

REPORT ON THE FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVITIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN 2009

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Introduction

The main direction of Slovakia's foreign policy in 2009 followed the foreign policy objectives set out in the Slovak Government Manifesto. The updated policy objectives are specified in the document "*Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation for 2009*", approved by the Slovak Cabinet on 4 March 2009 (No. 172/2009) and submitted to the Parliament for information. A systemic arrangement of the strategic priorities and objectives in line with the MFA strategy entitled "*Successful Slovakia in a Safe World*" (adopted in February 2008) brought more clarity into the evaluation of the foreign policy performance, making the utilisation of budgetary resources more efficient.

The 2009 international affairs were largely influenced by the **global financial and economic crisis**. The context of the crisis had an adverse impact on the universal endeavour to secure stability, prosperity and sustainable development in the world, brought about new impulses and challenges, and retarded or even halted the positive trends of integration. On the other hand, the economic downturn compelled the international community to search and find ways of making international dialogue more systematic, and inspired an unprecedented effort towards global coordination of anti-crisis measures. At the same time, the context of the crisis stepped up the effort to restore trust in international relations and revitalise global stability.

This overall framework determined the course of Slovakia's foreign policy in 2009. Slovakia subordinated its foreign policy activities to the new key priority – in close interaction with all relevant domestic economic actors, the country deployed a set of political and diplomatic tools designed to mitigate the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, strengthened the **economic dimension of diplomacy** to protect the economic security and the national and state interests of the country, supported Slovak exports, encouraged the inflow of foreign investments, actively contributed towards the identification of common international procedures, all without compromising its compliance with various international commitments. These objectives were also accomplished in the course of the year thanks to the synergies between with the top constitutional officials, ministries and other central government bodies, business associations and organisations.

Also in the dynamic year of 2009, the Slovak Republic preserved the **continuity** of its other **foreign policy priorities** in tune with the principle of profound respect for the values of democracy, human rights and support to sustainable development, with particular emphasis on social solidarity. Slovakia reinforced its international credibility by honouring all its commitments in organisations and communities of which it is a member, particularly the EU, NATO, the UN, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Despite the unstable international environment, Slovakia continued to pursue a balanced and transparent foreign policy inspired by the values compatible with the European and Euro-Atlantic stances. Through specific activities and steps, Slovak foreign policy confirmed full preparedness to actively participate in, via integration mechanisms, strengthening the instruments of effective multilateralism and tackling serious global issues. The activities of the forces of extremism, nationalism, neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism and religious fundamentalism, which have a potential to radicalise the situation in the world, including in Europe, represented a worrying phenomenon on the international scene in 2009.

Upon accession to the euro area on 1 January 2009, Slovakia successfully accomplished its **full integration within the EU**. The euro adoption elevated the country's political and economic profile, softened the negative impacts of the financial and economic crisis upon the domestic banking sector, and maintained currency stability. Slovakia began to benefit more actively from its EU membership by making more intensive use of the structural funds and direct payments and through participation in specialised EU programmes. Through responsible communication inside the Union, Slovakia is returning on the path of restoring its pre-crisis compliance with the Maastricht criteria of stability and growth. By timely

ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, Slovakia supported the deepening of European integration and consolidation of EU institutions aimed at strengthening a democratic, safe, dynamic, prosperous and socially stable Europe. The unprecedented disruption of natural gas supplies to Slovakia in January 2009 highlighted the seriousness of non-military threats to the security of Slovakia and the broader European space, and underscored the urgency of stepping up efforts to adopt a more effective common energy policy for the Union.

Membership in the **North Atlantic Alliance** constitutes the basic security pillar of Slovakia's foreign policy. Slovakia supported the transformation of the Alliance aimed at enhancing its capability to react to both existing and emerging security threats. Slovakia has been actively involved in the shaping up of the Alliance's strategic decisions and, for the first time in its history, also in the preparation of the new Strategic Concept of NATO. This fact was confirmed when Bratislava hosted a meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of defence ministers in October 2009. Slovakia advocated the continuation of NATO enlargement, tighter transatlantic links, and strategic partnerships and cooperation between the Alliance and various international organisations and regional groupings. These processes represent an ample tool for the strengthening of both European and global security and stability. By having increased its participation in ISAF in Afghanistan and by taking a decision to increase its future troop contribution, Slovakia confirmed its resolve to honour its commitments as an ally and to bear its share of responsibility for international security.

The activities of Slovakia in the **United Nations** focused on the peacekeeping operations and ways of enhancing their effectiveness. In 2009, Slovakia led the UN effort in support of security sector reform, participated actively in the **UN Human Rights Council**, and was elected as a member of the **UNESCO Executive Board** and member of **ECOSOC**.

In the **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe**, Slovakia supported discussions on the future of European security within the framework of the "Corfu Process" and advocated consistent implementation of the measures designed to build confidence and security.

In the **Council of Europe**, Slovakia actively contributed to the process of spreading freedom, democracy and respect for human rights, and constructively cooperated in the evaluation by the Council of Europe of Slovakia's compliance with commitments under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Slovakia successfully continued to develop its **relations with NATO strategic allies**, including the key guarantor of security – the United States. The overall improvement of the international atmosphere after the new US administration took office, and US emphasis on making the instruments of multilateralism more effective, present a unique opportunity to strengthen the Euro-Atlantic ties. The economic crisis, new global challenges, international co-responsibility and the positive experience of solidarity have strengthened Slovakia's relations with Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Canada and other EU and NATO members.

Good **neighbourly relations** constituted an integral part of the foreign-policy priorities of Slovakia. Slovakia's special relationship with the Czech Republic continued to have the nature of a strategic partnership. Relations with Poland have been traditionally friendly, intensive and forthcoming. A large part of Slovakia's foreign-policy energy has been sapped by the minority-related agenda in our relations with Hungary and by the massive internationalisation of bilateral issues, which damaged both sides. Slovakia has been trying to blunt the edges of the bilateral political dialogue by setting historical resentments aside. Our relations with Austria focused on the pragmatic aspects of bilateral and regional cooperation, particularly around projects in the energy and transport infrastructure. In its relations with Ukraine, Slovakia accentuated the economic and cross-border dimensions of cooperation,

security of energy supply, and support for the process of Ukrainian integration into the EU, WTO and NATO.

The **Visegrad Group** maintained its special status in Slovakia's foreign policy activities in the region. Its significance has risen and will continue to grow against the backdrop of the global economic downturn, threats to energy security and other global challenges. Slovakia considers this informal regional cooperation grouping as an important tool for the stability of the region.

Also in 2009, Slovak diplomacy continued to contribute towards the integration processes in the **Western Balkans**, particularly by sharing its experience from the transformation and EU integration processes, as well as through positive regional interaction with the international community. Slovakia's interpretation of international law principles in relation to the recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo remains unchanged.

The **eastern dimension** of the foreign policy of Slovakia has been amplified by interest in stabilising the situations in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, which has the potential to also influence situations in the CEE region. The bilateral dispute between Russia and Ukraine in early 2009 endangered the economic security of Slovakia. Nevertheless, relations between Slovakia and the Russian Federation continued to be based on pragmatic partnership and dialogue, supporting mutually beneficial economic cooperation and the EU's strategic partnership with Russia – a partnership to strengthen, in particular, the energy and raw material security of Europe and a long-term stability of beneficial relations between Russia and the EU. Slovakia incorporated the European concept of the **Eastern Partnership** with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan amongst the priority challenges of its foreign policy.

The structural shifts in the global economy have naturally boosted Slovakia's interest in intensifying trade and economic relations with the key countries of **Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Australia**.

Notwithstanding domestic budgetary constraints, Slovakia also remained active as a donor to **Overseas Development Assistance** in 2009 in line with its international commitments vis-à-vis developing countries, focusing on better effectiveness, distribution and the purposeful use of ODA.

Within the framework of various international organisations, Slovakia actively participated in finding a response to **global challenges** – the fight against terrorism, climate change, global economic crisis, disarmament, illegal migration, food and energy security, future water management, education, science and research, and the development of state-of-the-art technologies. At the Global Summit of Copenhagen, Slovakia supported the common EU position on specific contributions to a fund designed to assist developing countries to attain global emission targets.

The year 2009 was the fifth year of Slovakia's membership in the EU and NATO, 60th anniversary of the North Atlantic Alliance, and 20th anniversary of November 1989. These anniversaries gave **public diplomacy** an ample opportunity to hold various commemorative events, both domestically and internationally. Slovakia thus confirmed that it upholds the democratic legacy of November 1989 and that it perceives its membership in the major global integration groupings as the country's most reliable anchor in the Euro-Atlantic civilisation arena.

In collaboration with other domestic partners, the MFA launched an effort aimed at ensuring a more effective **coordinated presentation of Slovakia abroad**. The MFA consular service focused on the **consular assistance** to Slovak citizens in difficult situations abroad. Within the confines of their budgets, the ministries of culture, education and foreign affairs (among others) supported **Slovak ethnic communities abroad** in maintaining and developing

their linguistic, cultural and ethnic identity. Slovakia continued to perform its obligations under international treaties, honoured its multilateral and bilateral commitments, and advocated consistent respect for international law.

Also in the complicated year of 2009, Slovakia managed to pursue its foreign policy objectives – to protect the interests and security of the country and its citizens, deepen the country's international integration, strengthen the transatlantic partnership and European and regional cooperation, and strive for good relations with its neighbours and with the important players of world politics and economics. Slovakia's foreign policy remained convincing in that it based itself on strong alliances and unconditional respect for the principles of international law. At the same time, it followed a clear vision along main geopolitical lines, which has made its international communication natural and sufficiently self-confident.

1. Slovakia in a Safe and Democratic World

1.1. Enhancing Bilateral Cooperation with Slovakia's Key Partners

Effective and good bilateral relations are essential to ensuring the successful pursuit of Slovakia's foreign policy interests within the system of international relations. Slovakia achieved effectiveness in this area through the targeted coordination of foreign policy activities by the president, parliament cabinet, individual ministries and specialised agencies.

In 2009, Slovakia managed to lay solid foundations for cooperation with the Administration of **US President** Barack Obama, whilst preserving the continuity of dialogue on the issues of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The public confirmation of alliance and renewed engagement in the CEE region, and the activities of the US Administration in relation to its CEE allies from autumn 2009, provided a basis for the deepening of cooperation and substantive dialogue. Slovakia intensified activities aimed at supporting economic and scientific cooperation with the United States at all levels. The issues of economic, scientific and research cooperation, including opportunities for the transfer of technologies, were the main topics of visits to the US by Deputy Prime Minister Dušan Čaplovič (October), Minister of Education Ján Mikolaj (March), and of the follow-up activities by the Slovak Embassy in Washington. Slovakia strengthened the role played by its Honorary Consulates in the US in the promotion of commercial, economic and scientific-technological cooperation. Other levels and agencies of the Slovak administration have since been engaged in regular communication with their US counterparts. The foreign service used the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Velvet Revolution to present Slovakia as a modern and investment-friendly economy. The purpose of these activities has been to achieve better interaction and synergies among all stakeholders representing Slovakia in the territory of the United States.

The main purpose behind the effort to strengthen bilateral cooperation with **Germany** has been to maintain the intensity of mutual dialogue and economic cooperation and restore the previous favourable trends in mutual trade. Despite certain constraints (German parliamentary elections in September), a number of important meetings at the parliamentary, governmental and expert levels did take place. Particularly beneficial was the working visit by Prime Minister Robert Fico and Economy Minister Ľubomír Jahnátek in Lower Saxony, where they met with the top executives of German concerns operating in the vital sectors of the Slovak economy – energy (RWE, E.ON) and automotive (Volkswagen). Bilateral contacts also intensified exchanges in the field of education (government scholarship programme for Slovak secondary school students in Germany), research and transfer of technologies, police cooperation and regional cooperation of the Danube countries. Slovakia appreciated the solidarity measures taken by Germany, Czech Republic and France at the time of the “gas crisis” in January 2009.

Implementation of the strategic partnership agreement between Slovakia and **France** of September 2008 led to the signing of an agreement between the two governments on cooperation in the area of public administration (21 April 2009) and preparation of an agreement on the protection of classified information. The working visit by Foreign Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák to France (April) represented a valuable contribution towards the development of mutual relations. The cooperation of both countries in the area of nuclear energy continued, as confirmed during the working visit of Economy Minister Ľubomír Jahnátek in France (August). The quality of Slovak-French relations was also confirmed when Speaker of the Parliament Pavol Paška paid a visit to France (February), where he participated, among other engagements, in the Conference of EU Speakers, and also later that year when members of the Slovak-French friendship groups of the French National Assembly and of the Senate visited Slovakia (September). The working dialogue between the foreign affairs ministries and central government bodies of both countries intensified further. Within the framework of the Slovak government’s scholarship scheme, 12 nominated secondary school students from Slovakia went to study at French lycées. An intensive presentation of all aspects of Slovak culture and arts was held in Paris and other regions of France.

