missions, is especially significant. Since the ministry's leadership clearly realizes that its employees are its main asset and its suc-

successful performance depends on the professionalism, expertise, loyalty, institutional awareness and the personal qualities of its employees, who should not perceive their work in diplomacy solely as a job, but rather as a mission, it dedicated significant energy and effort to setting new principles of personnel management. A ground-breaking step was the drafting and approval in fall 2008 of the MFA *Personnel Code*, which, for the first time since the establishment of the ministry, comprehensively details all the different aspects of the work of the state and public services in the ministerial environment. The MFA *Personnel Code* is an integrated system of HR rules and procedures, which replaces and amends several directives, and brings together all the elements of a professional career at the ministry. It amends and updates the individual institutes and the work of the foreign service in the light of current challenges and trends. The *Personnel Code* introduces, among other things, a single system of positions at the headquarters and in the diplomatic ranks, which guarantees that the salary level of employees corresponds to their diplomatic rank. It comprehensively defines the terms and duties regarding professional training in the transition between the lower, middle, and higher diplomatic ranks (educational qualifications). It introduces pre-post training and in-service training for newly accepted employees. It also outlines the terms for language and subject training, and distance learning. It also introduces a system of training for new employees and employees who return to headquarters from overseas postings. Each employee is obliged to attend at least one training course per year. At the same time, it defines the basic tasks and competencies of the Diplomatic Academy as a completely new intraministerial institution responsible for setting up and coordinating education. In addition, the *Personnel Code* introduces a system for the regular yearly recruitment of employees and defines the parameters for evaluating, rewarding and honoring employees, as well as outlining the consequences of breaking work and service regulations. The appraisal of employees is being related to financial motivation. With regard to discipline, it defines those behaviors or activities that represent minor or major transgressions of the regulations. The terms primary and secondary expertise are also being introduced, which should contribute towards better HR planning and the problem-free rotation of employees. The length of postings abroad is being extended to five years regardless of whether the employee in question is a diplomat or an administrative-technical employee. The employee will have the option of being posted to two diplomatic missions (DM) in a row lasting for a total of up to seven years. The *Personnel Code* identifies clear rules and criteria in selecting employees for overseas postings and at the same time shortens the length of time it takes to acquire diplomatic rank. It also lifts the ban on sending married couples or close friends/family to the same diplomatic mission. The code also allows for the identification of internal posts in the headquarters' departments, where it is necessary to employ experts for periods of longer than three years. The regulations also refer to the work of the at-

A ground-breaking step was the drafting and approval in fall 2008 of the MFA Personnel Code, which, for the first time since the establishment of the ministry, comprehensively details all the different aspects of the work of the state and public services in the ministerial environment.

tation committee as the only advisory body to the minister and secretary general in implementing HR policy and a whole range of other changes designed to consolidate employees' rights and obligations. The *Personnel Code* is – like the organizational structure – a dynamic 'document' which will have to react to new challenges and problems. It is already apparent that it needs to be amended in relation to the newly launched system of crisis management and with regard to the need to introduce motivation factors to raise employees' interest in posts in the diplomatic missions given the increased emphasis on work performance. In any case, any modifications to the document, which systemically and comprehensively deals with the most important aspects of MFA employees' careers, will not be of great significance. Another system change in the HR field was the creation and implementation of an integrated mechanism for managing work performance through evaluating, rewarding, and training employees. There are not many institutions in the public sector that have succeeded in creating a unique set of rules to evaluate the performance and responsibilities of employees and set in place a training system that is connected to the position of the employee and his/her evaluation. The goal of this project was that the results achieved and the interest of the individual in improving his/her professionalism and expertise should be more impartially and transparently assessed. Following the evaluation, an employee with below standard results must attend a relevant training course, or may participate, if interested, in long-term specialization.

The greatest challenge in the HR field, however, will be maintaining the changes put in place.

Last year a competency model of all positions in the headquarters was drawn up. It includes general, managerial, and professional competencies, while each position has six general, three specific, and two managerial responsibilities. At the beginning of each year, a competency review affecting the level of personal bonuses is conducted. Four times a year, a performance appraisal is carried out, which is the basis for determining rewards for the competent fulfillment of professional obligations. Both reviews are carried out electronically and are used in drawing up individual training plans in accordance with the compulsory and voluntary courses provided. The performance appraisal is executed on the basis of existing performance indicators. The competency review is carried out by a superior who assesses the degree to which the competencies of the employee under review meet the agreed expectations and requirements. To facilitate evaluation and to ensure that the review is as objective as is possible throughout the ministry, a manual which sets out the distinction between fulfillment and non-fulfillment of the given competency was produced.

At the end of 2008, a test evaluation took place and this year, performance and competency reviews have already taken place. The system received positive feedback from management and employees alike. The high level of transparency has, among other things, a positive effect on the level of objectivity within the review, particularly since managers are starting to see personal bonuses and rewards not just as compensation for low salaries, but also as a real factor in motivating employees to perform better and develop their expertise. In the near future, the system will also be implemented at the diplomatic missions. Before that can take place, however, the development of

the software that allows the online performance reviews to be carried out via intranet and stored directly in the electronically registered personal files of the employees has to be completed.

The issue of HR planning and employee rotation also needs to be dealt with systematically. That requires the drawing up of a competency map for positions abroad as well, and the establishment of a system of professional growth so that employees – right at the start of their posting or after their return to headquarters – will be able to determine which position they will be assigned in two to three years and therefore start their own professional development. We also need to produce a development and motivation program for non-rotational employees so that the ministry gains a return on its investment into their professional development and training and so that the ministry avoids the danger of higher staff attrition. There are also plans to optimize and digitalize processes regarding HR (including completing the electronic personnel database, involving employees working on the HR agenda and relieving HR specialists from unnecessary bureaucratic tasks). Work has already begun on these and some of them will be completed during 2009 – depending on funding. A special challenge will be the gradual upgrading of the Diplomatic Academy, turning it into a more professional and respected institution. The greatest challenge in the HR field, however, will be maintaining the changes put in place. It is generally recognized that HR policy, especially in the foreign ministry, which is particularly attractive to potential employees, is most affected by continued attempts to bypass the approved rules and to make personal gains that are contrary to the agreed principles. The greatest challenge will therefore be not surrendering to the temptation to return to the previous state where decision-making was sometimes rather subjective, which had a demotivating effect on employees, who were sometimes more interested in promotion and personal benefits than in performance.

In 2008, the ministry prepared a draft act on the foreign service, which deals comprehensively with the foreign service institutions, guarantees their level of expertise, outlines employees' obligations and benefits with regard to other state administration employees, as well as other particularities concerning the work of the state body and its employees abroad. As it is a *lex specialis* subsequent to the law on the civil service, its submission before the government and parliament is contingent on the prior submission of the proposed amendment to the law on the civil service. Movement in this direction, therefore, depends on how the Ministry of Work, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic decides to deal with the proposed amendment to the law on state service. It is expected that the new law on state service will be submitted before government in the first half of 2009. Immediately thereafter, the MFA will submit the draft bill on the foreign service before government. Even though, the law on the state service has yet to be passed, the passing of a series of amended laws relating to the introduction of the euro has meant that new guidelines have been put into practice concerning the calculation of foreign salaries; the MFA's obligations to provide employees posted abroad with commercial health insurance; the payment of tuition fees on behalf of the school-aged children of employees posted abroad according to UN limits; and the payment of relocation expenses according to the criteria established.

MODERN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES – THE BACKBONE OF A MODERN FOREIGN SERVICE

Last year, we updated the Strategy for Developing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which we started to amend gradually through individual projects. Both the leadership and the employees began to realize that ICT represents an important tool in the professional accomplishment of foreign policy objectives. An audit carried out in 2007 supported the new perspective on solving strategic priorities within ICT – the rapidly-changing environment; the growing demands of ICT users; the need to integrate the MFA's numerous information systems; the law on information systems used in public administration; and the government's conceptual framework of the digitalization of the public administration are all part of this.

In 2008, we drew up the ministry's conceptual framework for information systems, which identified the main paths of advancement and ICT strategic goals up to 2013 and which is fully in accordance with the National Conceptual Framework of ICT Advancement in Public Administration. Following that, the MFA began to consider five priority projects in the following areas – the appointment of a system integration advisor, implementing IT security policy, ISVS development conceptual framework, the helpdesk, and the paperless office (digital ministry). Given the number of separate information systems in operation, we decided that the ministry would not replace them with an expensive single integrated system, but that we would gradually integrate the existing systems with the help of an external advisor using the process model. The advisor's task will be to assist the MFA's expert bodies in gradually integrating all the ICT systems in accordance with the approved conceptual framework for developing the information systems. In 2008, the specifications were outlined for selecting the advisor; a process which is due to take place during 2009. It is anticipated that the appointment of the advisor will lead to a reduction in inconsistencies within ICT and eliminate the negative impact of employee rotation on keeping know-how within the organization and increase the ability to follow the approved strategy.

The strategic goal concerning information security is to ensure confidence in the MFA with regard to the accessibility, integrity, and reliability of the data that is processed, stored, or transferred in terms of the valid legal framework that forms the basis for the work carried out by the MFA. The MFA did not previously have an information systems security policy as part of information security management. Basic security requirements on the protection of information, documents, and information security procedures were not defined and security issues were solved on an *ad hoc* basis. An external contractor was selected to prepare a security policy for the MFA's information systems and this will be presented to the ministry's leadership in the course of 2009.

In 2008, we improved the MFA helpdesk in order to meet the ICT demands of the employees, including feedback. The project went through a test phase and will be fully implemented in 2009. In setting up the Center for Assistance and Services to Citizens,

we used modern digital technologies, which enable us to receive, record and review the requests citizens have for information or assistance on a 24/7 basis. In 2009, using land data networks, we should also be able to connect all the diplomatic missions to the system, so that they are able to dedicate their time and skills to solving consular cases in the field and so that citizens have access to a standard level of service on a 24-hour basis regardless of whether it is outside working hours or the HR capacities of our diplomatic missions.

In 2008, we introduced an internal video conferencing system, thanks to which the headquarters regularly holds video conferences on topical themes with the Permanent Representation at the EU and the Permanent Delegation at NATO headquarters in Brussels. An addition to the system of modern internal communication was the launch of webmail for all employees, which can be accessed remotely. In 2008, we also introduced an internal online system for accountants at diplomatic missions, which speeded up the system of recording accounting operations in the cash day-book, property registrar, and stock control, thereby reducing bureaucracy in the diplomatic missions. Last year, we also introduced an electronic clocking-in system and an electronic employee phone book of high quality that includes agendas and images. We also made progress in introducing a system for the online transfer of classified materials. This project was highly demanding, financially, technologically and in terms of organization. It was successfully pilot tested at three diplomatic missions and will gradually be installed at other DMs.

In 2008, the MFA also intended to introduce the paperless office, which is one of the fundamental elements in creating a digital ministry. The MFA is still hampered by the number of manual tasks, the quantity of printed documents, the need to manually process letters and documents and the extensive paperwork, which leads to inconsistencies and is highly time-consuming in terms of monitoring the transfer of documents. The goal of the project, whose basic parameters have already been outlined, is to increase the ministry's effectiveness by eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy and introducing the electronic transfer of information where possible: all documents and information – where permitted by law – will be processed, drafted, annotated and modified electronically. We will also introduce an electronic register and create a central data storage system. The project was postponed until 2009, but given the significant cuts in funding, it was decided to further postpone it to a later date. In 2009, we will entirely redesign the ministry's website, which will not only introduce a standard visual style, designed and approved at the end of last year, but will also be clearer, more comprehensive, and more modern than the current one and at the same time allow for the voluntary registration of citizens travelling abroad, and will be accessible to those with special needs. A priority in the ICT field will also be updating the N-VIS passport system to link it to the central system, expanding it to include: biometric details (photographs, signatures, and fingerprints); the electronic submission of applications; securing an online system of classified material at most diplomatic missions; and upgrading the virtual private network as a reserve communication channel linked to the satellite connection currently used. Naturally, realizing all the projects that have already been launched as well as the new projects will depend on the availability of funding.

A WORKING SYSTEM OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT – A FUTURE GUARANTEE FOR IMPROVING WORKING PROCESSES

The following must be seen as the most important priorities of any modern foreign service – the quality of management and work processes as well as the quality of the service that the MFA provides to its partners and citizens. Although the ministry had long felt this need, it did not have a system that would allow for the regular review and adjustment or improvement to these processes, including strategic management, economic and financial management, process management, HR management, and information-communications management both internally and externally. In this context and with the goal of sustaining the reform process, the MFA's leadership decided to introduce independent quality controls by joining the internationally recognized system of quality management. In 2008, the MFA became a member of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) based in Brussels, and so that the EFQM Excellence Model could be fully implemented at the MFA, the following measures were introduced: the establishment of a department for process management and quality management, the training of several dozen employees, the creation of review teams etc. The second half of 2008 saw the collation of materials and data for the purposes of compiling the ministry's self-evaluation report in accordance with EFQM standards. Since the MFA has realized the projects described above it has *de facto* met the requirement for gaining the title "Committed to Excellence" and the right to use the EFQM logo on its printed documents. The comprehensive self-evaluation report will be prepared and sent to Brussels for review in the course of 2009. More important than the formal aspect of these processes is, however, the fact that quality has now become the aim of all the MFA's activities. We set mechanisms and built capacities for the ministry to be able to review its internal processes impartially and regularly against the standards of a renowned and internationally recognized system of quality management and thus advance the system forwards. The MFA has gradually joined the most modern public administration organizations, which through specific measures execute the government's strategy of public administration modernization.

CONCLUSION

Any reform applied to a management and organizational system is long-term and demanding, but this is particularly true of public administration and diplomacy, which are known to be conservative and cautious about reform. The TREFA project assisted the leadership in launching the changes, which are not easy and whose positive effect will be felt only after some time has passed. We should emphasize that, in the environment of the Slovak public administration, the decision to implement changes of such range and depth was literally a pioneering act. However, that it was both strategically correct and far-sighted is evidenced by the fact that it is already bearing fruit. While

reviewing the TREFA project, we should also mention that its ambition was not to solve all the ministry's systemic shortcomings over such a short period of time. Rather, it was the beginning of a process of revealing the system and resolving the weak points in the workings of the ministry. The goal was to launch modernization processes in key areas of the management of the ministry, while bearing in mind that it will probably be impossible to achieve an ideal state; nevertheless, we should consistently try to achieve this, even at the cost of introducing significant and unpopular measures, which may affect both employees and managers. If we look back at the expectations the TREFA project held, we can affirm that they were met to a great extent. The MFA today has a simple, effective, and above all working instrument of strategic planning and management that allows for entrusted funds and capacities to be fully exploited primarily for the purpose of meeting strategic goals. The MFA implemented a whole range of measures, which reduced the amount of bureaucracy at diplomatic missions and allowed them to focus on active diplomacy. We introduced performance and competency reviews and other mechanisms, which encourage employees to focus above all on fulfilling their designated tasks and producing results. In the HR field, we implemented measures and passed internal directives, which contributed to the professionalization and consolidation of the foreign service staff. The MFA is gradually transforming itself into an organization that is oriented towards providing quality services to its partners and citizens. We launched a modern system of quality management and the employees are gradually changing their way of thinking, becoming much more open to innovation and reform and aware that change must be an integral part of their work. It is without doubt thanks to the changes already implemented and those still to be achieved that the work processes at the MFA are becoming clearer, simpler, and thus more effective. Thanks to them, too, the MFA has strengthened its potential to influence global trends and challenges, to the benefit of Slovakia, and to direct domestic political events, and has thereby contributed to reinforcing Slovakia's international reputation.

In addition, the MFA's new and more modern character is evidenced in the decision to introduce a unified visual style, which was designed in cooperation with a renowned Slovak graphic designer. The new design, which is gradually being adopted not only standardizes all the ministry's documents and presentation and promotion materials, but also conveys an image of the ministry as a modern and progressive institution. Inwardly, it helps strengthen employee identification with the new quality of the internal culture.

The key issue at this moment is the ministry's readiness to continue with the changes already begun and to follow on with new reform projects even once the TREFA project comes to an end. As mentioned above, we need to continue developing projects designed to implement HR and ICT development strategies. We are also planning a project aimed at further removing the bureaucratic burden on the diplomatic mis-

In the environment of the Slovak public administration, the decision to implement changes of such range and depth was literally a pioneering act. However, that it was both strategically correct and far-sighted is evidenced by the fact that it is already bearing fruit.

sions through the creation of the post of chief of administration for several DMs based in one place or region. We also need to deal effectively with the situation regarding Slovakia's real estate abroad. Naturally, these projects will not be as extensive as TREFA was. Currently, the need is to consolidate the new processes, incorporate them into daily life, and fine tune them as required. However, we also need to show that we are prepared to embrace further change should circumstances require it. Only then will we be able to tell if we have succeeded in implementing the new processes in the various different areas of the management sphere of the MFA.

THE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN 2008

VLADIMÍR BENČ, PETER BREZÁNI

From the perspective of the official development assistance of the Slovak Republic (ODA or SlovakAid), 2008 can be seen as a very hectic year of transformation, due to the implementation of fundamental changes. The first change was that the Act on the Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic¹ came into force on February 1, 2008, which modified the system transformation of development assistance management and financing. This transformation had already started in 2007, with the establishment of the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS). At the same time, the end of 2008 was devoted to preparing the new Medium-Term Strategy for the Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013, which was approved by the Government on March 4, 2009. The strategy was preceded by extensive discussion on the future direction of Slovakia's ODA. It is perhaps a shame that the 'reform' was not deeper.

KEY CHANGES IN SLOVAKAID IN 2008

ACT ON OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The institutionalization of Slovakia's development assistance began with Government Resolution No. 806/2006, dating from September 28, 2006, on the institutionalization

¹ "Act No. 617/2007 Coll. on Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/296/1/2>.

of the Slovak development assistance system. A crucial step was the formulation of the Act on Official Development Assistance in compliance with the goals of Slovakia's foreign policy. The Act was adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in its final form on December 5, 2007 and published in the *Collection of Laws*. The Act defines the framework of Slovakia's development assistance, determines its principles, goals, and forms, while at the same time, it emphasizes the importance of development assistance to partner countries. The Act defines the status and scope of the activities of SAMRS, the status and participation of the central bodies of the state administration and the local self-governments involved in official development assistance.

The Act entered into force on February 1, 2008 and created the legal framework for the provision of Slovakia's official development assistance and the conditions required for the rigorous fulfillment of Slovakia's international commitments in official development assistance. The Act *de facto* upheld existing practice in implementing ODA, in terms of program documents, institutional coordination, etc. The Act is both a general and a framework act. It confers to the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) a broad range of responsibilities and powers in the development assistance field.² On the other hand, it is a shame that the Act did not directly bind the government to fulfill the development commitments of the international organizations of which Slovakia is a member. As a result, it basically left the MFA to find broader financing for development assistance on its own, without wide political support. In the future, this could lead to further stagnation in Slovakia's expenditure in this area.

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY FOR THE OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR THE YEARS 2009-2013

On the basis of this Act, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated the *Medium-Term Strategy for the Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013*. The strategy outlines in detail the assistance Slovakia is to provide, strengthens the program approach of bilateral development assistance (the drawing up of agreements on the provision of development assistance and assistance strategies for program/project countries), regulates the Slovak Republic's participation in EU development policy and the multilateral and humanitarian assistance provided by the Slovak Republic.

In comparison to the past, there is a clear improvement in the quality of the strategy, evident in the measures outlined to increase the effectiveness of Slovakia's development and humanitarian assistance, including the specifying of tasks, which will then be subject to evaluation. This makes the strategy far more focused than before. Compared

² The act defines two key tools, which the Slovak government and the MFA (see § 5) and the MFA in connection with SlovakAid (see § 7) hold full responsibility for, both in terms of their formulation and approval: "Act No. 617/2007 Coll. on Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/296/1/2>.

to the previous medium-term document, the new strategy can generally be regarded as being more sophisticated, more complex, and more detailed. This suggests that the key problems concerning ODA will no longer be found in the quality, or poor quality, of the program document, but in its implementation and the ability to fulfill the set priorities and goals, while respecting the principles defined in this strategy.

According to the new strategy, Slovakia's main priority, in terms of development assistance for 2009-2013, is "to strengthen stability and good governance in the regions and countries of primary interest to Slovakia, including those of economic interest, and, in addition, to encourage development, thus reducing poverty and hunger in developing countries, through more effective and better-targeted development and humanitarian aid."³

Paradoxically, while in a number of places, including in the main priorities themselves, the new strategy mentions the effectiveness and better-targeting of Slovakia's development assistance⁴, in comparison to the previous strategy, it is vaguer in many of its definitions, and broadens the goals and tasks of SlovakAid, including the enlargement of its territorial operation across the world, which could, in turn, negatively influence its effectiveness. This 'concern' is further increased by the intention to further institutionalize development assistance in cooperation with partner countries⁵ (by preparing assistance strategies for program countries, preparing development assistance agreements, and so on), which could reduce some of the flexibility of the assistance. In relation to the future of SlovakAid, there is a particular need to resolve the key question of the balance between the institutionalization of the system, which also means the bureaucratization of assistance provision (and therefore places increased demands on the individual bodies participating in SlovakAid provision) and the overall flexibility of the system. The gradually increasing administrative demands associated with the management and implementation of SlovakAid serve as an example. On the one hand, this may positively increase control over the management and implementation processes, but on the other hand, it also limits flexibility.

The development of economic cooperation from the perspective of Slovakia's 'economic interests' is now receiving significantly more emphasis than in the past.

Compared to the previous medium-term document, the new strategy can generally be regarded as being more sophisticated, more complex, and more detailed.

³ "Medium-Term Strategy for the Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013"; <http://www.slovakaid.mfa.sk/en/index.php/article/articleview/102/1/2>.

