



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Annual Report Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Foreign Policy in 2007



2007

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“The Slovak Republic advocates the idea of the protection and promotion of human rights both at the national and international level. In this context we are prepared to assume our respective share of responsibility.”

Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, speaking in the general debate of the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly, 25 September 2007 in New York



“Slovakia is perceived as a reliable and trustworthy NATO ally and a prospering EU member country with an effective diplomacy.”

Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, at the meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions, 17 July 2007 in Bratislava



“I am sure that Slovakia will continue to make important contributions to the agenda of Security Sector Reform, building upon its valuable experience in the Security Council for the past two years.”

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the UN, at the joint press conference after talks with the President of the SR I. Gašparovič during his official visit to the Slovak Republic, 28 January 2007 in Bratislava



“It is certainly no overstatement if I say that the geographical situation of our country makes it a gateway to Europe. A gateway that does not want to be closed. We do not want to represent ... a new ‘curtain’.”

Pavol Paška, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NC SR) speech at the conference of the speakers of the parliaments in the European Union, 25 May 2007 in Bratislava



“The MFA SR is a truly strong ministry, full of highly qualified people working abroad and at home.”

Ján Kubiš, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, at the meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions, 17 July 2007 in Bratislava



“...not only can the European Union bring and is already giving a very positive contribution to the future and economic and social progress of Slovakia, but Slovakia can also bring a very supportive power to the European project.”

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, at the joint press conference with the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic R. Fico, 5 December 2007 in Bratislava

Dear readers,



With this first Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic I wish to invite you on a journey through Slovak diplomacy in 2007. I believe it will earn your interest as well as enrich you because that is precisely the goal of this historic first publication of the report, which presents the objectives, activities and outputs of the Slovak foreign policy for the past year.

In the 30 years of my career in diplomacy I have addressed both bilateral and multilateral issues. My experience confirms that every country has its own individuality. And Slovakia is not any different. The dignified preservation of our individualities and at the same time the deepening of our integration into the community of developed and respected states of the world were the main motives of our activities on the international stage in 2007.

The main features of Slovak foreign policy can be found in its continuity, transparency and, the stability of its fundamental basis and strategic direction. Slovak foreign policy clearly defined its objectives after the establishment of the Slovak Republic in 1993: the integration of the country into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures and the active participation of Slovakia in significant world economic institutions. Today Slovakia is a full-fledged member of the EU, NATO, UN, OECD and other important organizations which allow us to pursue our own political and economic goals and interests more effectively.

The foreign policy of the SR is no longer an agenda of the MFA alone. The President of the SR, the National Council of the SR and the Prime Minister of the SR play a determining role. It also requires the increased participation of other departments and governing bodies of the state administration. Furthermore the active roles of the private sector as well as regional and local municipalities and last but not least good cooperation with the non-governmental sector are of particular benefit to the success of foreign policy activities.

I consider 2007 to be very successful in foreign policy. We were able to further evolve our success story, defend our interests and the good image of Slovakia as well as adequately project our influence on regional and global development. We have made progress in the consolidation of Slovakia's integration into the EU, in the development of the transatlantic partnership, good and pragmatic relations with neighbouring countries

and other significant actors of world politics. The accomplished achievements represent our constructive contribution to the development of international relations. Among others, I will mention our highly regarded and respectable conduct during our elected membership in the UN Security Council, our entry into the Schengen Area, the Slovak presidency in the Visegrad Group and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe or the support of the European heading of the Western Balkans and Eastern European countries. In 2007 we also made a step forward in providing development assistance, when a special agency was established for this sole purpose – Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation. I believe that in the following period we will also be able to increase the volume of resources dedicated to development cooperation as well as increase the level of public awareness about our responsibility for the positive development in the areas of fighting the poverty, respect of human rights or environment protection in the world.

The consular protection of our citizens and their property and maintaining contact with our citizens who have settled for temporary or permanent residence abroad has been and will continue to be an important challenge for Slovak diplomacy in the globalizing world. Even though the increased mobility of our citizens places more demanding tasks on our department with limited budgetary resources, our attention will continue to be as it has in the past focused on the service for citizens.

In 2007 we initiated a process of complex reform of the administrative procedures of the ministry which should ensure an increase in the efficiency, professionalism and transparency of the ministry's operation and an even greater focus on the needs of the citizens. A citizen who understands the importance of foreign policy better and supports the foreign policy steps taken by his government also makes the promotion of foreign policy goals easier and more effective. I wish this publication would become one of the integral elements of our efforts for proper communication with the Slovak expert and general public as well as our external partners.

Ján Kubiš

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SR

non-permanent membership in the UN SC

The non-permanent membership in the UN SC in 2006 and 2007 undeniably belongs to the greatest achievements of the Slovak foreign policy in our history so far. Our one-month presidency in February 2007 is the most important moment of our operation in this supreme body of international security. During this time the SR showed its ability to govern the work of the central UN body and its committees as well as to elaborate new perspectives on the solution of problems. The SR prepared two presidential statements adopted by the SC, one on Security Sector Reform – the issue on which we initiated the discussion – and the second on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The results of our work convinced our partners in the SC about the consistent and balanced approach of the SR in the issues of international relations. Our successful term in the UN SC confirms the maturity and high professionalism of Slovak diplomacy and represents a valuable experience for the fulfilment of future tasks and mandates.

activities in NATO

NATO remains the main forum for solving security policy issues and the main guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security for the SR. Our activities in NATO in 2007 were particularly reflected in Slovakia's efforts to:

- strengthen the flexibility of response to changes in the security environment in the world;
- consolidate the transatlantic bond;
- support multilateral cooperation with the EU;
- continue in the open door policy – for Western Balkan countries, Ukraine and Georgia;
- actively participate in NATO military missions abroad (in Afghanistan and Kosovo).

The region of the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia/Kosovo) and Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine) remain the centres of gravity of Slovakia's foreign and security policy activities. The unique experience from the operation of our embassy in Kiev as the NATO Contact Point Embassy deserves a special attention.

chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Slovakia's foreign policy image was enhanced by assuming the historic first chairmanship of the SR in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (the governing body of the CoE) in November 2007 for six months. Slovakia decided to focus the attention of participating countries on the more effective operation of the organization, the necessity to specialize in areas where it has the most capabilities for action (such as the field of human rights and rule of law), the improvement of the effectiveness of the European Court of Human Rights as well as on issues related to the fundamental interests of the SR like the situation of the Roma minority in Europe. The SR promoted close cooperation with the EU in this matter because the connection of similar activities could achieve a synergic effect towards the improvement of the living conditions of Roma in Europe.

good neighbourly relations and the V4 presidency

Neighbourly relations are a permanent element of our foreign policy priorities. The SR strives to systematically maintain its relations in a pragmatic state of cooperation in the widest possible range of areas and on all levels. Since 2004 our common membership in Euro-Atlantic structures has defined certain characteristics and particularities of Slovakia's relations to other countries of the Visegrad Group (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) and Austria. Throughout 2007 neighbourly relations evolved in multiple ways despite occasional misunderstandings. Through practical cooperation and maintaining contacts the SR also works on its relationship with its geographically largest neighbour – Ukraine with whom Slovakia realized multiple bilateral and multilateral projects. In the closer regional context, the SR made a positive image in the position of the V4 presiding country in the first half of 2007. After the previous period of doubt and the search for a new objective of the Visegrad cooperation the SR was able to reinstate the pragmatism and functionality of the V4 mainly in the issues of European policies. The V4 countries were able to adopt joint statements on all levels for the realization of important goals such as the accession to the Schengen Area, the visa regime with the USA, the strengthening of the ENP and others to achieve joint successes. During Slovakia's presidency the V4. The interest in the establishment of contacts on the local and civil levels through the International Visegrad Fund projects grew considerably.

development assistance

The provision of development assistance is one of the signs of Slovakia's understanding of its responsibility for positive global development including the fight against poverty, the respect for human rights and the protection of the environment. In order to improve the quality of this process in 2007 the Government of the SR established the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation which unifies the administrative management of these activities. Development assistance was provided in the form of financial support for sector projects and experts or in the form of the transfer of our own experience. Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Serbia and Sudan were the priority countries of development cooperation. The overall volume of development assistance in the year 2007 amounted to almost 1.7 billion SKK. The SR stands before the task of increasing this amount in the next period. At the anticipated annual growth rate trend of the Gross National Income of the SR – approximately 10% annually – Slovakia needs to increase the amount of official development aid to more than 3.9 billion SKK in 2010 in order to fulfil its commitments.

activities in the EU

Slovakia fully supported the ambition of the German presidency to overcome the stagnation of the debate on the reform of the basic treaties of the EU. In the negotiations on the EU institutional reform Slovakia consistently stood on positions which built upon previous agreements and which finally lead to the signing of the *Treaty of Lisbon* on 13 December 2007.

Slovakia belongs to the groups of countries which support the deepening of internal EU integration, full integration within the rules of the EU as well as the EU enlargement and spread of its influence in the world. The historical enlargement of the Schengen Area by 9 EU member states including Slovakia took place in 2007. This issue carries a strong political message about the trustworthiness and responsibility of a member country. The abolishment of border checks on internal borders and ensuring travel without lengthy procedures has significant potential for the development of civil and economic activities. The SR continued in its efforts to utilize European policies to increase the competitive ability of the country. Slovakia's accession to the Eurozone became the priority. The adoption of the Euro will be Slovakia's last step on its journey to the full integration into the European Economic and Monetary Union. On the agenda of the free movement of persons, two other countries – the Netherlands and Luxembourg – decided to abolish restrictions on the access of Slovak citizens to their job markets. In 2007 Slovakia assumed the co-management of the intra-Union discussion on the utilization and security of nuclear energy through the European Nuclear Forum. We can say that the SR has gained the first seat of an EU institution concerned with an issue of growing importance in the time of increasing concerns over an energy crisis and unfavourable climate change. The fact that two member countries – Slovakia and the Czech Republic – have agreed on the joint operation of the institution is unique. Continuing work on the deepening of the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the Eastern European countries and the progress in the accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey are successes from the point of view of European policies. The positive image of Slovakia and its diplomacy in relation to the Western Balkans was recognized by the fact that from July 2007 the post of the High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina is occupied by a Slovak diplomat.

consular service activities

Through its network of embassies and consular offices the MFA SR continued to provide consular services for the public and defend the interests of Slovak citizens abroad. The increased mobility of the public and the possibility of the free movement of citizens across the EU increase the demand for consular services and protection provided by the consular offices. Slovakia's accession to the Schengen Area was directly linked with the fulfilment of given criteria at the consular departments of Slovak diplomatic missions. Due to these criteria during 2007 all Slovak diplomatic missions issuing visas had a new visa information system installed and some of them gradually underwent necessary construction adjustments in order to fulfil the security criteria for issuing visas. The 2007 also brought progress in the sense of the abolishment of visa requirements for the trips of Slovak citizens to the USA.

The SR also made use of its network of honorary consulates abroad for consular assistance as well as the development of relations with other countries, especially in the areas of economic and cultural cooperation. In 2007 their number exceeded 150.

modernization of the MFA SR

The pressures of the globalizing international environment, increased demands on the quality of the results and services provided by the MFA SR as well as the necessary operative compatibility of the MFA and its partner bodies in allied and integration mechanisms are changing the position and the role of Slovak diplomacy and at the same time represent a unique opportunity for it. With this in mind, the MFA management initiated a reflection upon its own internal work procedures through a procedural, economic, organizational, functional, and personal audit. The objective is to increase the effectiveness and the performance of the MFA and implement a system which guarantees the permanent re-evaluation and the improvement of the effectiveness and quality of the organization's performance through strategic planning and management, the modernization of administrative procedures focused on results and the quality of the provided outputs and services as well as the support of a motivational work environment. The establishment of a system of long-term performance improvement following an adequate model of quality control is a part of the project. During 2007 the number of systemized work places of the MFA and its associated organizations was reduced by almost 20%. The commencement of the formulation of a new *Strategy of the MFA SR*, which will define the role of the MFA and thus the strategic goals of the department, is a part of the MFA's effort to create conditions for a more active foreign policy. These goals will subsequently be elaborated into a series of action plans with adequate performance benchmarks and preconditions for the fulfilment of the set tasks. ■

priorities of the MFA SR

The main goals of the MFA SR for the year 2007 were set in the annual planning document *Slovakia's Foreign Policy Orientation for 2007* which stemmed from the *Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic* from 2006, the *Medium-Term Strategy of the Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic till 2015* elaborated in 2005 and the *Security Strategy of the SR* adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in September 2005. In 2007, the MFA SR aimed to:

- **promote** the interests of the SR in the context of EU membership;
- **fulfil** NATO commitments and strengthen the transatlantic partnership;
- **develop** good neighbourly relations and accentuate the cooperation of the V4 countries during the Slovakia's presidency;
- **operate** actively in the UN and successfully carry out the elected membership in the UN SC;
- **support** security, stability, and prosperity in the Western Balkans;
- **engage** in the global protection of human rights;
- **strengthen** activities in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid;
- **expand** the economic dimension of Slovakia's foreign policy;
- **provide** consular services for the public;
- **effectuate** public diplomacy;
- **adapt** internal institutional structures to the current challenges in international relations. ■



For two years, Slovakia held the position of a non-permanent member in the UN SC

a safe and democratic world



The Slovak Republic and its citizens are an integral part of the democratic world by their own decision. It is in their vital interest that this world will not only be secure, but that the zone of democracy and security will continue to spread with a perspective of sustainable development. Slovakia synchronizes the priorities of its foreign and security policy with this interest not only on the bilateral but also on the multilateral level – within the Council of Europe and the European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations. The focus of our practical activities stems from the long-term foreign policy priorities, which are primarily the Western Balkans, cooperation with the eastern neighbors of the EU and relations with strategic partners.

In its six-month chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (12 November 2007 to 7 May 2008) our republic continued in the previous activities and supported the broadest possible implementation of the priorities adopted at the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government. It focused on the approximation of international structures to the citizen, the increase in effectiveness and transparency of the activities of the Council of Europe, and the support of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy in Europe.

Slovakia is participating in the preparation and realization of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU as well as the European Security and Defense Policy. The appointment of the Slovak

diplomat Miroslav Lajčák to the post of High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina is our exceptionally significant contribution, achievement and appreciation. To this date he has been successful in enforcing a number of key political reforms that have brought the country closer to European Union membership.

Slovak priorities within NATO in the year 2007 were the support of the transformation process and the enlargement of NATO, the strengthening of transatlantic relations including dialogue and cooperation with the EU and the participation in NATO missions and operations. Permanent attention was dedicated to the development of relations between NATO and Russia. Our embassy in Kiev has assumed the role of the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Ukraine for two years from 1 January 2007.