Slovakia paid particular attention to the enhancement of bilateral partnership relations with other member states of the EU and NATO. Cooperation and bilateral contacts with the **United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey** have been specifically important. Slovak diplomacy has been traditionally active as a mediator of bi-communal dialogue in Cyprus. Relations with the neighbouring countries (covered in a separate chapter under the 3rd strategic priority – Slovakia’s European Policy) have been of prime importance for Slovakia.

Our bilateral contacts with the **Russian Federation** have been dominated by an emphasis on the economic dimension of mutual relations. In spite of the history of stability in Russian energy supplies and the reliability of Slovakia as a customer, the cooperation of both countries in the energy sector was affected by a major stoppage in the deliveries of Russian natural gas in early 2009. Since then, Slovakia has been engaged in an intensive dialogue with Russia in order to prevent similar situations from recurring. The dynamics of the mutual dialogue in 2009 at the top political level (prime ministers, foreign affairs ministers and ministers for the economy/energy) was satisfactory. Slovakia advocated stronger ties between Russia and the European political, economic and security projects.

The Inter-governmental Commission for Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation, which held its 14th session in Moscow in November, represents an important mechanism in the development of economic relations. Intensive cooperation also continued in the area of education, mainly through study and scientific internships for students and researchers from both countries. In the second year of the successful scholarship programme

run by the Slovak government, students from Slovakia went to study at Russian secondary schools.

In relation to the **countries of the Western Balkans**, Slovak foreign policy remained consistent in advocating continuation of their integration into the EU and NATO. Albania and Croatia joined NATO in April 2009. Albania presented its application for EU membership in April and the EU Council decided, following Montenegro's application filed in December 2008, to also forward it to the European Commission for the preparation of the *avis*. The blockage of pre-accession talks with Croatia – prompted by a dispute over the common border with Slovenia in the north of the Adriatic Sea – was eventually lifted. In October 2009, the European Commission recommended launching pre-accession negotiations with Macedonia. In relation to Serbia, Slovakia pressed for the unblocking of the interim trade agreement and ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Slovakia confirmed the immutability of its position on the Kosovo issue in its opinion delivered to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Until the end of February 2009, current Foreign Affairs Minister of Slovakia Miroslav Lajčák served as the High Representative of the International Community and the EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The situation in BiH became complicated in the course of 2009. In October and November, the Swedish Presidency of the EU and the United States presented an initiative to reach progress in meeting the 5+2 criteria for the closure of the Office of High Representative in BiH and its transformation into the reinforced EUSR. The initiative also concerns BiH constitutional reform. Miroslav Lajčák participated in talks at the invitation of Swedish Foreign Affairs Minister Carl Bildt. The Slovak Republic continued to take part in the operations of KFOR and EULEX in Kosovo and EUFOR/Althea and EUPM in BiH.

The priority which Slovakia attaches to the stability in the Western Balkans has been reflected in the intensity of contacts and activities at top political levels. In spite of the global economic downturn, the volume of trade with these countries continued to grow.

1.2. Strengthening the Security of the Euro-Atlantic Area

Membership in the **North Atlantic Alliance (NATO)** constitutes the basic security pillar of Slovakia's foreign policy. Slovakia continued to support the process of NATO transformation designed to enhance the ability of the Alliance to effectively respond to both existing and emerging security threats.

In close coordination between the MFA and the Ministry of Defence, Slovakia actively participated in discussions that led to the adoption of strategic decisions at top NATO events in 2009, including the meetings of foreign affairs ministers in March and December, meetings of defence ministers in February, June and October, and the NATO Summit held on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of NATO in Strasbourg and Kehl in April 2009.

Slovakia supported one of the main conclusions of the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit - the decision to draw up a **new Strategic Concept of NATO**. In this connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared its basic framework position on the document and actively participated in two specialised conferences.

The **informal meeting of NATO defence ministers**, which took place in Bratislava on 22-23 October 2009, was of particular significance to Slovakia. It was a unique opportunity to present Slovakia as a full-fledged and trustworthy NATO member. In connection with this high-profile international event, two top officials of the Alliance – NATO Secretary General Anders F. Rasmussen and Supreme Allied Commander for Europe admiral James G. Stavridis – paid bilateral visits to Slovakia in October.

Also in 2009, Slovakia remained supportive, as a matter of principle, of **NATO's Open Door Policy**. Since the allies were unable to reach a consensus at the end of 2008 on the inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia into the Membership Action Plan (MAP), the Slovak Republic welcomed a joint decision to strengthen support and assistance to Ukraine and Georgia through Annual National Programmes for both countries, the purpose of which is to assist and support them in meeting the standards of NATO membership. Slovakia provided Ukraine, also through its diplomatic mission in Kiev which acts as a contact embassy for NATO in Ukraine, technical assistance in preparation for the country's first annual programme. Slovakia continued to implement activities aimed at increasing the awareness of NATO among Ukrainians.

At the April summit of the Alliance in Strasbourg/Kehl, Slovakia welcomed the admission of Albania and Croatia as NATO members, and expressed regret that the summit failed to admit Macedonia because of the lack of consensus over the name of the country.

Also in 2009, Slovakia actively contributed towards the **formation of NATO policy in the Western Balkans** and supported enhanced cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Montenegro and Serbia in line with the relevant partnership instruments and the level of their ambition. At a meeting of NATO defence ministers in December 2009, Slovakia supported the inclusion of BiH and Montenegro into the MAP.

As a matter of principle, the Slovak Republic maintained its stance not to recognise the unilaterally declared independence of **Kosovo**. It continued to advocate and support the engagement of KFOR fully in line with the mandate given by Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). Slovakia supported neutral solutions which contribute toward fostering security and the overall stability of the province and the entire region of the Western Balkans.

Slovakia had 193 troops of its Armed Forces (AF) deployed in the KFOR operation in Kosovo at the end of 2009. NATO already has plans under preparation to progressively reduce the number of troops deployed in the operation in connection with gradual shift of KFOR into the "deterrent presence" mode.

Involvement in NATO's ISAF operation in Afghanistan represented the most significant contribution of Slovakia and its armed forces to international crisis management in 2009. The main role of ISAF is to assist the Afghan government in creating a secure and stable environment in the country. The total number of Slovak troops deployed under this particular NATO operational priority increased from 121 at the end of 2008 to 245 in the second half of 2009. At the October ministerial meeting in Bratislava, the Slovak Republic declared its preparedness to further increase the number of its troops with the aim of contributing toward the international community effort to stabilise the situation in Afghanistan.

In international crisis management and the post-conflict stabilisation and development of the affected regions, Slovakia supported a comprehensive approach by international community. It systematically advocated and supported closer institutional cooperation of the North Atlantic Alliance with the EU, UN, OSCE and African Union. Slovakia began to draft a law regulating the secondment abroad of Slovak civilian experts in international organisations dealing with stabilisation and development in the crisis regions of the world.

Also in 2009, the Slovak Republic actively participated in various operational and policy activities of the EU in the area of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), recommending that EU operations be focused more on the Western Balkans, particularly within the framework of the ALTHEA and EUPM missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EULEX mission in Kosovo. Slovakia took an active part in discussions on the transformation of the ALTHEA operation into a training and advisory mission, as well as

discussions on the preparation and new tasks of EUPM in combating organised crime as of January 2010.

In the course of 2009, Slovakia had 39 soldiers in ALTHEA, five policemen in EUPM, eight policemen in EULEX, three members in EUMM in Georgia and five members in the EUBAM mission on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. In the policy area, Slovakia accentuated the need to improve cooperation between the EU and NATO based on a pragmatic approach at both the strategic and operational level. In the process of developing its civilian and military capacities, military and civilian personnel from Slovakia attended courses organised by the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

Slovakia's activities in the **United Nations** (particularly in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee) focused on making UN peacekeeping operations more effective mainly through active participation in the work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

Slovakia actively participated in discussions on the future of European security under the ambit of the **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** within the framework of the Corfu Process. Foreign Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák attended an informal meeting of OSCE ministers in Corfu. Slovakia succeeded in putting through the issue of energy security as one of the Corfu Process priorities.

In the context of suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) by the Russian Federation, Slovakia supported dialogue on the proposed *parallel actions package* (PAP) and identification of solutions to key differences of opinions in order to bring the Agreement on the Adapted CFE Treaty into force.

Slovakia advocated the adoption of OSCE initiatives aimed at improving implementation of the existing Confidence and Security Building Measures, participated in discussions on their modernisation, and supported OSCE activities geared towards finding solutions to frozen conflicts, albeit no significant progress was achieved in this respect during 2009.

The Slovak Republic supported the reinforcement, or at least maintenance, of OSCE missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo. In both cases, OSCE missions constitute an important part of the international community endeavour to ensure stability and development of the Western Balkans. Slovakia had two experts in the OSCE mission to BiH and one expert in Kosovo during 2009.

1.3. Facing Global Threats

The world continued to face the threat of the **proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)** and concerns that terrorists might be able to obtain and use them. The Slovak Republic presented its national positions on the entire spectrum of security issues in relevant international forums, supported the processes facilitating the identification of the threats of WMD proliferation and their active elimination, including prevention, advocated consistent implementation of various measures ensuing from relevant international treaties, and supported the strengthening of existing instruments, including the universalisation of the treaties and development of new mechanisms designed to strengthen global security. These activities intensified as a consequence of the overall improvement of atmosphere in this field when the new US Administration, which began to place an unprecedented emphasis on making multilateralism more effective, took office.

With the past decade characterised by clear-cut positions of individual countries and the ensuing absence of multilateral convergence, 2009 was the year of a considerable shift towards the **restoration of trust** in international relations and the revival of disarmament

machinery in the interest of strengthening global stability. The agenda of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation got a new boost in 2009, reached the peak of attention by the international audience, and has become a dominant theme of global security.

Within the agenda of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of WMD, Slovak foreign policy reacted to the continued existence of nuclear verification issues within the framework of the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** which, based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), ensures that nuclear energy is not used for other than peaceful purposes. Its system of safeguards represents the main instrument for the prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation. The Slovak Republic, as an IAEA member and also through the EU common procedure, advocated an approach whereby the IAEA should be perceived impartially and supported as much as possible in solving outstanding verification cases, particularly with regard to the Iranian, North Korean and Syrian nuclear programmes. Slovakia supported the strengthening of the authority and development of IAEA instruments designed to ensure that nuclear energy is not used for other than peaceful purposes. Slovakia supported the decision of the 53rd IAEA General Conference to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the IAEA system of safeguards.

Slovakia supported the maintenance of a positive approach towards the entry into force of the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**, facilitated by a change in the US Administration's stance on the issue and confirmation of commitments by other key countries under this agenda. In cooperation with its EU partners, the Slovak Republic participated in the preparation of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of CTBT (New York, 24 – 25 September 2009), specifically in the preparation of the final declaration of the conference. In the field of regimes for the control of exports of materials suitable for the production of weapons of mass destruction, military materials and dual-use goods and technologies – the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies and the Australia Group (AG) for control of biological and chemical substances – the Slovak Republic advocated the efficient functioning of these groupings in order to effectively prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the destabilising accumulation of conventional weapons in the world. At the same time, Slovakia held the view that the new policies and guidelines should adequately react to these threats without having a negative or overly restrictive impact on individual member states.

Slovakia continued to perform its tasks as a standard member of the **Conference on Disarmament (CD)**, an exclusive 65-member group which, in spite of the long absence of substantive negotiations, maintains its position of being the only permanent multilateral negotiation forum of the international community in the area of disarmament. In January and February 2009, Slovakia acted successfully as a coordinator of the CD Western Group and thereby contributed towards the most significant achievement of the past 12 years when the CD consensually adopted its programme of work.

Slovakia submitted to the United Nations its annual report on activities relating to the ban on **biological weapons** as part of the so-called confidence-building measures, thus belonging to the small group of those who comply with this obligation (*only about 20 countries each year*) from the total number of 161 State Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

On 11 May 2009, Slovakia concluded its term of office as chair of the Executive Council of the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (EC OPCW)** based in The Hague. During its one-year term in office, Slovakia contributed towards making the OPCW decision-making processes more efficient, particularly in relation to the implementation of individual articles of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) on the liquidation of chemical weapons and on international assistance in the effective monitoring of

the use of chemical weapons, strengthened dialogue with the chemical industry aimed at preventing misuse of chemical weapons, and promoted the universalisation of CWC.

The Slovak Republic, as a coordinator for national reports under Protocol V of the **Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)**, contributed towards increasing the number of submitted national reports on the implementation of the Convention by individual State Parties. Also in this respect, Slovakia belongs to those CCW members who are consistently compliant with their legal and political commitments (*only about a third of the 104 State Parties have done so*).

In the area of **conventional weapons**, Slovakia contributed towards a positive shift in negotiations on the preparation of the **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**, the purpose of which is to set the highest possible international law standards regulating the trade in arms and preventing their acquisition by illicit traders. The agreement on the preparation of this Treaty has historic significance, given the critical impact of illicit trade in small arms in developing countries.