⁴ Ibid. For example, the Strategy states, on page 2, paragraph 2, that the priority of Slovakia's development assistance in 2009-2013 is "encouraging development, thus reducing poverty and hunger in developing countries through more effective and better-targeted development and humanitarian aid". On page 3, the Strategy "defines measures to improve the effectiveness of the assistance provided by Slovakia, including the specification of tasks, which will be subject to evaluation. In this way, Slovakia wants to contribute to the effective provision of development assistance, reduce administrative requirements on partner countries, and meet development assistance objectives".

⁵ Ibid. See for example pp. 15, Tasks.

This subject has recently found its way into many of the foreign policy concepts of the Slovak Foreign Ministry. The question therefore arises as to whether the scope of SlovakAid will not start to exceed the framework of development assistance and cooperation as traditionally conceived of. In which case, either the strategy or the Act on Development Assistance currently lacks a section defining the limits of assistance provided to businesses (e.g. in the form of state support schemes) via SlovakAid, which could lead to discriminatory support of selected businesses.

The strategy then lists the goals of Slovakia's official development assistance defined by the Act on the Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic as follows⁶:

- a) reducing poverty and hunger in developing countries;
- b) promoting sustainable economic, social and environmental development in developing countries;
- c) ensuring global peace and security, in particular by enhancing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and good governance in developing countries;
- d) promoting universal access to education in developing countries;
- e) improving the quality of basic healthcare services in developing countries;
- f) promoting economic cooperation with developing countries;

In comparison with the Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance: 2003-2008, these goals and the related sectoral focuses are defined in a vaguer manner i.e. they broaden the thematic scope of ODA. Paradoxically, the new medium-term strategy subsequently states that it attempts to develop a 'narrower sectoral approach'⁷, but at the same time, it expands the priorities defined by the previous strategy.

The new strategy defines the sectoral priorities of ODA as follows:

- a) building democratic institutions, the rule of law, civic society and peace;
- b) social development – the health sector, aid for persons with disabilities, awareness-raising, prevention and treatment of infectious and epidemic diseases (HIV/AIDS in particular), child and adult education programs, social services, and drug prevention;
- c) economic development, building the market environment, strengthening the macroeconomic environment, public finance management, support for small and medium-sized businesses;
- d) infrastructure development with a positive impact on sustainable development and environmental protection.

The question thus emerges as to where the narrower sectoral focus approach is applied in the strategy. Even though it is true that the authors of the strategy left the specification of the sectoral priorities up to the National Programs for Official Development Assistance, the first one, for the year 2009, does not specify these priorities

⁶ See § No. 4 "Act No. 617/2007 Coll. on Official Development Assistance of the SR"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/296/1/2>.

⁷ "Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013", p. 11; <http://www.slovakaid.mfa.sk/en/index.php/article/articleview/102/1/2>.

in any significant way. Only partial sectoral limitations were applied to certain partner countries.⁸

The section defining the priorities and principles of SlovakAid is a new and very important part of the strategy. Clearly, this section must be perceived very positively, not only from the point of view of the scope of these priorities and rules, but also for their quality. All three key principles (effectiveness, coherence, and flexibility) should be typical for the development assistance of a small country such as Slovakia. The strategy defines this perfectly. On the other hand, in the section on its proposals, the document itself provokes a certain controversy, in relation to the principles and rules already mentioned. The broad scope of the sectoral priorities, the expansion of territorial commitments, as well as the partial bureaucratization and further institutionalization of Slovakia's development assistance serve as examples. The ability to observe these principles and rules in the implementation phase will thus be far more important than their definition. Only afterwards will it be possible to evaluate the contribution of this new section of the medium-term strategy to the development assistance provided.

The new strategy defines these rules and principles of SlovakAid:

1. *Effectiveness* is a fundamental basic rule that enhances the effects of development assistance. Aid effectiveness is primarily based on the principles of ownership, alignment, harmonization, result-oriented management, and mutual accountability and transparency, in addition to other principles (cost-effectiveness, predictability, relevance, quality, etc.).
2. The second basic rule in providing Slovak official development assistance is *coherence for development*, meaning strengthening the coherence of Slovak development policy in conjunction with the country's priorities in foreign, security, economic and migration policies. At the same time, it is necessary to boost the link and coherence between bilateral, trilateral, multilateral, and humanitarian aid (namely in terms of the territorial, sectoral and other priorities of Slovak development assistance specified in the Medium-Term Strategy and national ODA programs for particular years) in order to make use of their possible synergies.
3. The third basic rule is the *flexibility* of the mechanism for providing official development assistance. This flexibility is necessary in order to respond appropriately to the needs of and changes in developing countries, particularly in regard to the provision of humanitarian aid, and to current global challenges, as well as to better target and improve the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of Slovak development assistance efforts.

An interesting part of the new strategy is the commitment to strengthen the program approach of bilateral development assistance (the preparation of agreements on the

The ability to observe these principles and rules in the implementation phase will thus be far more important than their definition.

⁸ "National Programme for Slovak Official Development Assistance for 2009", pp. 7-10; <http://www.slovakaid.mfa.sk/en/index.php/article/articleview/103/1/1>.

Table 1: Comparison of the Territorial Focus of SlovakAid

2009-2013	2003-2008
Program Countries	Program Countries
Afghanistan, Kenya, Serbia	Serbia, Montenegro
Priority Countries	Priority Countries
Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia (FYR), Moldova, Mongolia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam	Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

Source: "Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic: 2003-2008"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/36/1/2>. "Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013; <http://www.slovakaid.mfa.sk/en/index.php/article/articleview/102/1/2>.

provision of development assistance and assistance strategies for program/project countries) and the commitment that, in providing development assistance, the Slovak Republic will gradually shift from project assistance to program assistance, while utilizing more flexible and proactive direct assistance along with targeted assistance in cooperation with international organizations.

Since the strategy itself expanded both the sectoral priorities and the territorial scope of ODA (Table 1), the question arises as to whether it will be realistically possible to fulfill this commitment with such an extensive territorial (literally global) scope and the increasing number of partner countries.

Not to mention the other competencies and the possibilities of broadening cooperation with other countries or the transfer of partner countries to program or priority countries, which the strategy deals with by stating that "any changes within country categories are made through National Programs approved by the Slovak Government".

At the same time, the strategy has moved away from its ambition to provide continuity in delivering ODA. It gives the Government the option of stopping the provision of assistance to a partner country: "Taking into account Slovak foreign-policy priorities, the volume of Slovak development assistance will gradually be reduced in those countries that make major progress in their EU accession process (acceding countries). Slovakia will halt the provision of development assistance to those developing countries that cease to be developing countries pursuant to the guidelines of the DAC-OECD." Of course, the government's room for maneuver is limited by the logical supposition that it is much harder to stop the provision of assistance (from a moral and political perspective, and in terms of its image) than it is to generously promise assistance to someone. However, the question remains as to why the Slovak Republic does not plan its development assistance so that it is more concentrated, long-term, and stable, and why it does not accept not only the requirements of the international

donor community, but also really use SlovakAid as an instrument of Slovak foreign policy – and thus, for example, help Ukraine, our eastern neighbor, gain membership to NATO, the EU, and the OECD.

In this connection, the need arises for better harmonization of Slovak development assistance with other donors (especially EU member countries) to achieve continuity in assistance and, for example, to gradually transform development assistance projects into pre-accession EU instruments (as was the case with Slovakia, when various forms of assistance from individual EU member countries subsequently appeared in the programs of PHARE, ISPA, or SAPARD). It is therefore a shame that the strategy did not make fuller use of the opportunity for greater cohesion with, for example, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), in the case of selected partner countries. Perhaps it will be possible to compensate for this in the National Programs prepared for the upcoming years.

The creation of an instrument of 'post-development' assistance within SlovakAid can also be reflected upon and discussed in a similar fashion. If development assistance is to become a functional tool of Slovak foreign policy, this concept undoubtedly requires further development. Many of the projects already implemented began with promising and positive cooperation and created immense potential to further develop cooperation with partner countries (such as Kazakhstan and the Western Balkan countries), however, without further support, which can be provided by reducing the volume of financial resources, shortening the implementation period or adjusting the co-financing terms, this cooperation may gradually dissipate. This is also evident in the structure of the SlovakAid projects that have been submitted and approved. Many Slovak organizations strive to maintain their activities within ODA, but the existing system hinders them from continuing their activities (for example, in supporting the expansion of projects and in providing follow up projects), which is why many organizations leave the country in which they implemented a project to go and replicate it in another country. We thus lose the acquired know-how and contacts to partner countries.

Another positive aspect of the strategy is the search for new instruments and forms of assistance provided to partner countries. For example, parallel to the current system of SAMRS, the strategy calls for project proposals for priority countries and sectors and also recommends the use of a more flexible approach through the use of public contracts. Public contracts will be issued to recipient countries which have drawn up Country Strategy Papers. However, this raises questions about the public control of these public contracts, since the strategy does not describe its newly proposed system in greater detail, not to mention the fact that many partner countries lack transparent systems in procuring any goods, work, or services. It would be wise to define this area more clearly, whether it be in the Act, the strategy, or the National Programs.

It is a shame that the strategy did not make fuller use of the opportunity for greater cohesion with, for example, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), in the case of selected partner countries. Perhaps it will be possible to compensate for this in the National Programs prepared for the upcoming years.

The strategy introduces another paradox in the territorial focus of Slovakia's development assistance. As it states itself in assessing previous experience "more narrowly focused activities were more effective, resulting in a stronger impact of development projects, better visibility of aid, and the full utilization of their synergies" and "Slovakia has only limited financial and human resources for development assistance at its disposal. Therefore, it needs to specialize and concentrate its development assistance on a limited number of countries and sectors."

On the other hand, the number of SlovakAid partner countries was increased. In addition, the selection of the partner countries itself raises some doubts, for example, regarding the fact that, so far, there has not been a complex analysis of the successfulness/effectiveness of the projects implemented in individual countries. The selection of priority countries was based on these criteria:

1. Political and economic criteria:
 - coherence with Slovak and EU foreign policy;
 - opportunities to utilize the comparative advantages and potential of Slovak ODA;
 - Slovakia's economic activities (the quality of economic cooperation, or its potential).
2. Development criteria, including criteria for the allocation of resources based on needs and performance*:
 - level of social, economic and political development (Human Development Index – HDI**, accomplishment of MDGs – based on data provided by the UN and the OECD***);
 - urgency for assistance (based on needs identified in documents prepared by international organizations, in national strategies and CSPs);
 - progress made in the country's development and reforms taken to improve social, economic and political development, and progress made in the utilization of funds provided under development assistance;
 - coordination of development efforts with other donors and availability of complementary financial resources for Slovak projects from other donors (possibilities of trilateral cooperation).
3. Logistical and practical criteria:
 - existence of a Slovak diplomatic mission and its technical and human capacities that may be used in order to promote Slovak development projects in a given country (selection, monitoring, evaluation);
 - existing activities and experiences of Slovak actors – private companies, governmental agencies and local authorities, NGOs, experts, historical bonds between that country and Slovakia, existing cooperation;
 - conditions or obstacles for ODA (degree of democracy, security situation, economic and political stability, legislative conditions, quality of governance, level of corruption), the experiences of Slovak Aid and other donors in effective ODA utilization.

4. Success and Effectiveness of Slovak Development Assistance Provided So Far: Impact and sustainability assessment; number of submitted and approved projects and the volume of aid for Slovakia's priority countries in the 2003-2008 period; assessment of estimated success rate and potential of Slovak development assistance projects for any new priority countries.

However, if we take a look at the selected countries (Table 1) and the individual evaluations of the countries selected, we are faced with a number of questions. First of all, were the other potential countries which the Slovak Republic could provide assistance to even considered? Many of the evaluations are more like 'rationalizations' of why the selected country was chosen as an ODA priority country. At the same time, the selection of some of the countries raises questions as to whether the provision of assistance is in compliance with many of the selected criteria, not to mention the priorities and goals of ODA as defined by law and the medium-term strategy itself. Afghanistan can be seen as an example, for it instantly became a program country, despite the fact that we do not have a diplomatic mission in the country, nor does the country have a stable security situation, which discourages many Slovak organizations from realizing projects there, and the MFA itself states that "the possibility of significant support for Slovak development projects on the part of the MFA (in Afghanistan) is considerably limited."⁹ A similarly peculiar decision was made in the case of Tadjikistan. The Slovak Republic does not have a diplomatic mission in the country, mutual relations in all areas are stagnant, and the MFA itself states that "the interest of Slovak organizations in implementing development cooperation projects in Tadjikistan is minimal."⁹

This leads to a number of questions, which cannot be answered by the strategy itself; they will most likely only be answered when the projects are implemented in practice:

1. What impact and results do we in fact expect from SlovakAid in partner countries? Will they be defined by bilateral agreements or strategies? At the same time, it would also be advisable to quantitatively define the anticipated results of SlovakAid in individual countries, so that the intention to evaluate programs and projects could be based on quantitative goals.
2. Will the priorities of SlovakAid change with each new government and each new Minister of Foreign Affairs? It is probably unrealistic to expect apolitical conduct in foreign policy and the blending of domestic and foreign policy. However, the development assistance of the Slovak Republic should remain a 'show case' – an example of an apolitical instrument where politics or the change of government does not play any role.

⁹ "Informácia o oficiálnej rozvojovej pomoci (ODA) poskytnutej Slovenskou republikou v roku 2008"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/389/1/1/>.

THE SECOND YEAR OF SAMRS

Despite personnel problems¹⁰ in 2008, the establishment of the institution which is to be the key actor in the future implementation of bilateral development projects was successful. As of December 31, 2008 the agency had 11 employees, however, significant personnel changes occurred throughout the year. Some discrepancies in the operation of the agency were resolved by the adoption of the new organization regulations of SAMRS, which entered into force on 1 January 2009, introducing, among other things, a new organizational structure of the agency and new project management. This change should bring more effective management and project monitoring, as well as a higher level of targeted responsibilities.

In the year 2008, SAMRS administered 110 SlovakAid projects¹¹ amounting to almost 9.9 million euros and carried out 6 financial operations of humanitarian aid totaling 345 thousand euros. In terms of new projects in 2008, SAMRS invited proposals for 4 new projects and, at the beginning of 2008, it also completed one from 2007. SAMRS received a total of 134 project proposals (requiring financial resources of 16.2 million euros), of which the SlovakAid Project Commission approved 48 (amounting to 4.6 million euros). At the same time, with the goal of multiplying financial resources for development assistance in the course of 2008, SAMRS supported four projects which had gained grants from the European Commission and whose implementation required co-financing from national resources (information and education projects). The provided co-financing resources of SAMRS amounted to 23,000 euros.

Throughout 2008, SAMRS also carried out the micro-grants program of Slovakia's Embassies in Belgrade and Sarajevo. The goal of this program is to offer operational and flexible assistance to non-profit activities, where a single project may receive financial support of up to 5,000 euros. In Serbia, 12 micro-grants of around 50,000 euros were awarded, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the figure was 11 micro-grants of 44,000 euros.

SAMRS also participated in supplying humanitarian aid to six countries in the form of financial transfers of 10.4 million euros. Aid was provided to the civilian population affected by the consequences of the armed conflict in South Ossetia (Georgia), to the civilian population affected by Hurricane Ike (Haiti), to the local population in Kenya (the humanitarian crisis at the beginning of 2008), to the citizens of Kyrgyzstan affected by earthquakes in the Osh province, to the victims of Cyclone Nargis (Myanmar), and to the group of civilians lacking food in the Western Gaza Strip (Palestine, support of the World Food Program through a WFP project).

¹⁰ Directors and project managers were repeatedly replaced – a trend which was to continue during the first half of 2009. See “Výročná správa rozpočtovej organizácie Slovenská agentúra pre medzinárodnú rozvojovú spoluprácu (SAMRS) za rok 2008” formulated on the basis of the Government Resolution no. 1189 from 19 December 2001; [http://www.mzv.sk/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_F822BE3DE07DBD0AC12575BA0032A603_SK/\\$File/final%20vyrocna%20sprava%20SAMRS%202008.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_F822BE3DE07DBD0AC12575BA0032A603_SK/$File/final%20vyrocna%20sprava%20SAMRS%202008.pdf).

¹¹ Ibid. Including projects for multiple years approved in 2007 – total number of 35 projects in the amount of 156.7 million Slovak crowns.

Alongside these activities, SAMRS continues to acquire experience from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). On January 21, 2009 SAMRS and ADA signed a mutual memorandum of understanding for 2009-2011, which will allow for the joint implementation of Slovak and Austrian development assistance projects and improve and strengthen SAMRS capacities, through training and study visits of its employees.

Before this memorandum, a new agreement on cooperation was signed and a new project for 2008-2010, Promotion of the Slovak Transitional Experience and Human Capital in Official Development Assistance, involving the MFA and the UNDP Trust Fund, was prepared in April 2008. The second phase of the UNDP Trust Fund based on this agreement commenced on July 1, 2008. This phase will focus on strengthening Slovakia's cooperation with selected developing countries, consolidating the position of Slovakia and Slovakia's official development assistance in the international context, deploying Slovak experts within international projects in cooperation with UNDP regional centers in priority countries, and resolving the deployment of volunteers as a part of bilateral development cooperation.

FINANCING AND ORIENTATION OF *SLOVAKAID*

The creation of a new legislative and institutional system has also encountered many obstacles. In Slovakia's case, the largest obstacle is the aforementioned limited amount of resources allocated to development assistance.¹² However, the commitments Slovakia has toward the international community (especially the EU, NATO, and the OECD) in the area of official development assistance suggest a need to constantly increase the amount of resources allocated to ODA. This has several implications for SlovakAid. On the one hand, it means the necessity of locating financial resources for ODA activities, and on the other hand, it implies the need to build an entire system for evaluating project realization, its efficiency, meaningfulness, impact, and sustainability, which will then be used to evaluate the purposefulness of the resources utilized.

Like the rest of the donor community, the Slovak Republic has also committed itself to regularly increasing the volume of resources provided to official development assistance. However, given Slovakia's circumstances, the current trend of increasing ODA expenditure from 0.17% of GNP to 0.33% of GNP by 2010 is particularly unrealistic. Even though the slight increase in the absolute figures relating to ODA resources and a lower GDP due to the economic crisis could increase the percentage share in the short-term, it is very likely that after the "restart" of the economy, Slovak ODA will return to where it was. This is largely due to the stagnation in providing sufficient amounts to the project element of development assistance.

¹² This is also based on the fact that the Slovak Republic itself is still a transition country and a significant recipient of assistance from, for example, EU funds, the Norway financial mechanism, EEA, and others.

Table 2: ODA Financing 2002-2008

Year	In thousands of SKK	In thousands of EUR	% ODA/GDP (till 2005) (GNP from 2006)
2002	257 600	8 551	0.024
2003	553 521	18 374	0.046
2004	910 500	30 223	0.072
2005	1 739 551	57 743	0.120
2006	1 638 118	54 376	0.103
2007	1 652 386	54 849	0.093
2008	1 970 000	65 447	0.102

Source: MFA SR (2009), all years have been calculated at the exchange rate of 1 euro = 30,126 SKK.

On the basis of the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic on development assistance in 2008, Slovakia provided official development assistance of 65.4 million euros. Expressed as a percentage, this sum represents a 0.102% share of GNP. In absolute terms, it is so far the greatest sum provided. However, as a percentage of GNP the amount of assistance provided in 2008 only ranks third (since 2002). The reason for this 'percentage' stagnation is the relatively high growth of the economy in recent years and the low volume of resources allocated to bilateral assistance.

However, a significant change occurred in the structure of the assistance distributed where the bilateral component accounted for more than 47% of the total assistance. We should point out that 55% of the bilateral assistance, 17.1 million euros in absolute figures, can be accounted for by the cancellation of Liberia's debt (!) while only 5.5 million euros was approved for SAMRS bilateral projects. This amount was subsequently reduced to approximately 4.8 million euros. The actual use of 'project' resources (realized through SAMRS and the UNDP Trust Fund Bratislava – Belgrade, where some projects are still ongoing) amounted to 5.3 million euros.

As in recent years, all the accessible information on Slovakia's ODA for the previous year is analyzed primarily through quantitative indicators, which represent the key determinant of the assistance provided. However, none of the official documents (from the MFA or SAMRS) include any mention of qualitative indicators. As suggested by the authors of the contribution on ODA in the previous Yearbook, we should state that Slovak ODA still lacks a mechanism for the clear and substantial evaluation of the projects implemented and for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the resources utilized. At the same time, the evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and especially the impacts of the projects are the criteria used in their selection and in the provision of financial resources for their implementation. Furthermore, it is not even possible to find final reports on projects already implemented on the official website of Slovak ODA, which could

provide at least a basic picture of the utilization and targeting of the allocated financial resources. Published analyses of project impacts or their further implementation would also be of great benefit.

As has already been mentioned several times, Slovakia provided both multilateral and bilateral development assistance in 2008.

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

As has traditionally been the case, the Slovak Republic realizes most of its assistance based on its contract commitments relating to its membership in international organizations. In 2008, Slovakia provided more than 53% of all its funding, i.e. 34,571,013 euros, in this manner. The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic contributed the most: 32,190,000 euros to the EU budget, 690,048 euros to the World Bank, and 250,000 euros to the Fund for Western Balkan countries. The Ministry of Finance contributed 5,951 euros to projects implemented by the Council of Europe Development Bank. As part of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, Slovakia cancelled Libya's debt of 63,068 euros. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs donated 959,010 euros¹³ to international organizations, namely, the UN and UN agencies, the OECD, the WFP, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Office of the High Representative of the international community for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Ministry of Agriculture contributed 119,676 euros to both the FAO (109,048 euros) and the WFP (including a voluntary payment of 10,628 euros made by the government). The Ministry of Environment paid membership contributions to international organizations and environmental funds totaling 109,958 euros. The Ministry of Economy played its part in multilateral assistance through its contributions to the WTO and UNIDO of 108,328 euros. The Ministry of Interior provided resources to the Office of the UNHCR for the rental of offices and related services as well as the resources required to cover the operating costs of the IOM. In addition, it provided a membership contribution to the IOM totaling 41,644 euros. The lowest contribution in terms of multilateral assistance (34,017 euros) was the membership contribution provided to the International Atomic Energy Agency by the Nuclear Regulatory Authority.