The year 2007 was the second year of the non-permanent membership of Slovakia in the UN Security Council. Slovakia has established a natural authority in this milieu by its active, professional and balanced approach. It successfully assumed the presidency of the UN SC in February 2007. Slovakia achieved a particularly strong position in the agenda of the Security Sector Reform, which also opens the doors to other issues and formats in the future. Slovakia thus continues to gain a positive image and confirms the credibility, efficiency and professionalism of its diplomacy. ■

slovakia in the UN Security Council

The Slovak Republic has concluded its first membership term in the UN Security Council since its independence. The UN SC is generally considered to be the most effective instrument at the disposal of the international community for the solution of international peace and security issues. It is also said to be the most functional body of the UN. Slovakia was presented with the opportunity to bear an adequate part of global responsibility for peace and security and directly participate in the solution of world problems and in the adoption of important decisions which are, according to the UN Charter, legally binding for all member states of the UN. The two year term of the SR in the UN SC not only increased the credit of the country within the UN but also significantly contributed to the overall image and positive representation of the country in the world and the media.

security sector reform (SSR)

The term 'security sector' describes the structures, institutions and personnel responsible for the management, provision and oversight of security in a country. Security Sector Reform then describes a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation led by national authorities, that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the state and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect of human rights and the rule of law. As the Security Council noted, the SSR should be a 'nationally-owned process' that is rooted in the particular needs and conditions of the country in question. Reforming the security sector in post-conflict environments is critical to the consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, rule of law, and good governance, extending legitimate state authority, and preventing countries from relapsing into conflict.

[According to the UN SC Statement S/PRST/2007/3 of 20 February 2007 and the Report of the UN SG Securing Peace and Development: the Role of the United Nations in Supporting Security Sector Reform from 23 January 2008] ■

our priorities

We focused not only on our traditional territorial and thematic priorities like the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Cyprus, the Middle East, issues of the fight against terrorism, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, protection of human rights, protection of the civilian population and children in armed conflicts, rule of law and so on. Some new themes were added thanks to our two year term in the post of a non-permanent member of the UN SC, these are namely the Security Sector Reform and the reform of the UN SC working methods. The traditional participation in other UN activities supported mainly by the presence of our military, police and civilian capacities in UN, NATO and EU missions gave additional value, force and respect to our arguments and positions presented in the UN SC.

heading the '1540 Committee'

Slovakia significantly contributed to the increase in the intensity and effectiveness of the UN SC and the entire UN operation in the field of fighting against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, namely nuclear weapons, mainly through its two-year presidency term in the UN SC 1540 Committee (2004). In accordance with the common EU policy in the area of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction Slovakia supported all steps taken towards the strengthening and speeding up of the implementation of internal state measures in UN member countries which are focused on the improvement of control over the movement and transport of sensitive materials suitable for the production of weapons of mass destruction or their carriers. The SR actively contributed to the decision of the committee to focus on the effective assumption of the role of the centre of information exchange in the following period, which



Peter Burian,
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of the
SR to the UN

we launched a debate in the UN

- How would you evaluate the past two years of Slovakia's membership in the UN SC?

It was an opportunity for Slovakia to show that it can open current issues which contribute to the solutions of even the most complex problems in the world, be it in the field of conflict management or in the fight against old and new threats addressed by the Security Council. I am most of all glad that our partners in the Security Council, as well as the Secretary-General of

the UN Ban Ki-Moon, are talking about the successful handling of our presidency.

- Was Slovakia able to achieve any particular results during its presidency in February 2007?

Slovakia was successful in the SC in two areas due to its long-term and conceptual approach to the preparation of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) theme presentation. First of all it was the debate itself on this issue in the SC and second we were able to achieve the adoption of the presidential statement

would help the UN SC improve the realization of assistance programs provision directed at the implementation of relevant UN SC resolutions. The SR also promoted the increased significance of other international organizations in this effort – namely those which specialize in border control, export control, customs control, financing control, trade restrictions, code of criminal conduct etc.

Slovakia made a distinct positive impact in the UN SC by initiating and elaborating the discussion to the cross-section issue of Security Sector Reform. Before the admission of the SR into the UN SC and especially before the Slovak presidency in the UN SC (February 2006) this issue was not completely unknown but it lacked a particular description and formulation and most of all a complex and systematic approach within the UN SC and the entire UN system.

the February presidency

In accordance with the internal member rotation system, the SR carried out its presidency mandate in the UN SC in February 2007. The following events took place during Slovakia's presidency:

- ▣ 3 open debates: on Security Sector Reform, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the current situation in the Middle East;
- ▣ 1 public meeting on the situation in East Timor;
- ▣ 8 private consultations on the general agenda of the UN SC, specifically the issue of African conflicts;
- ▣ 2 working lunches of the UN SC members with the Secretary-General of the UN (one of which was devoted to the high-priority agenda of Security Sector Reform, with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SR Ján Kubiš present).

building on the success

We can be very satisfied with our performance during Slovakia's membership in the UN SC in

which established certain basic milestones for the future development of the discussion in the SC as well as the UN General Assembly. The SR is still actively engaged in the issue of SSR even after its departure from the UN SC: we preside over the so-called group of friends on security sector reform. Simply put, Slovakia has gained the position of a natural leader in the issue of security sector reform in the UN, and is being regularly consulted by member countries and individual UN institutions on further development in this field.

under our presidency the UN SC adopted:

- ▣ 4 resolutions (extending the mandate of UN peace missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in East Timor and Haiti and the authorization of the deployment of the African Union peace mission in Somalia);
- ▣ 2 presidential statements (both formulated by the SR – on the Security sector reform and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction);
- ▣ 7 press statements (two of which were drafted by Slovakia. ■



The UN SC Presidency increased our credibility in the world diplomacy

2006-2007. Slovakia and its foreign service have achieved significant success which is a confirmation of the continuity of Slovakia's foreign policy as well as the maturity and high professionalism of Slovakia's diplomacy. This result will not only bear positive fruit on UN soil in the context of multilateral diplomacy but also in bilateral relations with our partners around the world. Slovak diplomacy is determined to adequately exploit the precious and unique experience gained through our operation in the UN SC in the future improvement of the quality and effectiveness of Slovakia's activities in the world in various fields: political, security, economic and social. It is often the small states which are able to offer and mediate solutions where large countries have failed to do so. Slovakia has accomplished this several times also during its two-year mandate as a non-permanent member of the UN SC. ■

More at:
www.un.org (UN)
www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/b.2486441/ (UN SC)

What awaits us in the UN in the near future?

We wish to use the credit which Slovakia gained during its term in the UN SC to strengthen our representation in individual bodies and institutions in the UN as well as in other international organizations. In the beginning of the year we were elected to the vice-presidency of the executive board of the UN Development Programme. Our campaign for membership in the UN Human Rights Council was successful and we will apply for membership in the UN Economic and Social Council in autumn 2009. ■

In 2007 the SR continued to strive towards being a trustworthy and predictable ally within NATO, responsibly fulfilling its duties and commitments derived from membership, and at the same time systematically defending and promoting its own security policy priorities.

striving for effectiveness and openness

The universal support of the NATO transformation process concentrated on the ability to effectively react to the ongoing changes in the security environment in the world belonged among these



In 2007 Slovak troops operated in several NATO missions

priorities. From the political view, this was most of all reflected in the full support of the NATO open-door policy as a process which significantly contributes to the enlargement of the zone of stability, security and prosperity in Europe and at the same time to the eradication of the division lines drawn by history. In accordance with the geographical priorities of its foreign policy, Slovakia actively sup-

ported primarily the deepening of NATO cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans and with Ukraine. With the April 2008 Alliance summit in Bucharest in sight, Slovakia supported the enlargement of NATO by all three candidate countries – Albania, Croatia and Macedonia –, while actively participating in the political and expert dialogue with the membership candidates on the Alliance platform, in their preparation process and the evaluation of achieved results in the *Membership Action Plan* (MAP) framework.

representing NATO in Ukraine

On a long-term and stable basis, the SR also supports the integration ambitions of Ukraine directed towards the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The role of the Slovak embassy in Kiev as the NATO Contact Point Embassy (CPE), from 2007, presented a unique and new experience in this regard. Our objective from this position was to support the dialogue between Ukraine and the Alliance to such an extent, which was expressed in the interest of Ukraine itself. At the same time through the activities of its diplomatic mission in Ukraine the SR strived to contribute to the build up of transparency and trust between Ukraine and NATO, support their mutual cooperation and assist with the realization of necessary political and defence reforms in Ukraine within this framework.

From the initiative of the Slovak diplomatic mission in Kiev it was possible to increase the efficiency of the operation of individual NATO structures in Ukraine through the mutual coordination of activities – the NATO Contact Point Embassy and the NATO Information and Documentation Centre. The knowledge of the region was also used to inform the Allies about key moments in the internal political development in Ukraine throughout 2007 and during their evaluation for the needs of NATO headquarters in Brussels.



Urban Rusnák,
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of the
Slovak Republic to Ukraine

we accomplish our mission under the motto 'Trust and transparency'

■ The Slovak Embassy in Kiev became the NATO Contact Point Embassy for Ukraine on 1 January 2007. What does this mean for Slovakia?

In all NATO partner countries one of the diplomatic missions of member countries always fulfils the role of the contact embassy for a two-year term. Charging us with the role of the contact embassy in an exceptionally important and – from NATO's point of view – considerably controversial country, is an appreciation of our

diplomacy. Ukraine's efforts to gain membership in the Alliance and namely the *Membership Action Plan* are the cause of disconcert in some countries within NATO as well as among some neighbours. Today the internal inconsistency of the country is the greatest problem.

For Slovakia the practical significance of the position of the contact embassy lays in two dimensions. Among our allies we have good knowledge of Ukraine's situation and bilateral relations without any conflicts, which in connection with our recent accession process and membership experience, gives our statements additional authority. In the dimension of NATO-Ukraine rela-

supporting the transatlantic dialogue

As in previous years, the SR strived for the preservation and strengthening of the transatlantic bond within the Alliance. As the EU and NATO member state Slovakia also tried to achieve the highest possible intensity of cooperation between these groups, on the political as well as the practical level, primarily in the field of joint operational activities in Kosovo and Afghanistan as well as in the field of military-strategic capacities build-up.

The representatives of the SR have systematically and on every given opportunity brought attention to the need for a real strategic partnership between NATO and the EU, linked with a common political dialogue concerning issues like civil-military cooperation, post-conflict reconstruction, joint planning and so on.

contributing to common security

In 2007 the Armed Forces of the SR (AF SR) participated in NATO operations and missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Iraq. In the evaluated period the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan was considered the operational priority of the Alliance. The SR continued its support of this operation which was demonstrated by the transfer of a multifunctional engineer unit of the AF SR (57 personnel) from the Kabul airport to the Kandahar airport in the South of Afghanistan and also by other contributions. At the end of 2007 the National Council of the SR passed a resolution on reinforcing the participation of the AF SR in the operation ISAF during 2008. Throughout 2007 Slovakia also continued to provide military assistance to Afghan security forces in the form of armaments and equipment donations.

The military contribution of the SR to the NATO operation in Kosovo (KFOR) in 2007 was constituted by 135 members of the AF SR. On the basis of a government motion, the National Council of

the SR approved the expansion of the Slovak contingent mandate and also decided on the deployment of two transport helicopters Mi-17 and 39 members of the AF SR to the KFOR operation mandated from 16 December 2007 to 16 June 2008.

The Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) re-evaluated the structure of the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTMI) in April 2007, which led to the abolition of allocated posts previously occupied by members of the AF SR. As a result of this development the following rotation of the members of the AF SR was cancelled and the operation of all remaining members of the AF SR active in the mission Iraqi Freedom was terminated by the end of 2007. Within the framework of material assistance the SR donated surplus military material for the needs of the Iraqi security forces. ■



In Afghanistan, Slovakia contributed with a multifunctional engineering unit

In Afghanistan, Slovakia contributed with a multifunctional engineering unit



More at:
www.nato.int (NATO)

tions we are considered a friendly country, with a similar language and culture and a similar historical experience, which has already made its decision in favour of the European and transatlantic community and unambiguously supports the integration ambitions of Ukraine to the extent to which Ukraine itself is prepared. That is why we are a trustworthy source of information and experience from NATO for many in Ukraine.

■ What is our most important task in Ukraine?

In the framework of our mission, which we are accomplishing under the motto 'Trust and transparency' we focus on three levels: cooperation with Ukrainian

central and regional authorities; cooperation and communication with the representatives of member countries and NATO international staff, and maybe the most important task is the improvement of Ukrainian public awareness on the Alliance and Slovakia's experiences from the accession process. We utilize a wide range of instruments for these tasks – from the active participation in media discussions, through the support of NGO projects to personal meetings with youth and students all over Ukraine. The preparation and opening of the NATO information centre at the Uzhgorod National University in 2008 is our flag ship project. ■

the key region: the Western Balkans

The region of the Western Balkans, which includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia (including Kosovo) belongs to the priorities of Slovak foreign policy. The main interest of the Slovak Republic, in relation to the region in general and to individual countries, remains in the further stabilization of the region, the approximation of its countries to European and transatlantic structures as well as the spreading of values upon which these structures stand. By utilizing its own experience from the process of transformation and preparations for the accession to the EU and NATO as well as the instruments of the official Slovak development assistance, Slovakia has contributed to the definition of the means in which to practically achieve and more effectively implement this interest.

The process of defining the status of Kosovo has had a major impact on the specific realization of these goals as well as the overall stability and development in the region. In 2007 this process represented a burden and complicated regional cooperation, interstate relations as well as the approximation of the countries to the Euro-Atlantic structures. Slovakia's objective was to dampen or completely stop this possible negative development through intensive bilateral and multilateral

communication and activities. Concerning the process of defining the status of Kosovo in general, Slovakia made efforts to see that the rules of international politics and law would be altered and developed in a transparent manner, with regard to the national and state interests of the SR.

building the agreement basis

Bilateral relations of the SR with individual countries of the Western Balkans were being actively developed with contributions from both sides. Many bilateral activities on the highest level took place in 2007. Following the trouble-free cooperation in the political field, the representatives of both states focused on the development of economic cooperation and the finalization of the agreement and legal basis. The *Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Serbia on Development Cooperation* has been signed during the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SR Ján Kubiš in Belgrade in December 2007. A similar agreement has been signed with Montenegro during a visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro Milan Ročen in Slovakia, on 26 November 2007. Among others in the year 2007, negotiations were being finalized on an agreement on economic cooperation and an agreement on the mutual support and protection of investments between the SR and BiH.

actively in the Balkans

The SR also strived to stimulate Slovak businesses to greater activity in the region of the Western Balkans with the goal of materializing a high level of bilateral political relations. The sides were thus able to improve the mutual trade balance and the economic cooperation between the SR and the countries in the region which is still beneath the potential of our economies.



Serbia's foreign policy chief Vuk Jeremić on one of his official visits to Slovakia



Miroslav Lajčák, High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina

for them we are a success story

■ The Western Balkan region is a long-term priority of Slovakia's foreign policy. How do you view Slovakia's performance in the region including its image in the eyes of its Western Balkan partners?

Slovakia has a good reputation all over the Western Balkans. They remember the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia and how fast we achieved European integration after having to catch up with our neighbours. They are also very perceptive to our ability of assisting them on their own journey to the EU. When Slovakia expressed this approach in the past (Croatia, Serbia,

Montenegro) our EU partners usually listened. Slovakia also gained respect in the region by promoting transparent policy. Our positions took into account the often underestimated reality of the interdependence of the region and the wider impact of the particular decisions of one country upon its neighbours. The fact is that our Western Balkan partners consider Slovakia to be a 'success story' which they hope to follow. It should be beneficial if Slovakia could carry on as an expert on this region in the EU. By our involvement in the Balkans we are also confirming that the EU enlargement was a step which not only helped the new members but also helped the entire EU and its foreign policy.