In the course of 2009, Slovakia actively participated in a broad spectrum of international activities focusing on the **fight against terrorism** and advocated the implementation of the **UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**. As one of the co-sponsors of the International Process on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation (together with Austria, Switzerland, North Korea, Turkey, Norway, Japan and Costa Rica), Slovakia actively contributed to dialogue within the discussion on the regional aspects of the UN Strategy in the context of the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1267, 1373 and 1540 into the laws of the participating countries.

The Slovak Republic continued to support the adoption of a **General Convention on Combating Terrorism** and worked actively within the **Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism**. Slovakia also supported OSCE activities in combating terrorism and pressed for the adoption of a decision by the OSCE Ministerial Council to support an international legal framework against terrorism. The **Council of Europe** has also been active in combating terrorism. Slovakia is a state party to all important legally binding documents of the Council of Europe in this field.

The Slovak Republic is a state party to all 13 universal international conventions on combating terrorism and participated in the normative activities which should lead towards agreement on and, subsequently, adoption of a comprehensive convention against terrorism.

1.4. Enlarging the Zone of Freedom, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Rule of Law and Good Governance

1.4. Enlarging the Zone of Freedom, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Rule of Law and Good Governance

In 2009 in the **Council of Europe (CoE)**, the Slovak Republic actively participated in internal decision-making processes and contributed to enlarging, in a broader context, the zone of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and good governance. In 2009, Slovakia continued to emphasise the need for a better dialogue with civil society. For the time being, Slovak non-governmental organizations have not shown interest in playing an active role in the structure of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations, which enjoys participatory status in the CoE. This issue is still a challenge.

As regards **Belarus**, Slovakia is supportive of a dialogue at the level of state officials and civic society and passes on its experience in the CoE to this country. Slovakia politically and financially supported the first project implemented by the CoE in Minsk - Infopoint. This activity will help raise the awareness of the CoE's activities and aims. The continuation of the

project will largely depend on the willingness of Belarusian authorities and Member States to fund the project from voluntary contributions.

As far as the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** is concerned, the evaluation process aimed at assessing our compliance with commitments was underway in 2009 and, at the same time, the CoE started a process to assess Slovakia's commitments under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Slovakia fared well as a member of the **UN Human Rights Council** within the human rights agenda of the **UN System in Geneva**. The Slovak Republic took an active part in the Council's regular and special sessions. Acting on its own behalf or representing the interests of the EU within the division of tasks, Slovakia participated at the negotiations on the Council's resolutions. One of the highlights of Slovakia's membership on the Council was the submission of a resolution concerning the new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which would establish a mechanism for the filing of complaints with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Slovak Republic successfully conducted the negotiations on the resolution, which was approved by consensus and cosponsored by almost 50 countries.

In May 2009, the UN Human Rights Council assessed the human rights situation in Slovakia as part of the so-called Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. The review involved a Slovak delegation comprised of representatives from several ministries and submission of a national report of Slovakia on the human rights situation. The UPR was successfully completed in September 2009. Within the UPR, Slovakia was a member of the so-called troikas for other reviewed countries (Mauritius, Macedonia and Cote d'Ivoire).

In 2009, Slovakia's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva was a member of the Council's Working Group on Situations (confidential mechanism for reviewing individual complaints concerning systemic human rights violations).

In April 2009, Slovakia attended the anti-racism Durban Review Conference in Geneva.

In November 2009 in Geneva, the Slovak delegation participated in the review of Slovakia's second periodic report on the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment or Punishment before the Committee against Torture. In June 2009, in line with the commitments arising from the ratification of international human rights treaties, the Slovak Republic submitted to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the third periodical report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the second periodical report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and, in October 2009, the initial reports on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Elected by the UN General Assembly in December 2008, Mr. Peter Guráň his personal capacity has been an active member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in . In the history of an independent Slovakia, Mr. Guráň is the first Slovak expert to work in a UN human rights treaty body.

Slovakia continued its active cooperation with the UN system organisations in New York as regards the protection and advancement of human rights, and confirmed its active approach by membership in the executive bodies of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Commission for Social Development (CSocD).

In the UN General Assembly and its Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Affairs Committee), Slovakia actively supported, through negotiations and co-sponsoring, the adoption of thematic resolutions and resolutions on human rights violations in

specific countries (Iran, Myanmar, North Korea). Slovakia closely coordinated its course of action with the EU partners, in line with human rights priorities of Slovakia and the EU.

On 24 September 2009, the Slovak Republic signed the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 2008, the Protocol is the most recent international human rights treaty and allows individuals or groups, claiming that their rights under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have been violated, to file complaints.

In 2009, no new individual complaints by Slovak citizens were registered in the proceedings before the monitoring authorities of the UN.

In the **OSCE**, the Slovak Republic defended the human rights policy of the Slovak Government, explaining and correcting inconsistencies related to the adoption and application of the Press Act and the State Language Act. In this connection, Slovakia intensively cooperated with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The Slovak diplomacy presented the policy of the Slovak government vis-à-vis Roma at several events dealing with human rights and actively promoted the existing scope of activities and mandate of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The Slovak Republic continued its dialogue with the Republic of Hungary using the mechanisms established under the Basic Treaty between the both countries. In July 2009, Budapest hosted the 9th session of the Joint Slovak-Hungarian Committee for Minority Issues. Moreover, Slovak and Hungarian experts held three meetings on the amendment of the State Language Act throughout 2009. The Slovak Republic asked the Venice Commission to provide an expert opinion on the Slovak amendment to the Language Act.

1.5. Strengthening Effective Multilateralism in the United Nations

Slovakia's foreign policy activities in the area of **multilateral relations** in 2009 were affected by the ongoing global economic and financial crisis. At the global level, the crisis revealed close ties between the maintenance of international peace and security and the socio-economic sustainable development in the world. The general debate of the **64th session of the UN General Assembly** indicated that the member states are mostly concerned over the problems associated with the global financial and economic crisis, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals, world hunger, UN Security Council reform, reform of peacekeeping operations, disarmament challenges and terrorism.

Within the jurisdiction of the UN and the specialized agencies of the UN system, the Slovak Republic supported processes aimed at eliminating the negative impact of the crisis on the maintenance of international order, particularly in coordination with EU countries.

The Slovak Republic joined the discussion concerning the UN Secretariat project entitled "A New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping", which should align the peacekeeping operations with the challenges of the 21st century. In 2009, Slovakia was contributing its troops to the UN mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the UN monitoring mission on the Israeli-Lebanon-Syrian border (UNTSO). Slovakia also continued its leadership role in UN activities promoting the Security Sector Reform.

Slovakia has been an active member of the UN Human Rights Council and succeeded with its candidature for the **UNESCO's** Executive Board for the term of 2009-2013. On 26 October 2009, during the 64th session of the UN General Assembly, Slovakia was elected as a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of the six principal organs of the UN, for a three-year tenure. The same year, Slovakia became a member of the Executive Board of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the tenure of 2009-2012.

In order to build effective multilateralism and in effort to bring the work of the UN General Assembly in harmony with the needs of the 21st century, Slovakia fully engaged in the discussion on the revitalization of the UN General Assembly by joining the revitalization working group.

Within the UN reform process, Slovak diplomacy paid special attention to the reform of the **UN Security Council**, which bears, under the UN Charter, primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Slovakia believes that the both parts of the Council's reform are equally important – adequate change in the composition of the Council to better reflect the geopolitical realities of today's world as well as a meaningful reform of its working methods. They both should aim at increasing the Council's legitimacy, authority, effectiveness and representativeness.

The Slovak Republic, in close coordination with other EU Member States, took part in the discussion on the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations. Slovakia promotes such a methodology for the assessment of the Member States contributions to the UN budget which will ensure that each country's contribution matches, to the highest extent possible, its status within the UN on the basis of the "*capacity to pay*" principle..

Slovakia continued to promote, as a Chair of the UN Group of Friends of **Security Sector Reform (SSR)**, a systematic and comprehensive approach to SSR within the context of UN peacekeeping operations . On 28-29 September 2009 in Buenos Aires, the MFA organised, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, an international workshop for Latin American countries and the Caribbean to support discussion on the possibilities of involving regional and sub-regional organisations in the SSR processes. The event was opened by Slovak Foreign Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák along with his Argentine counterpart. To that effect, Slovakia is preparing a publication for distribution within the UN system, Latin American countries and the Caribbean. The year 2009 saw an intensive diplomatic communication with Indonesia concerning the preparations to co-organise a regional workshop on UN peacekeeping operations from an ASEAN perspective, as the original date planned for February 2009 had been postponed.

Slovakia acted as a partner in the talks on finding a solution for Palestinian refugees in the Near East through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Based on a request by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Slovak Republic joined a project for the resettlement of a certain number of Palestinian refugees from the UNHCR refugee camp on the Iraqi-Syrian border to third countries.

In 2009, Slovakia continued constructive cooperation with the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**. Slovakia was one of four EU countries elected to the Coordination Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). In May 2009, UNAIDS representatives paid their first working visit to the Slovak Republic.

In line with the Basic Cooperation Agreement, the Slovak Republic complied with all of its obligations arising from its membership in the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**. It took an active part in the preparation and staging of the 97th session of the International Labour Conference in May 2009.

Furthermore, the Slovak Republic continued its participation in the activities of the **Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA)**, considering that Slovakia withdrew its offer to host the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Bratislava for financial reasons. Slovakia's membership of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board will expire at the end of 2010.

1.6. Contributing to the Elimination of Migration Risks in Line with Slovakia's Interests

Slovakia's foreign policy focused on tackling the migration issue at the level of international organisations and, for the most part, at the EU level. Active engagement in the creation of the **EU migration policy** represented the basic dimension of Slovakia's endeavours in this area. When actively participating in the preparation of important migration-related documents, such as the new multi-year programme for justice and home affairs (the Stockholm Programme), or a proposal for the establishment of the European Asylum Support Office, Slovakia pushed through its interests with success.

Slovakia promoted the implementation of the EU's Global Approach to Migration, with a focus on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (participation in the EU migration mission in Belarus, involvement in a Mobility Partnership pilot project with Moldova). As a partner country, Slovakia actively contributed to the preparation and the subsequent implementation of the "Building Migration Partnerships" project under the Czech EU Presidency

Slovakia granted a request by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and agreed to provide temporary housing in the territory of the Slovak Republic for a group of Palestinian refugees and persons under the protection of the UN from Iraq.

Given the growing foreign political importance of the migration phenomenon, the MFA proposed to strengthen the position of the inter-ministerial working commission for coordinated action related to the fulfilment of objectives under the Concept of the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic. Supported by the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, the discussion resulted in the transformation of the commission into the Steering Committee on Migration and Integration of Foreigners, the statutes of which were approved by the Slovak Government on 24 June 2009. The Committee will be the principal cross-sectoral initiating authority in the Slovak Republic with expertise in migration management issues.

2. A Prosperous Slovakia and Sustainable Development

2.1. Contributing to Allaying the Impacts of the Economic Crisis on the Slovak Republic

Economic Dimension of Diplomacy

In 2009, the global financial and economic crisis had a fundamental effect on the economic and social life in the Slovak Republic. The crisis underlined the pressing need for the use of specific economic diplomacy instruments when promoting the economic interests of the Slovak Republic. Overcoming the negative impacts of the crisis, supporting economic development and exports, as well as promoting closer cooperation abroad among all actors of the domestic economic policy – this agenda has become the **key priority of Slovakia's foreign policy**.

The MFA set up a permanent working group for economic crisis, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Within the Ministry, the tasks were performed by the project teams for combating the economic crisis, external energy security and cooperation support in innovation and technology transfer between Slovakia and the U.S., and by all MFA management units as part of line management. On a regular basis, the MFA supplied the Economy Ministry's business intelligence with information and analytical documents from abroad. The Ministry provided platforms for conference and presentation events, as well as dialogue with business associations, and responded to their requirements for specific cooperation activities with Slovak embassies abroad.

The factual priorities of the embassies' agenda in promoting exports and coordinating the inflow of foreign direct investment were defined by the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO), and other

central government bodies. Through its network of embassies, the MFA focused its activities on innovation, take-up of advanced technologies and the development of a knowledge-based society. The cooperation between stakeholders was facilitated by the first meeting on cross-sectoral cooperation abroad, with a focus on advanced innovation technology and a knowledge-based economy, which was held at the MFA premises and attended by the Office of the Slovak Government, Agency for Science and Research Support, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Education, the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) and SARIO. The meeting resulted in the approval of an internal project aimed at intensifying cooperation between Slovakia and the U.S. – the largest and most powerful economy in the world in terms of innovation and technology transfer. It can be used as a pilot project in other countries which have the potential to cooperate in the field of advanced technologies.

The foreign service sought out possibilities for the widest possible participation of Slovak entities in international tendering procedures. Within NATO, for instance, it is possible to become a NATO supplier when joining the process of decentralised international procurement of specific goods and services by NATO agencies and commands, or the new NATO headquarters. The permanent delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO notified central government bodies and more than 30 business associations of the possibilities for Slovak companies to take part in NATO's procurement processes.