Nonetheless, bilateral assistance as a percentage of total ODA increased to 47% in 2008, the total amount amounted to 30,875,640 euros; however, this increase was caused by the inclusion of the cancelation of Liberia's debt of 17,101,386 euros, which represents 55% of all bilateral assistance.

¹³ This sum includes the free provision of office space to organizations with a seat in Bratislava, UNDP, IOM, UNHCR, to the amount of 75,796 euros.

THE BILATERAL COMPONENT

Bilateral project development assistance, which is administratively handled and managed by the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS), in accordance with the Act on Development Assistance is a very effective foreign policy instrument. In Slovakia's case, it is the most significant and targeted direct foreign policy instrument, which the individual actors involved can use to expand Slovakia's experience and know-how, participate in broader international cooperation, and prepare the ground for further cooperation with the recipient country. Furthermore, the use of this channel may create an adequate environment for the establishment of Slovak enterprises in the recipient countries.

Despite this, the volume of financial resources allocated to bilateral assistance in 2008 did not change in any significant way, in comparison to previous years. Nonetheless, bilateral assistance as a percentage of total ODA increased to 47% in 2008, the total figure amounted to 30,875,640 euros; however, this increase was caused by the inclusion of the cancelation of Liberia's debt of 17,101,386 euros (which represents 55% of all bilateral assistance). The remaining financial resources (10,112,117 euros) were utilized in realizing projects administratively handled and managed by SAMRS and projects realized directly by the bodies of the state administration (the Ministries of Economy, Environment, Health, the Migration Office, the Nuclear Regulatory Authority, and the Office of Standards, Metrology and Testing). This sum was supplemented by the scholarships provided by the Ministry of Education to students from developing countries.¹⁴ A total of 2,066,373 euros was used to provide humanitarian aid. The remaining sum (1,595,764 euros) represented the administrative expenses of ODA.

Most of the projects were implemented through SAMRS. The financial resources allocated to specific projects represented less than 7% of the ODA total, while bilateral ODA accounted for approximately 15%.

In this context, we should also emphasize that the successful fulfillment of specific ODA goals is dependent upon a large set of factors. However, for Slovak development assistance to be a more effective and targeted instrument, especially given the government priority of more actively incorporating economic diplomacy, it is necessary to allocate more financial resources to ODA and define its goals with a narrower territorial and sectoral focus in accordance with the economic interests of the Slovak Republic. In this regard, Slovak ODA was also 'distributed' rather widely in 2008. Even though sectoral priorities have been narrowed, in many cases, the territorial focus remained broad.

Last year, 33 projects were implemented and concluded in 12 countries.¹⁵ In addition, 34 development projects (one project was canceled) were approved in 13 countries (some of which were already at the implementation phase) and 14 projects focused

¹⁴ For details of the specific projects, see the MFA's "Informácia o oficiálnej rozvojovej pomoci (ODA) poskytnutej Slovenskou republikou v roku 2008"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/389/1/1/>.

¹⁵ Even though these projects were approved in 2007 and most of them began in 2007, the main implementation phase took place during 2008.

on development education were also approved. Two humanitarian aid projects and 23 small projects, supported through the micro-grants framework of the Slovak Embassies in Belgrade and Sarajevo, were implemented alongside humanitarian aid organized by SAMRS in six countries across the world. SAMRS also financially supported four projects which successfully acquired grants from the funds of the European Commission. In total, the Slovak Republic, in 2008, provided assistance amounting to 5,329,635 euros through SAMRS, and the contract and administrative units of BBF and the UNDP Trust Fund, which still has some ongoing projects.

As mentioned above, project development assistance was rather broadly territorially distributed. The largest number of projects – 15 – was realized in Serbia, three per country in Montenegro, Belarus, and Ukraine, two in Macedonia and one per country in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, and Sudan. Two humanitarian projects were implemented in Moldova. However, we should point out that all of these projects were approved in 2007 and thus reflect the priorities defined by the National Program of ODA 2007 analyzed in last year's edition.

HUMANITARIAN AID

Humanitarian aid is a separate component of Slovakia's ODA which has undergone certain changes in the past two years. In 2007, for the first time, an independent fund was created within the MFA budget to provide urgent humanitarian aid to the sum of 330 thousand euros. The same amount was allocated in 2008. In 2008, Slovakia provided humanitarian aid to the citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Myanmar, Sudan, China, Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Haiti, Cuba, and Palestine to a total of 1.9 million euros. Of that amount, direct material assistance provided from the supplies of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic accounted for 1,634,155 euros. The remaining aid (432,218 euros) was provided through SAMRS financial transfers.

The aforementioned facts on ODA financing mean that:

- There is a long-term stagnation in the volume of resources allocated to ODA in relation to the current broadening of the territorial and sectoral focus of SlovakAid;
- In real terms, there has been a fall in the financial resources available for the bilateral component of SlovakAid. In previous years, this component has only been 'saved' by debt relief, which means that the active projects used in implementing SlovakAid are 'disappearing';
- SlovakAid is significantly lagging behind the goals and commitments of financing development assistance, and this will most likely worsen further in 2009, due to the global economic crisis and problems in public finances.

TERRITORIAL AND SECTORAL PRIORITIES IN 2008

In terms of analyzing the development of trends in the provision of project development assistance, the National Program of ODA for 2008, which defined the

target countries and sectoral priorities for 2008, would seem to be an appropriate source. It was on the basis of this document that calls for four proposals relating to projects in priority countries and one proposal for development education projects were issued.¹⁶ From a geographical point of view, the focus of Slovakia's assistance was defined in a slightly different structure. While the program countries remained unchanged (Serbia and Montenegro), the priority project countries were narrowed down to six (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Belarus, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, and Kenya). The third group consisted of other priority countries for Slovak ODA (Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Sudan, Tadjikistan, and Uzbekistan). In comparison with previous years, the sectoral priorities remained unchanged. The only significant difference was the narrower specification of priorities for the six priority project countries.

In 2008 itself, SAMRS organized four calls for project proposals. Slovak organizations submitted 134 proposals for projects totaling almost 16 million euros – including 24 proposals for development education projects that had been submitted in response to calls dating from 2007. Of these proposals, 51 were for projects in Serbia, six in Montenegro, ten per country in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine, five in Kazakhstan, four per country in Kenya, Afghanistan, and Mongolia, three per country in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Macedonia, two per country in Albania and Mozambique, and one per country in Belarus, Sudan, and Tadjikistan. Most of the proposals submitted came from non-governmental organizations who submitted 49% of the projects, followed by businesses with 31%, local governments with 9%, and state and public organizations with 11%.

The project commission approved 14 projects for Serbia and two projects for Montenegro – the program countries of Slovak ODA – and 18 projects for the project countries of Slovak ODA. Among these were three for Mongolia and Kenya, two for Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one per country in Afghanistan, Mozambique, Macedonia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. The breakdown of the type of organizations which began implementing the projects themselves or signed related contracts indicates that most came from the private sector – 15 projects¹⁷ – and non-profit organizations – 13 projects. Two projects submitted by the state administration were approved, as were two from the public administration and two from local governments. In figures, the total amount allocated by SAMRS in support of these projects was 4,222,559 euros. The non-governmental organizations received 1,427,110 euros in order to carry out their activities, the private sector 2,222,627 euros, the state and public administration 378,465 euros, and local governments 194,357 euros.

¹⁶ The call for the submission of development education projects was issued in 2007, but only evaluated in 2008.

¹⁷ One project, which was supposed to be implemented by Ekonom Servis was canceled when the company went into liquidation.

The largest amount of funding was allocated to infrastructure construction and re-construction projects. These projects accounted for almost 60%. They were followed by projects relating to the priority sectors requiring assistance with integration into international organizations, the build-up of democratic institutions, healthcare, and the market environment. In other sectors, the funding amounted to 20,000-30,000 euros.

As can be seen from the allocation, most of the financial resources were distributed to the private sector, in accordance with the government priority of strengthening the economic dimension of development assistance. It is, however, necessary to note that out of the 14 supported 'private' projects as many as six were small infrastructure projects in fields considered by developing countries to be critical to their development (the energy industry, electronics, machinery, agriculture), but mainly of a local nature. Despite the fact that they certainly improved the quality of life for a wider number of citizens, they lacked greater visibility. Besides, businesses were partner organizations in only a few projects, which led to the absence of a longer-term partner relationship. This may also have been caused by "low" financial motivation and the impossibility of realizing "follow-up" projects. Furthermore, we should note that projects focused on supporting economic development, the development of relations with the partner country, or the development of enterprises in the recipient country were not all organized solely by the private sector.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

The number of problems that Slovak ODA will continue to face after 2008 is high, which is why it will be necessary to carry on with the transformation already begun. These problems include the insufficient financing of the ODA and the fact that it is lagging behind in its goal to increase its ratio to GNP; a lack of sufficient resources (especially personnel); low publicity in Slovakia and in partner countries; the debatable results and impacts of some projects; and the broadening of the territorial and sectoral focus of Slovak ODA, which may simultaneously threaten the continuity of activities in some countries (and therefore the credibility of the Slovak Republic) and increase the demands on the implementation aspect of SlovakAid if its capacities are not strengthened by financial and human resources, including the broader support of partners and non-state ODA actors. On the one hand, this situation has been caused by the frequent changes in the foreign policy priorities of the Slovak Republic over the past few years (the external factor), and on the other hand, by problems affecting the system, i.e. the incomplete construction of the SlovakAid system in terms of programming, implementation, and in program and project evaluation.

¹⁸ See list of approved projects at www.slovakaid.sk.

The year 2008 has introduced a number of positive elements into the system of Slovakia's development assistance. However, at the same time, despite extensive "transformational" changes, ODA still lacks many qualitative changes which would make SlovakAid a real 'show case' instrument of Slovak foreign policy.¹⁹

In general, we can partly agree with the assessment of the MFA that "the SlovakAid projects that have been implemented provided significant assistance to aid beneficiaries, made Slovakia yet more visible abroad, deepened our ties with partner countries, paved the way for Slovak organizations striving to effectively establish themselves abroad, and also created new institutional and expert capacities in Slovakia". Partly, because although it is true that the Slovak Republic moved up the scale from zero (especially in the area of project assistance) to five, much greater effort will be required in order to reach ten, the top of the scale.

From our perspective, Slovak ODA – in terms of its capacities, the possibilities available to it, and the oft-mentioned effectiveness – should be concentrated more,

Although it is true that the Slovak Republic moved up the scale from zero (especially in the area of project assistance) to five, much greater effort will be required in order to reach ten, the top of the scale.

territorially and sectorally focused in the long term to ensure that Slovaks would not only travel and work all over the world, but that their development work would bring far more successful results in both developing and partner countries.

At the same time, it is necessary to continue building up capacity, especially in institutional and human terms, at all levels and in all sectors of society. Slovak organizations, for example, surely need repeated support to ensure continuity in their

activities in the projects implemented or even for their further expansion. Similarly, in the expert sector, Slovak experts must specialize both territorially and sectorally, because not all projects can be replicated in all countries with the same success. These are not only challenges solely for the ODA institutions, but also for the entire system of Slovak development assistance. And last but not least, it is crucial that the MFA is not left alone in its efforts to increase political support for Slovak ODA, as a significant instrument of Slovak foreign policy, in relation to other state and budget priorities. In order to gain this support the MFA needs strong partners who are involved in global development schemes.

¹⁹ It should be noted that in the past six years, Slovakia's official development assistance has become one of the key instruments of Slovak foreign policy which can be generally termed as successful with regard to the external conditions within which this instrument was created. With the aid of this instrument, Slovakia has joined the modern countries of the world which actively participate in solving problems in less developed countries. SlovakAid clearly improves our bilateral relations with those countries that accept Slovak assistance. However, there is still great potential for this instrument to be used to improve the image of the Slovak Republic in the world.

REFERENCES

- "Act No. 617/2007 Coll. on the Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/296/1/2>.
- Annual Report. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. Foreign Policy in 2008.* (Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2009).
- "Informácia o oficiálnej rozvojovej pomoci (ODA) poskytnutej Slovenskou republikou v roku 2008"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/389/1/1/>.
- "Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic: 2003-2008"; <http://www.slovakaid.sk/index.php/article/articleview/36/1/2>.
- "Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013"; <http://www.slovakaid.mfa.sk/en/index.php/article/articleview/102/1/2>.
- "National Programme for Slovak Official Development Assistance for 2009", pp. 7-10; <http://www.slovakaid.mfa.sk/en/index.php/article/articleview/103/1/1>.
- "Výročná správa rozpočtovej organizácie Slovenská agentúra pre medzinárodnú rozvojovú spoluprácu (SAMRS) za rok 2008" formulated on the basis of the Government Resolution no. 1189 from 19 December 2001; [http://www.mzv.sk/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_F822BE3DE07DBD0AC12575BA0032A603_SK/\\$File/final%20vyrocna%20sprava%20SAMRS%202008.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/WCM/main.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_F822BE3DE07DBD0AC12575BA0032A603_SK/$File/final%20vyrocna%20sprava%20SAMRS%202008.pdf).

ANNEXES

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE IMPORTANT EVENTS IN FOREIGN POLICY IN 2008

January 9 As part of the regular rotations, new members of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic departed for peacekeeping missions in the Western Balkans: ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the EU umbrella; and KFOR in Kosovo headed by NATO.

January 10 The President of the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus, paid an official visit to Slovakia. During the visit, Václav Klaus held talks with the Slovak President, Ivan Gašparovič, and Prime Minister Robert Fico. The bilateral talks focused on issues of European integration, for example the scheduled adoption of the Euro in Slovakia, which the Czech President warned against, and Czech-Slovak relations, which were evaluated very positively by both sides.

January 12 The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico, visited Malta to celebrate the island's membership in the eurozone. Robert Fico and his Maltese counterpart, Lawrence Gonzi, primarily discussed Malta's experience in preparing for and converting to the euro. Both also talked about investments, commercial trading and enlargement of the Schengen area.

January 15 The Defense Ministers of Slovakia and Albania, František Kašický and Fatmir Mediu, signed an *Agreement on Cooperation in the Military Field* in Bratislava. The Agreement resolves questions concerning defense politics, planning, the enlargement of NATO and membership in NATO. Reform of the armed forces, Slovak participation in operations of international crisis management and the question of Albanian membership in NATO, which Slovakia supports, are also considered. In addition, the Agreement covers cooperation in military education, career development, the training of professional soldiers, English language tuition and cooperation in the field of logistics.

Prepared by Rebecca Murray (murray@sfp.sk) based on the website data of the President of the Slovak Republic, the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic.

January 17 Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš met the NATO Deputy Secretary General, Claudio Bisognier, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa, in Bratislava. The talks focused on the current security situations in Afghanistan and Kosovo, issues in the fight against organized crime and drugs, as well as ways of improving cooperation in these areas.

January 18 During his official visit to Slovakia, the Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, informed the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico, and the President of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, about the US Anti-Missile Defense System planned to be built in Poland and the Czech Republic. The Polish Prime Minister declared that Poland was concerned that the anti-missile shield should conform to the NATO strategy. Both Prime Ministers also discussed interstate infrastructure and the energy sector.

January 28 The Slovak President, Ivan Gašparovič, the Prime Minister, Robert Fico, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ján Kubiš, met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, during his first official visit to Slovakia as the UN Secretary General. The mutual talks focused primarily on the international role of the UN, the performance and activities of Slovakia within the UN Security Council during 2006-2007, Slovak security sector reforms and current international issues. The situation in the Balkans, the issue of Kosovo and the creation of a functioning peacekeeping mission were earmarked as the main UN priorities for the near future. Ban Ki-Moon acknowledged the activities of Slovak UNICYP units in Cyprus and KFOR units in Kosovo.

January 30 The former State Secretary of the Defense Ministry, Jaroslav Baška, became Minister of Defense of the Slovak Republic. He replaced František Kašický, who resigned from office.

February 5 The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, received the ambassadors to the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM), whose members are Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Fuad Ismayilov, Head of the Diplomatic Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the GUAM presidential country, discussed with the Slovak minister the interest of the GUAM countries in cooperating with EU and V4 countries. Ján Kubiš expressed his support for the organization and acknowledged its present activities within the UN and the OECD.

February 12-15 The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ján Kubiš, paid an official visit to the USA. During his visit, Ján Kubiš met with the US Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte, Deputy National Security Advisor James Jeffrey, as well as UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice. The talks focused mainly on the progress Slovakia had made towards fulfilling the security criteria prerequisite to its being included in the visa-waiver program; the status of Kosovo; the situation in Afghanistan; the Anti-Missile Defense System in the Czech Republic and Poland; and the upcoming NATO summit.

February 27 The Government of the Slovak Republic approved an *Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Cuba on Economic Cooperation*. The proposal for the Agreement was also supported by the President of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič.

February 28 The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, made a speech as Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at the OSCE Permanent Council. The aim of his speech was to present the priorities of Slovakia's chairmanship within

the Council of Europe. Ján Kubiš also focused on the mutual relations between the Council of Europe and the OSCE. He further stressed the need to avoid duplicating their activities.

March 1 Canadian immigration authorities announced that citizens of Slovakia no longer need a temporary resident visa to visit Canada. However, this visa waiver does not mean an opening up of the labor market.

March 3 Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico officially visited Greece and became the first Slovak Prime Minister to do so. During his visit, Robert Fico negotiated with the Greek President, Karlos Papoulias, and the Prime Minister, Kostas Karamanlis. After the talks, Prime Minister Fico declared that he would try to establish military cooperation between Slovakia and the Russian Federation via Greece and that both countries would, in the near future, sign the necessary memorandum. Both countries also agreed on their positions regarding the independence of Kosovo.

March 5 The Slovak Republic was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Slovakia took over its one year chairmanship on May 12 assisted by Algeria, Iran, Costa Rica and Germany.

March 11 Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič received his Macedonian counterpart, Branko Crvenkovski, on an official visit to Slovakia. After the talks, President Ivan Gašparovič declared that Macedonia has fulfilled all the criteria for NATO membership and should be granted an invitation to the Alliance together with Croatia at the summit in Bucharest. Prime Minister Robert Fico and Branko Crvenkovski discussed the current political situation in Macedonia following the declaration of Kosovan independence, and the intensification of bilateral cooperation between the two countries, mainly in terms of the economy. Robert Fico expressed his strong support for Macedonia's EU integration ambitions.

March 11 The Minister of Defense of the Slovak Republic, Jaroslav Baška, met with the EU High Representative, Javier Solana, Chief Executive of the European Defense Agency Alexander Weis and NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer in Brussels. The bilateral talks with Javier Solana focused on Slovakia's priorities within European Security and Defense Policy, on Slovak involvement in creating EU battle groups and the future activities of the EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Talks with Alexander Weis were aimed at achieving results in the areas of the European defense market and technological and industrial defense bases.

March 12 Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Pavol Paška undertook the first historic official visit of an NC SR Speaker to India. During his stay, Pavol Paška met Speaker of the Lower Chamber of the Indian Parliament Lok Sabh and Speaker of the Upper Chamber Rajy Sabh. The investment opportunities of both countries were discussed.

March 17 The Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Robert Kaliňák, signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* that is a crucial milestone in the process of admitting the Slovak Republic to the US Visa Waiver Program in Washington. Important components of the memorandum include the security conditions for citizens who would like to travel to the USA. The Memorandum is similar to documents which the US has already signed with the Czech Republic, Estonia and Lithuania.

April 2-4 The Slovak delegation led by the President of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, participated in the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania. In his speech, Ivan Gašparovič declared

his support for the NATO open door policy which should contribute to enlarging the zone of stability and security in Europe. At the same time, Ivan Gašparovič expressed Slovakia's support for Albanian, Croatian and Macedonian membership in the Alliance as well as for the Partnership Action Plans for Ukraine and Georgia.

April 3 The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico, received the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Viktor Zubkov. The bilateral talks primarily concerned Slovak-Russian relations and opportunities to further intensify these, mainly in the economic and energy spheres. Both partners agreed to support the scheduled agreement on the long-term supply of natural gas to Slovakia. Robert Fico also declared that construction of the broad-gauge railway, leading from Russia to Vienna via Slovakia, should begin within two years.

April 10 Slovak Defense Minister Jaroslav Baška met his counterpart, Veselin Bliznakov, in Bulgaria. Their talks centered on the findings of the Bucharest NATO Summit and served as an exchange of opinion on the undertakings of Slovakia and Bulgaria in foreign missions. Both partners also outlined the possibility of cooperation between the national armed forces.

April 10 The National Council of the Slovak Republic ratified the *Treaty of Lisbon*.

April 14 President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič addressed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg as a part of Slovakia's Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers in the Council of Europe. In his speech, Ivan Gašparovič mentioned the situation of the Roma in Slovakia and positively evaluated cooperation with the European Court of Human Rights.

April 23 The Minister of Defense of the Slovak Republic, Jaroslav Baška, received the Minister of Defense of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Eimert van Middelkoop. Discussions focused on the performance of Slovak units in ISAF operations in Afghanistan. Both Ministers signed the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministries*.

May 2-3 The 15th Summit of Central and Eastern European Head of States took place in the Macedonian town of Ohrid. The President of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, gave a speech as part of the thematic panel dedicated to the challenges of EU enlargement.

May 7 Slovakia's six month Chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers came to an end. Foreign Affairs Minister Ján Kubiš officially handed over the presidency to the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt. During its six month mandate, Slovakia built on the activities of the previous presidencies with the aim of supporting the widest possible implementation of the priorities set out at the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe.

May 13-14 The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico, paid an official visit to the State of Israel on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of its foundation. During his talks with Israeli President Shimon Peres, R. Fico focused on possible future cooperation in the economic field. Besides meeting with President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Robert Fico also met with representatives of the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, to discuss the fight against terrorism.

May 21 The Slovak Republic was elected to the UN Council for Human Rights during the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly in New York for 2008-2011, with 135 UN member states voting in favor.