In cooperation with the diplomatic missions of the SR in Belgrade and Sarajevo, Slovak NGOs are actively aiding in the deepening of democratic mechanisms. A certain obstacle in the volume of the development aid mainly for BiH is the absence of a bilateral agreement on development aid, which is currently being prepared.

As a future member of the Schengen Area, Slovakia's efforts in the consular field were to maintain rational consular service operations according to state priorities. Emphasis was also put on the development of the Slovak community in Serbia, its ability to adapt to the changing circumstances particularly in the field of educational support, economic development and the protection of its rights.

During 2007 the SR actively participated in the strengthening of the security and stability of the Western Balkans. The appointment of the Slovak diplomat Miroslav Lajčák to the post of High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (HR/EUSR) also served as evidence of appreciation of the SR by its partners. The support of M. Lajčák, in the discharge of his function, has also been an inseparable part of Slovak foreign policy.

serbia and Kosovo

In 2007 the foreign policy of the SR was mainly focused on Serbia and Kosovo. Slovakia has established good business contacts with the new Serbian administration. It continued to support the realization of Serbia's European perspective in the fulfilment of necessary conditions especially through the mediation of its own experience as well as the clarification of Union positions as a whole. Special attention was devoted to the coverage of the solution of the status of Kosovo which from the position of an elected member of the UN SC as well as the EU and NATO member sig-



Slovak troops, too, make a contribution to security in Kosovo.

nificantly contributed to the increase in the quality of their positions and policy on this issue. The SR formulated its consistent position on the solution process referring to the declaration of the NC SR from March 2007. The continued participation of the Armed Forces of the SR in the KFOR operation, including the augmentation of the number of AF members in the mission, represented a tangible contribution to the solution process.

In 2007 the SR continued to support the activities of the OSCE field mission in Kosovo, which is considered to be an important part of the international community in Kosovo. Multiple legal and practical issues must be resolved for the mission to continue operating in the province. The key task was to find a solution for the operation of OMiK on the grounds of the mandate determined by the UN SC Resolution 1244 even in the event of a unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo and its following recognition by individual countries. In the field of the EU civilian crisis management, the SR supported the launching of the European Security and Defense Policy mission EULEX to Kosovo, which should primarily be focused on the police and legal state sectors and should gradually take over the tasks of the UNMIK mission. ■

■ How do you see the possibilities of the intensification of economic relations between the SR and BiH and potentially with other countries of the Western Balkans.

Recently I received a delegation headed by the Prime Minister of the SR R. Fico with the ministers of foreign affairs and defence in Sarajevo. I am pleased that two important bilateral economic agreements were concluded, which are a precondition for the deepening of economic cooperation. A significant number of Slovak businesses presented themselves at the fair in Mostar recently organized by the Slovak Embassy in BiH. These are the steps that lead to the strengthening of dialogue in this field. I see the role of Slovak diplomacy

in creating opportunities which must of course be preceded by a good legal contract basis. Our embassies are very active in this regard. Then it's only up to our businessmen to seize the opportunities.

■ Do you think there are areas where Slovakia still has not made use of its experience from the integration into Euro-Atlantic structures in the Western Balkans?

I dare not say that we neglected something although I think we could have achieved more. Let us try to make full use of our capacities to give the countries of this region the best assistance in the rigorous preparations for the integration process.

The interview took place in May 2008. ■

defending human rights

Through its foreign policy, the Slovak Republic strives to actively implement human rights principles which create the basis of international legal order. As a state which has undergone significant changes towards the renewal of democratic structures and the establishment of an efficient system of human rights protection in the recent past, the SR can in many ways serve as an example for other transforming countries in the world. The year 2007 was dominated by the preparation for Slovakia's chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which the SR assumed from Serbia in November 2007 for six months.

the preparation

Not only does the presiding country formally chair over the main body of the organization, but it also brings new impulses in the form of chairmanship priorities, which it tries to implement with the help of the other member states. In the first half of 2007 the Slovak Republic focused on the definition of its chairmanship priorities. It consulted the preparation with multiple partners including the Secretariat of the Council of Europe and the upcoming presidencies of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). On the basis of the initiative proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SR, the Government of the SR adopted the following chairmanship priorities in March 2007:

- ▣ citizens' Europe: the approximation of the international community and the citizen;
- ▣ a transparent and efficient Council of Europe: the coordination of the Council of Europe's activities with other international institutions like the OSCE, the EU and the UN with the objective of broadening dialogue and practical cooperation and eliminating the ongoing duplication of activities;
- ▣ the support of basic common values: human rights, rule of law and democracy.

The Ministerial Coordination Committee was established for the preparation and latter administration of the chairmanship. Its function was to coordinate the fulfilment of tasks assigned to department partners. This is due to the fact that the SR is also represented in the Council of Europe by representatives of ministries, selected bodies of the state administration and other authorities operating in the expert bodies of the Council of Europe and its partial agreements.



Ján Kubiš took over the Presidency in the Committee of Ministers of CoE from his Serbian colleague



building Slovakia's reputation

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SR assumed the post of the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE on 12 November 2007 at the special meeting of Ministers' deputies in Strasbourg. The full text of the priorities along with the schedule of major events of the Slovak chairmanship was announced on this occasion.

From the moment when the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SR assumed the chairmanship he regularly presented the positions on individual political and legal points of the organization's agenda and visited a number of the member states of the organization. The participation of the Minister is also required at numerous multilateral meetings, especially at the CoE Committee of Ministers meetings in Strasbourg, plenary sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly and at the so-called Quadripartite meeting between the Council of Europe and the EU.

Slovakia's chairmanship in the Council of Ministers brought the opportunity not only to confirm our interest in a unified and democratic Europe, in the support and development of its values, but also an opportunity for promotion. It was also necessary to prepare expert events in cooperation with other departments, as the organization of these events is closely bound to the chairmanship.

Among the activities in 2007 were the National Opening Conference on the occasion of the Slovak CoE Committee of Ministers Chairmanship on 20 November 2007 in Bratislava and the International Conference on Crimes committed by children and against children: 'Children and Antisocial Action', held in Bratislava on 29 November 2007.

moving on

A series of events is planned for the upcoming period of the chairmanship in 2008. We include a few illustrative examples:

- 'European Conference on the Education and Training of Romany Children and Youth';
- the seminar 'Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society: Promoters of Democracy and Active Citizenship';
- the seminar 'On the role of Government Agents in Hearings before the European Court of Human Rights in Ensuring Effective Human Rights Protection';
- the expert seminar 'The Use of International Instruments for Protection of Individual Rights, Freedoms and Legitimate Interests through National Legislation and the Right to Legal Defense in Belarus: Challenges and Outlook' organized in cooperation with the Constitutional Court of Belarus, the MFA of Belarus, the Venice Commission of the European Parliament



The SR had presided over the Committee of Ministers since November 2007

events linked to Slovakia's chairmanship in the CoE

- meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe organized by the National Council of the SR;
- 8th Conference of European Health Ministers 'People on the Move' under the auspices of the Ministry of Health of the SR;
- conference on crimes committed by children and against children 'Children and Antisocial Action' organized by the Office of the Ombudsman of the SR.

The major events of Slovakia's chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe which took place in Bratislava in November 2007 were initiated and organized by the MFA SR in cooperation with its ministerial counterparts. During the preparation phase the MFA SR provided expert assistance and ensured the presence of high officials of the CoE in the SR. The Minister of Foreign Affairs or the State Secretary attended all of these events. ■

and with the active contributions of the Slovak chairmanship.

Due to the non-permanent membership of the SR in the UN Security Council in 2006-2007, Slovakia expressed interest in active participation in the policy-making process in the field of human rights which would thus carry greater responsibility for stability, peace and security in the world. Bearing this fact in mind the Slovak Republic submitted its candidacy for membership in the UN Human Rights Council as the new body focused on increasing the efficiency of human rights protection in the world. Its candidacy was successful and the Slovak Republic was elected to be a member of the UN Human Rights Council in the period of 2008-2011 on 21 May 2008. ■

More at:
www.coe.int (CoE)
www.radaeuropey.sk (CoE)



OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría at a presentation about the SR on the grounds of MFA

2

a successful and prosperous Slovakia



Activities focused on the effective support of Slovakia's economic interests abroad are becoming an ever more important dimension of the MFA's work. Despite the room left for the improvement of cooperation between the involved bodies of the state administration the foreign ministry's priority effort rests in the creation of convenient conditions for the activities of Slovak economic entities abroad.

Tasks connected to the admission of the SR to the Eurozone were the top priority of the evaluated period. The economic diplomacy of the MFA was thus mainly defined by the intensive communication with EU bodies and institutions as well as in bilateral relations with EU member countries on our fulfilment of the criteria for the adoption of the common European currency.

Efforts to promote our interests in the EU environment, especially by intervening in the legislative processes which influence the business environment of the SR or by informing about the possibilities of benefiting from various forms of business activities support and so on were an every day part of the MFA's work. The scope of activities can be demonstrated for example on the coordination of Slovakia's positions for the negotiations of the various EU Council formations or the initiative approach to the issue of the so-called ownership unbundling presented by the European Commission in its third liberalization package.

In the multilateral dimension our economic diplomacy is supplemented by activities in the Doha negotiations on development issues and its individual parts (AGRI, NAMA) and at the same time by the significant change in the approach to the

coordination of individual department activities in our OECD membership.

Despite the dominant position of our EU membership in the context of the MFA economic diplomacy we cannot neglect activities in bilateral relations. These are mainly realized by the trade departments of Slovakia's diplomatic missions. However trade departments do not exist in many countries so diplomatic missions had an opportunity to show their practical skills in effectively contributing to efforts focused on the return of Slovak business entities to traditional markets, especially in the regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America or on the implementation of new projects with economic impact on the SR.

The mosaic of economic activities carried out by the MFA is aptly supplemented by activities in regional and cross-border cooperation aimed at the elimination of social-economic disparities. The financial assistance of the Kingdom of Norway and the Swiss Confederation designated to the rapid overcoming of disparities in the socio-economic development of the SR played an important role in this regard.

The aforementioned aspects of the MFA's work require the optimal setting of its internal structures and mechanisms. This leads to the intention of increasing the attention dedicated to economic diplomacy on the part of the MFA by creating an individual economically oriented section and also focusing a large part of MFA activities in this direction. Permanent communication with our basic partners – particularly the business environment – is a part of the series of measures. ■

The Visegrad cooperation represents the most important form of regional cooperation in Central Europe for the Slovak Republic. Since the signing of the *Visegrad Declaration* in February 1991, by the Presidents of Czechoslovakia V. Havel and Poland L. Walesa as well as the Prime Minister of Hungary J. Antall, the Visegrad cooperation has undergone a number of significant changes. After the dissolution of the CSFR in 1993 the V3 was transformed into V4.

The accession of V4 countries to the EU and NATO in the year 2004 forced its members to re-define the priorities of cooperation once again. The current V4 also focuses its activities outside the Visegrad area, it concentrates on third countries and groups – the B3, Eastern European countries and so on. The V4 also holds the potential to operate as an efficient platform for consultations and the coordination of adopted steps in the future.



The V4 prime ministers on a meeting at the Bratislava Castle

goals achieved

In 2007 Visegrad cooperation once again belonged to the top priorities of the foreign policy of the SR. From 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 this was intensified by the fact that Slovakia presided over the Visegrad Four. The main objectives of Slovakia's Presidency were achieved for the greater part: the V4 was reinforced as a dynamic regional forum within the EU; the coordination and consultation mechanism of the V4 cooperation was strengthened, with the aim of establishing common positions and standpoints concerning issues of mutual interest; dialogue and cooperation with third countries were intensified; the general level of public awareness concerning the V4 was improved.

concrete results

Significant outputs of the V4 in the first six months of 2007 (during the second half of Slovakia's V4 Presidency):

- At the closing June summit – during the Slovak presidency, the V4 Heads of Government agreed on the rejection of Austria's and partly Germany's efforts to sustain border checks after 1 January 2008 and thus delay the accession of the new member countries into the Schengen Area.
- A Joint Political Statement of the V4 countries on the Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), with the objective of supporting the goal of the following German EU Presidency to deepen cooperation with the Eastern neighbours of the EU, was submitted to the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting in Brussels in January.
- A discussion on a V4 document referring to the European Neighbourhood Policy was held at the informal meeting of the foreign ministers of EU countries in Bremen in March. The German EU Presidency acknowledged the V4 proposal and deemed that the ENP agenda had made significant progress.
- In May the V4 countries reached a consensus on the joint response to Minsk's proposal on the cooperation of V4 and Belarus in the field of ENP. In June, Slovakia as the presiding country, submitted the joint response to the representative of the Belarus diplomatic mission in Slovakia. The key message to the Belarus gov-

the significant contributions of Slovakia's V4 presidency were constituted by:

- the intensification of meetings on the political level, especially on the platform of foreign ministers, making use of the European forums;
- establishment of a stable form of cooperation with the Baltic countries;
- development of the periodical political, cultural and economical dialogue of the V4 with Japan;
- elevation of prior contributions of the V4 to European politics from statements to a higher form – direct contributions of the V4 to the political discussion of the EU on essential European issues;
- specific activities of the V4 focused on the strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy, accession of the V4 countries to the Schengen Area to the original date and the abolition of visas with the USA. ■



The June talks in Bratislava were held in the V4 + Portugal format

ernment is that the V4 countries are prepared to cooperate under the circumstance that Belarus undergoes democratization.

- The joint position on the distribution of the Governance Facility and Neighbourhood Investment Facility Funds in the ENP framework, was presented at the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Council meeting in Brussels in April, by the Slovak representative on behalf of the presiding state of the V4.

Neither during Slovakia's V4 presidency, nor throughout the year 2007 was the V4 able to make progress in the coordination of the selection process for candidacies of institutions seats or individual posts within the institutions. In 2008 cooperation in this issue will be a test of the foreign-policy cooperation of the V4.

meetings

Several meetings were held in 2007 – from the highest political level to the technical level, discussing issues of mutual interest to the V4 countries. A number of these meetings were held in the 'V4+' format and focused on the mutual interests of the V4 member countries and the particular partner country or group. The presidents of the V4 met in Keszthely in September. The Heads of Government met in the format of V4+ Portugal in Bratislava (June), V4 + Slovenia in Ostrava (December) and in the format of V4 + B3 (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) in Brussels at the European Council (December). The Foreign Ministers met in the format of V4 + Japan in Hamburg at the ASEM Summit

the international Visegrad fund

The objective of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF), established in 2000, is to seek better cooperation and strengthen mutual bonds among the V4 countries. This is being achieved through the financing of cultural, scientific and educational forms of cross-border cooperation.