2.2. Supporting Economic Development and Prosperity and Promoting Slovakia's Economic Interests

Participation in International Economic Organisations

Slovakia deems its participation in the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** to be particularly important. The basic role of membership in this global organisation is to facilitate, in close cooperation with the OECD Secretariat and experts, the development of Slovakia's economy and to improve the individual sectoral policies. As the most important event in bilateral relations of the year, OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría visited Slovakia in February 2009 to present the "Economic Survey of the Slovak Republic". The Slovak Government perceives the outcomes of OECD monitoring of the individual Slovak economy sectors as an important tool in the identification of issues deserving primary attention in the management of key economic areas. The favourable outcome of the Economic Survey of the Slovak Republic confirmed the generally positive perception of Slovakia's economic policy by this organisation.

Both the OECD and Slovakia paid attention to the financial crisis. The task faced by governments and economic experts of the OECD is to contribute to finding solutions for the current crisis situation and stabilise economic development. Having played an active role in the OECD Financial Markets Committee and the Economic Review Committee, Slovakia joined this process as well. The monitoring of trends on the labour markets in connection with the crisis and post-crisis development, as well as measures applied by governments to improve the situation on the labour markets and the social situation of the population, was given intensive attention.

Slovakia holds the OECD's work related to climate change in high esteem and supports the proposed concept of the green growth strategy. An integrated and coherent approach is a chance to meet this ambitious global objective for climate change and adaptation. At a session of the OECD Executive Board, the Slovak Republic, based on a principled standpoint of the Ministry of Justice, managed to press for a modified procedure for adopting the recommendations of the working group against bribery in connection with the so-called "*Small Facilitation Payments*". Even though the adoption of this recommendation was primarily pursued by the "major" OECD members with such legislation

in place that already governs these practices, Slovakia rejected any compromises regarding bribery. Slovakia's position took the form of a separate declaration appended to the text of the said recommendation.

With a view to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness in the support and facilitation of international trade, as well as the protection of society and the security of its citizens, Slovakia actively engaged in the sessions of the bodies and working groups of the **World Customs Organisation (WCO)**. Slovakia's membership in the WCO helps the customs administration to modernise customs procedures, facilitate international flow of goods, and utilize in practice the knowledge gained during individual sessions.

Slovakia's activities within the **International Energy Agency (IEA)** contributed to the success of the IEA Ministerial Meeting tackling the immensely important issue of energy security, climate change moderation, creation of a cleaner and more efficient energy future, and the strengthening of the global energy dialogue. Cooperation with the Atomic Energy Agency (OECD/NEA) represented a considerable share of activities. The gained expert knowledge will continue to be an important instrument for the national decision-making process with a view to achieving environment-friendly and economically effective utilisation of nuclear energy.

In 2009, the Slovak Republic actively participated in OECD enlargement projects and engaged in a broader dialogue with selected economies of the world. It systemically devoted its attention to the development assistance issue within the OECD and to the activities of the relevant committee. Cross-sectoral coordination aimed at removing the shortcomings in the individual approaches adopted by the ministries in activities performed within this organisation represented an important share of endeavours vis-à-vis the OECD.

As a World Bank (WB) shareholder, the Slovak Republic participated in the reform of its governance and voting system. Resolution No. 596 of 30 January 2009 entitled "Strengthening the voice and representation of developing and transit countries" in the World Bank group amends the Agreement on the **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**. The proposal for the amendment of the Articles of Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the proposal for additional accession of the Slovak Republic to the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) resources were approved by the Slovak Government on 30 September 2009. As a result of the approved amendment to the IBRD Articles of Association, Slovakia's total voting power increased from the current level of 0.21 to 0.22% without any additional burden on the public finance. In 2009, the Slovak Republic provided a contribution of EUR 680,000 to the **International Development Association (IDA)** and EUR 30,000 to the **Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI)**.

In 2009, in the context of the global economic crisis, Slovakia acted in line with the conclusions of the G-20 group, which committed itself to increasing the resources of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and to continuing the reforms of this organization. As an IMF member country, Slovakia took the necessary steps to increase its member quota in the IMF. On 1 April 2009, the Slovak Government adopted a document entitled "Proposal to increase the member quota of the Slovak Republic in the IMF". As part of austerity measures within the Belgian constituency, the Slovak Government approved a document entitled "Proposal for joint representation of the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic in the IMF and WB". On 19 August 2009, the Slovak Government approved a proposal to participate in the general allocation of the special drawing rights in the IMF, based on which Slovakia received a 256 million SDR allocation to strengthen the reserve assets in the balance sheet of the National Bank of Slovakia. Following an agreement with the Czech Republic, each country appointed its own representative both for the WB and IMF. On 30 September 2009, the Slovak Government approved a proposal to execute an amendment to the IMF Articles of

Agreement with a view to increasing its voting power and participation in the IMF, as well as another amendment aimed at increasing IMF powers in terms of investments.

Based on the EU's commitment concerning a bilateral loan to the IMF in the amount of EUR 75 billion, EU Member States have agreed that this amount would be distributed among the 21 members participating in the financial transactions plan. In the case of the Slovak Republic, the provision of the loan for the IMF (using an equivalent) by means of a bilateral agreement accounted for EUR 440 million. On 16 December 2009, the Slovak Government approved a draft loan agreement between the Slovak Republic and the IMF. In real terms, this move can bring an increase of EUR 9 million in public expenditures of the state budget between 2010 - 2012.

In 2009, Slovakia also dealt with the delicate issues related to the vote on Kosovo's membership in the World Bank group and the IMF. In May 2009, the Slovak Republic voted against Kosovo's membership in the IMF, but abstained from the vote on its membership in the World Bank group in June. In both cases, Slovakia voiced its principled position on Kosovo's recognition; however, this does not mean that Kosovo's chance to draw financial assistance from the resources of these organizations should be blocked.

In 2009, the originally planned steps leading to Slovakia's graduation from the operations of the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)** were not performed. As a result of the crisis, Slovakia reviewed its activities in the EBRD, and the process was postponed until 2012. In the course of 2009, the EBRD, in cooperation with Slovakia, launched preparations for the medium-term strategy for 2011-2014 to be approved in May 2010 during the annual meeting of the Board of Governors. Slovakia contributed EUR 200,000 to the EBRD's Western Balkans Fund in April 2009. The Slovak-EBRD Technical Cooperation Fund, focusing on support for the activities of Slovak entities in providing assistance to transition economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, was set up on 3 July 2009, with Slovakia contributing EUR 1 million.

As of 1 April 2009, the capital of the **European Investment Bank (EIB)** has been increased, and Slovakia gave its consent as one of the EIB's shareholders.

Slovakia's thematic priority within its activities in the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** was to be elected a member of this council for the upcoming tenure. In cooperation with the **UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)**, this meant building on the broad involvement of our experts in the individual programs of this institution, with an emphasis on utilizing comparative advantages related to the regional focus of its activities.

In the context of the current global financial and economic crisis, the Slovak Republic deemed it very important to maintain the openness of the multilateral trading system and to continue efforts aimed at further liberalization of global trade. In relation to the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, Slovakia focused, for the most part, on the continuation of multilateral negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), as well as on questions related to the economic crisis, in order to prevent protectionism and the introduction of safeguard measures in trade. In December 2009, the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference was held to assess the previous activities of the organization and outline the direction for further work.

Within the **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**, Slovakia supported the preparation of projects for eliminating the effects of a food crisis, poverty and hunger, for the protection of the environment, and for laying the groundwork for sustainable development and job creation. On the basis of an administrative agreement between UNIDO and the government, Slovakia participated, despite limited financial resources, in the financing of certain UNIDO projects in line with the development assistance priorities. Throughout the year, it was in particular Slovakia's Permanent Mission to the UN Office in Vienna which strived to satisfactorily resolve the problems concerning the Slovak-UNIDO pilot project focusing on the degradation of persistent organic pollutants (PCB) in the

environment, with the Ministry of the Environment acting as a supervisor on the part of Slovakia.

On 22 June 2009, the Slovak Government, represented by the Ministry of Finance, and the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, represented by the UNDP's Bratislava Regional Centre, signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The first example of cooperation came in the form of a programme entitled "Public Finance for Development: Strengthening the Public Finance Capacity in the Western Balkans and the Commonwealth of Independent States." The duration of the programme was set at 36 months with a budget totalling USD 1.05 million.

Activities in Priority Economic Cooperation Territories

In 2009, Slovakia's interest in strengthening economic cooperation with foreign countries helped revive dialogue with several **Middle East** countries. The visits paid by King Abdullah II of Jordan, the President of Syria Bashar al-Assad, and the Prime Minister of Jordan Nader al-Dahabi to the Slovak Republic were the breakthrough moments of the year. During these visits, the Syrian-Slovak and Jordanian-Slovak business forums were held. In the case of **Syria, Kuwait and Lebanon**, Slovakia signed agreements for the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments. Agreements for the avoidance of double taxation were signed with **Syria and Libya**.

For the sake of promoting stability in the region, Slovakia played an active role in the formulation of the EU's policy for political conflicts and crises, focusing on efforts to achieve a balanced and coherent EU policy vis-à-vis the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict**, Iraq, Sudan and other troubled areas in the region. As regards Iran, Slovakia promotes a unified and solidarity-based course of action on the part of the EU. In determining positions on **Iran**, emphasis was primarily placed on the Iranian nuclear program because Slovakia considers its solution to be particularly important.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the Slovak foreign policy focused on facilitating the growth of trade, in particular Slovak exports, strengthening cooperation and developing a political dialogue, preferably with **South Africa**. South Africa is a strategic partner of the EU in political, trade and development terms, and it is in the interest of the Slovak Republic to actively participate in the deepening and reaping the benefits of this partnership.

Relations with Nigeria, which is a West African regional leader and the key country of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), were important as well. **Kenya** was considered to be the key element of foreign policy activities vis-à-vis east African countries. In the **Ethiopian** capital, Addis Ababa, the seat of the African Union, the process of transforming the Slovak diplomatic mission into a standard embassy is underway.

The year 2009 saw an increase in the political and economic importance, as well as the potential, of the Asian countries. In that year, Slovakia's activities vis-à-vis Asia focused on the development of economic cooperation with key countries of the region. The continued growth of Slovak exports was a positive aspect; on the other hand, however, the negative balance of mutual trade turnover was rising.

The promotion of Slovak exports, efforts made to attract foreign direct investment, and cooperation in the energy and defence sectors have contributed to intensive development of economic cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC maintained the leading position among Slovakia's business partners from Asia. Slovakia hosts the branches of three major Chinese companies – Lenovo, Huawei Technologies and ZTE Corporation. The quality of mutual relations between Slovakia and China was confirmed by the Chinese President's first-ever visit to Slovakia in June 2009. The

Slovak officials to have visited China in 2009 were the Slovak Minister of Culture (May 2009) and the Minister of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications (September 2009).

The year 2009 saw the continuation of a constructive dialogue with the **Republic of India** with a view to improving the previous cooperation and creating favourable conditions for multi-faceted development of Slovak-Indian relations, with a focus on commercial and economic contacts.

Slovakia considers relations with the **Republic of Korea** in the political and economic areas to be very useful. The Korean Prime Minister visited Slovakia in April 2009, followed by a delegation of the Korean Parliament in August the same year. The Republic of Korea is one of the largest strategic non-European investors in Slovakia. Despite the economic crisis, the Samsung Electronics and Kia Motors Slovakia companies managed to expand their production in Slovakia. Mutual trust and understanding with **Japan** were consolidated within bilateral and multilateral cooperation. In September 2009, Slovak Foreign Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák visited Japan. The focus of cooperation with the **Socialist Republic of Vietnam** was to strengthen economic ties and continue a political dialogue. In December 2009, the President of Vietnam visited Slovakia.

Support for Slovak companies' participation in development projects undertaken with China and Vietnam, especially as regards the energy sectors, has not yet produced the expected results. Slovakia supported activities aimed at developing cooperation with Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore in science, research and development. Slovakia pursued the deepening of economic relations with **Indonesia** and **Malaysia**. Relations with **Mongolia**, North Korea and the Philippines remained at a low level. In order to strengthen relations and cooperation with Asian countries, Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák attended the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) of foreign affairs ministers held in Hanoi, Vietnam in April 2009.

Slovakia continued to implement its commitments vis-à-vis the international community in the reconstruction of **Afghanistan** by including this country among development assistance beneficiaries. The energy and economic dialogue constituted the focal point of Slovakia's relations with the countries of **Central Asia**.