May 22-23 At the International Energy Security Summit held in Kiev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš met with Deputy Prime Minister Hryhoriy Nemyria, the leader of the opposition Party of Regions and former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych and Minister of Foreign Affairs Volodymyr Ohryzko. During the negotiations, Ján Kubiš expressed Slovakia's interest in cooperating closely with Ukraine in implementing the project concerning the transportation of Caspian oil through Slovak territory as well as in signing the agreement on the supply of Ukrainian electricity.

June 15-16 Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico attended the Official Summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries. The heads of states evaluated the Czech presidency and the program of the upcoming Polish presidency was introduced. Among other things they also discussed questions of regional cooperation, support for the countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy. The talks were also attended by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Discussions were held on the French and Czech EU presidencies and other EU issues.

June 18 Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Ján Kubiš received the European Union's Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby. Both partners discussed current developments in the region of Southern Caucasus, including the integration efforts and future perspectives for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. They expressed an interest in finding a peaceful solution for the conflict region in line with international law.

June 19 The Slovak delegation led by the Slovak Prime Minister, Robert Fico, attended the Council of Europe meeting in Brussels. For Slovakia, the most important issue was adopting a political decision on introducing the Euro in Slovakia. European leaders approved the adoption of the common European currency in the Slovak Republic from January 1, 2009.

June 23-25 Slovakia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ján Kubiš visited Turkmenistan, where he met with President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, Speaker of Parliament Akja Nurberdieva, and his counterpart Rashid Meredov. In Ashgabat, Ján Kubiš attended the opening reception of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) led by Slovak diplomat Miroslav Jenča.

June 25 The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico, the Czech Prime Minister, Mirek Topolánek, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Prague Spring. The Prime Ministers and Bundestag President Norbert Lammert unveiled an exhibition called *Faces of the Prague Spring: Year 1968 in Czechoslovak Photography* in Berlin.

July 7 Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Dušan Čaplovič participated in the celebrations for the *Day of Slovaks* in the Hungarian city of Santov. At a meeting with the Minister heading the Office of the Government of Hungary, Péter Kiss, the implementation of the 14-point program of cooperation *Common Past, Common Future in the light of Common Projects* was reviewed. The program was the subject of discussions between Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico and Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in June 2007.

July 8 ECOFIN Council decided that Slovakia would adopt the euro as of January 1, 2009. The Council also decided that the conversion rate would be set at 30.1260 Slovak crowns to the euro.

July 13 The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Robert Fico, and the Slovak delegation took part in the meeting of the Head of States and Governments of the Barcelona Process: Union

for the Mediterranean – EUROMED. The talks mainly concentrated on the issues of economic development, food safety, water, energy, the environment, civil defense and naval security.

August 8 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, outlined Slovakia's position on the conflict in Georgia. He called for the immediate suspension of military operations and for the adoption of a peaceful solution to the conflict, respecting the principle of sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Georgia. Subsequently, the crisis staff held a meeting and discussed the most suitable and rapid means of evacuating Slovak citizens from the areas threatened by the conflict in Georgia.

August 8-10 Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Dušan Čaplovič paid an official visit to Serbia, where he met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economy and Regional Development of Serbia, Mladan Dinkić, and Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Science and Technological Development, Božidar Delić. The bilateral talks focused on mutual cooperation in the areas of science and research, business, the transfer of technologies and also on supporting projects aimed at integrating Serbia into the EU.

August 21-23 The Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, General Ľubomír Bulík, and the Chief of the General Staff of the Hungarian Armed Forces, General András Havril, visited Cyprus to ensure that the Slovak-Hungarian contingent was fulfilling its role within the UNFICYP mission. General Ľubomír Bulík visited the Camp Tatra Engineering Unit, the Main Camp of Sector 4, the General Štefánik Camp in the town of Famagusta and the patrol bases located directly in the buffer zone separating the Greek and Turkish sides of the island.

August 26 The Slovak Republic announced that it did not agree with Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In reaction to the steps of the Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that Slovakia respects the territorial integrity of Georgia.

September 1 During the Extraordinary European Council Meeting held in Brussels, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico discussed questions concerning current Slovak-Hungarian bilateral relations and opportunities for further development with his Hungarian counterpart.

September 4 Portuguese President Aníbal Cavaco Silva met with President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič during his official visit to Slovakia. Both parties discussed possible cooperation in using energy from renewable resources. Ivan Gašparovič stated that this was highly topical due to the fact that Slovakia had committed itself to shutting down the blocks of the nuclear power plant at Jaslovské Bohunice and needs to solve the problem of energy sufficiency.

September 8 The Slovak delegation attended the 9th meeting of the UN Council for Human Rights, which took place in Geneva. The debates focused mainly on upholding human rights in Sudan, renewing the mandates for individual reporters for Burundi, Haiti, Liberia and Cambodia and the problem of the global food crisis.

September 12-13 Another round of the regular meetings between the Presidents of the V4 countries took place in Piešťany. At the meeting, the Presidents reviewed the current situation and discussed possible perspectives for cooperation within the V4. The issues of Schengen, the free movement of people and labor, issues of illegal migration and cross-border crime were discussed. The Presidents also focused on questions of foreign policy, particularly in the context of developments in the Georgian-Russian conflict and the V4 position regarding this.

October 7-13 An official Slovak delegation paid a visit to the USA. During the meeting with US President George W. Bush, President Ivan Gašparovič mainly discussed the question of lifting the visa requirements. President G.W. Bush positively evaluated the work of Slovakia within NATO, the activities of Slovakia in combating terrorism and also the intention to increase the Slovak military presence in Afghanistan operations by 100%. Minister of Interior Robert Kaliňák signed a bilateral agreement with the US Secretary for Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, on intensifying cooperation in preventing and combating criminal activity.

October 13 The Slovak Prime Minister, Robert Fico, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, visited the Republic of Serbia. Both politicians were received by Serbian President Boris Tadić and Prime Minister Mirek Cvetković. The talks concentrated on Slovak-Serbian bilateral relations, economic and trade cooperation, the issue of Kosovo, and Serbian integration into the EU.

October 15-16 Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš and Prime Minister Robert Fico attended a European Council meeting in Brussels, where ways of coordinating strategies for dealing with the financial crisis were discussed. In addition, future developments concerning the *Treaty of Lisbon*; climate change; strengthening the energy security of the EU; and the instability regarding food and oil prices were also discussed. Ján Kubiš made use of this occasion to informally meet with the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kinga Göncz.

October 17 Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš participated in the conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs entitled *Common World: Progress through Diversity* in the Kazakh capital, Astana. Amongst other things, Ján Kubiš and his Kazakh counterpart, Marat Tajin, discussed deepening mutual cooperation and economic cooperation. Both sides also discussed the need to sign a memorandum on cooperation in the field of education in the near future.

October 23-24 At the invitation of the President of Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, the British monarch, Queen Elisabeth II, and her husband Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, paid an official two day visit to Slovakia. It was the first visit of the British Royal couple since the founding of the independent Slovak Republic.

October 24-29 The Slovak Republic opened a new embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam. The office was officially opened by Prime Minister Robert Fico on his official visit to Vietnam. Robert Fico also met with the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Nguyen Tan Dung, and other politicians. The delegation signed a bilateral agreement on protecting and supporting investment, with the aim of avoiding double taxation.

October 28-30 President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič paid an official visit to the Republic of Croatia. The Slovak President expressed his full support for Croatia in its EU and NATO aspirations and confirmed the signing of the ratification document as part of the protocol on Croatia's accession to NATO. Ivan Gašparovič highlighted the cooperation of both countries in the fields of trade and economic relations and thanked Croatian citizens for their help following the tragic Slovak coach accident near the town of Gospić.

November 3 Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš held informal talks with his Hungarian counterpart Kinga Göncz at a meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU and Mediterranean in Marseille. Ján Kubiš asked his Hungarian partner to see that the Hungarian government investigate the case concerning the anti-Slovak provocations of extrem-

ists, which took place during demonstrations outside the Slovak Embassy in Budapest. Kinga Göncz reciprocally requested a detailed inquiry into the events that occurred during a football match in Dunajská Streda.

November 15 After talks held in Komárno, the Slovak and Hungarian Prime Ministers adopted a Mutual Declaration against Extremism aimed at combating radicalism and violence. Both sides promised to cooperate in investigating such acts and confirmed their interest in the peaceful coexistence of both nations. Robert Fico and Ferenc Gyurcsány also committed themselves to cooperating on the issue of national minorities. Ministers of Foreign Affairs Ján Kubiš and Kinga Göncz held discussions in Komárno as well.

November 17 The United States of America officially lifted the visa requirements for citizens of the Slovak Republic traveling to the USA. Travelers are now simply required to register electronically, by completing the ESTA form available via the internet. This service is free. A biometric passport valid for at least six months and a return flight ticket within 90 days are needed to register via the ESTA system.

November 19-20 A meeting of the NATO Military Committee at the level of the Chiefs of Defense of NATO member states took place. Slovakia was represented by the Chief of the General Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces, General Ľubomír Bulík. The debate focused on strategic questions concerning the ongoing operations under NATO (ISAF, KFOR) and current issues of the military implications of the fight against sea piracy. The NATO Military Committee also dealt with current questions regarding relations between NATO and Russia in the new strategic environment.

December 6 President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič and Hungarian President László Sólyom met in Nové Zámky for a working conference on ways of improving mutual relations between Slovakia and Hungary. The Hungarian President presented a three-point proposal to the Slovak Republic suggesting that preparations for a common history school textbook be speeded up; that the post of ombudsman for national minorities should be created; and, that a law on national minorities should be put before parliament. Ivan Gašparovič stated that Slovakia already has an ombudsman who handles problems concerning the national minorities and therefore does not require another one. With regards the initiation of a law on national minorities, Ivan Gašparovič stated that this demand is beyond his competences.

December 17 At a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, it was decided that the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Kiev will continue to hold the function of a Contact Point Embassy for NATO in Ukraine for the period 2009-2010. As Slovakia has held this position for the last two years, this decision is indicative of the fact that Slovak diplomacy in Ukraine is regarded in highly positive terms.

December 17 The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, accepted the offer of the post of Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe based in Geneva. Prime Minister Robert Fico thanked him for his work for the Slovak administration.

December 28 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic condemned the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas in Gaza after the one-sided denouncement of the pact on non-aggression by Palestinian extremists and called for both sides to put an immediate stop to the violence. At the same time, it expressed its deep concerns regarding the high number of civilian casualties in the Palestinian areas in the Gaza strip and expressed its deep condolences to the families of the victims. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Israel to abstain from using disproportionate force and to take into consideration the risk of spreading conflict in the area.

LIST OF TREATIES CONCLUDED BETWEEN SLOVAKIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN 2008

PRESIDENTIAL TREATIES

1. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine on the Local Border Traffic (Bratislava, May 30, 2008)

INTERGOVERNMENTAL TREATIES

1. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Federal Government of the Republic of Austria on the Mutual Protection of Classified Information (Bratislava, March 14, 2008)
2. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the United Nations Organization on the Enforcement of Sentences Imposed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (The Hague, April 7, 2008)
3. Protocol of the Intergovernmental Trilateral Agreement on the Settlement of the Foreign State Debt of Syria (Damascus, May 18, 2008)

4. Slovak-French Partnership – Political Declaration
(Paris, September 17, 2008)
5. Slovak-French Partnership – Action Plan
(Paris, September 17, 2008)
6. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Federal Government of the Republic of Austria on the Establishment of the Joint Contact Point Jarovce-Kittsee
(Prague, May 15, 2008)
7. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the United States of America on the Exchange of Information from the Screening of Known Terrorists or Persons Suspected of Engaging in Terrorism
(Bratislava, October 2, 2008)
8. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Austrian Federal Government on changing and amending the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Austrian Federal Government on the Establishment of Border Checkpoints and the Execution of the Border Control Procedure in Rail Transport on Transiting Train from April 28, 2004
(Exchange of notes on September 10, 2008 and September 15, 2008)
9. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on International Road Transport of Passengers and Goods
(Bratislava, March 11, 2008)
10. Administrative Agreement on Cooperation between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Hungary with the goal of implementing the Council Regulation (EC) No. 343/2003 from 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national
(Hévíz, October 3, 2008)

MINISTERIAL TREATIES

1. Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth of Romania in the field of Education for the years 2007-2010
(Bucharest, February 6, 2008)
2. Protocol on the Establishment of Bilingual Sections in Secondary Schools in the Slovak Republic concluded between the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Republic
(Bratislava, April 24, 2008)

3. Protocol on Cooperation concerning the European Integration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania (Bratislava, April 25, 2008)
4. Plan of Cooperation in the field of Health and Medical Sciences between the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Health of the State of Israel for the years 2008-2010 (Tel Aviv, May 27, 2008)
5. Program of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania in the field of Education (Bratislava, June 10, 2008)
6. Program of Cooperation in the field of Education, Science, Youth and Sports between the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus for the years 2008-2011 (Nicosia, June 9, 2008)
7. Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Hungary on Cooperation in the Fight Against Cancer for the years 2008-2010 (Budapest, July 3, 2008)
8. Agreement between the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Albania on Cooperation in the field of Health (Geneva, May 19, 2008)
9. Measures of Slovak-Ukrainian Cooperation on Approaching EU Standards in 2008 (Bratislava, May 30, 2008)
10. Financial Memorandum between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro (New York, September 26, 2008)
11. Financial Memorandum between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Serbia (Belgrade, September 30, 2008)
12. Program of Cooperation in the field of Education and Culture between the Slovak Republic and the Kingdom of Spain for the years 2008-2011 (Bratislava, October 28, 2008)
13. Agreement between the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria on Cooperation in the field of Social Welfare (Bratislava, February 18, 2008)
14. Program of Cooperation in the field of Education and Culture between the Slovak Republic and the Hellenic Republic for the years 2008-2011 (Bratislava, December 3, 2008)

MULTILATERAL CONVENTIONS AND TREATIES

1. Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking Human entered into force for the SR on February 1, 2008
2. Air Transport Agreement between the EU and EC Member States and the USA entered into force for the SR on March 30, 2008
3. Convention on International Access to Justice entered into force for the SR on November 1, 2008
4. Amendment of the Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement on International Trade Marks entered into force for the SR on September 1, 2008
5. Agreement changing and amending the Partnership Agreement between the Members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States on the one hand and the EC Member States on the other entered into force for the SR on July 1, 2008
6. Internal Agreement between the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the Financing of Community Aid under the Multi-Annual Financial Framework for the period 2008-2013 in accordance with the African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ACP) – EC Partnership Agreement and on the Allocation of Financial Assistance for the Overseas Countries and Territories to which part four of the Treaty Establishing the EC applies entered into force for the SR on July 1, 2008
7. Internal Agreement between the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council amending the Internal Agreement of 18 September 2000 on the Implementation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific states – EC Partnership Agreement entered into force for the SR on July 1, 2008
8. Declaration of the SR on Articles 40 and 41 of the Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement of June 14, 1985 entered into force for the SR on June 25, 2008
9. Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterways (CMNI) entered into force for the SR on March 1, 2008
10. Protocol to the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) entered into force for the SR on May 20, 2008
11. Convention on Cybercrime entered into force for the SR on May 1, 2008

SELECTED DOCUMENTS WITH FOREIGN POLICY IMPACT SUBMITTED TO SESSIONS OF THE SR GOVERNMENT IN 2008

I. STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

1.1. BASIC FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS OF SLOVAKIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign Policy Orientation of the Slovak Republic for 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/6A3B8D2E8FC3BB33C12574030038402E?OpenDocument>

National Program of the Official Development Assistance for 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/CE9FD883E2A8854AC12574170028E7DE?OpenDocument>

Concept of the State Policy on the Care of Slovaks Living Abroad until 201

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/06DE0DEE29655DA9C12574A40046810F?OpenDocument>

Proposal to conclude the political declaration and action plan of the Slovak-French strategic partnership

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/D1A3F4BA3A3AAB51C12574BB002E3C7B?OpenDocument>

1.2. EURO

Update of the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Slovak Republic between 2008 and 2009

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/8B92D4E9F816F86BC1257427003661A0?OpenDocument>

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/63ADBA610DCE9077C12574CC003F82B9?OpenDocument>

Based on Information of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic prepared by Tomáš Siviček, Slovak Atlantic Commission(tomas.sivicek@ata-sac.org). Documents available in Slovak only.

II. STANDPOINTS AND POSITIONS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

2.1. EUROPEAN UNION

Proposal of the priorities of the Slovak Republic during the 18-month presidencies of France, the Czech Republic and Sweden in the EU Council

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/88C5B6C0DEC7371CC12574D7002E1789?OpenDocument>

Draft position of the Slovak Republic on the review of the EU budget for 2008/2009

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E67CBDA15984BA50C125740B0049A797?OpenDocument>

Procedure for Preparation of the Slovak Republic's position on the integrated climate and energy package of the EC

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F1A4BE26F8447912C1257405004B5ED6?OpenDocument>

Monitoring of the developments in the Slovak Republic's positions on draft legal acts of the European Union

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/8C2564B58897C7DAC12574630029E292?OpenDocument>

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/1CBA3F545470E355C12574FA002F4C31?OpenDocument>

2.2. TREATY OF LISBON

Analysis of the effects of the Treaty of Lisbon on the system of laws of the Slovak Republic and on the competence of individual departments should the treaty take effect

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/56148B440465B066C12574670046E850?OpenDocument>

III. REPORTS ON THE RESULTS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND NEGOTIATIONS

3.1. FOREIGN OFFICIAL AND WORKING VISITS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Information on the proceedings and results of the working visit by Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on January 20-21, 2008 and the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ján Kubiš, on January 20-22, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/4C8B60D83FCC113CC12573E700514607?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the official visit by a delegation led by Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on February 28, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A6A8EE5408A4A4FDC1257408004C28D9?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the official visit by a delegation led by Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico to the Hellenic Republic on March 3, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/31401D1CB16E7707C12574120028E468?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the official visit by Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico to the Helvetic Confederation on April 14, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/70AC48BBB6C05B49C125743D0040E9F4?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceeding and results of the official visit by Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico to Bosnias and Herzegovina on June 2, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/2065411307CD12CEC125746C00492464?OpenDocument>

Report on the participation of the delegation of the Slovak Republic Government under the leadership of Robert Fico, the Prime Minister, at the summit of the representatives of states and governments of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean in Paris on July 13, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FDB5E2A143DB9477C12574A30021C39C?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the official visit of Robert Fico, the Prime Minister, to the Czech Republic on August 21, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/C5143EB37456C453C12574BA001D7E5A?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the official visit of Premier Fico to the Kingdom of Norway on September 12, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/908C5B194BE2AF81C12574D6002E552F?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the working visit to France of the Prime Minister, Robert Fico, on September 17 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/959AAAEC59CE9D03C12574D30022C8A0?OpenDocument>

Information on the agenda and results of the working visit to the Republic of Serbia by the Prime Minister, Robert Fico, on 13 October 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A67501941780C3C2C12574F20045A690?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the official visit of Prime Minister Fico to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on October 25 – 29, 2008 and on the participation of the delegation of the Slovak Republic under the leadership of Ján Kubiš, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM7) in Beijing, China on October 24-25, 2008.