Since the beginning of 2007 the IVF budget has been increased to five million Euro. In the academic year 2007/2008 the IVF provided 171 scholarships (57 intra-Visegrad, 33 in-coming, 8 out-going and 73 scholarships for Ukrainian students and researchers) at the total sum of 1,120,500 Euro. The number of provided scholarships has increased 2,5-fold in comparison to the year 2006. The Visegrad scholarship subprogram for Ukraine has met with exceptional interest on the part of the Ukrainian public and government. The IVF, with 73 allocated scholarships, has become one of the largest providers of scholarships in Ukraine. The Fund also registered an increase in the number of organizations applying for a small, standard or strategic IVF grant from 866 applications in 2006 to 966 applications in 2007. In 2007 the IVF distributed 2,855,667 Euro to 155 small, 248 standard and 3 strategic grants. 19 artists from the V4 countries participated in the Visegrad Artist Residency Programme in 2007. ■

(May), in the format of V4 + B3 in Luxembourg at the GAERC Summit (June) and the format of V4 + Moldavia in Štířín (October). Among other department ministers, the V4 culture ministers met in Budapest (January) and Bratislava (September), the justice ministers in Hévíz (March), education ministers in Warsaw (March), defense ministers in Bratislava (April), transport ministers in the High Tatras (April) and the agriculture ministers met in Palárikovo (May). ■

More at:
www.visegradgroup.eu (V4)
www.visegradfund.org (IVF)

Good relations with neighbouring countries remain a natural long-term element of Slovak foreign policy priorities. This priority is given by our position in the respective geopolitical environment, by historical, economic and cultural bonds from the past and present as well as the need of strengthening these bonds in the future. In 2007 this cooperation was enhanced for us by our presidency in the V4 and the joint accession of all Visegrad countries to the Schengen Area.

czech republic

In 2007 the bilateral relations with the Czech Republic (CR) continued to be characterized by a dynamic and positive atmosphere. The president of the CR Václav Klaus visited Slovakia on 11-14 January 2007. With his Slovak counterpart Ivan Gašparovič, he discussed the internal political situation of both countries, the positions on the draft of the EU constitutional treaty and the situation in Kosovo.

Intensive contacts were also developed on the level of Prime Ministers. In February 2007 Robert Fico returned from a business trip to Prague, where he presented the economic policy of the Government of the SR in the auspices of the Prague Business Club. In November the Slovak Prime Minister once again negotiated with his Czech counterpart Miroslav Topolánek in Brno. They informed one another on their positions to the installation of the USA anti-missile radar in the CR. Contacts on the level of political parties continued to evolve alongside intergovernmental cooperation.

The joint candidacy for the seat of the new European institution – The European Nuclear Energy Forum is a demonstration of the exceptional level of long-term preferential relations with our most important neighbour. The candidacy was successful and the first historic European nuclear forum was organized together with the presence of the

Prime Ministers of both countries in November 2007 in Bratislava. By storing Slovakia's emergency oil and oil product reserves on its territory, according to the bilateral agreement from February 2007, the CR helped us fulfil an important condition posed by European legislation.

Intensive cooperation in the economic area continued throughout 2007 and supported the growth of mutual trade. The CR is the second largest trade partner of the SR. In 2007 imports from the CR grew by 5.5% compared to the previous year and reached the amount of 165,313 mil. SKK. Export from Slovakia to the CR also experienced growth when it increased by 4.7% to 176,621 mil. SKK. Foreign trade with the CR in 2007 thus showed an active trade balance of 11,308 mil. SKK.

poland

Slovak-Polish relations maintained a traditionally high standard throughout 2007. They were based on the mutual interest in the realization of good neighbourhood relations and cooperation on the grounds of natural bonds between citizens, regions and business entities. Our relations are not burdened by historical residues so our full political, economic, cultural and civil capacities can focus on benefiting from good neighbourly relations adequately to the demands and possibilities of the 21st century.

The visit of the Speaker of the NC SR Pavol Paška to Warsaw on 25 January 2007 can be considered constructive and pragmatic in the light of the fact that it was held in the atmosphere of the suspension of oil transport through the oil pipeline Družba which concerned Poland as well as Slovakia. During talks with the Polish Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński P. Paška supported the idea of the diversification of oil routes.



Juraj Migaš,
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of the
SR to Hungary

bright sides are overshadowed by incidents

▪ **What are the particularities of a Slovak Ambassador's job in Hungary in comparison with missions to our other neighbours?**

Slovak-Hungarian relations have a very sensitive character especially in issues connected to history and to minority issues. These often influence the diplomatic relations between our countries, as if they dictated their pace and content. There is a certain set regularity of bringing up the so-called unresolved or sometimes artificially construed issues. This is mul-

tiplied by the fairly intensive attention of the media which prohibits the perception of the true dynamic evolution of bilateral relations in other areas. A partially distorted image of Slovak-Hungarian relations has been established, where minor 'incidents' overshadow the aforementioned dynamic of our relations.

▪ **Which moments do you consider to be positive?**

On 18 June 2007, in Bratislava, the Prime Ministers of the SR and Hungary signed a document containing 14 specific projects focused on the future. Their implementation is being actively worked on. I consider this document to be an exceptionally significant step in the fulfilment of the spirit and words of the *Slovak-Hungar-*

During the visit of the Polish Prime Minister J. Kaczyński to Slovakia on 11 May 2007 the high quality and problem free nature of bilateral neighbourly relations were stated as standard. Both governments differed on the issue of the voting system after the potential adoption of the *EU Constitution* and the installation of USA military bases in Central Europe.

Bilateral cooperation evolved intensively in the field of the preparation of both states for entry into the Schengen system, which was accompanied, for example, by the implementation of joint border patrols on Slovak-Polish borders.

The expert dialogue in energy and renewable energy resources utilization emphasized the strengthening of energy security. Both countries share an interest in the development of nuclear energy while Poland considers Slovakia to be the leader in this field. The formulation of the EU Eastern Policy has been a significant area of cooperation in the European agenda.

Both sides fully supported the commenced projects in transport infrastructure – the road connection Žilina – Skalité – Zwardoň, the construction of the bridge over the Poprad River on the border crossing Mníšek – Piwniczna and the construction of the road connection Via Baltica through Rzeszow and Košice.

Mutual trade also experienced dynamic growth and in 2007 Poland became the fourth most important trade partner of the Slovak Republic. We have a long-term active trade balance with Poland. In 2007 total foreign trade turnover between Slovakia and Poland reached the amount of 149.4 billion SKK. Slovak export to Poland represented 88.3 billion SKK and import reached 61.1 billion SKK. Tourism is an important economic sector in both countries while Polish tourists are the second most significant group to visit Slovakia.



On one of Central Europe's meetings

hungary

The relations with the Republic of Hungary continued to evolve throughout the year 2007 in full compliance with the *Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Co-operation* signed in 1995 in Paris. The dynamics of the development of Slovak-Hungarian relations can be considered positive in many areas. Despite the complexity of bilateral relations the political dialogue has intensified.

In the first half of 2007 multiple signs appeared indicating the rapprochement of mutual positions. This included for example the visit of the Speaker of the NC SR, Pavol Paška, to Budapest in February, where he negotiated the realization of particular cross-border projects. The June meeting of the Prime Ministers after five years in Bratislava which adopted the programme *Common Past, Common Future in the Mirror of Common Projects* concerned with various fields of cooperation was a very important pragmatic step. Among the projects are agreements on the maintenance and

ian Basic Treaty. For example, the work of historians which could one day lead to a common history textbook has been started in accordance with this document. The agreements on the construction of two bridges over the Ipeľ River have been signed during the meeting of the foreign ministers of the SR and Hungary in November 2007 in Štúrovo. It is necessary to commend the cooperation of the interior ministries in relation to the admission of our countries to the Schengen system or the defence ministries in the context of the deployment of our armed forces to Afghanistan.

▪ **Where do you see the intersection of our common interests in the EU?**

Both the SR and Hungary are among the new member states and belong to the group of small or medium-sized countries. We have the same opinions about the *Lisbon Treaty* as well as the future institutional development of the EU including its enlargement. Our common positions are being promoted on the implementation of the ENP, on the approach to the future development of the Common Agricultural Policy, on the revision of the EU budget financing and on the preservation of the cohesion policy or the need for the effective utilization of European resources. I would like to underline the significance of cross-border cooperation programmes which are also indicators of the quality of bilateral relations. ■

modernization of transport infrastructure near the borders, the construction of two bridges over the border river Ipeľ and the speeding up of the motorway construction between Košice and Miskolc.

The VII. meeting of the *Joint Slovak-Hungarian Committee on Minority Issues*, which stated that the provision of support is in full compliance with the agreement on mutual support of national mi-



Hungary's foreign policy chief on an official visit to Slovakia in November

norities in education and culture, was held in September in Budapest.

The positive development in bilateral relations was disrupted in the latter half of 2007 by aspects of an internal political character: An intention appeared to propose the moral and financial compensation for the Beneš Decrees victims in the NC SR wherein both the Slovak and Hungarian parliaments would apologize for past injustices in the common history of both nations. In September the NC SR adopted an act on the inviolability of the Beneš Decrees. The escalation of tensions was supported by the following reactions of Hungarian political representatives to the passing of the NC SR act as well as by the utilization of the private trips of Hungarian politicians to Slovakia for political ends.

The excessive political and media attention devoted to other issues, such as the case of Hedviga Malinová or the alleged violation of minority rights

in the SR and their internationalization efforts not only made a negative reflection on mutual relations, but also served as stimulation for various extremist parties and movements. In the autumn months of 2007 tension in mutual relations was stirred by the activities of the extremist organization Hungarian Guard whose establishment was condemned by our diplomacy.

Mutual relations were calmed by the common negotiation of the both foreign ministers in November 2007. The continuity of the apolitical negotiation on the verdict of the International Court of Justice in the Hague over the Gabčíkovo – Nagymaros Waterworks is a positive aspect of Slovak-Hungarian relations although it has not brought any significant progress. The positions of Slovakia and Hungary were virtually identical in a broad spectrum of individual European issues.

austria

Mutual bilateral relations and cooperation between Slovakia and Austria maintain a high standard. Regional cooperation is a specific area since it is very intensive. The official visit of the Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer to the SR shortly after he assumed office in February 2007, which was one of his first visits in office altogether, was a reflection on our very good mutual relations. The Prime Minister of the SR repaid the official visit to Austria in May 2007.

The only issue perceived from different angles on both sides is the issue of nuclear energy utilization. Despite the argumentation on the Slovak side and the several-year effort of the Slovak nuclear energy representatives, signs of only minor changes in Vienna's rigid position have been achieved.

The improvement of road infrastructure deserves special attention on the practical level of bilateral relations. The A6 motorway connection between Vienna and Bratislava has been completed in November 2007 although the situation needs further improvement in the area of the connection over the border river Morava. The cooperation of the Vienna and Bratislava airports is also being strengthened. Significant quality improvements have been achieved in personal railroad transport between Vienna and Bratislava. The railway between the capital cities has become a part of the European project TEN-T 17 – the high-speed railroad connection between Paris and Bratislava.

Good cooperation between the SR and Austria is also visible in the EU, mainly in the Austrian support for Slovakia's efforts to enter the Eurozone. The issue of job market liberalization which is being closely observed by the SR in the EU is still a sensitive area. ■

ukraine

We were able to maintain the intensity of Slovak-Ukrainian bilateral relations throughout the year 2007. The improvement of the dialogue in cross-border cooperation, economy and civil society institutions contact was crucial. Despite the negative trade balance of the SR with Ukraine the dynamic growth of our mutual trade is a positive fact. However there are still many unexplored possibilities. Tourism from Ukraine to Slovakia continued to grow throughout 2007. The Slovak embassy in Kiev fulfilled the role of the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Ukraine in 2007. ■

Access to energy in the form of light, heat or fuel is a right of the citizens which must be guaranteed by the state. This gives energy security great political significance in the internal and foreign policy of the state. The energy security of a country is not the exclusive agenda of one department or institution. National security is indivisible, and it is the duty of the MFA to comment on it and assist in its protection in accordance with the current *National Security Strategy of the SR*.

operability

Even though the energy security of the SR is not imminently threatened, we cannot underestimate its external risks. External economical and security threats are currently much more realistic than traditional military threats. Global energy consumption is increasing faster than predicted, investments have been neglected in the past years and new capacities are not being built fast enough to match consumption demands, the price of oil is rapidly increasing and regional instability in multiple regions of significant production is not decreasing.

The issue of climate-energy security is the focus of almost every major event and therefore it cannot be avoided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The MFA SR decision from August 2007 establishing the Standing Work Group on External Energy Security created the basic organizational step to the systematic processing of this issue. Its main role is to analyze foreign policy relations in the procurement of energy resources for the SR in the European and global context, consequences of climate changes and potentially propose particular steps and measures to the management of the MFA or the Government of the SR. A series of consultations attended by the members of this

working group at home and abroad has confirmed the right timing of this step.

flexibility

The Standing Work Group has been established as a flexible structure utilizing the existing capacities of the MFA SR and its sections while other representatives of the Ministry of Economy of the SR and other parts of the state administration were also invited for cooperation. The group was concerned with the key issues of the energy security situation of the SR in relation to the external environment and the evaluation of the Russian energy strategy till 2020. The active participation of Slovak diplomatic missions which contributed mainly by their well-elaborated materials on the energy policy of the countries of their operation is a part of the preparation of both documents. Special attention was devoted to the formulation of Slovakia's positions which were presented by the leading political representatives of the SR on numerous multilateral forums on energy issues.

With hindsight we can state that the establishment of this analytical unit effectively contributed to the stimulation of a creative debate within the MFA itself, to the active formulation of ideas and positions on individual particular questions of the energy agenda in broader expert circles, and to the establishment of a number of interesting links and contacts, which will be very useful in the formulation and implementation of the energy policy goals of the SR. The successful conference of the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association *The Common EU Energy Policy and the Energy Security of Slovakia* in which the MFA actively participated and assisted in organizing, is one of the particular demonstrations of such an approach. ■

we need the EU, but it also needs us

■ What is the position and the role of Slovakia in European and global energy security?

In the situation where we are almost completely dependent on the import of natural gas, oil and nuclear fuel, any progress in the diversification of sources and the routes of pipelines or the perfection of the regional infrastructure connections can increase our own as well as regional energy security. The transit role of Slovakia for Europe is underlined by the fact that more than one sixth of the natural gas consumed in the EU countries and approximately one tenth of all Russian oil sent to Western Europe is flowing through Slovakia. Slovakia's membership in the EU allows us to

participate in the formulation of the European external energy security policy.

■ Russia is the main energy partner of the EU. How should our relations with Moscow evolve in light of this fact?

The Slovak-Russian bilateral energy dialogue is essentially identical with the energy dialogue between the EU and Russia. Despite multiple open issues, the Union still considers Russia to be the key strategic partner in energy and has no intention of isolating it because the energy dependency of Europe upon Russian energy resources will only increase in the decades to come. It is in the interest of the SR and its neighbours to foster the current energy partnership alongside the natural diversification efforts and continue in the correct permanent dialogue with Russian partners. ■



Ján Šoň,
Director of the Analyses
and Policy Planning
Department of the MFA
SR, Head of the Standing
Work Group on External
Energy Security of the
MFA SR

Official development assistance is an integral part of Slovak foreign policy and its significance is increasing every year. The crucial impulses for the development activities of the SR were most of all the international commitments resulting from the participation in the development policies of the EU and the UN. Slovakia, as a new EU member country, accepted the commitment to strive to increase the volume of allocated financial resources to 0.17% of its gross national income (GNI) by the year 2010 and 0.33% GNI by the year 2015.

a new institutional framework

The total volume of financial resources allocated to the official development assistance of the SR (SlovakAid) in the year 2007 amounted to 1.670 bil. SKK with a 0.093% ODA/GNI ratio. The practical outcome of activities hitherto is the support, mainly in the multilateral field, in the form of financial contributions to international organizations, which dominated in the previous period in terms of volume.