In 2009, Slovakia was actively engaged in relations with **Latin American** countries. The first visit of the Mexican parliamentary delegation to the Slovak Republic in March 2009 helped preserve the continuity of bilateral dialogue between both countries. In relations with Brazil, Slovakia supported the development of a balanced and targeted political dialogue and cooperation. In November 2009, the Slovak Minister of Economy visited Brazil. Beneficial relations in all areas were confirmed by Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, who visited **Argentina** in November 2009. Slovakia has also taken action to intensify economic cooperation with **Chile**. The cancellation of EU sanctions had a positive impact on the standardization of relations between Slovakia and **Cuba** as well. In April 2009, the Joint Slovak-Cuban Committee established specific areas of cooperation in trade, production and investment. Bilateral relations between Slovakia and **Caribbean** countries took a more practical shape in the political and economic areas. In June 2009, the Saint Kitts and Nevis islands requested approval to open its diplomatic mission in Bratislava; the Prime Minister of the islands visited Slovakia in November. In September 2009, Slovakia commenced diplomatic relations with **Saint Lucia** as the last country in the Caribbean.

2.3. Increasing the Volume and Effectiveness of Slovakia's Development and Humanitarian Aid

Along with foreign, security and trade policy, the development cooperation constitutes the core of the EU's external relations. The European Union is the largest collective donor in the world (55%). Development assistance and cooperation therefore ranks among Slovakia's

foreign policy priorities. Having joined the EU and OECD, Slovakia entered the club of wealthier countries of the world and accepted the principle of solidarity vis-à-vis less wealthy countries. Subsequently, Slovakia graduated from the World Bank's operations, based on which it was formally reclassified from a recipient of financial aid from the World Bank to a donor of such assistance. Development assistance also facilitates the cultivation of bilateral relations with partner countries and development of contacts at different levels.

In 2009, the Slovak Government approved the **Medium-term Development Assistance Strategy of the Slovak Republic for 2009 - 2013**. The strategy is a key tool for planning medium-term development assistance and represents the basis for further planning and programming documents for the next five years. The strategy reflects the evolution of Slovakia's foreign policy interests, a change undergone by Slovakia as a new donor since 2003, including the completion of the development assistance system, experience in providing development assistance, as well as commitments arising from EU membership. The strategy also regulates multilateral development cooperation and the provision of humanitarian aid. At the same time, it defines measures aimed at increasing efficiency. The strategy outlines Slovakia's main priorities in the area of development cooperation between 2009 – 2013, i.e., the reduction of poverty, building of democratic institutions and rule of law, social and economic development, and infrastructure development.

The provision of development assistance in 2009 was governed by a national program – a programming document approved by the Slovak Government. The document adds more detail to sectoral and territorial priorities of foreign aid, the budgets for the individual types and forms of development assistance, the tasks arising from the medium-term strategy and indicators for the measuring of results, as well as identification of new challenges and solutions thereto for the respective year. In terms of content, the key target addressed by the national programme is the provision of bilateral development assistance.

In 2009, the MFA implemented bilateral assistance projects through grant rounds, ensured the co-financing of actors applying for EU funds, and provided micro-grants for projects run by diplomatic missions in priority countries, including humanitarian aid. In the same year, around 40 projects totalling nearly EUR 5.5 million (projects with a maximum duration of three years) were approved for funding from the Ministry's financial resources. Of this volume, the majority of projects (25%) were approved for Serbia, 14% for the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Montenegro, BiH, Macedonia), 19% for African countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya), 20% for Eastern European countries (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus), 14% for the Asian region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam) and 8% for Afghanistan. By type of contractor, the majority of bilateral development assistance projects, funded from the Ministry's budget through the grant rounds, were carried out by the non-governmental sector – 58%. The private sector accounted for 11%, the state sector 4% and the local authorities 1%.

By sectoral priority, the majority of projects were approved in the area of social development (education), followed by infrastructure development with a positive impact on sustainable development, environmental protection and the development of a market environment. Other sectors to follow include: infrastructure (in general), civil society, revitalization of the social system, regional development and building of democratic institutions, and support to the emergence of new business opportunities. The projects focusing on assistance to integrate into international organizations and communities and on economic development – building a market environment, the strengthening of macroeconomic environment and public finance management – were supported to a lesser extent.

In 2009, the MFA was the administrator of a micro-grant programme for beneficiary countries, which was funded from the Ministry's own financial resources for official development assistance through diplomatic missions. The small grant projects were allocated

EUR 245,000, involving Slovakia's diplomatic missions in Belgrade (for Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia), Sarajevo (for projects in BiH), Nairobi (for projects in Kenya), Minsk (for projects in Belarus), Kiev (for projects in Ukraine) and Bucharest (for projects in Moldova).

In the field of **humanitarian aid**, the funds of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for ODA in 2009 were spent for humanitarian aid to Macedonia (EUR 20,000 for the purchase of vaccines against mumps), Cambodia (EUR 36,000 for the operation of two orphanages), Afghanistan (EUR 30,000 for the purchase of vaccines against polio), Taiwan (EUR 10,000 for the population affected by the cyclone), Palestine for the activities of UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency), Ukraine (EUR 25,000 for the purchase of drugs for people suffering from influenza epidemic), Ethiopia (EUR 10,000 through the World Food Programme) and Laos (EUR 10,000 for the population affected by the consequences of the cyclone). In addition, the MFA cooperated with the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic to ensure material humanitarian aid for Tajikistan and Palestine totalling more than EUR 700,000.

In January 2009, an international review conference entitled "Slovakia and Development Aid: Challenges and Experiences" was held in Bratislava at the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In June 2009, the Ministry organised, in collaboration with the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre, an international conference entitled "Sharing Transformation Experience". It was attended by representatives of countries of the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

An important element in providing development assistance is statistical reporting. All through the year, the Ministry consulted and provided expert advice to the ministries that provide development assistance. In cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS), the MFA organized a seminar on ODA reporting according to OECD/DAC, attended by experts from the OECD and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

On 26 August 2009, the Minister of Finance of the Slovak Republic signed the Agreement on the Financial Contribution of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic to the Slovak-UNDP Trust Fund, intended for funding the programme entitled "Slovak Trust Fund 2008-2010: Sharing experience from the transition period to a market economy and supporting human resources involved in ODA".

On 22 June 2009, the Minister of Finance signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Finance and UNDP, as well as the Agreement on the financial contribution to the programme entitled "Public Finance for Development: Strengthening Public Finance Capacities in the Western Balkans and Commonwealth of Independent States".

By Resolution No. 358 of 13 May 2009, the Slovak Government agreed to execute the Agreement between the Slovak Government, represented by the Ministry of Finance, and the EBRD concerning the Slovak-EBRD Technical Cooperation Fund. The agreement entered into force on 3 July 2009. The fund is intended solely for support to activities performed by Slovak actors in order to aid transforming Eastern European and Central Asian countries (EBRD beneficiary countries) in their transition to a market economy, with the emphasis put on support for the private sector.

In 2009, the Slovak Republic contributed EUR 200,000 to the EBRD Western Balkans Fund. Slovakia's total contribution since 2007 reached EUR 700,000.

2.4. Contributing to Increasing External Energy Security of the Slovak Republic

Activities of the Slovak Republic in the area of increasing its external energy security

in 2009 were largely affected by the events from the beginning of the year, when the unprecedented suspension of the natural gas supply from the Russian Federation through Ukraine to Slovakia and other European countries occurred. Slovakia, as a major European transit country, became a hostage of a bilateral commercial and political dispute and, owing only to the mobilisation of its expert and diplomatic potential, it managed to eliminate negative impacts of the situation that had not occurred due to its fault. The emergency situation, its economic impacts and security aspects highlighted the severity of non-military threats to Slovakia's security, as well as to the European political and economic area. In the context of these adverse developments, described by the IEA as the largest crisis in the natural gas supply to Europe, the issue of energy security became an area of special concern for a wider international community.

During the **January crisis**, the Slovak Government, the Ministry of Economy and the MFA actively cooperated with the Czech Presidency of the EU and the European Commission with the aim of seeking effective solutions. Bilateral visits of Slovakia's top political officials to the Russian Federation and Ukraine played an important role.

Within the EU, Slovakia actively participated in shaping the EU energy policy in 2009 and advocated a more effective EU external energy policy built on three pillars: security of supply (producer), transit and consumer. Slovakia endorsed a constructive dialogue between the EU and its traditional energy partners, in which the Slovak Republic considers the issue of balance in these relations and mutual benefits respecting the legitimate interests of all stakeholders within a supply chain pivotal from a long-term point of view.

Slovak diplomacy was supportive of the EU intensifying the energy dialogue with partners, which would be part of an inclusive mutual cooperation framework with the aim of establishing a network of countries around the EU that would hold discussions on the basis of shared rules and principles of predictability, transparency and stability. Slovakia promoted the development of an energy dialogue between the EU and countries having the potential for the development of new energy partnerships. During two rounds of talks within the Eastern Partnership platform (energy security), Slovakia managed to push through a proposal in 2009 that this new format would also be used for discussing the security of supply of energy materials, a specifically important issue for Slovakia, with affected countries.

Bilateral Energy Dialogue Development

The MFA, along diplomatic lines, and the Ministry of Economy in its expert capacity, were engaged in an intensive dialogue with regional partners from the V4 group, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Ukraine on external energy security of the countries of this region. Slovakia emphasised that a better interconnection of energy transport networks and electricity grids was crucial for the energy security of the Central European region. The Slovak Republic endorsed the concept of strengthening north-south energy interconnections within the region. By the same token, the MFA supports the programme of the Hungarian Presidency of the V4 and is preparing, on an ongoing basis, the programme of the Slovak V4 Presidency.

In a dialogue with partners, Slovakia sought to create conditions for the implementation of diversification plans and projects included in its Energy Security Strategy. As part of its bilateral contacts and discussions with partners from the Central Asian and Caspian region, Slovakia opened the issue of direct energy supply from these producer countries to the EU.

With respect to ambitious EU targets in combating climate change and reducing its dependence on external energy sources, Slovakia emphasised at relevant forums that the development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy combines, to a large degree, solutions to energy security as a reliable, cost-effective and environmentally acceptable source of energy.

3. Slovakia's Interests in an Effective EU, Strengthening Neighbourly Relations and Intensifying Regional Cooperation

3.1. Improving the Promotion of Slovakia's Interests in the EU and Its Influence on the Preparation of EU Common Policies

The Slovak Republic considers the European Union a basic instrument in the European integration process and a key community built on the values of democracy and solidarity, providing the best conditions for a real emancipation of all European countries. Having joined the euro area in January 2009, Slovakia fulfilled all of its domestic integration tasks and completed the formal process of its integration into all EU structures. By removing high volatility and uncertainty in exchange rate development, Slovakia secured its currency stability at the time of the financial crisis. This benefit was not outweighed by losses resulting from more advantageous purchases abroad due to exchange rate differences with some of the neighbouring currencies.

Through its Permanent Representation in Brussels, Slovakia was actively involved in the work of individual preparatory bodies of the Council. At the working level, Slovak representatives and ministry officials promoted positions reflecting the priorities arising from the government's agenda and strategic documents in particular areas.

Slovakia paid special attention to strengthening **energy security**. The European Commission earmarked a total of EUR 3.98 billion under the European Economic Recovery Plan for energy infrastructure projects. Medium and long-term measures were primarily aimed at building interconnections, diversification of supply and construction of gas storage facilities. Slovakia applied for projects for the interconnection of electricity grids and gas networks. In projects for the interconnection of regional energy networks submitted to the Commission in a document entitled Strategic Energy Review, Slovakia managed to push through an increase in funds (compared to the original allocation) earmarked for projects for a north-south energy interconnection, which will contribute to improving energy security of Central European countries, providing them with an option to diversify their transport routes. Slovakia takes the stance that setting up an integrated EU energy system, enabling a reverse flow, is in the interest of all Member States, not only the Central European countries.

The Slovak Republic continues to advocate the development of the nuclear energy sector, and endorses its utilisation as an instrument to accomplish EU energy policy objectives and as one of the components in the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

A package of legislative measures on **energy efficiency** was approved in 2009 (including the Energy Labelling Directive, the Tyre Labelling Directive, and the Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings), and is expected to contribute to a 20 percent reduction in energy consumption in the EU by 2020.

In the course of 2009, Slovakia made intensive diplomatic efforts (letters by the President, Primer Minister, a joint letter by the ministers of foreign affairs and economy) to win support for Slovakia's candidacy to seat the **Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER)** in Bratislava. The candidacy was presented at all multilateral forums, as well as in bilateral contacts with partners from EU Member States. Under a decision adopted on 7 December 2009 in Brussels, Ljubljana (Slovenia) was chosen as the seat of the ACER.

Complying with its energy policy, Slovakia promoted, during discussions on the **EU Climate and Energy Package and the 3rd Energy Package**, development of such instruments that would prevent negative impacts the implementation of relevant legal acts might have on its competitiveness.

In 2009, the main theme of EU discussions was **climate change** and its international implication in light of preparation of a post-Kyoto agreement. From Slovakia's point of view,

a uniform position presented by the EU at the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009 constituted the basis for an ambitious and balanced global agreement, even though the ultimate outcome was rather modest. The conclusions of the Council of the EU respected the specific position of the Slovak Republic and other Member States.