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/8B8C418F51AA4587C12574FD00487EB9?OpenDocument>

3.2. FOREIGN OFFICIAL AND WORKING VISITS BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Information on the proceedings and results of the working visit by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš to the USA on February 11-15, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/AF9CFA7CEBF0A638C12573FA0049E252?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the working visit by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš to the Kingdom of Sweden on February 18-19, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/CF73827B50505DC5C125740400324B96?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the working visit by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Ján Kubiš in Strasbourg on April 14-15, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F3F1E41B846FC6DDC1257441003DF6DC?OpenDocument>

3.3. FOREIGN VISITS OF OTHER STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Information on the agenda and results of the official visit of the president of the Slovak Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, to the USA from 7 to 11 October 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/50664F13D3FD443BC12574EB004524A4?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the working visit of Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister for the Knowledge-based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities, to Ethiopia on March 3-7, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/323594B6C188F4B9C125741E00220605?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the working visit of Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister for the Knowledge-based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities, to the Kingdom of Sweden on April 10-13, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/844A5DBB8DBFAEE4C125744E00304D52?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the working visit of Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister for the Knowledge-based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities to Germany on April 22-25, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A367F8FE4C0316B5C125744E002F80AD?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the working visit to Croatia of the deputy prime minister for knowledge society, European affairs, human rights and minorities, Dušan Čaplovič from 31 August to 3 September 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F3E8077DA7A9E12FC12574CF003480BD?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the working visit of Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister for the Knowledge-based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities, to Switzerland on September 26-28, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/54F5B96D1B95E11BC12574E50044F922?OpenDocument>

3.4. FOREIGN VISITS TO THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Information on the proceedings and results of the official visit by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland Donald Tusk to the Slovak Republic on January 18, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/55AB515E1BF80D51C12573E500371E80?OpenDocument>

Information on the official visit by Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Viktor Zubkov to the Slovak Republic on April 3-4, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/16624145F96799E5C125742C002A956C?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the working visit of Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Holland, to the Slovak Republic on November 12, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/4A427FDCBACDC0E2C1257514002C005A?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the meeting of Robert Fico, the Prime Minister and Ferencz Gyurcsány, the Prime Minister of the Hungarian Government on November 15, 2008 in Komárno
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/ED1C0A909F166CCEC1257514002CB8C2?OpenDocument>

3.5. EUROPEAN UNION

Report on the Signing of the Treaty of Lisbon on December 13, 2007 in Lisbon and on the proceedings and results of the European Council in Brussels on December 14, 2007
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FE2F4755D6BA9B3BC12573D40044DA91?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the working visit by a delegation of the Portuguese EU Presidency led by Prime Minister of the Republic of Portugal José Sócrates to the Slovak Republic on December 21-22, 2007 on the occasion of ceremony of the Slovak Republic's entry to the Schengen area
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/DB628B5C13617344C12573D700482AA8?OpenDocument>

Report on the proceedings and results of the European Council in Brussels on March 13-14, 2008
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/820BFA2F9B5DE0C2C125743200412B1E?OpenDocument>

Report on the proceedings and results of the European Council in Brussels on June 19-20, 2008
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/963AC6E235A9C3F7C125748E00291582?OpenDocument>

Report on the proceedings and outcomes of the extraordinary session of the European Council in Brussels on September 1, 2008
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A5965DB4A0F5F5F3C12574DB00455286?OpenDocument>

Report on the proceedings and outcomes of the session of the European Council in Brussels on October 15-16, 2008
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/891CA7FCEA4479C1C125750500398401?OpenDocument>

Report on the proceedings and outcomes of the session of the European Council in Brussels on November 7, 2008
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/9E7F44178D3FF310C1257516003F53F2?OpenDocument>

3.6. V4

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries and Slovenia (Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, Ostrava, December 9-10, 2007)
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FA13CA9E8763EB83C12573C40028BAF9?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries and the president of the Republic of France Nicolas Sarkozy (Prague, June 15-16, 2008)
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F96B2DD2142D77CEC1257479002739FB?OpenDocument>

Information regarding the proceedings and outcomes of the summit of the prime ministers of the Visegrad Group countries and the countries of the Baltic Council of Ministers (Warsaw, November 5, 2008)
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E79149414608D22EC125750B003820A1?OpenDocument>

3.7. UN

Information on results of negotiations of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ján Kubiš in New York and Washington on December 16-12, 2007 in connection with the end of non-permanent membership of the Slovak Republic in the UN Security Council

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/0C1632864C316C1EC12573D0004A0749?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the main part of the 62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/D224C33AFF6E70D0C12573EF00305EA9?OpenDocument>

3.8. OTHER MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS AND MEETINGS

Information on the proceedings and results of the 34th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris on October 16 – November 11, 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E0E4618297E8CE5BC12573BE003F2389?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and outcomes of the 1st Session of the European Nuclear Energy Forum in Bratislava

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/785D7CC1C5174FCBC12573CA002E91AD?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the 8th Conference of Health Ministers from the member countries of the Council of Europe, “People on the move: Challenges to health systems and human rights” held in Bratislava on November 22-23, 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/222B1C2F34313AF1C12573CC0028223D?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the 15th Session of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Madrid on November 29-30, 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F7027A0FD154788F412573E1004D64F8?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the 34th Session of the FAO Conference

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/8148B4A39D3FC7DDC12573FD003078AB?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the 17th General Assembly of the UN WTO in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia on November 22-29, 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/4E93DF33AAB2A95EC1257401004245EA?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of 12th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/2A6CE0076F54CC24C125746700372B3F?OpenDocument>

Report on the proceedings and outcomes of the Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions in Dublin

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/DDC12B84DC7AB3ACC1257479003D7E90?OpenDocument>

IV. OTHER REPORTS, ASSESSMENTS AND PROPOSALS

4.1. REPORTS ON THE BASIC FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

Report on the Implementation of Slovak Foreign Policy Tasks in 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/686A76C0A4A59980C1257402002FE21A?OpenDocument>

Information on Official Development Assistance Provided by the Slovak Republic in 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/4196CD18F45BCE13C125742F0044ED6D?OpenDocument>

4.2. EUROPEAN UNION

Summary report on the fourth year of the Slovak Republic's membership in the European Union between May 1, 2007 – April 30, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/94DDDDA7DBF8CE5FC125746A002ED90F?OpenDocument>

National Convention on the European Union project (2007 Report on Activities)

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/EB7FD46F61046982C12573F3003361D9?OpenDocument>

Information on the Strategic report on the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/8F1F9ABD9DD1C45FC12573F6004B9C23?OpenDocument>

Report on the personnel representing the Slovak Republic in European Union institutions in 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F97CFB12D4E9515DC125744E00322893?OpenDocument>

Interim report on the implementation of the climate energy package in the Slovak Republic.

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FED8AF57F5A0013AC125745E00402B92?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the ratification of the Agreement on Stabilization and Association between the European Communities and its member states and Bosnia and Herzegovina

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/B16C6F54EF5339E5C12574DC0046A7A0?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the candidature for the placement of the Agency for the Cooperation of Regulatory Authorities in the energy industry in the SR

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/87E73B5B33A7D048C12574E300247269?OpenDocument>

Analysis of the situation regarding the rights and obligations resulting from Slovakia's membership in the EU with a view to maximising its potential

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/DF7CBEA25CDAB84DC12574F20047F5AC?OpenDocument>

Information on the course of action of the relative regarding the Decision of the Commission on the Slovak legal regulations related to hybrid postal services

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A294515B1FEB3BFEC125750C002BF5A1?OpenDocument>

Interim assessment on the progress in negotiations and the current state of preparedness of the SR for the implementation of the integrated energy and climate change package

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A772E6A9DD46EEA1C125750F0034E666?OpenDocument>

Information on the results of the pre-selection round in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture, on the basis of a report of the Selection Committee of the event 'European Capital of Culture – Slovakia 2013'

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/D2DF3A12D1BBFA58C12574640041E62D?OpenDocument>

4.3. UN

Evaluation of the Slovak Republic in the UN Security Council in 2006-2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/013163601566017CC12573F6002F1EA3?OpenDocument>

Voluntary Pledges and Commitments to the Slovak Republic's candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/C972581D88444561C12573F60030A5C5?OpenDocument>

Information on securing the membership of the Slovak Republic in the UN Human Rights Council

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FAFD7321ED0C045BC12574790027CB4E?OpenDocument>

Information on the establishment of the Regional Office of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the proposal for its location in Bratislava

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/7F2F2D922DE19135C12574A20043AE05?OpenDocument>

Information on the development of individual complaints against the Slovak Republic in the UN system in the field of human rights and basic freedoms

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/223C495A7439D33DC12574A900491F70?OpenDocument>

Proposal to conclude of the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the United Nations on the enforcement of sentences imposed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FE56DEB2D38BBA49C12573EF00280E77?OpenDocument>

4.4. EURO

Report on the Fulfilment of the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Slovak Republic of December 31, 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/3E431634760AFC8FC12573E20047CC9F?OpenDocument>

Report on negotiations regarding the change of central parity and transactions in the Slovak Crown before the official notification regarding the central parity change

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E78E6F9BB2D330F6C12574AA0041D5BF?OpenDocument>

Progress report on the preparation for the adoption of the euro in the SR

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/56DEA04550513A1AC125745C0045ADA3?OpenDocument>

Progress report of June 29, 2008 on the preparation for the Euro adoption in the SR

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/2577B96A8DD25F64C12574860034478B?OpenDocument>

Progress report of July 29, 2008 on the preparation for the euro adoption in the SR

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E5E4BBDD755494239C12574A40034901E?OpenDocument>

Progress report of August 29, 2008 on the preparation for the euro adoption in the SR
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/70EA880DA372BD9BC12574CC004055F5?OpenDocument>

Progress report of September 29, 2008 on the preparation for the euro adoption in the SR
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/BE8C6D5EF65C95C7C12574E900327FE6?OpenDocument>

Progress report of October 29, 2008 on the preparation for the euro adoption in the SR
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/C17E2D9440AA0CBEC125750B00455BBC?OpenDocument>

4.5. EU LEGISLATION – APPROXIMATION, TRANSPOSITION

Information on the approximation ordinances of the Government of the Slovak Republic issued in the 2nd half of 2007 and on the intention to adopt the approximation ordinances of the Government of the Slovak Republic in the 1st half of 2008
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/1248CEBC3D1350D0C12573CC00296F3C?OpenDocument>

Information on the transposition deficit and the timetable for its elimination
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/D8725E72F569311AC12573EF002D73D8?OpenDocument>
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A08055D12ACBDD86C12574AD00334BA1?OpenDocument>

Information on the approximation ordinances of the Government of the Slovak Republic issued in the 1st of 2008 and on the intention to adopt the approximation ordinances of the Government of the Slovak Republic in the 2nd half of 2008
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/C7A20A2440339E13C125747B003F5DC2?OpenDocument>

Proposal for determining the responsibilities of ministries and other central state government authorities for the application and adoption of measures of the national level regarding EC directives and EC/EU decisions
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/D8014F59FAF5C23AC1257516004A33CB?OpenDocument>

4.6. FINANCIAL MECHANISMS / EU FUNDS

Draft Communication Plan for implementation of the National Strategy for the Protection of the European Community's Financial Interests in the Slovak Republic
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E3FB94F8AA0415CEC12573C5003D469E?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the Common Operational Program ENPI Hungary – Slovakia – Romania – Ukraine 2007-2013
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/DAF1DE36C6F79C9EC12573B000491815?OpenDocument>

Report on the readiness of the Slovak Republic to use structural funds and the Cohesion Fund in the 2007-2013 programming period (situation as of November 15, 2007)
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/69CB96CFE2759D82C12573CB004AF921?OpenDocument>

Report on risks and proposed measures within the implementation of projects of the Cohesion Fund
<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/0E7E6D2E35F61BDD412573E1004A4D0C?OpenDocument>

Report on the implementation and use of pre-accession instruments, structural funds, the Cohesion Fund and other financial instruments as of December 31, 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/3DE3B705ACC565D0C12573F600428BCF?OpenDocument>

Analysis of the need to strengthen administrative support of directing and implementation of the EEA financial mechanism, Norwegian financial mechanism and Swiss-Slovak cooperation program for decreasing economic and social differences within the enlarged European Union

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E14153AD4EB7DD4FC1257412003820A8?OpenDocument>

Report on the implementation of the Transition Facility in the Slovak Republic in 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E3120E3C8C66278AC125746400449C3B?OpenDocument>

Information on the current situation in drawing financial resources from structural funds, ISPA/CF and the Cohesion Fund as of 13 June 2008 and on the measures adopted to eliminate potential risks

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F8B2025364BCF715C12574750032C08C?OpenDocument>

Draft summary report on the completion of the process of approval for operational programmes of the Slovak Republic for 2007-2013 financed from the funds of the European Community

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/50DB0440C32CCEB1C125747B0035C88D?OpenDocument>

Bill on the assistance and support provided by the European Community Funds

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/89E08A35B5624FA0C12574A60045B6FD?OpenDocument>

Report on the implementation and use of pre-accession instruments, structural funds, the Cohesion Fund and other financial instruments as of June 30, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/BBD1671399110B13C12574AA004A50DE?OpenDocument>

Report on progress in the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/34A02573AAD1C023C12574C70045C241?OpenDocument>

Report on the participation of the Slovak Republic in Community programmes of the European Union in 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F3B64CC2D8BC3856C12574CF0044F44B?OpenDocument>

Analysis of the status of contracting and drawing of means from the Structural Funds in the program period 2004–2006 and the measures adopted for the elimination of potential risks

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/94324450A4C73D44C1257519003030B9?OpenDocument>

4.7. SCHENGEN

Evaluation of the Action Plan for the Accession of the Slovak Republic to the Schengen Area

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/ED4005055935EAAAC12573D400332A2A?OpenDocument>

Schengen Action Plan of the Slovak Republic for years 2008-2009

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/62E97C813568D9A7C12574040042EBB0?OpenDocument>

4.8. SECURITY DIMENSION OF THE FOREIGN POLICY

Report on the proceedings and results of Meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels on March 6, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/1026F833C0A92C50C1257412004D4CB4?OpenDocument>

Information on the proceedings and results of the NATO Summit in Bucharest from April 2-4, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/0AF8B4A7A0DF9DA5C12574520026DC9F?OpenDocument>

Information on the agenda and results of the informal meeting of NATO defence ministers (Budapest, October 9-10 2008)

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FA1108D88E0942EFC12574F6005026B1?OpenDocument>

Information on the agenda and results of the extraordinary informal meeting of NATO defense ministers (London September 18-19 2008)

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/3826A628FAE62E06C12574E900359BA1?OpenDocument>

Information on the activity of members of the armed forces of the Slovak Republic serving in NATO/EU bodies, national support elements in NATO military commands and in NATO/EU military structures involved in international crisis management operation

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F5469DF92E7116D4C12574F30034059E?OpenDocument>

Proposal to appoint the plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for the preparation and implementation of the informal session of the ministers of defense of the NATO member states in the Slovak Republic and to establish the coordination mechanism for this activity

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A8CB8354A9F3842CC12574AC002AF568?OpenDocument>

Draft of the evaluation of the performance of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in operations of international crisis management in 2007 with projections from 2008-2010

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/206D409B9D1449C7C125745200352A08?OpenDocument>

Information on the activities of members of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic operating along with NATO/EU bodies, national support units operating along with NATO military headquarters and in NATO/EU military structures in crisis management operations outside Slovak territory

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/8C1FC8B6AC3A4DABC125748000362603?OpenDocument>

Comprehensive evaluation of the defense of the Slovak Republic for 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/3B8D01E49C3063A5C1257436003645CC?OpenDocument>

Draft report on the security situation in the Slovak Republic for 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/30ED7A81E3E87A8EC125747C003C7937?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the changes in the mandate, size of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and the conclusion of the tour of duty of the healthcare team of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in the ISAF Operation in Afghanistan

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/6368CB15B49562BDC125745F00353A88?OpenDocument>

Proposal for extending the secondment of members of the Police Force of the Slovak Republic for the purpose of protecting the High Representative of the International Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/8549202CCEEC03E0C1257471003B4500?OpenDocument>

Information on the proposal of the mechanism for identifying of economic opportunities abroad for the Slovak defense industry and for active support of government representatives of the Slovak Republic in favour of the Slovak defense industry in competition for foreign orders

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/C713871FBA49E124C125744200480123?OpenDocument>

Proposal for expressing consent with the ratification of the protocols on the accession of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Croatia to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/CB6F4864DDD96065C125746E0040E3B8?OpenDocument>

The proposal for the ratification of the protocols on the access of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Croatia to the North Atlantic Treaty

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/AFB66DD483A7892AC12574C7002D953B?OpenDocument>

Proposal for expressing consent on the presence of foreign armed forces on the territory of the Slovak Republic within the project -- International Staff Officers' Course

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/B6DC6FB236E28013412573FD0043DA1A?OpenDocument>

Proposal for ensuring the participation of the Slovak Republic in the NATO CMX 08 crisis management exercises on April 16-22, 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FC6EFA181668F669C125740400368806?OpenDocument>

Proposal for expressing consent on sending the Slovak armed forces outside the territory of the Slovak Republic and the presence of members of foreign armed forces on the territory of the Slovak Republic for the purposes of military exercises in the second quarter of 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/14F4E990EDB7C045C125741200391B30?OpenDocument>

Proposal for updating of the military exercise program for the 2nd quarter 2008 and of the related dispatch of members of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic out of Slovak territory and the presence of members of Foreign Armed Forces on Slovak territory for the purposes of military exercise

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A50A3033B51B5829C125745000333C76?OpenDocument>

Draft evaluation of the NATO CMX 08 crisis management exercise

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/B86DEF4E60892851C1257474002E5FD4?OpenDocument>

Proposal for approving the dispatch members of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic outside Slovak territory and with the presence of Foreign Armed Forces on Slovak territory for the purposes of a military exercise in the 2nd half-year 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/9B020289E8FF8735C125747A00494125?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the updating of the deployment of the Slovak armed forces outside the territory of the Slovak Republic and the presence of foreign armed forces on the territory of the Slovak Republic for the purpose of military manoeuvres in the second half of 2008

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F0025B926A944FD7C12574FA0039B861?OpenDocument>

Draft plan for the setup and further development of the security system of the Slovak Republic until 2010

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/9D826256489D5FABC125747C0023A18E?OpenDocument>

Proposal to conclude the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of France on donating military material for the instruction of engineers and specialists

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/F907D989D3553AC6C12575150042DEFC?OpenDocument>

Analysis of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and recommendations for further proceedings

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/83CE2A2AD34C96C3C12574F20032AE84?OpenDocument>

4.9. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

Proposal for the accession of the Slovak Republic to the 15th Funds Replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) and the funding of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative within the IDA

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/3C8A24BF76D975C8C12574800037D768?OpenDocument>

4.10. SLOVAK EXPATRIATES

Report on the state policy on the care of Slovaks living abroad and on provided state assistance of Slovaks living abroad for 2009

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/D082B05C59F980C0C12574C1003B3443?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the earmarking of funds from the reserves of the Government of the SR for the construction and furnishing of the new Slovak house in Mlynky and for other Slovak self-government projects

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E74BA830EE39AD05C125746A0045C9F9?OpenDocument>

4.11. VISA

Proposal to terminate the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Russian Federation on simplification of visa issuing for Slovak and Russian citizens concluded in the form of exchanging of notes of August 22, 2001 and October 1, 2001

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/3F6E7DB8E33118DEC12573B40041A32E?OpenDocument>

Proposal to cancel the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on liberalisation of visa regime concluded in the form of exchanging of notes of January 30, 2001 and February 21, 2001

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/A8D17E5DAB704A6CC12573BE0041881D?OpenDocument>

Proposal to cancel of Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 737 of July 14, 2004 concerning the proposal of liberalisation of visa regime between the Slovak Republic and Serbia and Montenegro

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/670FBFA80002274DC12573BE003FEFDB?OpenDocument>

Proposal to cancel of Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 58 of January 16 2002 concerning the proposal for the unilateral abolishment of the visa obligation for citizens of Japan

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/64DAD493E8513631C1257467002F5115?OpenDocument>

Proposal to cancel Slovak Republic Government Resolution No. 551 of August 20, 1996 regarding the proposal for the unilateral cancel of the visa requirements for citizens of Canada for tourist and business trips not exceeding 90 days

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/5ACCCB17BAF564C1C12574D30027681C?OpenDocument>

Proposal to cancel Slovak Republic Government Resolution No. 1082 of December 8, 1999 regarding the proposal for the unilateral cancel of the visa requirements for citizens of the Australian Union and citizens of New Zealand entering the territory of the Slovak Republic

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/AC5E7BBAEBB6F0C9C12574D300280E58?OpenDocument>

4.12. OTHERS

Report on the state of the network of Slovak embassies abroad in 2008 and on the bases for its further development

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/875BA1DE522719B7C1257479002BAA39?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the establishment of an embassy of the Slovak Republic in Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/46EF137FD13F3EEBC12574790025311B?OpenDocument>

Comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the Slovak Republic's membership in international organizations and related financial aspects

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/AB4B5344DDE9A398C125741A004E3C26?OpenDocument>

Information on the status of international treaties in 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/6A8B4A199CA20F33C125740F0039301C?OpenDocument>

Memorandum of location of on the joint candidacy of the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Austria for the headquarters of the European Innovation and Technology Institute

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/2E1F03A0532B38A8C125741F002F6ED6?OpenDocument>

The 2007 report on the activities of the Slovak Republic's agent in proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/FF9126CA414C9EFBC125741900403508?OpenDocument>

Proposal for graduation of the Slovak Republic from the World Bank's operations

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/88DE7DC5D2FCAA0CC125741E00275E21?OpenDocument>

Report on activities of the Chief border plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic in 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/249EC3B203B37CAC125744800357151?OpenDocument>

Draft of final accounts for the chapter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 2007

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/5B01974E62FB3A65C1257439002D9689?OpenDocument>

Draft of the second report on implementing the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages in the Slovak Republic

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/3B3370E1798BACC6C12574560049A083?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the organizational arrangements of the 3rd session of the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) in Bratislava

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/2F07833B08BFD609C12574DD00423AD3?OpenDocument>

Information on the preparation of textbooks on Slovak and Hungarian history regarding on the evaluation of the task of the prime ministers of Slovakia and Hungary 'Common Past, Common Future – in the mirror of common projects'

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/AD9D8AF3EC4CCE00C12574F60029C736?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the ratification of the European Social Charter (revised) of the European Council from 1996 by the Slovak Republic

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/5E8A7F6E5D8924A4C12574FD004314A6?OpenDocument>

Proposal for increasing the membership fee of the Slovak Republic for the Fund for the Western Balkan Countries within the framework of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/493D07614AC2481FC125750F004FDC7A?OpenDocument>

Proposal for the conclusion of the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina on economic cooperation

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/073A59614011FE16C125744E0030C638?OpenDocument>

Draft Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the government of the Republic of Cuba on economic cooperation

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/D77598584D1C43CBC12573F6002A9AEE?OpenDocument>

Proposal for concluding the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on the support and mutual protection of investments

<http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/34D59AF8B16D068BC125746A002CDBDA?OpenDocument>

STRUCTURE OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITIES ACTING IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN 2008

PRESIDENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Ivan Gašparovič

Office of the President of the Slovak Republic

Hodžovo nám. 1, 810 00 Bratislava 1

tel.: 02/5933 3319

www.prezident.sk

Department of Foreign Affairs and Protocol

Department of Protocol

Head of the Department: Peter Priputen, tel.: 02/5933 3339

Department of Foreign Affairs

Head of the Department: Ján Foltín, tel. : 02/5788 8165

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Nám. Alexandra Dubčeka 1, 812 80 Bratislava 1

tel.: 02/5972 1111

www.nrsr.sk

Chairman of the National Council of the SR

Pavol Paška

Foreign Affairs Committee

Boris Zala, chairman, tel.: 02/5972 1233, zv@nrsr.sk

Committee for European Affairs

Milan Urbáni, chairman, tel.: 02/5972 2751, vez@nrsr.sk , oez@nrsr.sk

Committee for Human Rights, Minorities and the Position of Women

László A. Nagy, chairman, tel.: 02/5972 1699, lpn@nrsr.sk

Defense and Security Committee

Rudolf Pučík, chairman, tel.: 02/5972 1225, vob@nrsr.sk

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Nám. slobody 1, 813 70 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5729 5111

www.government.gov.sk

Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

Robert Fico

Deputy Prime Minister for the Knowledge-Based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities

Dušan Čaplovič, tel.: 02/5729 5318

European Affairs and Knowledge-Based Society Section

Director General: Pavel Holík, tel.: 02/5729 5501

Department for European Affairs

Head of the Department: Daniel Ország, tel.: 02/5729 5503

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Hlboká cesta 2, 833 36 Bratislava 37

tel.: 02/5978 1111

www.foreign.gov.sk

Minister

Office of the Minister

Head of the Office: Michal Kottman, tel.: 02/5978 3003, kami@foreign.gov.sk

State Secretary

Ol'ga Algayerová, tel.: 02/5978 3101, stat1@foreign.gov.sk

State Secretary

Diana Štrofová, tel.: 02/5978 3201, stat2@foreign.gov.sk

Secretary General of the Ministry

Marcel Peško, tel.: 02/5978 3301, vedu@foreign.gov.sk

Department of Analyses and Planning

Head of the Department: Ján Šoth, tel.: 02/5978 3021, anap@foreign.gov.sk

Political Division

Director General: Igor Slobodník, tel.: 02/5978 3401, pols@foreign.gov.sk

Common Foreign and Security Policy Department

Head of the Department: Peter Mišík, tel.: 02/5978 3411, szbp@foreign.gov.sk

Department of Security Policy

Head of the Department: Juraj Podhorský, tel.: 02/5978 3481, obep@foreign.gov.sk

3. Territorial Department – States of Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia

Head of the Department: Štefan Rozkopál, tel. 02/5978 3431, 3teo@foreign.gov.sk

4. Territorial Department – States of Southeastern Europe

Head of the Department: Eva Ponomarenková, tel.: 02/5978 3441, 4teo@foreign.gov.sk

5. Territorial Department – States of North America and Australia

Head of the Department: Dušan Krištofík, tel.: 02/5978 3451, 5teo@foreign.gov.sk

Division for European Affairs

Director General: Juraj Nociar, tel.: 02/5978 3501, seza@foreign.gov.sk

Department of European Policies 1

Head of the Department: Dušan Bella, tel.: 02/5978 3561, okse@foreign.gov.sk

Department of European Policies 2

Head of the Department: Jaroslav Auxt, tel.: 02/5978 3531, peu1@foreign.gov.sk

Department of Common Affairs and Relations With EU Institutions

Head of the Department: Eva Kimliková, tel.: 02/5978 3511, ovzi@foreign.gov.sk

1. Territorial Department – States of Western and Southern Europe

Head of the Department: Ján Gábor, tel.: 02/5978 3511, 1teo@foreign.gov.sk

2. Territorial Department, States of Central and Northern Europe and Neighbourhood Policies

Head of the Department: František Dlhopolček, tel.: 02/5978 3541, 2teo@foreign.gov.sk

Division for Global Challenges, Human Rights, UN and the International Organizations

Director General: Mária Krasnohorská, tel.: 02/5978 3601, svlp@foreign.gov.sk

Department of the UN and UN Specialized Agencies

Head of the Department: Ján Varšo, tel.: 02/5978 3611, osno@foreign.gov.sk

Human Rights, Council of Europe, OECD and National Minorities Department

Head of the Department: Veronika Lombardini, tel.: 02/5978 3641, olrp@foreign.gov.sk

Department of International Economic Organizations

Head of the Department: Jaroslav Chlebo, tel.: 02/5978 3861, omeo@foreign.gov.sk

Division for Global Challenges, Human Rights, UN and the International Organizations

Generálny riaditeľ: Radomír Boháč, tel.: 02/5978 3801, shsr@foreign.gov.sk

Department of Development and Humanitarian Cooperation

Head of Department: Marek Brenčíč, tel.: 02/5978 3811, orpo@foreign.gov.sk

International Law Division

Director General: Milan Kollár, tel.: 02/5978 3701, sepk@foreign.gov.sk

International Law Department

Head of the Department: Barbara Illková, tel.: 02/5978 3711, mepo@foreign.gov.sk

Division for Public Diplomacy and Services for the Citizens

Direktor General: Vasil Grivna, tel.: 02/5979 3901, voks@foreign.gov.sk

Consular Department

Head of the Department: Anna Juriková, tel.: 02/5978 3921, konz@foreign.gov.sk

MINISTRY OF ECONOMY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Mierová 19, 827 15 Bratislava

tel.: 02/4854 1111

www.economy.gov.sk

Minister

Ľubomír Jahnátek

State Secretary

Peter Žiga, tel.: 02/4854 7104

State Secretary

Ivan Rybárik, tel.: 02/4854 7105

Section for European Affairs

Director General: Jana Sermeková, tel.: 02/4854 2517, sermekova@economy.gov.sk

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Kutuzovova 8, 832 47 Bratislava

tel.: 0960/11 22 33

www.mod.gov.sk

Minister

František Kašický (until January 25, 2008)

Jaroslav Baška (from January 25, 2008)

State Secretary

Daniel Duchoň, tel. 02/4425 9946, ivana.kacenakova@mod.gov.sk

Defense Policy, International Affairs and Legislation Department

Director General: Július Demetrian, tel.: 0960/312 156, margita.bittalova@mod.gov.sk

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Pribinova 2, 812 72 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5094 1111

www.minv.sk

Minister

Robert Kaliňák

State Secretary

Jozef Buček, tel.: 02/5094 4401

State Secretary

Vladimír Čečot, tel.: 02/4859 3801

MINISTRY OF FINANCE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Štefanovičova 5, 817 82 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5958 1111

www.finance.gov.sk

Minister

Ján Počiatek

State Secretary

František Palko, tel.: 02/5958 2301

State Secretary

Peter Kažimír, tel.: 02/5958 2101

MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Námestie SNP č. 33, 813 31 Bratislava

tel.: 02/2048 2111

www.culture.gov.sk

Minister

Marek Maďarič

State Secretary for Media and Audiovision

Ivan Sečík, tel.: 02/2048 2101

State Secretary for Minority and Regional Culture

Augustín Jozef Lang, tel.: 02/2048 2215

MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Limbová 2, 837 52 Bratislava 37

tel.: 02/5937 3111

www.health.gov.sk

Minister

Ivan Valentovič (until June 3, 2008)

Richard Raši (from June 3, 2008)

MINISTRY OF LABOR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND FAMILY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Špitálska 4-6, 816 43 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5975 1111

www.employment.gov.sk

Minister

Viera Tomanová

State Secretary

Emília Kršíková, tel.: 02/5975 1310

State Secretary

Peter Sika, tel. 02/5975 2713

Section for International Affairs

Director General: Miloslav Hetteš, tel. 02/5975 1613

Department of European Integration and International Cooperation

Head of the Department: Juraj Džupa, tel. 02/5975 1611

Department of Foreign Relations and Protocol

Head of the Department: Štefan Lednický, tel. 02/5975 1621

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Stromová 1, 813 30 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5937 4111

www.education.gov.sk

Minister

Ján Mikolaj

State Secretary

Bibiána Obrimčáková, tel.: 02/5477 5524

State Secretary

Jozef Habánik, tel.: 02/5477 3977

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Župné námestie 13, 813 11 Bratislava

tel.: 02/59 35 3111

www.justice.gov.sk

Minister

Štefan Harabin

State Secretary

Anna Vitteková, tel.: 02/5935 3529

State Secretary

Daniel Hudák, tel.: 02/5935 3458

Section for International Law and European Integration

Director General: Peter Bážas, tel.: 02/5935 3381, ms.smep.sek@justice.sk

Department of Private and Procedural International Law

Head of the Department: Miloš Haľapka, tel.: 02/5935 3347, inter.coop@justice.sk

Department of International Relations and Human Rights

Head of the Department: Jana Vnuková, tel.: 02/5935 3473, jana.vnukova@justice.sk

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Nám. Ľ. Štúra 1, 812 35 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5956 1111

www.enviro.gov.sk

Minister

Jaroslav Izák (until August 18, 2008)

Ján Chrbet (from August 18, 2008)

State Secretary

Jaroslav Jaduš, tel.: 02/5956 2012

State Secretary

Miloslav Šebek, tel.: 02/5956 2491

Section for Foreign Relations and Environmental Policy

Department of European Union Affairs

Head of the Department: Katarína Butkovská, tel.: 02/5956 2205

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Dobrovičova 12, 812 66 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5926 6111

www.mpsr.sk

Minister

Zdenka Kramplová (until August 18, 2008)

Stanislav Becík (from August 18, 2008)

State Secretary

Vladimír Palša, tel.: 02/5926 6245

State Secretary

Viliam Turský, tel.: 02/5926 6243

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Námestie slobody č. 6, 810 05 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5949 4111

www.telecom.gov.sk

Minister

Ľubomír Vážny

State Secretary

Milan Mojš, tel.: 02/5273 1462

State Secretary

Dušan Švantner, tel.: 02/5244 2301

Section for European Union and Foreign Affairs

Director General: Dušan Rizek, tel.: 02/5273 1446, dusan.rizek@telecom.gov.sk

MINISTRY OF CONSTRUCTION AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Preievozská 2/B, 825 25 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5831 7111

www.build.gov.sk

Minister

Marian Janušek

State Secretary

Martin Glváč, tel.: 02/5831 7273

State Secretary

Daniel Ács, tel.: 02/5831 7270

SUPREME AUDIT OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Priemyselná 2, 824 73 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5542 3069

www.nku.gov.sk

Head: Ján Jasovský, tel.: 02/5011 4402

ANTIMONOPOLY OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Drieňová 24, 826 03 Bratislava

tel.: 02/4829 7111

www.antimon.gov.sk

Head: Danica Paroulková, tel.: 02/4333 7305

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Miletičova 3, 824 67 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5023 6111

www.statistics.sk

Head: Ľudmila Benkovičová, tel.: 02/5542 5802

LIST OF THE EMBASSIES OF THE EU, NATO COUNTRIES AND SOME OTHER COUNTRIES

THE EMBASSIES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC AND THEIR HEADS AS OF FEBRUARY 2009

Country	Start of Diplo- matic Relations	Address of Embassy	In charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	--	Komornická 1852/25 160 00 Prague 6 Czech Republic	Mohammad Kacem Fazelly <i>Ambassador Designate</i>
The Republic of Albania	1. 1. 1993	Pod Kaštany 22 160 00 Prague 6 Czech Republic	Qazim Tepshi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 30, 2007
The Democratic People's Republic of Algeria	1. 1. 1993	Rudolfínergasse 18 A - 1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Taous Feroukhi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 21, 2002
The United States of America	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám.5 811 02 Bratislava	Keith Allan Eddins <i>Counsellor, Chargé d'affaires a.i.</i>
The Principality of Andorra	3. 6. 1996	Kärtnering 2A/13 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Joan Pujal Laborda <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: July 16, 2007
The Republic of Angola	30. 9. 1993	Jelenia 4 811 05 Bratislava	Alberto Correia Neto <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 30, 2007
The Argentine Republic	1. 1. 1993	Goldschmiedgasse 2/1 A – 1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Eugenio Maria Curia <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: March 21, 2007
The Republic of Armenia	14. 11. 1993	Hadikgasse 28 A-1140 Vienna Republic of Austria	Ashot Hovakimian <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 11, 2006
The Commonwealth of Australia	1. 1. 1993	Mattiellistrasse 2 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Peter James Shannon <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 21, 2006
The Republic of Austria	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 10 811 01 Bratislava	Helmut Wessely <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 11, 2006
The Republic of Azerbaijan	27. 11. 1993	Hügelgasse 2 A-1130 Vienna Republic of Austria	Fuad Ismayilov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 11, 2006

Prepared by Martin Fírák, RC SFPA (fírak@sfp.sk).

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In Charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	3. 3. 1993	Dovestr. 1 105 87 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Tarik Ahsan <i>Minister, Chargé d'Affaires a. i.</i>
The Republic of Belarus	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 5 811 02 Bratislava	Viktor Navrotsky <i>Counselor (Economic Affairs), Chargé d'Affaires a. i.</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	1. 1. 1993	Fraňa Kráľa 5 811 05 Bratislava	Alain Cools <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 3, 2006
The Republic of Benin	19. 1. 1993	Uspenskij Pereulok 7 Moscow Russian Federation	Honoré Tossavi <i>Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Minister – Counsellor</i>
The Republic of Bolivia	5. 3. 1993	Waaggasse 10/4 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Sergio Fernando Olmos <i>Chargé d' Affaires a.i., Minister – Counselor</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1. 1. 1993	Opletalova 27 110 00 Prague Czech Republic	Ivan Orlić <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 3, 2006
The Republic of Botswana	29. 11. 2001	High Commission of the Republic of Botswana 6 Stratford Place W1C 1AY, London United Kingdom	Roy Blackbeard <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: April 16, 2002
The Federative Republic of Brazil	1. 1. 1993	Radisson SAS Carlton Hotel Hviezdoslavovo nám. 811 02 Bratislava	Marília Sardenberg Zelner Gonçalves <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Bulgaria	1. 1. 1993	Kuzmányho 1 811 06 Bratislava	Ognjan Garkov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 13, 2006
Burkina Faso	1. 8. 1997	Strohgasse 14c A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Noëlie Marie Béatrice Damiba <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 2, 2004
The Republic of Burundi	29. 6. 1999	Berliner Strasse 36 D-10715 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Domitille Barancira
The Republic of Cape Verde	--	Schwindgasse 20/2 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Alirio Vicente Silva <i>Ambassador Designate</i>
The Kingdom of Cambodia	--	Dreždenska 3 03-969 Warsaw Republic of Poland	Chan Ky Sim <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: April 26, 2004
Canada	1. 1. 1993	Muchova 6 160 00 Prague 6 Czech Republic	Michael Calcott <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 11, 2006
The Republic of Chile	1. 1. 1993	Lugeck 1/3/10 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Milenko Skoknić <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 21, 2006
The People's Republic of China	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 8 811 02 Bratislava 1	Jianfú Chen <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 4, 2008

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In Charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
The Republic of Colombia	1. 1. 1993	Stadiongasse 6-8/15 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Rosso José Serrano Cadena Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 9, 2004
The Republic of Congo	30. 6. 1998	Grabbeallee 47 D-13156 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Serge Michel Odzocki Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Minister – Counselor
The Democratic Republic of Congo	18. 2. 1993	Soukenicka 34/1765, 110 00 Prague Czech Republic	Henri Benjamin Ntikala Booto Minister – Counselor chargé d'affaires a. i.
The Republic of Costa Rica	6. 10. 1993	Wagramer Strasse 23/1/1/2-3 A-1220 Vienna Republic of Austria	Ana Teresa Dengo Benavides Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: June 4, 2008
The Republic of Croatia	1. 1. 1993	Miškova 21 811 06 Bratislava	Tomislav Car Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 16, 2007
The Republic of Cuba	1. 1. 1993	Somolíckého 1/A 811 05 Bratislava	David Paulovich Escalona Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 11, 2006
The Republic of Cyprus	1. 1. 1993	Parking 20 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Marios Lyssiotis Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 8, 2009
The Czech Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 8 811 02 Bratislava	Vladimír Galuška Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: October 4, 2004
The Kingdom of Denmark	1. 1. 1993	Panská 27 816 06 Bratislava	Jorgen Munk Rasmussen Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 15, 2005
The Republic of Ecuador	1. 1. 1993	Goldschmiedgasse 10/2/24 A-1010 Vienna Republic Austria	Iván Fernando Garcés Burbano Secretary, Chargé d'Affaires a. i.
The Arab Republic of Egypt	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 4 P.O. Box 322 811 08 Bratislava	Hassan Hanafy Mahmoud el-Laithy Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 11, 2007
The Republic of Estonia	1. 1. 1993	Wohlebengasse 9/13 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Katrin Saarsalu Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: October 30, 2003
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	10. 5. 1995	Wagramerstrasse 14/1/2 A-1220 Vienna Austria	Kongit Sinegiorgis Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: July 16, 2007
European Commission Representation	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Andrea Elscheková-Matisová EC Representative to SR
European Parliament Information Office	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Robert Hajšel Executive Director
The Republic of Finland	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Jukka Jalmari Leino Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: September 29, 2008
The French Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné nám.7 P.O. Box 152 810 00 Bratislava	Henry Cuny Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 16, 2007
The Republic of Gambia	18. 8. 1995	Avenue F. D. Roosevelt 126 1050 Bruxelles Kingdom of Belgium	Amie Nyan-Alaboson Minister – Counselor, Chargé d'Affaires a. i.

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In Charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
The Federal Republic of Germany	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 10 811 02 Bratislava 1	Jochen Trebesch Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: August 23, 2005
The Republic of Ghana	1. 1. 1993	V Tišine 4 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	Mohammed Nurudeen Ismaila Minister - Counselor
Georgia	25. 11. 1993	Michalská 9 811 01 Bratislava	Nikoloz Nikolozishvili Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: October 3, 2006
The Republic of Guatemala	15. 4. 1993	Landstrasser Haupt strasse 21/9 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Sandra América Noriega Urizar Minister – Counselor, Chargé d'Affaires a. i.
The Republic of Guinea	16. 3. 1993	Jägerstrasse 67-69 D-10117 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	El Hadj Aboubacar Dione Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: March 7, 2006
The Hellenic Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné nám. 4 811 01 Bratislava	Nicolaos Kanellos Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 15, 2008
The Holy See	1. 1. 1993	Nekrasovova 17 811 04 Bratislava	Mario Giordana Apostolic Nunciatus LoC: June 4, 2008
The Republic of Hungary	1. 1. 1993	Sedlárska 3 814 25 Bratislava	Antal Heizer Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 16, 2007
The Republic of Iceland	1. 1. 1993	Naglergasse 2/8 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Sveinn Björnsonn Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: October 28, 2004
The Republic of India	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 4 811 08 Bratislava	Homai Saha Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: September 11, 2007
The Republic of Indonesia	1. 1. 1993	Mudroňova 51 811 03 Bratislava	Harsha Edwana Joesoef Ambassador Designate
The Islamic Republic of Iran	1. 1. 1993	Strohgasse 14c A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Mohammad Javad Sarbolandi Counselor (Slovak Republic Affairs)
The Republic of Iraq	1. 1. 1993	Korabinského 3 811 02 Bratislava	Hassan Quassim Hassan Ahmedal - Sheikh Counsellor, Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Carlton Savoy Building Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Kathryn Coll Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: September 29, 2008
The State of Israel	1. 1. 1993	Slávičie údolie 106 P. O. Box 6 811 02 Bratislava	Zeev Boker Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 14, 2006
The Republic of Italy	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 49 811 06 Bratislava	Brunella Borzi Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 15, 2008
The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	28. 10. 2002	Schinkelstrasse 10 D-10785 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Aya Biaye Akale First Secretary

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In Charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
Jamaica	1. 1. 1993	Schmargendorfer Strasse 32 D- 2159 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Joy Elfreda Wheeler <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 12, 2009
Japan	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné nám. 2 813 27 Bratislava	Yoshio Nomoto <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 12, 2009
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	3. 3. 1993	Rennweg 17/4 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Makram Mustafa Queisi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 2, 2009
The State of Qatar	1. 1. 1993	Gárdonyi Géza 19, 1026 Budapest Republic of Hungary	Mubarak Rashid Al Boainin <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: March 21, 2007
The Republic of Kazakhstan	1. 1. 1993	Romaina Rollanda 12 160 00 Prague 6 Czech Republic	Kairat Sarzhanov <i>Counselor, Chargé d'Affaires a. i. for Slovak Republic</i>
The Republic of Kenya	1. 1. 1993	Neulinggasse 29/8 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Julius K. Kandie <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 18, 2007
The Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 4 811 08 Bratislava	Yong-kyu Park <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 22, 2007
The Democratic People's Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Na Větru 395/18 162 00 Prague Czech Republic	Pyong Gap Ri <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 4, 2004
The State of Kuwait	1. 1. 1993	Strassergasse 32 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Fawzi Abdulaziz al-Jasem <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 4, 2004
The Kyrgyz Republic	1. 1. 1993	Invalidenstrasse 3/8 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Rina Prijivoit <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 13, 2006
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	1. 1. 1993	Uspiskova 8 02-386 Warsaw Republic of Poland	Sengphet Houngboungnuang <i>First Secretary, Chargé d'Affaires a. i.</i>
The Republic of Latvia	1. 1. 1993	Stefan Esders Platz 4 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Aivars Groza <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 9, 2006
The Lebanese Republic	1. 1. 1993	Oppolzergasse 6/3 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Ishaya El-Khoury <i>Ambassador Designate</i>
The Kingdom of Lesotho	8. 5. 1995	Via Serchio 8 001 98 Rome Italian Republic	Jonas Sponkie Malewa <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: July 16, 2007
People's Bureau of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1. 1. 1993	Révova 45 811 02 Bratislava	Khalifa Ahmed <i>Chargé d'Affaires</i>
The Republic of Lithuania	1. 1. 1993	Löwengasse 47/4 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Giedrus Poudžinas <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 30, 2007
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	1. 1. 1993	Wallnerstrasse 2/1/2 1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Marc Thill <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 9, 2006

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In Charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1. 1. 1993	Maderstrasse 1/10 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Vesna Borozan Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: March 21, 2007
The Republic of Madagascar	16. 2. 1996	Koursovoy Per. 5 119 034 Moscow Russian Federation	Eloi A. Maxime Dovo Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 26, 2003
Malaysia	1. 1. 1993	24th Floor, Florido Tower Floridsdorfer Haupt- strasse 1-7 A – 1210 Vienna Austria	Mohd. Arshad Manzoor Hussain Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 16, 2007
The Republic of Malawi	30. 12. 1993	Westfälische strasse 86 D-10709 Berlin Republic of Germany	Teddington Derring Mkandawire Chargé d' Affaires a.i., Counselor
The Republic of Mali	12. 2. 1993	Novokuznetskaya 11 115 184 Moscow Russian Federation	Safiatou Konate Traoré First Counselor
The Republic of Malta	1. 1. 1993	Opernring 5/1 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Christopher Grima Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 15, 2008
Sovereign Military Hospitalier Order of St. John of Jerusalem Of Rhodes and Of Malta	1. 1. 1993	Na Vřšku 8 811 01 Bratislava 1	Mariano Hugo princ Windisch-Graetz Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: October 23, 2003
The Islamic Republic of Mauritania	1. 1. 1993	Korovy Val 7 119049 Moscow Russian Federation	Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Dahi Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: March 22, 2005
The United Mexican States	1. 1. 1993	Operngasse 21/10 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Alejandro Díaz y Pérez Durate Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 12, 2007
The Republic of Moldova	1. 1. 1993	Loewengasse 47/10 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Victor Postolachi Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: June 13, 2006
Mongolia	1. 1. 1993	Na Marně 5 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	Ochir Enkhör Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 14, 2006
The Kingdom of Morocco	1. 1. 1993	Opernring 3, 4. Floor. A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Dina Bennani Counselor
The Republic of Namibia	9. 12. 1997	Ungargasse 33/5. Floor A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Penda Naanda First Counselor
Nepal	4. 3. 1994	Guerickestrasse 27 D-10587 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Madan Kumar Bhattarai Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: June 4, 2008
The Kingdom of The Netherlands	1. 1. 1993	Fraňa Kráľa 5 811 05 Bratislava	Rob Swartbol Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: September 11, 2006
New Zealand	1. 1. 1993	Atrium Friedrichstrasse 60 D–10117 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Alan Cook Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: March 21, 2007