In the bilateral field it is necessary to mention the realization of development projects implemented through Slovak entities financed from the financial resources of SlovakAid. From the establishment of the mechanism in the year 2004 to the end of the year 2007 – 172 projects were launched and 129 were completed, amounting to a total of 700 billion SKK. Every year the greatest volume of financial resources is assigned to the program countries – Serbia and Montenegro.

The MFA SR implemented a fundamental change in the mechanisms of official development assistance on 1 January 2007 by establishing the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation. The Agency has been gradually built up to the level of an independent organizational unit capable of ensuring the administrative management of official development assistance.

The formulation of the law no. 617/2007 Z.z. on official development assistance marked an important step in the legislative field. It was passed by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in



We run development projects also in Lebanon

December 2007 and entered into force on 1 February 2008.

both an individual and a team player

In the year 2007 the SR participated in a broad spectrum of activities related to development assistance within the EU: meetings of the EU Council work groups, committees of the European Commission and general directors for development assistance, meetings of development ministers or the European Development Days.

The SR actively contributed to the formulation of the adopted documents – the *Financial Regulation to the 10th European Development Fund*, the perspective of the EU development policy in light of the new *Common Strategy* and the *EU-Africa Action Plan*, the *Conclusions of the Council on Security and Development*, the *Conclusions of the Council on Policy Coherence for Development* – as well as to the promotion of development assistance of the SR by the presentation of SlovakAid during the European Development Days in November 2007 in Lisbon.

In 2007 resources worth 5 mil. SKK were allocated from SlovakAid particularly to the co-financing of development projects of Slovak entities approved through the grant rounds of the European Commission. Despite a demanding competitive environment four Slovak NGOs were successful in the EC grant rounds and their projects were co-financed from the budget of SlovakAid by the total amount of 1.4 mil. SKK.

The volume of resources dedicated from the state budget to the MFA SR for the provision of bilateral development assistance has been stagnating in the recent period. In the period of 2003-2006, 160 mil. SKK was allocated yearly, in 2007



Mongolia is one of the target countries of Slovakia's development aid

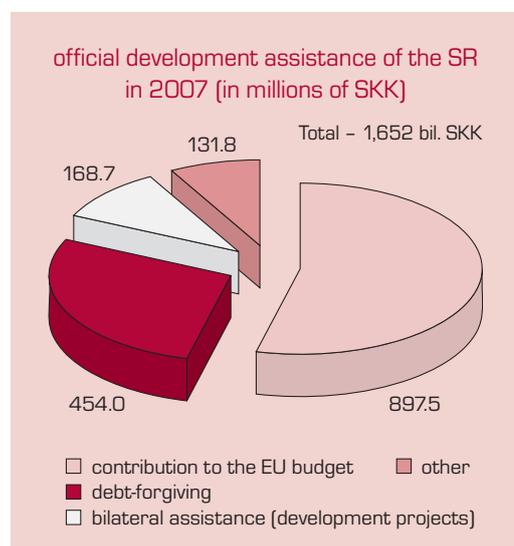
the volume of financial resources increased to 168.744 mil. SKK and in 2008 it decreased again to 165.976 mil. SKK. In the year 2007 SlovakAid therefore continued to search for new forms of cooperation with traditional donors in order to implement a greater number of development projects from other than the budgetary resources of the SR. The direct cooperation on tripartite projects with the EC and donor countries (Canada, Austria) proved itself in previous development activities. Multiple European countries – mainly France, the Netherlands, Ireland, Luxembourg and Norway – have expressed their interest in this form of cooperation in the recent past

The Memorandum of Understanding between the MFA SR and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) which establishes the potential for trilateral cooperation in the period of 2006-2008 is currently the most significant demonstration of international development cooperation. Three development projects are currently being co-financed from the financial resources provided by ADA in the amount of 1.5 million EUR (in Serbia and Kenya).

humanitarian aid

In 2007, for the first time in the history of Slovakia, an individual fund for the provision of urgent humanitarian aid has been established within the budget of the MFA SR. Financial resources worth 10 million SKK were allocated for this purpose. In the year 2007 the Slovak Republic provided humanitarian aid to the population of four countries affected by disasters in the total volume of 19.5 million SKK. Our humanitarian aid flowed to Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Peru. ■

More at:
www.slovakaid.sk (ODA SR)





the interests of the Slovak Republic in an effective European Union

3.

Slovakia's accession to the European Union on 1 May 2004 has had a significant impact on our country and after four years of our membership we can state that it brought a strong and positive impulse for Slovak domestic and foreign policies. The priority during the accession process – EU membership as the fixation of Slovakia in a democratic, secure and prospering environment – is being completed and still resonates in the years immediately following the accession in the form of two main objectives:

- ▣ the entry into the Schengen Area, which will ensure the free movement of our citizens throughout the entire Union by abolishing border checks on internal borders, and
- ▣ the entry into the Eurozone, which will create a stable and secure currency environment in Slovakia and lower transaction expenses for economic activities within the international environment.

The first objective has been achieved in 2007 and the second is being successfully fulfilled with the intention of finalizing the efforts in 2009. The reform of the institutional structure of the EU is the next priority agenda for the European dimension of the Slovak foreign policy. It should result in the democratization, increase in efficiency and the approximation of European institutions to the citizen. The perception of the Union as an area of values such as solidarity, freedom, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights including the rights of minorities and human dignity will be the dominant content of the fulfilment of our priorities in relation to the EU.

The EU strives to enlarge this area also through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Slovakia actively participates on its formation and implementation. On European forums Slovakia, as the presiding country of the Visegrad Group, at first presented the *Joint Political Statement of the V4 Countries on the Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy* in January 2007 and then presented a common document of the V4 including particular concepts of the V4 countries on the realization of the reinforced ENP in March 2007. In the second half of the year 2007 the Slovak embassy in Minsk officially represented the interests of the EU in Belarus through the prestigious function of the local presidency of the EU in a third country.

The position of the SR in the decision-making processes is also determined by our personal representation in the Union and in the year 2007 the number of Slovak citizens working in EU institutions continued to increase. The European Nuclear Energy Forum became the first EU institution to reside in the SR.

Slovakia is perceived as an example of a dynamically developing new state also thanks to its membership in the EU. Today no European state can fulfil its interests in the international arena alone. Especially due to the nature of the EU in its enlarged form – the inevitability of compromises acceptable for all 27 member states – the SR, as a member of the EU, can provide its citizens with freedom and security and the fulfilment of its interests more efficiently than ever before. ■

After the rejection of the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* in the French and Dutch referendums in 2005, the EU leaders agreed on another intergovernmental conference which would formulate the text of a new reform treaty. The *Treaty of Lisbon* is the result of the negotiations of member states during the intergovernmental conference taking place from 23 July 2007 to 18 October 2007. It was signed at a ceremony in Lisbon on 13 December 2007.

The *Treaty of Lisbon* changes and amends the founding treaties – the *Treaty on the European Union* (*Maastricht Treaty*, in force from 1993) and the *Treaty Establishing the European Community* (*Treaty of Rome*, in force from 1958). From the formal point of view the treaty does not replace the currently existing treaties – they remain valid.



Robert Fico and Ján Kubiš signed the Lisbon Treaty in December in Lisbon

a new and better EU

The *Treaty of Lisbon* has taken a package of institutional changes from the content of the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*. They should result in a more effective, democratic and transparent operation of the EU in comparison with the currently valid state, according to the *Treaty of Nice* (from 2001). The greatest benefits of the *Treaty of Lisbon* include the following:

- the EU will obtain a single legal personality;
- the three-pillar structure will be abolished while the CFSP will maintain a specific position;
- the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights will gain legally binding force;
- the European Council and the European Central Bank will become official institutions of the EU;
- the European Council will have a permanent president elected for a two-and-a-half-year term, who will represent the EU and preside over the meetings of the European Council;
- the number of commissioners of the European Commission will be decreased from 27 to two thirds of the number of member countries from the year 2014 (including the Commission Presi-

dent and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy);

- the President of the European Commission will be elected by the European Parliament for a 5-year term;
- the position of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will be established, the new High Representative will also become the Vice-President of the Commission and will preside over the regular negotiations of the foreign ministers;
- the European Parliament will gain power over more legislative areas and the number of its members will be decreased from the current 785 to 751 (including the President);
- an 'exit clause' will be added, which will properly constitute the process of the withdrawal of a member country from the EU;
- the division of competences between the EU and the member states will be more transparent.

The goal is to see the treaty enter into force at the latest before the elections to the European Parliament in June 2009 or as soon as on 1 January 2009. If this should not occur, it will enter into force on the first day of the following month after the ratification by the last signatory state.

our success, as well

The adoption of the *Treaty of Lisbon* and its submission to the ratification is also an achievement of the Slovak foreign service. The SR played an active role in the preparation of the intergovernmental conference as well as in its course. During negotiations with our partners on a bilateral and multilateral level in the V4 as well as outside it we expressed our interest to terminate the intergovernmental conference in time and submit the *Treaty of Lisbon* to its signing and ratification in the year 2007, without the need to open the package of institutional reforms taken from the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*, which has been passed by a large majority in the National Council of the SR. The SR promoted constructive negotiations on all levels of the intergovernmental conference so that the EU could shift its focus to more visible and sensitive problems of our citizens, unlike the prolonging of the discussion on institutional reform.

Slovakia is a relatively small EU member state that can effectively fulfil its interests mainly through searching for partners and allies among the other member countries. In this regard the *Treaty of Lisbon* offers us new opportunities and instruments among which is for example the right of national parliaments to directly inspect the coherence of the legislative proposals of the European Commission with the respect for the principle of subsidiarity. ■

More at:
www.mzv.sk (MFA SR)
europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_sk.htm (EU)
consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=1296&lang=sk (EU Council)

The Schengen Area was established by the *Schengen Agreement* in 1985 with the objective of facilitating the movement of persons, capital and services across Europe by abolishing systematic border checks. 24 states participated in the Agreement by the end of 2007. The removal of internal border checks logically had to be linked with the tightening of external border checks in the attempt to prevent undesired persons from entering the common area. The free movement without border checks throughout the zone is ensured for the citizens of EU member states and the 'Schengen' as well as foreigners who fulfil the given conditions for their entry and stay. Slovakia successfully concluded its aspirations for the Schengen area membership in December 2007 (abolishment of checks on road communications) and in March 2008 (abolishment of checks on airports).

what preceded it?

Before entry into the Schengen Area, the Slovak Republic was requested to fulfil demanding Schengen criteria involving the security of the land border, airports, protection of personal information, police cooperation, the agenda of visas and the preparedness for the inclusion into the Schengen Information System as well as other systems for the exchange of information. The preparation process was composed of several parallel dimensions. Among the most important were the legislative modifications, building and reconstruction operations, the construction of a national visa information system and the specialized training of personnel.

During the building and reconstruction process, the MFA SR evaluated, and where necessary, proceeded to the building or reconstruction of the consular departments of individual diplomatic missions. For the premises to fulfil the security criteria in accordance with the best practice for the field of visas (for example the installation of security cameras), the MFA SR invested 3,713,377 SKK into 12 diplomatic missions in 2006 and 4,615,053 SKK into 14 diplomatic missions or general consulates in 2007. The investments were mainly into construction works on internal and external premises.

Throughout 2007 the construction of the National Visa Information System (N-VIS) and its phased installation into all consular departments of Slovak diplomatic missions continued gradually. The N-VIS significantly changed the process of issuing visas: it introduced better protection of data including the protection of the personal information of visa applicants and a multi-level access rights system. The modernization of the software and hardware



equipment of individual missions was a part of the introduction of the new program system.

The pre-delegation preparation of the employees charged with the administration of consular and visa agendas has also been modified by the MFA SR to comply with the entry into the Schengen Area. Today it is constituted by a three-week intensive training focused primarily on the practical use of the N-VIS program and the detection of counterfeit or retouched travel documents.

schengen implies that...

Two basic groups of people primarily benefit from our membership in the Schengen. The first being the citizens of the SR and other countries of the Schengen who are entitled to free movement inside the zone without systematic checks at the 'internal' borders. The second group consists of the citizens of third countries who may also move freely throughout the entire Schengen Area if they have a Schengen visa or another similar document (for example a residence permit from one of the Schengen member countries). The entry and the consequent stay of a foreign national subject to visa requirement can be up to 90 days within 180 days in the entire Schengen Area. The stay of a visa-free foreign national can also be up to 90 days within 180 days. ■

- schengen member states
- EU states that did not abolish border checks
- states seeking entry into the Schengen later on
- countries without EU membership

More at:
www.minv.sk/?schengen-1 (MI SR)
ec.europa.eu/youreurope/nav/sk/citizens/living/schengen/index.html (EC)

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is one of the basic priorities of the EU's foreign policy. Its objective is the integration of ENP partner countries from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean into a shared common area of freedom, security and prosperity. As for Slovakia, ENP mainly represents an opportunity for the projection of neighbourhood synergy into the harmonization of social, political and economic systems of surrounding states with the EU. Slovakia naturally puts the emphasis on the development of relations with its Eastern European partners. The SR has made the greatest efforts towards relations with Ukraine, then Belarus, Moldova and Russia. In the context of Slovakia's membership in the EU the SR also continued in the dialogue with the South Caucasus countries. The SR actively engaged in the process of solving frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus on various forums (UN SC, EU and NATO) and continued in the active support of the formulation and implementation of the European policy towards the Central Asian countries.

the 'Slovak' eastern dimension

In 2007 the ENP gained momentum also due to the German EU presidency. The SR contributed to this positive development as well when it initiated activities for the strengthening of the ENP eastern dimension from the position of the presiding country of the V4. On behalf of the V4 the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the SR Ján Kubiš presented the *Joint Political Statement of the V4 countries on the Strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy* at the January 2007 session of the GAERC and then presented a common document of the V4 including particular concepts of the V4 countries on the realization of the reinforced ENP on the informal meeting of the EU foreign ministers in March 2007 in Bremen, Germany.

In this document the V4 emphasized the need to deepen bilateral cooperation and strengthen the regional approach simultaneously. Broad sector cooperation should be a significant factor along with the establishment of effective mechanisms for regular progress evaluation. The interest of the V4 countries is to create an institutional cooperation framework with an appointed special coordinator and the establishment of adequate work formats.

The V4 countries organized many negotiations and consultations on multiple levels and in different formats (V4 + B3, V4 + partner country, as well as V4 + SE + partner country) which resulted in the presentation of the document, *ENP and Eastern Neighbourhood - Time to Act*, during the Czech V4 presidency. The culmination of this process, initiated by the SR during its V4 presidency, was the presentation of Poland's and Sweden's proposal of the *Eastern Partnership* at the May session of the GAERC in 2008. The proposal was composed of all the thoughts and suggestions of the V4 countries which made long-term efforts for the implementation of strengthened EU cooperation with the eastern partners included in the ENP. In June 2008 the European Council approved its conclusions to the Eastern Partnership which meant the finalization of the first phase of the deepening of the EU's cooperation with this region.