Given the severity and extent of the global financial and economic crisis, Slovakia contributed to seeking solutions and shaping a coordinated response at the EU level **aimed at restoring confidence in the economy and reforming the financial system**. Slovakia deemed it important that the EU would act **in a coordinated manner and in compliance with the principles of solidarity**, further reject any protectionist efforts, and **take relevant actions in a balanced way, taking into account conditions in individual countries**. From the outset of the crisis, Slovakia endorsed the idea of prompt, long-term, targeted and coordinated support of demand by means of effective fiscal policy instruments. At the same time, it supported efforts to minimise the impacts of the crisis on the most vulnerable groups of population. Slovakia joined the proposals to support new job creation through public investments into projects that would contribute to sustainable development and provide faster and **simpler access to European financial instruments**, either through **Structural Funds** or **European Investment Bank facilities**. It supported **the establishment of a new EU financial supervision system**, approved at a European Council session held 10-11 December 2009. At the same time, it highlighted the need of concurrently introducing macro and micro-prudential supervision in a single package. The new system should be put into operation at the beginning of 2010.

The consequences of the economic and financial crisis **were felt more in the social sphere**. Several financial instruments were modified, primarily in order to facilitate improvements in the active labour market policy (reintegration of the unemployed into the labour market). For example, modifications were made in the drawing of funds from the European Globalisation **Adjustment** Fund (changes in co-funding, simplification of administrative procedures). In 2009, the Commission decided to amend regulations on Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund.

With respect to EU common trade policy, Slovakia supported further liberalisation in international trade, establishing new opportunities for Slovak exports, and preserving or improving the competitiveness of Slovak producers in export-oriented industries such as the automotive, electronics and steel industries. At the multilateral level, Slovakia further endorsed activities to advance multilateral talks on trade liberalisation (DDA) within the WTO. At the bilateral and bi-regional level, Slovakia actively advocated both offensive and defensive interests of Slovak companies in the context of negotiations on the establishment of free trade zones between the EU and South Korea, Ukraine, ASEAN countries, Euromed, GCC, Mercosur, ACP, the Andean Community, Central American countries, India, Libya and Canada. Slovakia also paid much attention to EU and WTO mechanisms to monitor protectionist efforts with negative impacts on global trade, and actively sought the removal of measures that had negative consequences on Slovak export interests (Slovakia managed to remove import surcharges imposed by Ukraine on cars and refrigerators). With the aim of retaining and/or defending the competitiveness of Slovak manufacturers, Slovakia actively endorsed the utilisation of instruments existing under EU trade policy for protection against unfair business practices of third countries. In line with requests from domestic industrial producers, Slovakia successfully pushed through a number of customs suspensions on necessary manufacturing inputs, which reduced costs and increased the competitiveness of Slovak manufacturers.

The Competitiveness Council looked into the possibilities of mitigating the impacts of the crisis on the European economy at a number of sessions. The conclusions of the Council's March meeting on the mitigation of problems in the automotive industry were

extremely important from Slovakia's perspective. In 2009, Member States also focused their efforts on the complete removal of barriers and accomplishment of a fully functioning internal market, reduction of administrative burdens, improvements in framework conditions for the industry with a special focus on small and medium sized businesses and innovation, intensification and quality improvement of investments in knowledge, education and research, and a shift towards the external dimension of competitiveness. The Services Directive was implemented at the end of the year, which could be one of the milestones on the road towards a truly integrated internal market. Its main objective is to facilitate cross-border trade and access of small and medium sized businesses to the market.

Slovakia actively participated in, and successfully pushed through its interests, the preparation of a new multiannual programme in the area of **justice and home affairs**, the so-called **Stockholm Programme**. The Programme defines EU priorities for the 2010-2014 period in the following areas: criminal and civil law, internal security strategy, effective law enforcement, combating serious and organised crime, counter-terrorism, police cooperation, comprehensive and effective disaster management within the EU, integrated external border control, visa policy, common asylum and migration policy, and external dimensions of freedom, security and justice. The Programme reflects a new contractual framework laid down by the Treaty of Lisbon, representing a balanced compromise.

Slovakia played an active role in promoting the further enlargement of the Schengen area. Several official Romanian delegations, including a delegation led by a Romanian Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Administration and the Interior, were received by Slovakia with the aim of sharing practical experience with border security and application of the Schengen acquis. In addition, preparatory works began started with the aim of providing a similar type of assistance to Bulgaria in the form of a visit by a Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior planned for January 2010.

In the area of **education**, Member States concentrated their efforts on the mobility of young people and the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, as well as on a European strategy for multilingualism and combating digital piracy.

The EU also dealt with specific issues in 2009, including the drafting of a strategy and measures against the new pandemic influenza A (H1N1).

3.2. Supporting EU Enlargement and Contributing to a Successful European Neighbourhood Policy

Slovakia's foreign policy still considers the EU enlargement process the most successful and positive project in Europe's history. Slovak diplomacy took part in a number of consultations to **share its experience** with EU integration and worked intensively with candidate countries, as well as with those Western Balkan countries involved in the Stabilisation and Association Process. On that account, it supported Croatia's accession efforts into the EU, sharing its experience with accession negotiations with Croatian partners. Slovakia also endorsed the integration efforts of Turkey, while placing an emphasis on the fulfilment of pre-accession criteria. It also took account of the situation in Cyprus, where Slovakia acts as a mediator in the so-called bicomunal dialogue between Cypriot Greeks and Turks.

Slovakia welcomed applications for EU membership submitted by Montenegro, Albania and Iceland. It especially acknowledged the progress made by Western Balkan countries in visa liberalisation. Slovakia has long been supportive of the Western Balkan countries' integration in the EU, provided that they meet the set criteria. With respect to this process, Slovakia approved the ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement

between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, of the other part, in March 2009.

In compliance with EU priorities, Slovak foreign policy paid special attention in 2009 to the development of its eastern dimension, as reflected in an intensified dialogue with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia.

Slovakia, along with other EU Member States, actively participated in the preparation and launch of the EU **Eastern Partnership** project, which is both part of and a follow-up to the European Neighbourhood Policy, constituting one of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. These efforts translated into the adoption of a joint declaration at the Prague Summit held in May 2009. Slovakia wishes to see the Eastern Partnership intensify a policy focused on practical projects of common interest between the EU and partner countries, as well as among partner countries. The Slovak Republic endorsed the launch of four thematic Eastern Partnership platforms in 2009 and intensively communicated, and still communicates, with partners and EU countries with the aim of building capacities to provide its own contribution, taking into consideration both the possibilities and added value. At the EU level, it endorsed further advancement in talks on the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine, which are still pending. In relation to Belarus, Slovakia promoted a policy of conditional cooperation with the regime and support to the development of civil society in the country. The Eastern Partnership is one of the most important initiatives under EU foreign policy, and Slovakia is fully committed to its successful implementation.

3.3. Contributing to Strengthening the Effective Operation of the EU

The Slovak Government has undertaken to further deepen the European integration process and consolidation of the EU, with the objective of strengthening the democratic, secure, economically dynamic and prosperous, socially stable and solidary, educated and cultural Europe.

The completion of **the Treaty of Lisbon** ratification process was a crucial step towards the more effective functioning of EU institutions. Following rather complicated developments in 2008, the next year also saw a number of obstacles. Before the European Council of 29-30 October 2009, Slovakia had to respond to the concerns and requirements voiced by the Czech Republic with respect to the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, and request that the equal legal status of both countries be preserved as far as their past was concerned. In the end, the agreed-upon solution provided a political guarantee to the Czech Republic that it would be exempt from the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. For Slovak citizens, on the other hand, the wide-ranging rights guaranteed under the Charter have been preserved. All Member States were assured in the conclusions of the European Council that the Charter of Fundamental Rights would only be applicable in Member States once the EU acquis was implemented. Slovakia showed through its constructive approach that it was supportive of the Treaty. The Treaty entered into force on 1 December 2009.

At the EU level, Slovakia advocated an earlier start of preliminary talks on the implementation of the Treaty, which, however, started as late as the second half of 2009.

Establishment of a functioning **European External Action Service** will be an important element in the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon. Slovakia consistently presented its positions in this respect. The consensus that staff from Member States should represent at least one third of the total EEAS diplomatic staff can be considered the most important achievement. Within discussions concerning amendments to the rules of procedures of the Council and the European Council, Slovakia supported the principle of preserving the rotating presidency of the Council, which will continue chairing nine out of ten Council configurations and must be fully involved in the preparation, progress and presentation of

outcomes of European Council and Council of the EU meetings. This principle should also be observed at the level of working groups or other preparatory bodies of the Council. The purpose is to improve the functioning of EU institutions, while ensuring adequate influence and possibilities to enforce Slovakia's interests at the EU level in conjunction with partner Member States.

Slovak representatives participated in Council of the EU meetings at the ministerial level and the level of permanent representatives to the EU in Brussels, as well as in preparatory bodies. Slovakia supports effective decision-making in the EU. The Council of the EU represented a key platform for Slovakia to advance its positions within European institutions and the EU. Slovakia actively participated in the European policy-making process, while simultaneously respecting the interests of its citizens as well as the values of European solidarity and cohesion.

The completion of the Treaty of Lisbon ratification process and the preparation for the implementation of a new institutional framework required active cooperation between Slovak representatives and the representatives of the European Parliament within the co-decision process. Cooperation in the European Parliament strengthened, especially on an informal level.

3.4. Reinforcing Neighbourly Relations and Intensifying Regional Cooperation

Reinforcing good neighbourly relations with its closest and most natural partner, **the Czech Republic**, remained among Slovakia's top foreign policy priorities in 2009. Slovakia sees the Czech Republic as a strategic partner. Political, economic, military, cultural, academic and civil cooperation, stemming from natural bonds and the interests of the two countries, was at an above-average level.

A unique example of this above-average bilateral relationship was the assistance promptly provided by the Czech Republic to Slovakia during the gas crisis at the beginning of the year, as well as joint activities of top political representatives of the two countries to commemorate the common past of the two nations. The Czech Republic was the first of the V4 countries to ever assume the presidency of the European Union, in the first half of 2009. Most of the Czech presidency priorities (economy, energy sector, the EU in the world) corresponded with Slovak foreign policy priorities. Secondments of Slovak experts to assist the Czech presidency were rewarding for both sides.

The development of cross-border cooperation was very favourable, increasingly gaining momentum since the entry of our two countries into the Schengen area. There was considerable demand for the drawing of finances from the European Regional Development Funds allocated for Slovak-Czech cross-border cooperation for 2007-2013. The amount of funds for projects approved in the first two rounds accounts for 50% of the total allocation. Slovakia also cooperated with the Czech Republic in promoting an effective system of international relations based on close cooperation within the UN, NATO, OSCE, the Visegrad Four group, and other international organisations. This cooperation translated into concrete and frequent mutual consultations and bilateral support of national initiatives.

Cultural and promotion activities performed by Slovakia in the Czech Republic concentrated on preserving the cultural and language proximity of the two nations. Priority attention was given to cooperation between public media. The Czech public welcomed restored contacts with the Slovak language.

Bilateral cooperation with **the Republic of Hungary**, building on the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation of 1995, advanced positively in a multitude of agendas, namely in European and trans-Atlantic security, Visegrad cooperation, energy, military cooperation, and culture.

But the year 2009 revived some controversies in bilateral relations, arising from a different view of our common past and a differing approach to minority issues. Institutional bonds persist between the Hungarian state and Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries, which politically translated into, in a manner unacceptable for Slovakia, the institutionalisation of the Forum of Hungarian Representatives of the Carpathian Basin at the House of the Nation of the Republic of Hungary (the Parliament). Differing approaches to bilateral highest-level communication also continued to exist, with Slovakia rejecting the conditioning of bilateral talks upon meeting unilaterally imposed requirements, and refusing to accept the disregard of its sovereignty, dignity, and diplomatic notices. An amendment to the State Language Act adopted by the Slovak Republic in 2009 was misused by Hungarian partners for an unfair, massive disinformation campaign against Slovakia in Hungary and abroad. Hungarian authorities even failed to respect an expert opinion prepared by the OSCE High Commissioner for Minorities. Slovakia became alarmed by the fact that the anti-Slovak campaigning started to spill over to the civic level, including attacks against Slovak institutions in Hungary.

Slovakia sought a solution to this situation in the speeding up of a high-level political dialogue with no conditions. Hungary agreed to this approach in September 2009, when the Prime Ministers of both countries met in the village of Szécsény, Hungary. They adopted an 11-point joint statement, including an agreement on particular measures to remove political tensions in bilateral relations. At the same time, intensive communication existed between both Foreign Affairs Ministries and their leaders, as well as between both sides of some of the joint inter-governmental committees for the implementation of the Basic Treaty.

Also in 2009, Slovak-Polish relations remained among the most dynamic. Slovak political representatives frequently attended events organised by Poland as the presiding country of the V4 group. One of the most significant aspects that strengthened Slovak-Polish relations and facilitated regional cooperation was the first round of talks of parliamentary top officials of the two countries held in the High Tatras in September 2009, and the adoption of their joint declaration. In the course of the year, both countries created forums of personalities that should contribute to enriching the existing dialogue, with new topics having a direct impact on the countries and their citizens.