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In Charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
The Republic of Nicaragua	5. 1. 1993	Ebendorferstrasse 10/3/12 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Isolda Frixione Miranda <i>Chargé d' Affaires a.i., Minister Counselor</i>
The Federal Republic of Nigeria	1. 1. 1993	Rennweg 25 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Jerry Sonny Ugokwe <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 5, 2009
The Kingdom of Norway	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Brit Lovseth <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: July 22, 2004
The Sultanate of Oman	3. 3. 1993	Währinger Strasse 2- 4/24-25 A-1090 Vienna Republic of Austria	Badr bin Mohammed al-Hinai <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 5, 2009
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan	1. 1. 1993	Hofzeile 13-A A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Mr. Shahbaz <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 14, 2006
The Palestinian Territories	1. 1. 1993	Klemensova 6 810 08 Bratislava	Hafez Fathi Al-Nimer <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 26, 2004
The Republic of Panama	15. 2. 1993	Joachim-Karnatz Allee 45 105 57 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Darío Ernesto Chirú Ochoa <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: March 19, 2008
The Republic of Paraguay	8. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 18/1/7 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Horacio Norgués Zubizarreta <i>Ambassador Designate</i>
The Republic of Peru	1. 1. 1993	Gottfried Keller-Gasse 2 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Romulo Fernando Acurio Traverso <i>Minister – Counselor, Chargé d'affaires a. i.</i>
The Republic of the Philippines	1. 1. 1993	Laurenzerberg 2 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	Linglingay Fonacier Lacanlale <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 11, 2006
The Republic of Poland	1. 1. 1993	Hummelova 4, 811 03 Bratislava	Andrzej Krawczyk <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 12, 2009
The Portuguese Republic	1. 1. 1993	Moskovská 10 811 08 Bratislava	José Ernst Henzler Viera Branco <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 14, 2005
Romania	1. 1. 1993	Fraňa Kráľa 11 811 05 Bratislava	Florin Vodit <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 5, 2009
The Russian Federation	1. 1. 1993	Godrova 4 811 06 Bratislava	Alexander Udaltsov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: August 23, 2005
The Republic of El Salvador	1. 1. 1993	Joachim-Karnatz-Allee 47 D-10557 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Edgardo Suárez Mallagray <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 10, 2006
The Republic of San Marino	1. 1. 1993	Via Eleonora Duse 35 00197 Rome Italian Republic	Severino Bollini <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 22, 2007

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In charge of Embassy (LoC - Letter of Credence)
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	16. 6. 1995	Formanekgasse 38 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Mansour Bin Khalid Al Fabran Al-Saud <i>Ambassador Designate</i>
The Republic of Sierra Leone	1. 1. 1993	26/1 Rublyovskoye Chaussee Apt. 58-59 121615 Moscow Russian Federation	Ibrahim Vandi Kondoh <i>Chargé d'Affaires a.i., First Secretary, Consul</i>
The Republic of Singapore	12. 2. 1993	MFA Tanglin 248163 Singapore	Jennie Chua Kheng Yeng <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: July 16, 2007
The Republic of Slovenia	1. 1. 1993	Moyzesova 4 813 15 Bratislava	Miha Rossler <i>Chargé d' Affaires a.i., First Counsellor</i>
The Somali Democratic Republic	-	Simferopolsky Bulvar, 7a- 145, 117 556 Moscow Russian Federation	Mohamed Mohamoud Handulle <i>Chargé d' Affaires a.i., First Secretary</i>
The Republic of South Africa	1. 1. 1993	Sandgasse 33 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Leslie Mbangambi Gumbi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 9, 2006
The Kingdom of Spain	1. 1. 1993	Prepoštská 10 811 01 Bratislava	José Ángel López Jorin <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 15, 2008
The Republic of Serbia	1. 1. 1993	Búdkova 38 811 04 Bratislava	Danko Prokić <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 11, 2007
The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	15. 2. 1993	Rainergasse 1/2/5 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Musthaf Mohammed Jaffer <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 12, 2009
The Republic of Sudan	27. 7. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 29/5 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Sayed Galal Eldin Elamin <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: March 7, 2006
The Kingdom of Swaziland	1. 1. 1993	Avenue Winston Church- ill 188 1180 Bruxelles Kingdom of Belgium	David Mawokota Dlamini <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 30, 1999
The Kingdom of Sweden	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Mikael Westerlind <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 11, 2006
Switzerland	1. 1. 1993	Tolstého 9 811 06 Bratislava	Josef Aregger <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 14, 2005
The Syrian Arab Republic	1. 1. 1993	Daffingerstrasse 4 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Muhammad Badi Khattab <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 5, 2009
The United Republic of Tanzania	1. 1. 1993	Eschenallee 11 D-14050 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Ahmad Rweyemamu Ngemera <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: March 17, 2008
The Kingdom of Thailand	1. 1. 1993	Cottagegasse 48 A-1180 Vienna Republic of Austria	Adisak Panupong <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 3, 2005

Country	Start of Diplomatic Relations	Address of Embassy	In Charge of Embassy (LoC – Letter of Credence)
The Republic of Tunisia	1. 1. 1993	Sieveringerstrasse 187 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Mohamed Ben Ayed <i>Counselor, Chargé d'Affaires a. i.</i>
The Republic of Turkey	1. 1. 1993	Holubyho 11 811 03 Bratislava	Tunç Ügdül <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 22, 2007
Turkmenistan	1. 1. 1993	Argentinerstrasse 22/II/EG A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Yazkuli Mammedov <i>First Secretary</i>
Ukraine	1. 1. 1993	Radvanská 35 811 01 Bratislava 1	Inna Ohnivec <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 10, 2006
The United Arab Emirates	3. 1. 1993	Peter Jordan Strasse 66 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Khalid A. Shohail <i>Minister, Chargé d'affaires a.i</i>
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Panská 16 811 01 Bratislava	Michael John Wyn Roberts <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 11, 2007
The Eastern Republic of Uruguay	1. 1. 1993	Wallnerstrasse 4/Top NA 17 A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	
The Republic of Uzbekistan	20. 1. 1993	Pöetzelnsdorfer Str. 49 A-1180 Vienna Republic of Austria	Kadyrjan Yusupov <i>Chargé d' Affaires</i>
The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	1. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 72/1 A-1040 Vienna Republic of Austria	Alí de Jesus Uzcátegui Dugue <i>Ambassador Designate</i>
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	1. 1. 1993	Felix Mottlstrasse 20 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	Nguyen Ba Than <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Yemen	1. 1. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 18-20 A-1030 Vienna Republic of Austria	Ahmed Alwan Mulhi al-Alwani <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 18, 2007
The Republic of Zambia	5. 5. 1993	Axel-Springer Str. 54 A D-10117 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Godwin Kingsley Chinkuli <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: March 17, 2006
The Republic of Zimbabwe	3. 3. 1993	Strozzigasse 10/15 A-1080 Vienna Republic of Austria	Grace Tsitsi Mutandiro <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 13, 2006

LIST OF CONSULATES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF FEBRUARY 2009

<i>Country</i>	<i>Address of the Consulate in the SR</i>	<i>Consul</i>
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	Obchodná 6 Pasáž Zlatý Jeleň 811 08 Bratislava	Štefan Rosina <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Grenada	Priemyselná 6 824 90 Bratislava	Juraj Široký <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Čajakova 26 831 01 Bratislava	Štefan Žiak <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Malaysia	Jašíkova 2 821 03 Bratislava	Igor Junas <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of El Salvador	Zahradnícka 62 821 05 Bratislava	Igor Moravčík <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	Podunajská 24 821 06 Bratislava	
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	Apollo Business Centrum Mlynské Nivy 43 821 09 Bratislava	Peter Kriško <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Hlavná 75 040 01 Košice	Dany R. E. Rottiers <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Denmark	Letecká 10 831 03 Bratislava	Michal Lörincz <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Morocco	Krajná 86 821 04 Bratislava 2	Lubomír Šidala <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Spain	Hutnícka 1 040 01 Košice	Daniel Lučkanič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Sweden	Lermontovova 15 811 05 Bratislava	Ruben Kemény <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Thailand	Viedenská cesta 7 851 01 Bratislava	Alexander Rozin <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	Košická 44 P.O. BOX 21 080 01 Prešov	Matúš Murajda <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Albania	Púpavová 61 841 04 Bratislava	Juraj Kolesár <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Bangladesh	Jura Hronca 44 841 01 Bratislava	Štefan Petkanič <i>Honorary Consul</i>

Prepared by Martin Firák, RC SFPA (firak@sfp.sk).

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Country	Address of the Consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Colombia	Dostojevského rad 3 814 99 Bratislava	Miroslav Behúň Honorary Consul
The Republic of Congo	Na Hrebienku 30 811 02 Bratislava	Soňa Klimeková Honorary Consul
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	Štefanovičova 15 811 04 Bratislava	Pavol Jánošík Honorary Consul
The Republic of Costa Rica	Prepoštská 6 811 01 Bratislava	Tomáš Chrenek Honorary Consul
The Republic of Finland	Moyzesova 5 811 05 Bratislava	Karol Kállay Honorary General Consul
The Republic of Guinea	Devínska cesta 108/A 841 04 Bratislava	Ľubomír Schweighofer Honorary Vice-Consul
The Republic of Hungary	Hlavná 67 040 01 Košice	János Szerencsés General Consul
The Republic of Chile	Laurinská 2 815 08 Bratislava	Jaroslav Šoltys Honorary Consul
The Republic of Iceland	Palisády 39 811 06 Bratislava	Otto Halás Honorary Consul
The Republic of Kazakhstan	Obchodná 6 Pasáž Zlatý Jeleň 811 08 Bratislava	Štefan Rosina Honorary Consul
The Republic of Kyrgyzstan	Miletičova 1 821 08 Bratislava	Tibor Podoba Honorary Consul
The Republic of Korea	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 20 811 02 Bratislava	Marián Mojžiš Honorary General Consul
The Republic of Nicaragua	Stredný hon 430 900 43 Hamuliakovo	Vladimír Kašťák Honorary Consul
The Republic of Paraguay	Prepoštská 8 811 01 Bratislava	Martin Šamaj honorary consul
The Republic of Peru	Tuhovská 5 831 07 Bratislava	Andrej Glatz Honorary General Consul
The Republic of Philippines	Cesta na Senec 15725/24 830 06 Bratislava	Pavol Konštiak Honorary General Cconsul
The Republic of Poland	Nám. osloboditeľov 1 031 01 Liptovský Mikuláš	Tadeusz Frackowiak Honorary Consul
The Republic of Senegal	Na kopci 24 010 01 Žilina – Trnové	Souleymane Seck honorary consul
The Republic of the Seychelles	Beblavého 4 811 01 Bratislava	Andrej Hryc Honorary Consul
The Republic of Sierra Leone	Partizánska 16 A 811 03 Bratislava	Branislav Hronec Honorary General Consul
The Republic of South Africa	Fraňa Kráľa 1 851 01 Bratislava	Milan Lopašovský Honorary Consul
The Syrian Arab Republic	Tatranská ulica 1 Bratislava – Záhorská Bystrica	Mustafa Al Sabouni Honorary Consul
Ukraine	Plzeňská 11 080 01 Prešov	Yevgen Perebyinis General Consul
Ukraine	Budovateľská 29 093 01 Vranov nad Topľou	Petro Tokáč Honorary Consul
Ukraine	Donská 12 058 01 Poprad	Petro Tokáč Honorary Consul
The United Mexican States	Prepoštská 8 811 01 Bratislava	Václav Míka Honorary Conzul

LIST OF THE EMBASSIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, PERMANENT MISSIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, SLOVAK INSTITUTES ABROAD

EMBASSIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, PERMANENT MISSIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, SLOVAK INSTITUTES AND THEIR HEADS AS OF FEBRUARY 2009

Embassy	Accredited	Country	In Charge of the Embassy
Abuja	Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, Gambia, Cameroon, Gabon, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso, Mali, Liberia, Togo	Plot 187, Deeper Life St., Asokoro, Abuja Federal Republic of Nigeria	Igor Hajdušek Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Ankara	Turkey	Atatürk Bulvarı 245 06692 Ankara Republic of Turkey	Vladimír Jakabčín Head of Embassy
Astana	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan	Sary-Arka, Karatökef 5 010000 Astana Republic of Kazakhstan	Dušan Podhorský Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Athens	Greece, Cyprus	Georgiou Seferi 4, Paleo Psychiko 154 52 Athens Hellenic Republic	Ján Voderadský Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Baghdad	Iraq	Hayy Babil (Al Jadriyah) Section 923 Street 37 House 94, Baghdad – Jadriyah Republic of Iraq	Jozef Marhefka Chargé d'Affaires
Bangkok	Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar	No. 21/144 South Sathorn Road Bangkok 101 20 Kingdom of Thailand	Vasil Pytel' Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Beijing	China, Mongolia, North Korea	Ritan Lu, Jian Guo Men Wai 100 600 Peking The People's Republic of China	Žigmund Bertók Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Belgrade	Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia	Bulevar umetnosti 18 New Belgrade 110 70 Republic of Serbia	Igor Furdik Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Berlin	Germany	Friedrichstrasse 60 10117 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	Ivan Korčok Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Bern	Switzerland, Lichtenstein	Thunstrasse 63, 3074 Muri b. Bern Switzerland	Štefan Schill Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Bonn	Germany	August-Bier-Straße 31 53129, Bonn Federal Republic of Germany	Dušan Matulay Head of the Branch of the Embassy in Berlin

Prepared by Martin Fírák, RC SPPA (fírak@sfp.sk).

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Embassy	Accredited	Country	In Charge of the Embassy
Brasilia	Brazil, Ecuador, Columbia, Venezuela, Surinam, Guyana	SES, Avenida das Nações Lote 21 B Qd. 805 CEP 70 200-902 Brasilia Federal Republic of Brazil	Marián Masarik Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Brussels	Belgium, Luxembourg	Avenue Moliere 195 1050 Brussels Kingdom of Belgium	Peter Sopko Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Budapest	Hungary	Stefánia út. 22-24 1143 Budapest XIV Republic of Hungary	Juraj Migaš Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Buenos Aires	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay	Figueroa Alcorta 1425 Buenos Aires Argentine Republic	Vladimír Grác Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Bucharest	Romania, Moldova	Strada Otetari 702 06 , Bucuresti Republic of Romania	Dagmar Repčėková Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Canberra	Australia, New Zealand, Fiji	47 Culgoa Circuit, O' Malley 2606 Canberra Commonwealth of Australia	Peter Procházka Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Damascus	Syria, Lebanon, Jordan	Al Shafei Str. 33115 Damascus Syria	Oldřich Hlaváček Head of the Embassy
Delhi	India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan	50-M, Niti Marg, Chanakyapuri 110021 New Dehli Republic of India	Alexander Iláščík Head of the Embassy
Dublin	Ireland	Clyde Road, Ballsbridge Dublin Ireland	Roman Bužek Ambassador
The hagne	The Netherlands	Parkweg 1 2585 Haag Kingdom of the Netherlands	Oksana Tomová Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Havana	Antigua a Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, Saint Lucia, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.	Calle 66, No. 52, entre 5 - tay7- ma Miramar Havana Republic of Cuba	Zdenek Rozhold Head of the Embassy
Helsinki	Finland, Estonia, Latvia	Annankatu 25 00100 Helsinki Republic of Finland	Viera Štupáková Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Jakarta	Indonesia, The Philippines, Singapore, East Timor	Jalan Profesor Mohammad Yamin 29 1368 Jakarta 103 10 Republic of Indonesia	Peter Holásek Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Cairo	Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia	3, Adel Hosein Rostom 450/11794 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt	Peter Zsoldos Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Copenhagen	Kingdom of Denmark (Denmark, Faroe Islands, Greenland)	Vesterled 26-28 2100 Copenhagen Kingdom of Denmark	Ľubomír Golian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia, Brunei	11, Jalan U-Thant 55 000, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia	Milan Lajčiak Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Kuwait	Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar	Block No.2 Street No.16 Villa No 22 26222 Kuwait State of Kuwait	Ján Lišuch Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy	Accredited	Country	In Charge of the Embassy
Kiev	Ukraine	Jaroslavov val 34 010 34 Kiev Ukraine	Urban Rusnák Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Lisbon	Portugal	Avenida Fontes Pereira de Melo 19, 7. Dto 1050-116 Lisbon Portuguese Republic	Jaroslav Jarúnek Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
London	The United Kingdom	25, Kensington Palace Gardens W8 4QY, London United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Juraj Zervan Head of the Embassy
Ljubljana	Slovenia	Tivolská cesta 4, P.P.395 1000 Ljubljana Republic of Slovenia	Marianna Oravcová Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Madrid	Spain, Andorra, Morocco	C/Pinar, 20 28006 Madrid Kingdom of Spain	Ján Valko Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Mexico City	Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize	México 11 560 Julio Verne 35 United Mexican States	Jozef Adamec Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Minsk	Belarus	Platonova 1-b 220034 Minsk Republic of Belarus	Marián Servátka Ambassador
Moscow	Russian Federation, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia	J. Fučíka 17/19 Moscow Republic of Russian Federation	Augustín Čisár Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Nairobi	Kenya, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Seychelles, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Djibouti, Somalia	Milimani Road 30204 Nairobi Republic of Kenya	Igor Liška Head of the Embassy
Nicosia	Cyprus	4,Kalamatas St., Acropolis, Strovo- los 2002 1165 Nikosia Republic of Cyprus	Anna Tureníčová Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Oslo	Norway, Iceland	Thomas Heftyes Gate 24 NO-0244 Oslo Kingdom of Norway	Dušan Rozbora Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Ottawa	Canada	Rideau Terrace K1M 2A1 Ottawa Canada	Stanislav Opiela Head of the Embassy
Paris	France, Monaco	14 Avenue d'Eylau 75016 Paris Republic of France	Ján Kuderjavý Ambassador
Prague	Czech Republic	Pelléova 12 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	Peter Brño Head of the Embassy
Pretoria	South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Le- sotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe	930 ARCADIA Street 127 36 Pretoria Republic of South Africa	Ladislav Straka Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Riga	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	Smišņu iela 8 1050 Riga Republic of Latvia	Ivan Špilda Head of the Embassy
Rome	Italy, Malta, San Marino	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 00194 Roma Italian Republic	Stanislav Vallo Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy	Accredited	Country	In Charge of the Embassy
Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Skopljanska br.7 710 00 Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina	Miroslav Mojžita Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Sofia	Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania	Blv. Janko Sakazov 1504 Sofia Republic of Bulgaria	Karol Mistrík Head of the Embassy
Seoul	South Korea	389-1 Hannam-dong, Yongsam-gu 140-210 Seoul Republic of South Korea	Pavol Hrmó Ambassador
Stockholm	Sweden	Arsenalsgatan 2/3 TR P.O. Box 7183 Stockholm Kingdom of Sweden	Peter Kmec Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Tashkent	Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	ul. Kičik Bešjogoč 38 100070 Tashkent Republic of Uzbekistan	Jozef Mačišák Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Tehran	Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan	No.38, Sarlashgar Fallahi Street P.O.Box.11365-4451 Tehran Islamic Republic of Iran	Anton Hajduk Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Tel Aviv	Israel, The Palestinian Territories	Jabotinsky 37 P.O.Box 6459 Tel Aviv State of Israel	Ivo Hlaváček Head of the Embassy
Tokyo	Japan, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau	2-11-33, Motoazabu Minato-ku 106-0046 Tokyo Japan	Peter Vršanský Head of the Embassy
Tripoli	Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Chad	Hay Al-Andalus Gargaresh Street, P.O.Box 5721 Tripoli Libya	Marian Záhora Head of the Embassy
Warsaw	Poland	Litewska 6 00-581 Warszawa Republic of Poland	František Ružička Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Vatican (The Holy See)	Vatican	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144 00 194 Roma Italian Republic	Jozef Dravecký Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Vienna	Austria	Armbrustergasse 24 A-1190 Wien Republic of Austria	Peter Lizák Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Washington	USA and their dependencies	3523 International Court, NW 20008 Washington D.C. United States of America	Peter Burian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Zagreb	Croatia	Prilaz Gjure Deželica br. 10 10000 Zagreb Republic of Croatia	Roman Supek Head of the Embassy

Permanent Mission	Address	Head of the Mission
PM EU Brussels	Avenue de Cortenbergh 79 1110 Brussels Kingdom of Belgium	Maroš Šefčovič
PM NATO Brussels	Boulevard Leopold III, NATO HQ 1110 Brussels Kingdom of Belgium	František Kašícký

PM UN New York	Second Avenue 10017 New York United States of America	
PM UN Geneva	9,chemin de l'Ancienne Route 1218 Grand Saconnex Switzerland	<i>Anton Pinter</i>
PM Council of Europe Strasbourg	Rue Ehrmann 67000 Strasbourg Republic of France	<i>Emil Kuchár</i>
PM OECD Paris	28,avenue d' Eylau 750 16 Paris Republic of France	<i>Jana Kotová</i>
PM International Organizations Vienna	Blaastraße 34 A-1190 Vienna Republic of Austria	<i>Juraj Macháč</i>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Name and Address of the Consulate General of the SR</i>	<i>Consul General</i>
The People's Republic of China	Shanghai, Qi Hua Tower 4B 1375 Huai Hai Yhong Lu 200031 Shanghai	<i>Igor Pacolák</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Vollmannstrasse 25d 819 25 Munich	<i>František Zemanovič</i>
The Republic of Hungary	Derkovits sor 7 5600 Bekescsaba	<i>Štefan Daňo</i>
The Republic of Poland	sw. Tomasza 34 31 027 Cracow	<i>Ivan Horský</i>
The Russian Federation	Orbeli 21/2 194 223 Sankt Peterburg	<i>Peter Osvald</i>
The Republic of Turkey	Sümbül Sok. / Bambu Sok. 6 3. Levent, Istanbul, 343 30 Istanbul	<i>Katarína Smékalová</i>
The United States of America	10 940 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2030 CA 90024 California, Los Angeles	<i>František Hudák</i>
The United States of America	801 Second Avenue, 12th Floor New York, N.Y. 10017	<i>Igor Pokojný</i>
Ukraine	Lokoty 4 880 17 Uzhgorod	<i>Marian Sládeček</i>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Head</i>
Slovak Institute Berlin	Zimmerstrasse 27, D-10117 Berlin Federal Republic of Germany	<i>Martin Sarvaš</i>
Slovak Institute Budapest	Rákóczi út. 15, H-1088 Budapest Republic of Hungary	<i>Milan Kurucz</i>
Slovak Institute Prague	Jiřská 450/16, 110 00 Pradue The Czech Republic	<i>Vladimír Valovič</i>
Slovak Institute Moscow	Ul. 2 Brestská 27, 125-056, Moscow Russian Federation	<i>Peter Bircák</i>
Slovak Institute Paris	125, rue de Ranelagh, F-75016 Paris Republic of France	<i>Božena Krížiková</i>
Slovak Institute Rome	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144, I-00194 Rome Italian Republic	<i>Daniela Rozgoňová</i>
Slovak Institute Vienna	Wipplingerstrasse 24-26, A-1010 Vienna Republic of Austria	<i>Viera Polakovičová</i>
Slovak Institute Warsaw	ul. Krzywe Kolo 12/14a, PL-00 270 Warsaw Republic of Poland	<i>Helena Jacošová</i>

LIST OF THE CONSULATES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC HEADED BY THE HONORARY CONSULS

THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF APRIL 2009.