In the context of the ENP agenda, Slovakia's priority relations are mainly with Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and in perspective also with Belarus, of whose inclusion into the ENP is conditioned by the respect for democratic values and the rule of law.

belarus

The SR actively implemented EU policy towards Belarus mainly through our embassy in Minsk which in the second half of 2007, as the first in the history of the Slovak diplomatic service from our ac-



Lubomír Reháč,
Head of the Diplomatic
Mission in Minsk

belarusians pick out the cherries from the cake

■ How did you receive the decision of the EU to entrust the local presidency in Belarus to Slovakia?

According to the procedure approved by the General Secretariat of the EU Council, if there is no diplomatic mission of the current or following president of the EU in the country, one of the present embassies takes its role. In the case of Portugal's presidency in the EU Council the role of substituting our Portuguese partners was taken over by Slovakia. It is positive that this occurred in a country which belongs to the foreign

policy priorities of the SR and in relation to which we have a good expert basis. I accepted the decision as a great challenge. It is not the only first Slovak experience with the local presidency but also a very responsible position in a country which is still regrettably exclusive within the European region. I initiated the preparation of the presidency immediately after I assumed my post in Minsk in May 2006. For an entire year from July 2006 I assisted the German local presidency which operated in the incomplete EU Troika. My knowledge of Portuguese and specialization on Portugal were advantages in the informal communication with the Portuguese presidency. Of course, the success of the presi-

cession to the EU, held the function of the EU local presidency in a third country.

The embassy presented the EU positions to Belarus institutions, coordinated the cooperation and contacts of the EU with Belarussian regions and cooperated with the democratic forces of the country and other segments of society. It also formulated and coordinated the preparation of basic documents and EU positions towards Belarus.

According to the evaluation of our partners, the SR is handling the local presidency in Belarus successfully. It proved its expert preparedness to partake in EU management functions and its ability to effectively represent the EU. It was confirmed that the SR is perceived as a relevant actor of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU with significant expertise and experience in relations with Belarus as well as the wider post-Soviet space.

moldova

The SR actively supported the fulfilment of the *EU/Moldova Action Plan for the years 2005 – 2007* through expert negotiations as well as Moldova's ambitions to reach a higher level of cooperation with the EU. Furthermore the SR promoted the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Moldova and the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Transnistria proposed by the government of Moldova at international forums (UN, OSCE, EU).

russia

The strategy of the development of relations between the SR and Russia takes into regard the national interests of the SR and its ambitions to contribute to the deepening of the broad-spectrum dialogue between the EU and Russia. A pragmatic dialogue based on correct and friendly relations is a crucial parameter of the relations with the RF; it has been implemented by the SR on a long-term

basis. The fundamental and long-term objective of the SR towards the RF is to secure our economic interests and to support and participate in the perspective energy partnership between the EU and the RF to the greatest possible extent, due to the fact that Slovakia plays an important role mainly in the area of the transit of energy carriers from Russia to Europe. The RF is also a strategic partner in the fight against new threats such as terrorism, environment pollution, international organized crime and illegal migration. In 2007 Slovakia actively supported the opening of negotiations on a new *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia*.

ukraine

In the ENP context Slovakia unambiguously supports the dialogue between Ukraine and the EU and the pro-European direction of Ukraine. One of the particular examples of Slovakia's support is the help of the SR in the implementation of the *Action plan EU – Ukraine*.

The plan of activities for 2007, focused on technical assistance in the modernization of the country and its state administration, has been signed during the visit of the Prime Minister of the SR R. Fico to Ukraine in February, 2007. The January 2007 session of the GAERC approved the mandate of the European Commission for negotiations on a new 'strengthened agreement' between the EU and Ukraine and also by Slovakia's efforts GAERC's conclusions include a text which among other things says that the EU recognizes Ukraine's European aspirations. ■



Ukraine's President Victor Yushchenko on an official visit to Slovakia in November

More at:
ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm (EC)

ency was achieved not only by the diplomatic mission in Minsk but also by the complementary activities and effective support of the Bratislava headquarters, the Permanent Representation of the SR to the EU in Brussels and other diplomatic missions of the SR abroad.

■ **What is the particular contribution of our presidency to the future relations between the EU and Belarus in the context of the ENP?**

It was during our presidency that the fundamental consent of the Belarus side was achieved on the opening of the EC Delegation in Minsk. The direct representation of the EC in Minsk creates adequate preconditions for the deeper involvement of Belarus in the ENP.

As a part of the EU Troika, we presented the material of the European Commission, *What the EU Can Bring to Belarus*, in Minsk and other municipalities. The material describes in a comprehensive manner what Belarus could gain from cooperation with the EU and what it has to do to achieve it. Sadly enough, so far the Belarussian leadership is approaching the ENP by the method of picking out the cherries from the cake. For example they would welcome the liberalization of the visa system, but on the other hand they are strongly opposed to and reluctant to address issues of democratization of the country and the respect for human and civil rights. ■

The established system of the coordination of European affairs on the national level has proven to be efficient and created all the necessary requirements for the successful and long-term representation of the SR on all levels of the EU decision-making processes. The MFA plays an important role in this system in interdepartmental coordination as well as in ensuring a coherent approach of all the central bodies of the state administration. Our priority areas of interest within the EU in the past year included the entry of the SR into the euro zone, the free movement of workers, migration, energy policy and climate change, EU budget revision and the Lisbon Strategy.

slovakia's entry into the Eurozone

The priority of the Government of the SR was to create the most favourable economic environment for the successful, transparent and sustainable fulfilment of the Maastricht Criteria (a prerequisite for the entry of the SR into the Eurozone on 1 January 2009). The EU Council determined the conversion rate at 30.1260 SKK/EUR.

In 2007 the MFA played a coordination role in the creation of preconditions for the successful integration of the SR into the Eurozone and ensured the communication with European institutions and

EU member countries. In August 2007 the MFA SR submitted the *Action Plan for Intensification of Consultations with EU Institutions and Selected EU Member Countries* to the session of the government with the goal of contributing to the adoption of the Euro by the SR according to the planned schedule. The *Action Plan* passed by the government included a proposal of the schedule of activities for the representa-

tives of the SR and proposed the establishment of a joint expert group of the MF SR and the NBS, which would formulate the argumentation to the most frequently asked questions of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and EU member countries on the preparedness of the SR to enter the euro zone. Based on the *Action plan* all consultations with European institutions were

intensified in the second half of 2007, from the highest political level to the expert level.

the free movement of labourforce

In 2007 the MFA increased diplomatic efforts in order to achieve the abolishment of the implementation of transitional measures on the part of all EU member states. Through the joint efforts with other countries we were able to achieve the abolishment of transitional measures on the free movement of workers in the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Austria still implement transitional measures with Slovak citizens.

migration

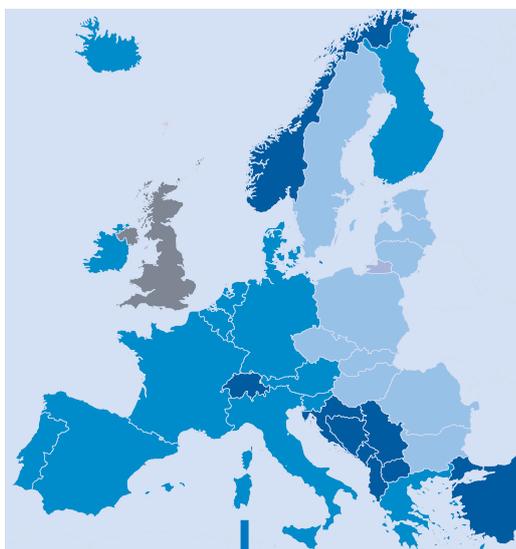
Due to its position, the MFA SR plays the role of a coordination body in the issue of migration. In accordance with the interests of the SR and in close cooperation with other involved institutions (MI SR, MLSAF SR) in 2007 the MFA successfully promoted the expansion of the so-called global approach to migration by the Eastern and South-eastern European regions adjacent to the EU. In practice this decision means that the attention of the EU has been shifted onto the regions which are crucial for us (Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova). The MFA also ensured the active participation of the SR on the two most significant events in the issue of migration in the past year – the first session of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (Brussels, July 2007) and the historic first meeting of the Ministerial conference EUROMED (the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) on migration (Algarve, November 2007). In cooperation with the Office of the International Organization for Migration the MFA held an international conference on migration and development with the participation of the Secretary General of the organization Brunson McKinley in April 2007.

the EU budget revision

The Ministry of Finance of the SR in cooperation with the MFA prepared the document *Draft of the Preliminary Standpoint of the Slovak Republic towards the Revision of the 2008/2009 EU Budget*, which was approved by the government of the SR on December 5, 2007. The goal of the document is to prepare the unification of Slovakia's positions within various formal and informal consultations and negotiations on this issue.

In the revision of the budget we will ensure that the budget best reflects the political priorities of the EU as well as the interests of the SR, reacts to common challenges and adequately respects the principles of subsidiarity, proportionality, solidarity and the added value of expenses for the entire EU. ■

eurozone



- EU member states that accepted Euro
- EU member states with a special status
- EU member states to which an exception applies
- states without EU membership

Increasing Slovakia's representation in EU institutions contributes to the strengthening of our position as the EU member state. This does not only concern the size of the representation, but also our access to real influence, prompt information and feedback which eventually contributes to the promotion of Slovakia's national interests in the EU.

The coordination of activities in personnel management in relation to EU institutions is mainly handled by the Government and the MFA. In cooperation with the Permanent Representation of the SR to the EU they coordinate the communication between individual departments and Brussels and organize various training activities for Slovak citizens preparing for work in European institutions.

a more of Slovak Brussels

The development in this area in 2007 can be considered successful. We strengthened our representation not only in the sense of absolute numbers but also more and more of our representatives are assuming the most interesting and the most significant positions of the middle and higher management of the European Commission (EC). The fact that as of July 2007 Slovakia has its first representative on the A15 level assumed by the Slovak Katarína Mathernová as Deputy Director-General of the DG REGIO (The Directorate General for Regional Policy) is one of our most significant achievements.

At the end of 2007 the total number of Slovak citizens working in EU institutions in various positions was approximately 600. 264 working in the EC, out of which 190 were working for the EC on a contract for an undefined period. Along with the other new EU member states Slovakia has the right of preferential position occupation within the European Commission during the 7-year transition period (till 2010). During this period Slovakia has the opportunity to assume 279 permanent positions. The trend of fulfilling this quota is positive for Slovakia. By the end of the year 2007 we achieved 68% of the 'minimal goal' while continuing in the very stable annual growth rate of approximately 56 people yearly. If this trend continues by 2010 we should not only achieve, but exceed the set goal.

slovaks in management

The absolute number of gained positions is not the only indicator. The level of representation, that is to say the structure of the representation in individual levels, is more important than just the number of Slovak citizens in the EC. Our long-term goal is to primarily strengthen our representation in the middle and higher management. These representatives significantly strengthen the credit of

their home country and at the DGs where Slovaks are in the highest positions there are also more Slovaks in lower-ranking positions. For example DG REGIO already has 16 Slovak employees.

Twelve posts for the EU12 were set as a goal on the higher management level (DDG – Deputy Director-General), that is one position per member country. So far 9 DDG positions have been occupied, however only by 6 member countries.

By the end of 2007 Slovakia has filled one from the three quota positions. Middle management (Head of Unit) goals were set to 189 posts, out of which 127 have already been filled. So far Slovakia has only occupied 6 positions of Heads of Units (HoU) while the quota is set to 15 positions.

fulfilment of the minimal goal of the permanent staff status (undefined period contracts) in the EC for the Slovak Republic

(december) year	total number	minimal goal by 2010	%
2004	21	279	7.53
2005	79	279	28.32
2006	126	279	45.16
2007	190	279	68.10

investment into the future

A long-term training and education strategy of Slovak candidates is the fundamental factor to the success of promoting them to all position levels in the wide range of DGs and other bodies in the EC. The MFA SR is very active in this respect; among other activities in 2008 it is also participating in the national project financed from the resources of the European Social Fund – *Expert Training for Public Administration Jobs Applicants*. In 2008 the MFA SR also published a guidebook for the candidates for employment in EU institutions *Slovaks in the EU Institutions – Practice and Experience*. The publishing of this practical guidebook is a part of the MFA complex approach to the personal policy of the SR towards the EU, whose goal lies in the long-term strengthening of Slovak representation in EU institutions and thus eventually strengthening the position of the SR as an EU member country. ■

overall representation of Slovak citizens in the EC

(december) year	total number	of those:			
		women	%	men	%
2004	64	45	70.31	19	29.69
2005	128	89	69.53	39	30.47
2006	177	124	70.06	53	29.94
2007	264	174	65.91	90	34.09



Prime Minister Robert Fico on the grounds of the embassy in Beijing

serving citizens and Slovakia open to the world

Consular service and the protection of the interests of Slovak citizens abroad is one of the work areas of the MFA SR and Slovak diplomatic missions closely connected to the public. The MFA has set the following priorities in this area:

- meet the legitimate needs of the growing number of Slovak citizens travelling, living or working abroad, protect their rights and interests and provide consular assistance to all those who find themselves in need abroad (in the countries where the SR does not have its diplomatic mission, the consular service closely cooperates in the fulfilment of its duties with other member states of the EU);
- improve the communication with the public and increase public awareness of consular services;
- strengthen European consular cooperation;
- liberalize the visa regime with certain countries and conclude bilateral consular agreements;
- provide high quality trained personnel for diplomatic missions.

Communication with the public in other countries is also a part of diplomacy. Culture and art are among the best instruments capable of overcoming geographical and political distances. The objective and the priority of cultural diplomacy projected through Slovak institutes and diplomatic missions is to present Slovakia as a country with rich cultural and artistic traditions as well as modern production, which is able to contribute to the multi-cultural dimension of the world with its own original work. Slovakia's image

in the world has improved in the past few years and today both the political elite and the general foreign public know at least the basic facts about Slovakia. However after the successful conclusion of our integration ambitions it will be necessary to, not only continue in the active pre-accession presentation trend, but to advance it into a new level of quality. Efforts to strengthen relations with traditional Slovak communities in the world and with organizations of Slovak citizens who have travelled abroad temporarily or for a long-term stay is an integral part of the work of the MFA SR. The MFA SR cooperates with the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad to this end. The MFA monitors and takes interest in the situation of Slovak communities abroad through its diplomatic missions in accordance with international legal commitments of the particular countries in the field of national minority rights protection and human rights protection. It consults issues of their position and the protection of their rights along with department partners at bilateral negotiations or at the negotiations of bilateral intergovernmental committees (Slovak-Hungarian and Slovak-Ukrainian Committees).