Following the successful euro changeover in Slovakia, Poland appreciated several Slovak promotional activities on this process and will welcome the transfer of Slovakia's experience in the future. Poland considerably contributed to ensuring uniform support by the V4 countries to Slovakia's candidacy for the seat of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). Slovakia highly appreciated Poland's approach, despite the failure of one of the V4 members. Under traditionally close Slovak-Polish cooperation in the area of security, talks were completed on the setting up of a joint battle group within the EU. Slovak top officials and ministerial partners were actively engaged in all events organised by the Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Four. *The intergovernmental committee* for cross-border cooperation, which held its 15th meeting in October 2009 in Rzeszow, was instrumental in effectively developing bilateral cooperation.

Bilateral political and expert dialogue with the **Republic of Austria** continued at almost all levels in the same good spirit and intensity. The nuclear energy issue traditionally remains a closely watched agenda in bilateral relations. Continued work on the completion of Blocks 3 and 4 of the Mochovce nuclear power plant had no negative implications on other bilateral issues. Slovakia's open approach to this issue provided room for constructive discussion with the partner who holds an opposite view of the use of nuclear energy. A cross-border environmental impact assessment process concerning the construction of the two blocks had a positive outcome for Slovakia. Cooperation aimed at increasing energy security of the two countries also played an important role. Priority projects include, in particular,

interconnections of crude oil and natural gas pipeline systems. Austrian and Slovak Economy Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the Energy Sector.

Cross-border cooperation had a particularly important place in bilateral relations in 2009. A milestone in this respect was the signing of agreements on cooperation between neighbouring cross-border territorial units, which helped kick off cooperation among particular working groups. Transport infrastructure projects became an important element of cooperation at the regional level, particularly in areas along the Morava River.

Relationships with **Ukraine** were among Slovakia's priorities. Ukraine is an important neighbour and actor in political, security and economic terms, and a crucial energy transit country. Slovakia is naturally interested in seeing Ukraine accomplish its European and Euro-Atlantic integration efforts, since a democratic, politically stable and economically thriving Ukraine would enhance security and stability in the region.

Bilateral economic cooperation was negatively affected by several factors - the January gas crisis, the introduction of a six month import duty on cars and refrigerators, suspension of railway freight transport at the border with Slovakia. These negative factors were gradually removed. A visit by the incumbent Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to Slovakia in October 2009 highlighted the importance of regular dialogue as a tool for pursuing the interests of both parties and addressing potential problems. Contacts with the Slovak investor community operating in Ukraine intensified – the volume of Slovak investments in Ukraine is growing. The agreement on reciprocal promotion and protection of investments between Slovakia and Ukraine, which entered into force in August 2009, will also facilitate activities of Slovak business operators in Ukraine.

Intergovernmental committees (for economic, industrial, and scientific and technical cooperation, for national minorities and education, and for cross-border cooperation) were instrumental in the development of cross-border cooperation in the past. The only still-functioning committee is the one for national minorities and education, falling under the competence of the MFA. The committee meets on a yearly basis. The last meeting was held in October 2009 in Kiev.

The Slovak Embassy in Kiev continued to serve as a NATO Contact Point Embassy in Ukraine in 2009 (selected again for this purpose for the 2009-2010 period). Ukraine is one of the project countries under Slovak official development assistance. Slovakia also sought the restoration of activities with respect to using the so-called micro-grant scheme.

Regional Cooperation

Informal cooperation of the **Visegrad Group (V4)** countries continued successfully in 2009. Slovakia concentrated on strengthening V4 internal cohesion, internal and external equilibrium, and transparency towards V4 nationals. Political and expert level meetings were held regularly. Meetings of Prime Ministers and other governmental officials of V4 countries had the most noticeable impacts on the Group's actions. In January 2009, the Prime Ministers of the V4 countries and the President of the European Commission, J. M. Barroso, met at an extraordinary summit in Bratislava to discuss the gas crisis. The V4 Prime Ministers also attended the ceremonial launch of the euro currency in Slovakia. Their meeting was a manifestation of the solidarity and functionality of the V4 group. Under a decision adopted by the V4 Prime Ministers (Krakow - Wieliczka, 3 June 2009), the working group of high-level representatives for energy security resumed its activities, and a working group of high-level V4 representatives for Roma integration was established.

Meetings of the Presidents of the V4 countries provide further impetuses for future cooperation within this platform. At the last presidential summit (in Sopot, Poland, 11-12 September 2009), Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič introduced the idea of promoting the Visegrad region as one of the new EU regions and suggested the founding of an International

Visegrad Award of the V4 Presidents for individuals or organisations considerably contributing to the strengthening of the Visegrad identity.

The Slovak Republic actively and constructively utilised V4 coordination and consultancy mechanisms to support and promote joint interests at the EU level, including through submission of joint V4 candidacies. On the initiative of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries, intensive joint diplomatic actions were taken (meetings of V4 foreign affairs ministers in May in Warsaw and in October in Budapest), aimed at supporting European and Euro-Atlantic integration efforts of the Western Balkan countries and enhancing the Eastern Partnership.

The initiative for mutual diplomatic/consular representation of V4 countries is in their common interest, with positive implications for their nationals in practice. A working group at the level of the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries was established in order to make this idea a reality, including by means of a joint use of premises and facilities of diplomatic/consular posts.

The Slovak Republic held the presidency of the **International Visegrad Fund (IVF)** in 2009. Through project funding (e.g., youth cooperation, culture, scholarships, science and research, cross-border cooperation), the International Visegrad Fund contributed to the strengthening of Visegrad cohesion. Based on a decision made by the Foreign Affairs Ministers, the IVF launched *Visegrad+* projects for Belarus, Serbia and Georgia with the aim of supporting their convergence to EU countries. The IVF Code of Ethics was adopted at the initiative of Slovakia.

Slovakia's core activities within the **Central European Initiative (CEI)** concentrated on assisting those CEI members that are not EU Member States in creating a suitable environment for effective and targeted solutions to regional challenges that hamper their political, economic and social development, and on facilitating their integration processes while endorsing their mutual convergence.

4. Service to Citizens and Slovakia Open to the World

4.1. Protecting the Interests of Slovak Citizens

In 2009, the Slovak foreign service placed a special emphasis on responsibility and high quality of assisting to Slovak citizens in emergency situations abroad, as well as on the provision of consular assistance in dealing with the all aspects of **consular agenda**. Despite the lasting economic crisis and an decreasing of number of citizens travelling abroad, the volume of consular services provided to applicants abroad by the Slovak diplomatic missions was not affected in any significant way. In 2009, Slovak consular offices abroad were addressed with 333 injuries and 288 deaths of Slovak citizens, 1,572 cases of citizen crimes; they issued 2,534 substitute travel documents due to loss or theft, were addressed with over 3,000 submissions for registrations and performed with 26,451 legalisations and certifications in the legalisation agenda.

The MFA's intention to improve the protection of Slovak Republic's citizens abroad and to ensure a more operative contact with them has led to the creation of the system of a system registering citizens who travel abroad may register on the MFA website. The system is accessible beginning 9 June 2009. This electronic registration system makes it possible to contact Slovak citizens promptly in the event of an emergency situation, notify them of an imminent threat and, if necessary, coordinate assistance during the evacuation from a danger zone. The introduction of this consular service has met with a positive response from the public. Approximately 2,000 citizens have used the service so far. During the first three

months since its launch, there have been 11 cases where the Ministry sent registered citizens information about a crisis situation in their place of stay, along with the necessary instructions.

Prompt creation of a database of up-to-date information and tips for travelling abroad on the MFA information portal, as well as the activities of the **MFA Citizen Assistance and Service Centre**, both represented important dimensions for improving of consular services to citizens. With a view to improving the information of the public when travelling abroad, the Consular Department increasingly cooperated with the mass media.

The issuing of travel documents represented one of the significant aspects of consular services. In this respect, a new electronic IS PASY system was introduced in 2009, collecting biometric data and processing applications for travel documents with biometric features pursuant to national legislation.

Training for consular employees of Slovak diplomatic missions was held in Bratislava during the summer months of 2009, in line with the tasks set out in the foreign policy orientation for 2009. The training had been prepared as part of an EU project to train consular staff on visas within the “Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows” Programme.

The year 2009 was the second year of application of the Schengen rules in the consular area. The Schengen countries cooperated well and the application of visa procedures ran smoothly. There were no problems with regard to the issuance of visas pursuant to agreements between the European Community and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine on the facilitation of the issuance of visas. A visa-free regime applies to the citizens of Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia as of 19 December 2009.

Referring to Community law, Visa waiver short-stay agreements were concluded on 28 May 2009 between the European Community and Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Mauritius, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and the Seychelles on the short-stay visa waiver.

Entering the Schengen zone, the Slovak Republic applies all rights and obligations dedicated to all the countries of the Schengen. This also includes accommodating applications for a Schengen visa to the Slovak Republic anywhere in the world. In order to prevent undue inconvenience and discomfort of visa applicants when accessing a consular office, EU Member States will endeavour to conclude consular visa representation agreements with other Member States that have a consular office in the respective region or area. This fact is stipulated in the new Community Visa Code. Slovakia had submitted draft bilateral representation agreements to selected partners from among the EU countries as early as 2008. The first agreement was signed with Austria on 23 October 2009. Austria will provide consular representation for Slovakia in Lebanon and Jordan.

The honorary consulates in Slovakia and abroad also play a significant role in assisting to our citizens. Their activities contribute to improving the effectiveness of the Slovak foreign service network. In order to improve mutual information and communication, the MFA introduced a portal of Slovak honorary consulates on its website in June 2009.

Expatriate issues

Contacts, cooperation and communication with the worldwide community of Slovak expatriates were also an important part of Slovak foreign policy bilateral agenda in 2009. The Foreign Affairs Ministry participated in the introduction of the Concept of Care for Slovaks Living Abroad until 2015, prepared under the auspices of the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad (OSLA). The Slovak Republic organised a number of events with and for expatriates. These were mainly organised and co-organised by the OSLA, the competent Slovak ministries (the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and Slovak diplomatic missions abroad. In coordination with the OSLA, the MFA monitored the status of Slovak minorities/citizens abroad, assisting them in preserving their language and cultural identity by

means of existing institutional instruments, as well as through its diplomatic missions and Slovak institutes abroad (organisation of cultural events and presentations, support for Slovak expatriate national, cultural and social activities, support of education and scholarship projects, etc.). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs included meetings with representatives of Slovak organisations and associations abroad in the programme of top Slovak political representatives' official and working visits to countries with a large expatriate community. It coordinated the activities of the Joint Slovak-Hungarian Commission for Minority Affairs, which had been established pursuant to the Protocol between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, as well as the Intergovernmental Slovak-Ukrainian Commission on National Minorities, Education and Culture, which had been established pursuant to the Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Co-operation between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

4.2 Improving the Communication of the Objectives and Results of Foreign Policy Both in the Slovak Republic and Externally

In 2009, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also focused on a more active role in improving the communication of the objectives and results of foreign policy both in the Slovak Republic and externally. To this end, it held several **discussion forums** on the topic of public diplomacy at the ministries, which in many countries became a fundamental instrument in awareness-raising of the state's foreign policy priorities.

In cooperation with multiple universities, the ministry's diplomatic staff held dozens of lectures in 2009 on topics concerning international relations and the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic. The MFA also publishes the MFA Annual Report of the previous year as a brochure for the professional public.

When communicating with the foreign public, the Ministry has been using its network of diplomatic missions. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, it sent a photographic exhibition to all the diplomatic missions under the title "Following the way of the Velvet Revolution: Slovakia after 1989", which featured fourteen exhibition panels introducing the foreign public to Slovakia's journey over the past 20 years.

The Ministry has been updating and constantly continues to update its **website** with a view to improving the quality and effectiveness of information. It registers feedback from users and constantly strives for greater transparency. This is one of the reasons why most of the diplomatic mission's websites took on a uniform design in 2009, facilitating the finding of information.

4.3. Coordinating a Uniform Presentation of the Slovak Republic Abroad

The conceptual activities of the Government of the Slovak Republic in the field of presentation of Slovakia abroad resulted in the creation of the Council of the Slovak Government for the Uniform Presentation of Slovakia abroad as an advisory body of the government, which confirms the concern of the government for ensuring the professional communication of "trademark Slovakia" abroad with increased effectiveness. The role of the Council is to set out the basic strategy of presenting Slovakia abroad, including the preparation of strategic documents and consequently the creation of the "trademark Slovakia." The Minister of Foreign Affairs is one of the three vice-chairmen of the Council, and the Secretariat of the Council has been established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Section of Public Diplomacy and Services to Citizens.

Current experience has confirmed a need for a unified, coordinated and systemically targeted presentation of Slovakia abroad by all members of the Council of the Government – by the government, non-governmental organisations and self-governing bodies. However, it has also shown a necessity in increasing the activity of most of its members in the creation of new ideas, methods and possibilities for its own presentation. The ongoing process includes not only a more thorough preparation for upcoming global events, at which Slovakia will be represented, but also from a long-term perspective - the setting of a key timeless and apolitical basis for the presentation of our country. Such a basis will subsequently be reflected in visual and content-related activities of all state institutions.