Country	Consulate	Consul
The Republic of Albania	Tirana	Faik Dizdari <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Argentine Republic	La Platta	Eduardo Kabát <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Armenia	Yerevan	Gagik Vladimirovič Martirosian <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Commonwealth of Australia	Brisbane	Michal Horvath <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Commonwealth of Australia	Melbourne	Vojtech Michael Markuš <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	Dhaka	Reza Ali <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Antwerp	Gunar Riebs <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Gent	Arnold Vanhaecke <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Liège	Raffaele Antonio Apruzzese <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Mons	Mario Annaert <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Bolivia	La Paz	Hernán Guido Vera Ruiz <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Medjugorje	Rajko Zelinka <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federative Republic of Brazil	Joinville	Ernesto Heinzelmann <i>honorary consul</i>
The Federative Republic of Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	M. Faiçal HAMMOUD <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federative Republic of Brazil	Sao Paulo	Peter Paulíček <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Costa Rica	San José	Eugénio Gerardo Arraya Chacón <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Cyprus	Limassol	George Vassos Hadjitheodossiou <i>Honorary General Consul</i>

Prepared by Martin Firák, RC SFPA (firak@sfpa.sk).

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Country	Consulate	Consul
The Republic of Chile	Santiago	Paul Nador <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The People's Republic of China	Hong Kong	Willy Sun Mo Lin <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Denmark	Aarhus	Štefan Pető <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Arab Republic of Egypt	Alexandria	Mohamed Moustafa el Naggar <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	Addis Abeba	Feleke Bekele Safo <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Croatia	Split	Ante Plančić <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Estonia	Tallinn	Evan Tudeberg <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Finland	Teerijärvi	Mikael Albäck <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of the Philippines	Cebu City	Antonio N. Chiu <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of the Philippines	Manila	Robert Chin Siy <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The French Republic	Grenoble	Menyhért Kocsis <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The French Republic	Lille	Alain Bar <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The French Republic	Nancy	Jean-Marie Keller <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The French Republic	Saint Pol De León	Yan Méllenec <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The French Republic	Toulouse	Kathy Bayoud-Vidal <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Guatemala	Guatemala	Mario Fernando Montúfara Rodrigues <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Guinea	Conakry	Boubakar Lombonna Diallo <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Haiti	Port- au - Prince	Claude Martin <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Hellenic Republic	Thessaloniki	Konstantinos Mavridis <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	Eindhoven	Gerardus Hendrik Meulesteen <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	Meppel	Gerhard Tonnis Poppempa <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	Rotterdam	Jacob Ten Hoope <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of India	Calcutta	Patra Sadham Bosé <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of India	Mumbai	Amit Choksey <i>honorary consul</i>
The Republic of Indonesia	Denpasar	Jürgen Schreiber <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Indonesia	Surabava	Sindunata Sambudhi <i>Honorary Consul</i>

Country	Consulate	Consul
The Republic of Iceland	Reykjavik	Runolfur Oddsson Honorary Consul
The State of Israel	Beer Sheva	Samuel David Sax Honorary Consul
The State of Israel	Ha Sharon	Karol Nathan Steiner Honorary Consul
The State of Israel	Haifa	Dan Mandel Honorary Consul
The State of Israel	Jerusalem	Dr. Martin Rodan Honorary Consul
Jamaica	Kingston	Christopher Richard Issa Honorary Consul
Japan	Kirishime	Masahiro Yamamoto Honorary Consul
The Republic of Yemen	Saná	Adel Mohamed Al Huraibi Honorary Consul
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Amman	Khaldun A. Abuhassan Honorary General Consul
The Republic of South Africa	Cape Town	Geoffrey Leighton Ashmead Honorary Consul
The Republic of Cameroon	Yaoundé	Mohamadou Salihou Honorary Consul
Canada	Calgary	Ludovít Zanzotto Honorary General Consul
Canada	Montreal	Dezider Michaletz Honorary Consul
Canada	Toronto	Mikuláš Martinček Honorary Consul
Canada	Vancouver	Stanislav Lišiak Honorary Consul
Canada	Winnipeg	Jozef Kiška Honorary Consul
The Republic of Kenya	Mombassa	Christoph Modigell Honorary Consul
The Kyrgyz Republic	Bishkek	Igor Konstantinovič Gusarov Honorary Consul
The Republic of Colombia	Medellín	Jenaro Pérez Gutiérrez Honorary Consul
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	Luxembourg	Blanche Mourtrier Honorary Consul
The Republic of Macedonia	Skopje	Vlade Tome Stojanovski Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Kota Kinabalu	Wong Khen Thau Honorary Consul
The Republic of Malawi	Blantyre	Salim David Bapu Honorary Consul
The Republic of Malta	Valletta	Godwin Edvard Bencini Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Morocco	Casablanca	Kamil Ouzzani Touhamy Honorary Consul
The Republic of Moldova	Chisinau	Iurie Grigore Popovici Honorary Consul

Country	Consulate	Consul
The Principality of Monaco	Monaco	Cristine Noghés-Ménio <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Mongolia	Ulanbaatar	Munchijn Enchtajvan <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Mozambique	Maputo	Ismael Mussá Manguera <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Federal Republic of Nigeria	Port Harcourt	Eze Clifford Amadi <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Norway	Bergen	Morten L. Gjesdahl <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Norway	Drammen	Zuzana Opavská Wahl <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Norway	Trondheim	Erik Frederiksen <i>Honorary Consul</i>
New Zealand	Auckland	Peter Kiely <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Bad Homburg	Imrich Donath <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Hamburg	Peter Littmann <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Hannover	Dirk Bettels <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Leipzig	Wolfgang Fritz Eschment <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Stuttgart	Christoph Goeser <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Wuppertal	Ivan Koval <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Islamic republic of Pakistan	Karachi	Abdula Sikander Ghulamali <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Panama	Panama	Julio César Benedetti <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Paraguay	Cuidad del Este	Charif Mammoud <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Peru	Lima	Teresa Koetzle-Daly <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Poland	Gliwice	Marian Czerny <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Poland	Poznan	Piotr Stanisław Styczinski <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Poland	Rzeszow	Adam Góral <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Poland	Sopot	Jerzy Leśniak <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Poland	Zakopane	Wiesław Tadeusz Wojas <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Portuguese Republic	Porto	Manuel de Sá Bastos <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Austria	Innsbruck	Jurgen Bodenseer <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Austria	Linz	Ernst Papesch <i>Honorary Consul</i>

Country	Consulate	Consul
The Republic of Austria	Salzburg	Gerald Hubner <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Austria	Vienna	Walter Hildebrand <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Romania	Salonta	Miroslav Jabloncsik <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Russian Federation	Chanty-Mansijsk	Eduard Vasiljevič Lebedev <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Russian Federation	Rostov-on-Don	Peter Šulek <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Russian Federation	Krasnojarsk	Valerij Alexandrovič Gračev <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of El Salvador	San Salvador	Nicolas Antonio Salume Babun <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Senegal	Dakar	Mapathé Ndiouck <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Seychelles	Victoria	Joseph France Albert <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Singapore	Singapore	Cheo Guan Ow <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Belfast	Thomas Sullivan <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Cardiff	Nigel Bruce Harold Payne <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Edinburgh	Duncan Alexander Spiers <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Boston	Peter Mužila <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Cleveland	Edward George Keshock <i>honorary consul</i>
The United States of America	Denver	Gregor James Fasing <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Detroit	Edward Zelenak <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Chicago	Thomas Kenneth Klimek Ward <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Indianapolis	Steve Zlatos <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Kansas City	Ross F. Marine <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Las Vegas	Geoffrey A. VanderPal <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	North Miami	Cecilia F. Rokusek <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	Pittsburgh	Joseph T. Senko <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The United States of America	San Francisco	Barbara M. Pivnicka <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Yemen	Saná	Adel Mohamed Al Huraibi <i>Honorary Consul</i>

Country	Consulate	Consul
The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	Colombo	Mahen Roshan Andrew Kariyawasan <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of the Sudan	Khartom	Nasreldin Ibrahim Shulgami <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Syrian Arab Republic	Lattakia	Anas Dib Joud <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Spain	Barcelona	Joan Ignacio Torredemer Galles <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Spain	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Francisco José Perera Molinero <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Spain	Zaragoza	Jean-Pol Jules Marie Bastiaanas <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Swiss Confederation	Zürich	Michal Čierny <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Sweden	Göteborg	Carl Magnus Richard Kindal <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Sweden	Malmö	Rolf Bjerndell <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Italian Republic	Ascoli Piceno	Carlo Matarazzo <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Italian Republic	Florence	Massimo Sani <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Italian Republic	Forlì	Alvaro Ravaglioli <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Italian Republic	Milan	Luigi Cuzzolin <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Italian Republic	Neapol	Franca Serao <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Italian Republic	Terst	Miljan Todorovič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Italian Republic	Torino	Giuseppe Pellegrino <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Togolese republic	Lomé	Vivoto James Victor Sossou <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Turkey	Edirne	Coskun Molla <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Turkey	Izmir	Selçuk Borovali <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Ukraine	Doneck	Tamara Timofejevna Lysenko <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Ukraine	Uzhgorod	Ivan Julievič Šufrič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	Huy Ho <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Zambia	Lusaka	Jaroslav Kulich <i>Honorary Consul</i>

NUMBERS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

AS OF FEBRUARY 2009

<i>Mission</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of the SR Armed Forces Members</i>
UN		
UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus) – UN	Cyprus	196
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) – UN	Syria, Israel	3
NATO		
ISAF (International Security Assistance Force)	Afghanistan	176
KFOR (Kosovo Force) – NATO	Kosovo	139
NATO Headquarters (Sarajevo)	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
EU		
ALTHEA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	35 + 4 (Headquarters)

Prepared by Martin Firák, RC SFPA (firak@sfp.sk).
Source: Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic

AUTHORS

AUTHORS

Vladimír Benč graduated from the Faculty of Business Economics of the University of Economics (Bratislava) in Košice in 2000, majoring in marketing and management. In 2000-2001, he was project coordinator at the Prešov regional office of the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In 2000, he joined the Prešov branch office of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association as a junior researcher. He also headed the Regional Development Section of the Committee of the Third Sector and was an internal expert of the 4th Working Group of the National Convention on the EU in Slovakia. At present, he works at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association as Head of the Economic and Development Policy Program. In his research, he focuses on economic policy, regional development, cross-border cooperation, and development assistance. (benc@sfpa.sk)



Vladimír Bilčík studied political science and economics at Swarthmore College in the USA, European politics at the University of Oxford in the UK and political theory at Comenius University in Bratislava. He has been working as an analyst and head of the European studies research program at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association since September 1999. From December 2005 he has also been working as assistant professor in the Department of political science at the Philosophical Faculty of the Comenius University. In 2002-2003 he worked as advisor to Ján Figel' who was then a member of the Convention on the Future of Europe. Vladimír Bilčík's research covers various aspects of European integration and international relations. (bilcik@sfpa.sk)



Radomír Boháč studied at the Faculty of Law of Comenius University in Bratislava in 1982-1983. He continued his studies at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations from 1983-1987. In 1997, he successfully completed his postgraduate studies at the International Institute of Public Administration in Paris and he is also a graduate of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany (2003). He joined the Czechoslovak diplomatic service in 1986 and received his first posting at the CSSR Embassy in London. In 1991-1996, he was deployed to the diplomatic mission in Delhi. Afterwards, he worked as an advisor to the State Secretary of the MFA SR, Deputy Director of the EU/NATO States Department, and Deputy Director General of the Political Affairs Directorate. In 1998, he was appointed Ambassador of the SR to Ethiopia, Kenya, the Seychelles, and Uganda located in Nairobi and, at the same time, occupied the post of the Permanent Representative of Slovakia at the UN Office in Nairobi. From 2002, he worked at the headquarters as Director of the Asia, Africa, Middle East, and the Latin America Department of the MFA SR. He later became the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Portugal. As of October 2008, he is the Director General of the Directorate for Economic Cooperation and Official Development Assistance of the MFA. He is the author of numerous analyses, articles, and studies on various issues on international relations. He also lectures at Slovak universities and other institutions. (Radomir.Bohac@mzv.sk)



Peter Brezáni graduated from the University of Economics in Bratislava in 2002. In 2001, he studied at Sejong University of Korea in Seoul and in 2009, spent two months as a researcher at the University of Tokyo in Japan. He began his career as a development policy analyst at the Slovak Institute of International Studies in 2002. In 2003, he joined the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association as an editor and foreign policy analyst. He has been responsible, both as editor and co-editor, for the journal *Listy SFPA* (2003); the quarterly *International Issues* (2004-2005); the quarterly *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* (2006-present); and the *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy* (2003-present). In his research, he focuses on the issues of relations in Northeast Asia and development policy. (brezani@sfpa.sk)



Alexander Duleba graduated from the National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv in 1989. In 1990-1993, he worked at the Department of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Prešov. From May 1993 to August 1995, he worked as an analyst for the MFA's Slovak Institute for International Studies. Since September 1995, he has been working at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, and from May 2000, as Director and Head of the Eastern Europe Research Program. He is the author and co-author of a number of books, studies, and many articles. Among his most important publications are: *Koniec súčasnej strednej Európy? Ukrajina a Slovensko po prvej vlne rozšírenia NATO* (1998), *Rusko na konci Jel'cinovej éry. Zahraničná a vnútorná politika, Rozširovanie NATO a záujmy Slovenska* (1999), *Ukrajina a Slovensko* (2000), *Eastern Policy of the Enlarged European Union. A Visegrad Perspective* (co-editor, 2003), *Zahraničná politika Slovenska po vstupe do NATO a EÚ. Východiská a stratégie* (co-editor/co-author, 2004). (duleba@sfp.sk)



Martina Hrvolová graduated from the Faculty of Law of the Comenius University in Bratislava in 2004. She is continuing her study of law at the postgraduate level. Since 2004, she has been working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in the Human Rights, Council of Europe, OSCE and National Minorities Department. She represents the Slovak Republic in various permanent multilateral forums including the Steering Committee of the Council of Europe for Human Rights. In 2009, she is also working as a specialist at the Open Society Institute in open education. She continues her lecture and scientific activities. She collaborates on the preparation of university textbooks on international security for the American market. (Martina.Hrvolova@mzv.sk)



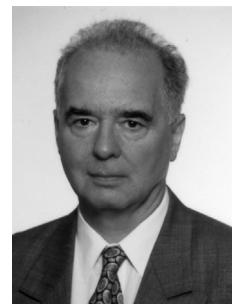
Matúš Korba graduated in 1999 from the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, where he also completed his postgraduate studies. He successfully defended his dissertation thesis in 2007. In 1997-1999, he worked as an assistant on projects organized by the Dutch Centre for European Security Studies in Gronigen. In 2000-2001, he worked as regional project coordinator at the British Safeworld Research Center in London as well as at the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA). In 2002-2004, he was a pre-doctoral research fellow at the Institute of International Relations in Prague and in 2005-2006, a visiting researcher at the Department of Political Science of the University of Latvia in Riga. He is a founding member of the Center for Security Studies (CSS Bratislava), established in 2002, and he is currently project manager. From 2004, he has also been working as coordinator of the editorial board of *Bezpečnostné analýzy/Strategické štúdie*. (m.korba@security-studies.sk)



Miroslav Lajčák is a law graduate from Comenius University in Bratislava. He studied international relations at the State Institute of International Relations in Moscow and he is also a graduate of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany. He started his professional career by joining Czechoslovakia's Foreign Ministry in 1988. He was Ambassador in Japan between 1994 and 1998 and later on Ambassador in Belgrade with accreditation to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and to the Republic of Albania between 2001 and 2005. Before becoming Slovak Foreign Minister in January 2009, he carried out his duties in the capacity of the High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina from July 2007 to March 2009. His extensive experience and knowledge of Southeastern Europe as well as his skills in crisis management have been proved by his smooth and successful mission in Montenegro, where he was appointed to the role of mediator and personal representative of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, to oversee the referendum in 2006. He is fluent in English, German, Russian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian and Bulgarian. (kami@mzv.sk)



Július Lőrincz has been working as a professional journalist for over forty years. Former Yugoslavia was the focus of his interest in the seventies and his interest increased during the crisis years of the 1990s. He is the author and co-author of numerous interviews published in the newspaper *Pravda* with important political figures of the region such as e.g. Kiro Gligorov, Milan Kučan, Ibrahim Rugova, Ivica Račan, Mira Marković, Zoran Đinđić, Vojislav Koštunica, Milo Đukanović, Boris Tadić, Čedomir Jovanović, Veton Surroi and others. In 2002-2005, he worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic at the Slovak Embassy in Zagreb. He cooperates on a long-term basis with various non-governmental organizations, especially in activities related to the Western Balkans. (lorincz@szm.com)



Marcel Peško graduated from the Institute of International Relations and International Law of National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv in 1990, majoring in international economic relations. In 2001, he completed his two-year postgraduate studies at Dublin City University and holds an MBA degree in change management and strategic management. From January 1992, he worked as Director of Sales and Marketing for Slovakia at the newly founded subsidiary of the *Coca-Cola* Company. In December 1992, he joined the Slovak diplomatic service and in August 1993, he was appointed Deputy Head of the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the OSCE in Vienna. After his return, he worked for the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs as Deputy Director and later as Director. In 1999-2002, he was Head of the Slovak Embassy in Ireland. He was subsequently employed as Director for the Development of Markets and Trade of Transacty Slovakia. In November 2003, he became Executive Secretary for the Office of the Secretary General of the OSCE, Ján Kubiš, responsible for the coordination of individual bodies of the organization and the implementation of new management processes. In September 2005, he returned to the MFA, where he was charged with preparing and later coordinating the non-permanent membership of the Slovak Republic in the UN SC as Head of the Coordination Unit and Director of the UN Department. As of January 2007, he holds the post of Secretary General of the MFA. In his previous publications, he has focused on issues of European and transatlantic security as well as on increasing the effectiveness of public administration through the implementation of modern management processes for the MFA SR. (Marcel.Pesko@mzv.sk)



Ján Petrovič graduated from the Faculty of Mining of the Technical University of Košice in 1988. From 1988 he held various positions at Baňa Dolina (the Dolina Mine) in Veľký Krtíš. Since 1995 he has been working at the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic in the field of energy and mining. From 2004 he was Director of the Energy Policy Department and from 2007 he has been Director General of the Energy Section. His main activities and responsibilities include energy and raw materials policy, energy and resource security, the electricity sector including nuclear energy, the use of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, the natural gas sector, the oil sector including bio-fuels, the heating sector, the mining and processing of metallic and non-metallic mineral resources and fuels, energy and mining legislation, and international relations in the field of energy. (Petrovic@economy.gov.sk)



Tomáš Strážay works at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, where he heads the program Central and South-eastern Europe. He has also been co-editor of the *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* quarterly. Currently he is completing his PhD at the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. (strazay@sfpa.sk)



YEARBOOK OF SLOVAKIA'S FOREIGN POLICY 2008

BRATISLAVA 2009

© RESEARCH CENTER OF THE
SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

EDITOR
PETER BREZÁNI

EDITORIAL BOARD
VLADIMÍR BILČÍK, PETER BREZÁNI, JURAJ BUZALKA, ALEXANDER DULEBA,
JURAJ MARUŠIAK, LUCIA NAJŠLOVÁ, ELIŠKA SLÁVIKOVÁ, TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY,
JÁN ŠOTH

REVIEWERS
VLADIMÍR BILČÍK, PETER BREZÁNI, JURAJ BUZALKA, ALEXANDER DULEBA,
JURAJ MARUŠIAK, LUCIA NAJŠLOVÁ, TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY

TRANSLATION
MARTIN FIRÁK, MARTIN CHOVANČÍK, REBECCA MURRAY, PAVOL SZALAI

PROOF-READING
CATRIONA MENZIES

FIRST EDITION, NUMBER OF PAGES 232

PRINTED BY
AEPRESS, S.R.O.

ISBN 978-80-89356-07-2