Our doors are also open to Slovak citizens at home. The Diplomatic Archive and the Library of the MFA SR are prepared to provide their services to both the experts and the general public with an interest in Slovak diplomacy and foreign policy. The Ministry plans to open the Museum of Slovak Diplomacy in the near future in order to increase awareness and stimulate deeper discussions on our past as well as the current diplomacy. ■

The provision of assistance to Slovak citizens abroad in the case of need as well as in processing personal matters in relation to Slovak institutions is one of the fundamental long-term goals of the SR. It is the most tangible evidence that the citizens of the Slovak Republic are the final beneficiaries of its foreign policy.

What we were dealing with abroad in 2007:

- 413 deaths of Slovak citizens;
- 469 serious injuries of Slovak citizens;
- criminal activities of 2,140 Slovak citizens;
- incarceration of 309 Slovak citizens;
- restriction of individual freedom of 493 Slovak citizens;
- we assisted 171 times in the protection of the rights of minors;
- we legalized 32,947 signatures, copies and translations;
- we accepted 6,601 requests for the issuing of birth, marriage and death certificates;
- 6,753 citizens applied for the issuing of a new passport;
- we issued 96,775 visas for visits to the SR. ■

One of the letters of thank to the Slovak Consul in Romania thanking for helping tourists after the accident

The range of services provided by the MFA to Slovak citizens abroad through its embassies and general consulates is growing. After Slovakia's accession to the EU, NATO and the Schengen Area, after the opening of the EU job market and due to the improvement of the economic situation of the population, Slovakia is experiencing a travel and work migration boom. The embassies and general consulates are the first contact points in accommodating their requests, assisting in extraordinary situations and providing consular information.

Among the other priorities of the consular service are: issues linked to the entry into the Schengen Area, strengthening the European consular cooperation, the liberalization of visa regimes with certain countries, improvement of the ministry's communication with the public, raising public awareness on consular services and the procurement of highly qualified and trained personnel for the diplomatic missions of the SR.

solving your problems

Approximately 250,000 Slovak citizens live and work abroad, mostly in EU member countries. Slovak diplomatic missions deal with many cases linked to their employment and provide necessary assistance in problems related to their stay or their return home.

The significance of Article No. 20 of the *Treaty Establishing the EC* is emphasized in the provision of consular assistance. It states that every EU citizen located in the territory of a third country, without the diplomatic mission of the member state of his nationality, is entitled to protection from the diplomatic or consular offices of any other member state under identical conditions as nationals of that state.

the consular 'hotline'

Due to the heterogeneity of provided information, one of the important steps of the MFA SR towards the improvement of the assistance and services to citizens is to ensure the 24-hour accessibility of the MFA SR and the diplomatic missions from one centre. For this purpose the MFA SR established the project, *Centre for Assistance and Services to Citizens* (MFA SR Hotline).

The establishment of the centre is a part of the goal to improve the quality of the services provided to the citizens, the achievement of higher effectiveness in the provision of administrative

The goal of the center, whose operation commenced in June 2008, is to achieve the satisfaction of the citizen in the solution of his requests by:

- unified procedure standards;
- the handling of a request in one place;
- permanent 24-hour access;
- easy accessibility from the SR as well as abroad;
- simple and effective communication;
- the high quality and range of provided information;
- means of sensitive and helpful approach. ■

and material services and the modernization of the state administration. The objective is to also increase public awareness on the possibilities of protection and services from the MFA SR. The establishment of the centre will offer a more complex look and incomparably better statistics and summaries of the demand for provided services. It will also enable the confrontation of the manner and tempo of the satisfaction of requests as well as improve the quality of communication between the calling citizen and the MFA SR. ■

Subject: Postupit: Poďakovanie
From: Igor Skocek <Igor.Skocek@mzv.sk>
Date: Wed, 5 Sep 2007 12:54:42 +0200
To: maria_hanusova@bukarest.mfa.sk, slovakembassy@b.astro.ro.sk

----- Postupit do Igor Skocek/TLAC/MZV dne 05.09.2007 12:51 -----
Komu informacie@foreign.gov.sk
"JazzWelt" <cajazz@nexta.sk> Kopie
04.09.2007 17:38 Predmet: Poďakovanie

Važené Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí, touto cestou by som chcel poďakovať pani konzulke v Rumunskej republike pani Hanusovej za profesionálne odvedenú prácu pri havarii autobusu našej Cestovnej kancelarie. Myslím že pokial všetci pracovníci vašich úradov budú odvádzať takúto prácu, my občania a podnikatelia budeme hrdí na naše zastupiteľstva v zahraničí. Ešte raz veľmi Ďakujeme

Rudolf Matejka
a CK JAZZWELT

JazzWelt

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The external communication of the MFA SR is also handled by the Archives, Documentation and Registry Department. Services that are availed of not only by its employees but also by the general public constitute an important part of the department's activities. This concerns the archive and the library, which will soon be expanded by a permanent exposition of the history of diplomacy in Slovakia.

diplomatic archive

The Diplomatic Archive has already passed several years of operation. The first step came in 1993 when it was classified in the network of Slovak archives as an archive of special significance by the approval of the Ministry of Interior of the SR.

The archive with its archive funds and collections currently represents the research-information basis for the ministry itself and its employees, other bodies of the state administration as well as for the number of interested individuals from the general public which increases every year. Various publications, diploma and doctoral theses have been composed on the basis of studying sources from the Diplomatic archive research facility and archived materials from its depository have been presented at several exhibitions at home and abroad.

Archive funds from the operation of the network of Slovak diplomatic missions abroad constitute the nucleus of the Diplomatic Archive. Only documents from the period of 1993-2000 are processed and accessible at the moment. Documents from some diplomatic missions from the Czechoslovak era are also partially accessible.

Archive collections are an important source of:

- bilateral international treaties of the Czechoslovak Republic 1921-1992;
- bilateral international treaties of the Slovak Republic 1992-2008;
- multilateral international treaties of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1992
- multilateral international treaties of the Slovak Republic 1993-2008;
- credentials and resignation letters of foreign titulars accredited in the SR 1993-2008;
- credentials and resignation letters of Slovak titulars accredited abroad 1993-2008;
- letters of recognition of the SR and the establishment of diplomatic contacts with individual states 1992-2008.

The delimitation and the reproduction of original documents from the former archive of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague was a significant expansion of the MFA SR Diplomatic Archive funds. The negotiations on its delimitation also resulted in an agreement on the free access

on the Slovak side to the archive funds and the following withdrawal for the needs of the MFA SR. Many interesting collections of documents with a high documentary value were thus added: the formation of Slovakia's borders 1918-1921, the Paris Archive and personal files of diplomats of Slovak origin in Czechoslovak diplomacy, including the personal fund of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimír Clementis. It also includes copies of documents linked to the Vienna Arbitration, the substantial part of which was published in the three-volume publication of Ladislav Deák: The Vienna Arbitration – Documents.

the museum of diplomacy project

The newest contribution to the Archives, Documentation and Registry Department is a project of a permanent exposition – the museum of the history of diplomacy in Slovakia. It is meant to compile documents on diplomatic, peace and alliance negotiations and events (along with their actors) concerning more than one country, which took place in or had a significant relation to Slovakia. The timeline reaches from the ancient to the present. Currently in the preparatory stage, documentary and exhibitory sources from relevant museums, archives, libraries and other institutions, from diplomatic missions as well as personal funds are being located and processed. The exact date of the museum's public opening will depend upon the number and character of the acquired exhibitory sources and their processing as well as the solution of the museum's location. ■

library

The MFA library operating from 1992 is registered in the network of Slovak libraries as a special library. It systematically works on the build-up and accessibility of periodical and non-periodical literature in all formats. It acquires, processes, declassifies and ensures the long-term preservation of literature focusing on history, diplomacy, political science, law, international relations and economy. The MFA library fund is constituted by more than 12,000 books and special documents. The every day services of the library, the access to daily and periodical domestic as well as foreign press, the information database and an extensive library fund are primarily availed of by the employees of the MFA. But due to the specific orientation of the library fund it also enables studying and consultations for external researchers. The library is periodically filled with new titles from domestic and foreign book production. Conditions for the stabilization of the MFA library as a specific informational institution in the field of diplomacy and international relations are set by the systematic compilation of library and information funds. ■

More at:
www.ceit.sk/webisnt/mzvs.htm
 (MFA SR Library)

The MFA realizes that current global political and economic development is significantly influenced by, not only state actors, but non-governmental entities as well. Alongside the private sector these are mainly civil society organizations, often of a supranational character. The MFA therefore strives to cooperate with third sector entities to mutual benefit, for example in development assistance where it can utilize the knowledge and experience of these organizations from their development activities in particular regions to increase the effectiveness of projects financed by public resources. Besides, government cooperation with the third sector is a natural part of every democratic system. That is why the MFA stimulates the exchange of opinions with the community concerned with international relations issues through a grant system and utilizes the theoretical and practical expert potential of NGOs and academic institutions in the formulation of materials for the adoption of foreign policy decisions.



From the April Annual Foreign Policy Review Conference for 2006

two brains are better than one

The goals of the MFA grant activities in 2007 continued to be: the support of research in the field of international relations and the foreign policy of the SR and the stimulation of discussion on these issues, the support of the interest of Slovak citizens in international political events and the deeper understanding of the link between the foreign and domestic policies of the SR. The MFA also appreciated the opportunity to ask external organizations to formulate alternative foreign policy analysis, which served as a complementary source of information in the formulation of fundamental informative, preliminary, conceptual and strategic materials of the department. To motivate broader expert discussion, the Ministry financially and organizationally supported non-governmental organizations in hosting conferences on current issues of international relations such as EU energy

grants to NGOs in 2007 in comparison with 2006

- number of themes published by the Ministry – 3% decrease
- number of initiative applicant themes – 100% increase
- number of applicants – 70% increase
- number of applications – 55% increase
- number of approved applications/projects – 10% increase
- allocated financial resources – 2% increase ■

policy, EU enlargement, assistance to Ukraine to increase public awareness of NATO and so on.

11 partners, 31 projects

One grant round was issued in the year 2007. The MFA SR published (by 1 March 2007) 35 priority themes copying the main current foreign policy goals of the SR (for illustration: the development of the domestic political situation in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, the Western Balkans, priorities of Slovak development assistance, energy security issues, Slovaks living abroad, human rights, Slovakia's membership in the UN SC, The SR in the EU, EU enlargement, current international law issues). 24 NGOs expressed their interest in the elaboration of selected themes and presented the MFA with a total of 65 project proposals which either reflected the published themes or initiatively offered their own. The submitted grant applications exceeded the financial possibilities given by the MFA budget 2.5 fold. The MFA therefore decided to fully or partially financially support 31 applications from 11 organizations, which met the criteria (the expert competence of the applicant, coherence with the priorities of the Slovak foreign policy, utility to the MFA, timetable of implementation and the justification of expenses). The total sum of approved grants for 2007 amounted to 5,099,400 SKK. In comparison with 2006, in 2007 the expected increase in the number of applicants as well as applications and submitted projects, including the initiative projects, was confirmed.

The presented projects were a benefit to the work of the MFA. The grant system in 2007 was positively evaluated not only by the MFA but also by the organizations which actively participated in it. A thought has been accepted simultaneously with this development, to primarily ensure the realization of repeated activities in the future, through long-term contracts concluded on the basis of selection procedures for their provision. ■

Cultural diplomacy is an integral part of public diplomacy. It has a universal character and is therefore an instrument which does not divide, but instead connects sometimes completely different cultural, political or social environments. Slovak institutes abroad or diplomatic missions play an important role in the propagation of Slovak culture, knowledge about the history of Slovakia, current events from the field of culture and arts and in the promotion of Slovakia as an attractive tourist destination. Through cultural presentations they contribute, to the establishment of business and economic contacts between individual countries.

In 2007 the MFA became a member of EUNIC – European National Institutes for Culture, which created an opportunity for the presentation of Slovakia's cultural heritage at joint EU events. Significant themes, jubilees and joint events with other countries were added to the program structure of the Slovak institutes in order to point out the cultural proximity of Central European countries.

The work of the MFA also includes one other important task: to spread Slovak culture and language among compatriots. It monitors the position and situation of Slovak minorities and compatriot communities abroad and actively assists them through Slovak diplomatic missions and Slovak institutes abroad. It is also participating in the formulation of the *State Policy Concept of Care for Slovaks Living Abroad up to 2015*.

cultural events

Slovak Culture Days taking place in Sibiu – the main city of European culture for 2007, was one the most successful events extensively presenting Slovak culture abroad. They included the exhibitions of the Lowlands Slovak Traditional Wedding, Contemporary Slovak Art 1960 – 2000, an exhibition on the composer Ján Levoslav Bella and the play *Toaletárka* performed by the Prešov Theatre of Alexander Duchnovič.

The Slovak Institute in Moscow organizes cultural events not only in the capital of Russia but also elsewhere – wherever it finds a demanding and grateful audience and where there is a chance to gain greater media response. The exhibition of the sculptures and paintings of Milan and Marek Ormandík in the Tula Museum of Art was very successful.

Among the important cultural and social activities of the Slovak diplomatic missions in the USA during 2007 were – the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the Slovak Heritage Festival in New Jersey, USA with the participation of the President of the SR, the exhibition Artist Oskar Čepan in the

Koloman Sokol Gallery in Washington, the vernissage of Slovak art in Los Angeles Albín Brunovský and Friends and the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak League of America.

In 2007, the issue of minorities was presented by the SI in Rome by the organization of the Roma evening with the photographic exhibition of Matúš Zajac on Slovak Roma. The exhibition of the Roma palette held at the Slovak embassy in Helsinki met with great interest.

cooperation with the countrymen

In 2007 Slovak institutes organized 130 events that were specifically directed at compatriots. The promotion of Slovak books and literary publications is an integral part of the activities of Slovak institutes and Slovak diplomatic missions. The SI in Warsaw presented a collection of a handicapped young poet at the VI. Book fair in Poznan, the SI in Budapest presented the first part of the *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka [Dictionary of the Contemporary Slovak Language]* for the first time abroad and the SI in Paris introduced the *Učebnica slovenského jazyka [Textbook of the Slovak Language]* published by L'Asiathèque with the support of the European Commission. The SI in Berlin presented the book *Malé jazyky, veľké literatúry [Minor Languages, Major Literatures]* within the EUNIC framework at the Leipzig book fair, the SI in Rome introduced the Slovak edition of Dante's *Inferno* and the SI in Vienna presented the selective works of the writer Anton Hykisch with the participation of the author.

The teaching of the Slovak language is an important part of the activities of Slovak institutes and it has been met with high interest in Budapest, Warsaw and Vienna. Various Seminars and presentations were a part of the projects aimed at Slovak history in the context of Europe. For example the seminar of the 30th anniversary of *Charter 77* in Rome, the meetings of young Slovak and Hungarian historians, which contribute to the objectivity and the improvement of the Slovak-Hungarian dialogue in Budapest and the EU Rally organized by the SI in Vienna in cooperation with other diplomatic missions of EU member countries on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the EU. ■

In 2007 the Slovak institutes in Berlin, Budapest, Moscow, Paris, Prague, Warsaw and Vienna organized a total of 698 events in their own premises and 532 events outside the SI. In cooperation with the diplomatic missions they prepared 38 events for the general public. Throughout 2007 they also organized 106 joint programs with the Ministry of Culture of the SR, the Ministry of Economy of the SR, the Slovak Agency for Tourism and 45 joint events within the EU. The various organized events were visited by approximately 240,000 people. ■

More at:
www.uszz.sk (The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad)



5.

The meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions in July

a modern Slovak diplomacy

5.

We are here to help our citizens abroad and advocate the interests of our country in the international field. We are glad that our institution played a crucial role in the time when Slovakia was gaining its independence, establishing itself in the international arena and in the fulfilling of accession criteria to the EU, NATO, OECD and other international groupings and organizations.

Why did the ministry need an audit of its own work in 2007? Simply because the positive achievements of the previous period have moved the MFA SR into a different and much more demanding environment where it must cope with new challenges. All of this must be done without a significant increase in financial and human resources. The percentage allocated for the MFA SR in the state budget is decreasing annually; in the year 2008 it will reach its second lowest level and it is approaching the minimum allocated in 1993. We must also take external trends into consideration, for example globalization, the deepening of European integration or the changing position and perception of diplomacy. It is thus obvious that the Slovak Foreign Service needs to strengthen its ability to flexibly react to develop-

ments in order to fulfil the new tasks which are more demanding than they were in the past.

our goal is to...

- have the MFA do what it should do for the state, the citizens and the whole society;
- utilize allocated resources primarily for the fulfilment of strategic goals and active diplomacy – less administration, more diplomacy;
- be an organization which supports a culture of change, openness, innovation and the willingness to risk – not avoiding responsibility;
- focus foremost on the quality of our outcomes, not only the number of fulfilled tasks;
- have motivated and professional employees in the right place and with the right competences;
- improve the quality, effectiveness and professionalism of our services;
- work simpler and thus better and cheaper;
- help our society better understand the added value of the MFA;
- strengthen our ability to influence global trends in our favour;
- continue strengthening the international reputation of the SR. ■

the concept of the MFA SR modernization

Experience with state administration modernization from developed countries confirms that it is possible and often inevitable to implement well-established managerial practices known from the private sector. Those countries that ceased to emphasize only inputs and assumptions and focused on efficiency and results were successful. We are taking other MFAs that are comparable in size as an example of inspiration – but probably most of all the Danish MFA. That is why an audit and the project TREFA was the next step.

TREFA

The current MFA management decided to react to the situation in 2006 by issuing an audit identifying the weak spots and initiate systemic changes. The project that should bring the Ministry the Permanent Efficiency of Management (*TR*valá *EF*ektivnost *ri*Adenia) is known by the acronym TREFA.

TREFA is a long-term project which we could not implement solely with our own resources, that is why we also cooperate with external consultants. Even though preparations for the Project TREFA began in the end of 2006, it was only launched in 2007. We were able to complete the preparatory stage by January 2007, the selection of the provider by September 2007 and the internal audit was carried out from October to December 2007. The implementation of a long-term quality improvement system according to the internationally acknowledged method is an integral part of TREFA. The ministry will thus be forced to periodically evaluate the core processes and constantly remove weak spots in the strategic management of administrative processes, the use of allocated resources, the work with people and so on.

The planned changes in our department are derived from the assumption that in the next few years Slovak diplomacy apparently cannot count on a substantial increase in budgetary resources or personnel. This is true despite the fact that it belongs to the smallest and financially least demanding ministries. The budget of the department of foreign affairs for 2007 was 3,363 billion SK, which is below one percent of the entire budget of the SR. The 2008 will not be different.

furthermore...

The trend of lowering the number of employees of the MFA still continues from 2004. In 2007 the ministry has lowered the number of delegated employees by 7.5%, to while maintaining the number of missions.

The MFA did open new diplomatic missions from 2004, however without any increase in the number of delegated personnel. In 2007 the MFA had 1,100 employees. 442 of these worked at the

the goal of the TREFA project is to:

1. introduce instruments supporting strategic planning and management
2. introduce modern methods of management;
3. simplify and diminish the bureaucratic aspects of work in a manner allowing the employees to focus on the core roles of the MFA and their main activity and the fulfilment of tasks, related to the strategic goals of the organization;
4. increase the quality of human potential, introduce modern motivation techniques, including attractive financial benefits for fulfilled tasks;
5. introduce clear career regulations and contribute to high-quality legislation on foreign service, unequivocally defining the rights and obligations of employees;
6. increase the efficiency of the economic aspects and management of budgetary and financial processes;
7. optimize the system of information and communication technologies, increase the effectiveness of information transfers and democratize access to information. ■



headquarters and 658 employees at the 89 diplomatic missions.

For comparison: the Dutch MFA has over 5,000, the Finnish and Swedish over 3,000, the Czech MFA has more than 2,300 and the Danish MFA, which is comparable to ours, has nearly 2,500 employees. Out of these numbers two thirds are generally diplomats serving abroad, while the budgets of partner departments are several times higher than that of the MFA.

Today the SR has as many as 45 diplomatic missions, these are the so-called 'mini-embassies' with 1-2 delegated diplomats (51%). This is the highest number of small embassies since the beginning of Slovak diplomacy. This state is all the more alarmed due to the fact that the results of studies performed by some comparable MFAs have shown that in cases of small diplomatic missions – the most efficiently operating missions are those with 3-5 delegated diplomats.

The current reality is that by reducing the number of delegated employees, the ratio between diplomatic and administrative and technical (support) activities has been altered. Administrative and technical activities required by legislation and other obligatory regulations must be carried out by the mission, regardless of its size, which decreases the room available for diplomacy. Missions where the extent of support activities is at the same level as diplomatic activities are not a rarity.

2007 only a harbinger of changes...

The year 2007 has only been a harbinger of changes to come in the following years when the MFA starts gradually implementing elements of the strategic department management concept. It is necessary to say that throughout 2007 the MFA underwent a very intensive internal discus-

what did we achieve in the year 2007?

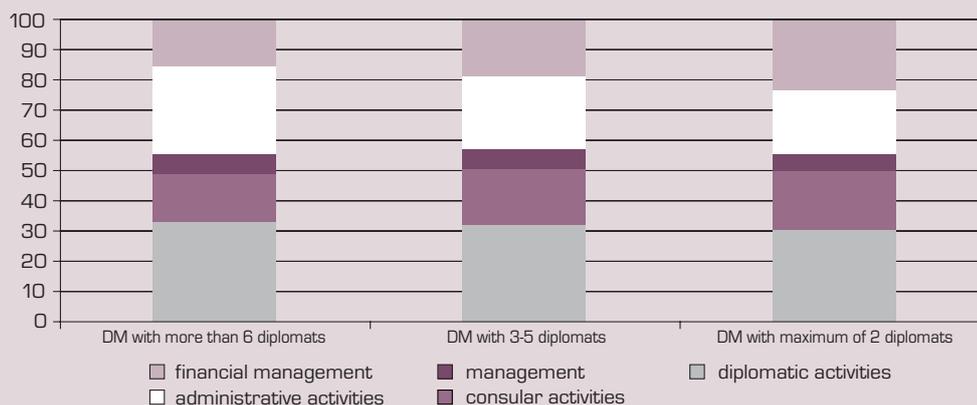
- new categorization of diplomatic missions (DMs), (small, medium, large) and the optimization of the number of delegated employees;
- more demanding and transparent selection criteria for delegation;
- addressed financing and motivational rewards;
- more resources for the education of MFA employees, e.g. procedural management training, quality management system EFQM, ECDL;
- emphasis on public diplomacy – the Internet Division was established;
- new software for the economic section and the transfer to international accounting standards;
- increase in the efficiency of road transport;
- projects in information and communication technologies (intranet, national information system, videoconference transmission, biometric passports, complex system for the transmission of classified information). ■

sion on the current strategic priorities of Slovakia's Foreign Service. Even though the decision on the final version of our strategic vision will only be adopted in 2008 we can surely at least outline how we coped with this demanding task. The determinants of the future changes at the MFA are already indicated by these five identified strategic pillars which will form the basis for the support and development of TREFA in the next year:

- security;
- democracy, human rights and rule of law;
- prosperity;
- an effective EU;
- public diplomacy and service to the citizens.

The year 2008 as well as the following years will already be witness to the specific implementation of short-term and long-term TREFA measures through partial projects. Prior to this the management of the MFA will set the precise schedule for their implementation whether with the help of external consultants or in their own capacities. ■

comparison of individual activities according to mission size
[%]



MFA's closing account

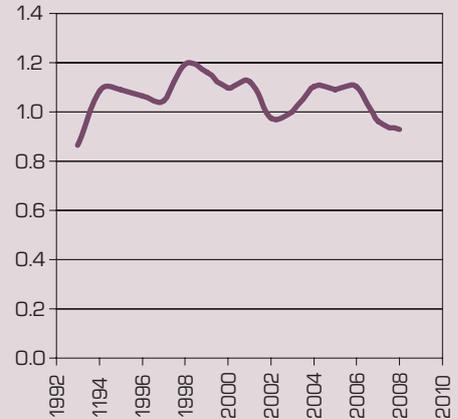
As the following graph and table show the MFA must cope with the long-term trend of its decreasing share in the total budget of the SR.

The State Budget of the Slovak Republic for 2007 was adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in Act No. 681/2006 Coll. on 12 December 2006. The total volume of expenditures in the MFA SR chapter for the year 2007 was set to 3,555 mil. SKK. During 2007 the expense budget was adjusted by budgetary measures to 3,363 mil. SKK. The real volume spent amounted to 3,187 mil. SKK (94.8%).

staying in the plus

MFA SR chapter incomes were set to 470 mil. SKK. Actual incomes represented 404 mil. SKK (86%). The MFA SR however ensured its legal obligation to bind expenses in the sum of 66 mil. SKK of the unfulfilled income, that means the resources drawn from its budget were lowered

the percentage MFA's budget's share on the state budget



by this amount. By comparing the summary of overall economic results with the approved and adjusted budget, it is possible to see that the MFA SR chapter has completely met the obligatory indicator of chapter expenses. Within the budget, the MFA SR also observed the limit for expenses dedicated to salaries, wages, business incomes and other personal settlements as well as the number of employees.

our expenses

In 2007 the SR had a total of 89 functional diplomatic missions abroad (embassies, diplomatic mission offices, permanent missions, consular missions, permanent missions to the EU, a permanent delegation to NATO, general consulates, economic and culture offices and Slovak culture institutes). The Slovak diplomatic mission network is dominated by offices with a small number of personnel. Most missions had one to three delegated employees. The institutionalization of Slovak development assistance in the year 2007 was a new element in the MFA SR chapter. Based on the Act of the Government of the SR and the approval of the Ministry of Economy of the SR the MFA SR established its first dependent budget organization – The Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation [SlovakAid].

Multiple economizing measures were implemented in 2007 including the decrease in the number of systemized positions. Further information on the steps and efforts taken to limit expenses and increase the effectiveness of the MFA and the network of diplomatic missions are stated in other parts of the annual report. ■

MFA SR expenses in 2007

(simplified summary of the programme structure – actual expenses in thousands of SKK)

□ diplomatic representation abroad (mainly the activities and maintenance of diplomatic missions, salaries and social payments for employees abroad)	2,015,152
□ cultural representation abroad	76,725
□ programme management (activities and maintenance expenses in MFA SR headquarters)	550,518
□ legal dispute on Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros	320
□ development and operation of the NSIS [the Schengen]	199,443
□ representation of the SR in international organizations (Slovak contributions to international organizations)	288,786
□ official development assistance	35,365

our foreign policy capacities in 2007

- the Slovak Republic was represented by 58 diplomatic missions 8 permanent missions, 10 consulates general, 1 consular mission, 3 diplomatic mission offices, 8 Slovak institutes and 1 Slovak Economic and Cultural Office;
- the MFA SR had a total of 1100 employees, of which 442 worked at the ministry headquarters and 658 at the diplomatic missions;
- 124 MFA employees were rotated or delegated (64 diplomats and 60 administrative employees) along with 13 employees of other departments. ■

Because we wish to continually increase the quality of the services we provide and the level of cooperation with other institutions, we are interested in the opinions of our external partners. In 2007 we asked 60 partner institutions in a special survey how satisfied they are with our work. The distribution of questionnaires corresponded with the level of mutual cooperation:

- ministries, government and parliament bodies – 28%
- intergovernmental and public organizations, state bodies and institutions – 19%
- non-governmental organizations, independent institutions and church organizations – 37%
- universities – 5%
- local government authorities – 11%.

The overall evaluation of the satisfaction of external partners by the accessibility, content and quality of the provided services was positive for the MFA. Only 2% or 24% of our partners found our work to be satisfactory or partially satisfactory, while 74% of respondents found our work to be very good or good. Satisfaction surveys of our partners will continue to be one of the systematic instruments of the evaluation of the quality of our work in the future.

the opinions of some of our partners

Office of the President of the SR: „In the majority of cases, the cooperation with the MFA SR is good and straightforward. Trust, personal contacts and proper mutual cooperation play a great role“.

Answers of some of our partners to the question, “What would you change on the manner of communication/providing information/services/documents/cooperation with the MFA” were:

- the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association expects the MFA SR to change the internal regulations of its operation leading to the reduction of the bureaucratic aspects of its activities and giving wider competences for middle and lower management personnel, especially in the communication and cooperation with external partners; greater and more focused utilization of the services of external partners in the activities of the ministry;
- self-governing region of Trenčín wants a wider use of communication through e-mails, to send us information about significant events as well as for example information about important things that will be in the media (links to important media and websites, specialized press and so on);
- euro-Atlantic Center: “Increase in the effectiveness of communication and the swiftness of feedback”. ■

In general the quality of the cooperation with our partners is rated as good. The ministry was mainly criticized for its external presentation. ■

1. Where can I travel only with a citizen's ID card?

With a citizen's ID card the citizens of the Slovak Republic may travel to all of the EU member states, Montenegro, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and since 1 March 2008 also to Bosnia and Herzegovina. For travels to other countries a travel document valid at least six more months after the intended termination of stay is necessary.

2. Does my child also need a passport?

The child can be listed in the parents' passport up to the age of five. From the age of five every child is required to have a personal passport. The issuing of passports is in the competence of the Ministry of Interior of the SR.

3. What if I loose my travel documents abroad?

In case of theft or loss of your travel documents it is necessary to contact the relevant Slovak embassy and proceed according to the directions of its employees. We also recommend visiting the nearest police station to report the loss or theft of travel documents and the issuing of a written certificate. The embassy will issue a temporary travel

document for the citizen, first and foremost, for the return to the homeland via the shortest route.

4. Will the embassy issue a registry document?

On the request of Slovak citizens permanently residing abroad consular personnel can ensure the issuing of regular registry documents of the SR like the birth certificate, marriage certificate, death certificate, Slovak citizenship certificate etc. The citizen is required to fill out the appropriate forms at the consular department of the embassy, deliver the complete attachments and pay the corresponding administrative fee. The same conditions apply to the foreign registry documents for the needs of citizens with a permanent residence in the SR.

5. In the case of an emergency can I turn to the embassy of any another EU country?

If there isn't a Slovak diplomatic mission in the country of your stay the embassy (or consulate) of any other EU member state, which has an office in that country, must assist you. Under these circumstances the diplomatic mission of any EU member state can issue a temporary travel document for Slovak citizens. ■