As a starting point for the activities of the Council, the Ministry has prepared an analysis of models and strategies of national presentation of other states, an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of presentation strategies of institutions and entities in the Slovak Republic, which promote our country externally, i.e., abroad, as well as an analysis of how Slovakia is perceived abroad by nationals of other countries and by Slovak expatriates. The materials include recommendations and inspirational ideas that can be used instantly or in the preparation of a global strategy of presenting Slovakia abroad.

Another step aimed at accelerating the creation of a strategy of uniform presentation was a working meeting of the coordinators of all relevant ministries and institutions concerning the presentation of the Slovak Republic during the Winter Olympic Games in 2010 in Vancouver, and an appeal of the Council to ministries and institutions to take advantage of the offered presentation opportunities in the Slovak Olympic House during the Games. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the coordinator of this process, committed to create an expert forum, the activities of which should result in a nationwide discussion or the organization of a discussion round table attended by experts and representatives of the non-governmental sector. The necessity of involving the expert public and non-governmental organizations into the process of preparation of the presentation strategy resulted in organizing a conference in October, in which the representatives of the expert public and the non-governmental sector expressed their readiness to participate in the process and contributed with matter-of-fact comments and ideas.

The Activities of Slovak Institutes Abroad

The basic framework for the cultural dimension of foreign policy is set out in the provisions of the "Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic concerning cooperation in the fulfilment of tasks of cultural diplomacy and presentation of Slovak arts and culture abroad." This activity is coordinated by a joint inter-ministerial group, which proposed joint priorities for the presentation of culture in line with the foreign-policy priorities of the Slovak Republic, also taking into account the adopted bilateral and multilateral commitments of the Slovak Republic.

The presentation of Slovak arts and the cultural dimension of diplomacy has been implemented in practice primarily by the network of Slovak Institutes, which constitute the institutional basis for presenting Slovak culture abroad, as well as by Slovak embassies abroad. Exhibitions, musical events (concerts), recitals, new book presentations and other events covering a varied selection of genres introduced to foreign audiences the best and the most recent works of Slovak culture. Significant anniversaries and events, such as the 65th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising and the introduction of the euro currency, were presented by means of exhibitions, discussion tables and documentary films. In 2009, the dominant topic in the presentation of the Slovak Republic abroad was the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution.

Successful events aimed at the public at large also included participation in film festivals, where Slovakia introduced prominent Slovak films that received awards abroad. The following is a selection of the multitude of events: presentation of Slovak regions in a number of European towns, special broadcast – a series of reports on current events in Slovakia entitled “Slovak Day on Czech Radio”, presentation of the book “Slovak-Polish relations in 1918 – 1945 through the eyes of diplomats” in Warsaw, presentation of the exhibition and a specialized seminar on the "Path of Slovakia to the Euro" in the Polish Sejm (Parliament), panel discussion at the Philosophy Faculty of L. Eötvös University in Budapest attended by direct participants in the Velvet Revolution, festive concert of the Symphonic Orchestra of Bruno Walter and Slovak performing artists on the eve of the Velvet Revolution in the Vienna Philharmonic, concert of the State Chamber Orchestra Žilina in Berlin to mark the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, mobile exhibition “The Most Beautiful Books of Slovakia” as a part of a presentation of Slovakia as a host country at the International Fair of Books for Children and Youth in Bologna, conference entitled “European Integration of Slovakia (2004 – 2007 – 2009)” in Compiègne in France as a part of the cycle of lectures on Slovakia, exhibition of Slovak wartime fine arts entitled ”Trajectory of Fate – Man and the War in Slovak Fine Arts of Three Decades” in the Museum of Patriotic War in Moscow, and many others.

4.4 Promoting Cooperation with the Non-Governmental Sector

The communication and cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic with the non-governmental sector, the representatives of academia, political science think tanks and the Slovak security community brought considerable added value to the specialised activities of the Ministry. New international challenges and the necessity of a new perspective on the modern functioning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led to the adoption of a new strategy of the Ministry (2008), which clearly defines the importance of communication and cooperation with the non-governmental sector. In 2009, as a part of its grant programme, the Ministry supported 22 projects implemented by non-governmental organizations, with active participation of competent departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The projects concerned conferences and publications reflecting the priority issues in foreign policy and international relations. Many of the conferences took place at the Ministry and were attended by experts from the Ministry, non-governmental institutions, the expert public and academia. Almost EUR 100,000 was allocated for these activities from the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

It is important to inform the public and partners about the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is why in 2009 the Annual Report of the Ministry for 2008 was published. Mutual cooperation included the performance of framework agreements concluded with non-governmental organizations aimed at consulting and conference activities. As a result of cooperation in the field of publishing, the following periodicals were issued: Yearbook of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic, the magazine “Zahraníčná politika” (Foreign Policy) and “International Issues”. The Minister and experts from the Ministry gave lectures at a number of universities and secondary schools aimed at specialized and current topics and actively participated in domestic and international conferences.

Over the course of 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs pro-actively organized a number of discussion round tables, which were also attended by representatives of non-governmental institutions.

5. Modern Slovak Diplomacy

The year 2009 saw the implementation and fine-tuning of modernisation changes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the field of organisation management, development of human resources, management of financial and administrative processes and management of information and communication technologies. The Ministry perceives the functionality of these mutually interconnected elements as one of the pre-conditions for an effective performance of the foreign service.

5.1. Optimising Internal Procedures at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

As a part of the optimisation of its operation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focused on modification of its internal reforms with the aim of stabilising working processes. Strategic planning and project management were simplified so that these tools better correspond to the possibilities and needs of the Ministry. A number of projects have been launched.

The continued introduction of quality management in accordance with the model of exclusivity of the European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) was an important element of increasing the quality of the management system at the Ministry. The optimisation of the system of internal management acts is a part of these changes. The aim is the creation of a clear and up-to-date Collection of Internal Management Acts of the Ministry.

The network of Slovak embassies abroad is an integral part of the performance of the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic. In 2009, the Slovak Republic had 89 foreign service offices, of which there were 60 embassies, three embassy offices, seven permanent missions to international organizations, nine consulates general, eight Slovak Institutes and one Slovak Economic and Cultural Office. Given the priority status of the Western Balkan region in the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic, at the beginning of the year embassy offices were opened in Skopje and Tirana, which were later transformed into full-fledged embassies.

5.2. Ensuring Technologically Advanced Communication

Information and communication technologies constituted one of the essential tools of high-quality and timely fulfilment of foreign service tasks. Due to limited funds, it was not possible to meet all planned parameters (e.g., electronic circulation of documents). The concept of development of information systems of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (CDIS MFA) was drafted as a basis for the preparation of the feasibility study for the project of the Ministry oriented at Slovak citizens. In order to obtain a non-repayable financial contribution from EU funds (OPIS), it was necessary to draft the above-mentioned concept and to implement security policy in the field of information systems, which the Ministry managed to do as an ongoing effort.

5.3. Optimising Financial Management and Structure of the Budget

Thanks to the long-term preparation of the Ministry for the introduction of the euro, this process has been successfully tackled. In the course of the year, the concept of adjustment of the performance of the financial and economic agenda abroad was developed, which also includes the processing of accounting agenda of small embassies at the Ministry and the creation of the position of head of administration at large embassies. In order to optimise the administration of property, the analysis of real property of the Slovak Republic abroad is in the final stage of processing. The Management Information System (MIS) was developed, the

aim of which is the distribution of up-to-date data on the management of the Ministry for all staff. This system is being fine-tuned in order to better correspond to the needs of the Ministry. The system of controlling was introduced towards the end of the year.

5.4. Strengthening the Expertise of Foreign Services Staff

Current changes in the society necessitate a continuous development of know-how, capabilities and skills of Ministry staff, which is one of the basic pre-requisites of the development of the Ministry. That is why the priority status among educational processes was awarded to activities aimed at increasing the quality of the human potential of the Slovak foreign service, its stabilisation, higher motivation and development, as well as the gradual introduction of career planning elements.

With regards to this goal, in 2009 a higher number of internal and external language courses and specialized courses was organized, which were adapted to the discharge of diplomatic and consular tasks abroad. Special attention was paid to education programmes (certification education) aimed at acquiring a certain diplomatic rank. In comparison with the previous period, these educational activities had a more comprehensive character, reflected the real needs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also utilized internal lecturing capacities.

The Career Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic was successfully applied in practice, which unified and harmonized the course of the entire working career of the Ministry staff, supplemented the respective career paths in light of new challenges, and made the performance of the foreign service clearer in terms of quality. The modification of salaries paid to staff abroad and of laws relating to the conversion to euro was also successfully completed. A new system of evaluation was implemented into practice, the aim of which is a more objective and transparent evaluation of work results in relation to individual interests and enhancement of individual expertise. A system was put in place to encourage staff to apply for positions at embassies in areas with disadvantaged conditions. Special attention was paid to the amendments to the Act on State Service and the drafting of a law on foreign service.

In the reviewed period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also participated in the specialized preparation of potential human resources for its needs. In this sphere, the Ministry cooperated with selected higher education institutions and universities, where graduates can apply for positions in the foreign service. In the reviewed period, more than 140 students attended a short-term internship at the Ministry or at embassies. The Ministry continued its cooperation by providing its staff as consultants advising students in the preparation of their master's theses, or lecturers that delivered lectures on topical issues of foreign policy and participated actively in the examination panels in final state examinations.

5.5. Enhancing the Representation of the Slovak Republic in the EU and in International Organizations

In 2009, the positive trend of increasing the number of Slovak citizens working in EU institutions continued. During the seven year transition period of priority recruitment, the Slovak Republic had the possibility of filling 279 positions from a total of 3,400 positions in European Commission structures that had been earmarked for new member states. The transition period will end in 2010. As of 1 October 2009, Slovakia had 324 employees in European Commission structures (of which 240 are for an indefinite term), which means it fulfilled 116% of its quota. In total, more than 650 Slovak citizens work in EU institutions (European Parliament, European Commission, Court of Justice, Court of First Instance, Court of Auditors, European Central Bank, European Investment Bank, committees, agencies, and interns). Besides Slovak citizens working in EU institutions on the basis of contracts, as of 1

January 2009, a further 25 Slovak citizens worked as national experts sent by the competent ministries.

Making the Slovak public aware of vacant posts in EU structures is an integral part of recruitment aimed at filling those vacant posts; the Ministry provides for this by continuously informing the staff of central bodies of state administration of announced selection procedures. Current offers of vacant positions are also published on the website of the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU in Brussels.

Discussions on the creation of the **European External Action Service** were revived by the Swedish presidency in the second half of 2009, and Slovakia was fully involved in them. Slovakia ranks among the countries that supported the consular aspects of the activities of the Service. With regards to the personnel policy, Slovakia supported the idea whereby at least one-third of the diplomatic personnel should originate from national diplomatic corps of member states, which was ultimately reflected in the final recommendation that the European Council submitted to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Agreement was also reached on the necessity of adequate geographic balance in the representation of personnel and the necessity of reasonable representation of citizens from all member states.

Within the UN system, the Slovak Republic is currently represented in two senior posts – the Executive Secretary of the European Economic Commission of the UN (J. Kubiš) and Special Representative and Chief of UN Regional Centre of Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (M. Jenča). Slovakia is also represented at the International Court of Justice in the Hague (P. Tomka) and in the Regional Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization for Europe and Central Asia (M. Kadlečiková).

As of 30 June 2009, 27 Slovak citizens were employed in the United Nations, of which seven positions are subject to geographical distribution (the quota for Slovakia is 3 - 14 positions). Slovak citizens also work in the organizations of the UN system in Geneva. Moreover, several experts work in the United Nations Office and specialized international organizations in Vienna.

In the Secretariat and institutions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (**OSCE**), there are two experts from Slovakia and another six experts at the OSCE missions (including the Head of OSCE mission in Ukraine).

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED

ALTHEA	EU military crisis management operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
CCW	Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
CERN	European Organisation for Nuclear Research
CFE Treaty	Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
CFSP	EU Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CoE	Council of Europe
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
DC	Danube Commission
DCI	European Community Development Cooperation Instrument
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova/Ukraine
EUFOR RD Congo	EU operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in support of MONUC during the election process
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EU PAT in FYROM	European Union Police Advisory Team in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
EUPM in BH	EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina
GAERC	General Affairs and External Relations Council of the EU Member States
IAEA	International <i>Atomic</i> Energy Agency
ILO	International Labour Organisation/International Labour Office
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (NATO operation in Afghanistan)
IVF	International Visegrad Fund
KFOR	NATO Kosovo Force
MAP	NATO Membership Action Plan
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPCW	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
Slovak Aid	Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation

UN/ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference for Trade and Development
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
V4	Visegrad Group
WCO	World Customs Organisation
WFP	World Food Programme
WG-NMAS	Working Group on Non-Military Aspects of Security
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
WTO	World Trade Organisation