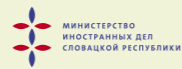




MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



Published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic
Public Diplomacy Department

ISBN 978-80-88726-39-5

Annual Report Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Foreign Policy in 2009

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Publishing



Oľga ALGAYEROVÁ
Secretary of State
Deputy Minister

Juraj SIVÁČEK
Secretary General

Diana ŠTROFOVÁ
Secretary of State

Miroslav LAJČÁK
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Slovak Republic

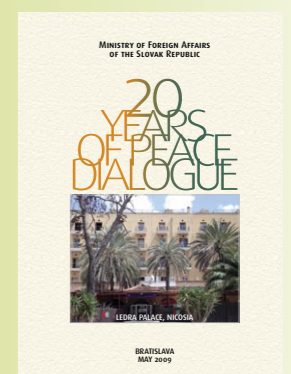
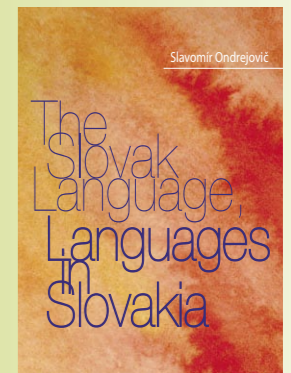
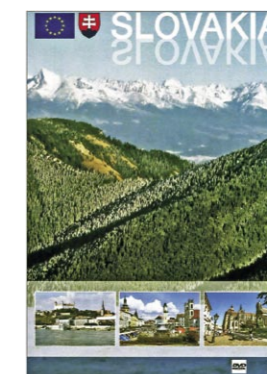
To provide information and to promote Slovakia abroad 70,777 copies of promotional and information materials were purchased and sent to diplomatic missions and cultural centres.

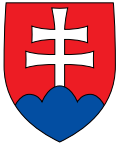
Besides that, the Department of Public Diplomacy prepared and provided the diplomatic missions and cultural centres on a regular basis with the economic and analytical periodicals *Trend Watch* and *Ekonomika a obchod* published in both Slovak and English.

Editorial Activities in 2009

In 2009 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, in close cooperation with the diplomatic missions and cultural centres of the Slovak Republic as well as with external publishers, published several non-periodical publications and promotional materials:

- 200,000 copies of information leaflets and 200,000 stickers with contact data were prepared for the Citizens Assistance and Services Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic;
- to promote participation of Slovak citizens in elections to the European Parliament 100,000 copies of promotional posters were produced;
- in cooperation with the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Nicosia 500 copies of non-periodical publications dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the peace talks in Cyprus were published;
- the exhibition *Velvet Revolution: Slovakia after 1989* dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution was arranged in cooperation with the TASR (The News Agency of the Slovak Republic) in Slovak, English, French and Polish versions. The exhibition was sent to all diplomatic missions and cultural centres of the Slovak Republic and in November 2009 was also installed in the exhibition premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic;
- a set of ten large-size posters was prepared for all diplomatic missions and cultural centres;
- in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic the publication *The Slovak Republic in NATO* was published in Ukrainian and Russian for the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Kiev;
- in cooperation with the Language Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences the publication *The Slovak Language, Languages in Slovakia* was published in English;
- in cooperation with the GeoGrafia Publishing House the promotional publication *Slovakia* was published in English;
- in cooperation with AB Film the DVD *Slovakia* was produced. ■





MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



Annual Report Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Foreign Policy in

2009



Annual Report. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic
Foreign Policy in 2009

© Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 2010
All rights reserved.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic
Hlboká cesta 2
833 36 Bratislava 37
The Slovak Republic

Tel.: +421-2-5978-1111 (switchboard)
Fax: +421-2-5978-3638 (3639)
E-mail: info@mzv.sk
Website: www.mzv.sk

Photographs:

Database of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Slovak News Agency, The News Agency of the Slovak Republic, Office of the President of the Slovak Republic, National Council of the Slovak Republic, Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SlovakAid), UNPhoto (Paulo Figueiras), ADRA-Slovakia (Marek Sós)

Translation:

Rastislav Majorský

Language Editor:

John Connolly

Number of Pages: 56

Number of Copies Published: 700

Designed and Printed by: AEPRESS, s.r.o.

ISBN 978-80-88726-39-5

Table of Contents

■ Introduction	5
■ Supreme Representatives and Foreign Policy	7
■ Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic in 2009	8
■ A Safe and Democratic World	11
Slovakia in NATO.....	12
Slovakia in the OSCE and the Corfu Process	14
The Western Balkans: Our Long-term Priority	16
Slovakia in International Organisations.....	18
■ A Successful and Prosperous Slovakia	21
Slovak Economic Diplomacy.....	22
Slovakia and the V4	24
Good Relations with Neighbours	26
SlovakAid 2009	29
Energy Security	32
■ The Interests of Slovakia in an Efficient EU	35
Ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon	36
Slovaks in the EU institutions	37
Coordination of EU Sectoral Policies	38
Eastern Partnership	40
■ Serving Our Citizens and Slovakia Open to the World	43
Consular Service.....	44
Services to the Public.....	46
Honorary Consulates.....	47
Public Diplomacy.....	48
Cultural Diplomacy	49
■ Modern Slovak Diplomacy	51
MFA Modernisation	52
MFA Organisational Chart	54
MFA Closing Account	56



“Not only does Slovakia formulate its foreign policy positions in a clear and comprehensible fashion and on the basis of values that accord with European and Euro-Atlantic approaches, but it is also capable of defending any possible particularities of her positions in a reliable way.”

Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, address delivered during the Annual Conference on the Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic, 28 April 2009

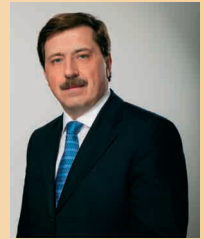
Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, address delivered during the Annual Conference on the Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic, 28 April 2009



“It is a shame that the Treaty of Lisbon was not presented in a more attractive way. It does not seem to be a regulation of major relevance, but in fact it is an important international document.”

Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic on ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon

Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic on ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon



“I expect that in the new electoral term, but especially in the new financial term, there will finally prevail a tendency to make the European Union, assisted by the European Parliament, a real power that is to play a role in solving global problems just as the USA or other world powers do.”

Pavol Paška, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic during the elections to the European Parliament.

Pavol Paška, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic during the elections to the European Parliament.



“We need to do more today to be able to do less tomorrow.”

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary-General of NATO, address to the conference New Challenges – New Capabilities held on the occasion of the informal meeting of the NATO Ministers of Defence in Bratislava, 22 October 2009

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary-General of NATO, address to the conference New Challenges – New Capabilities held on the occasion of the informal meeting of the NATO Ministers of Defence in Bratislava, 22 October 2009

Dear Readers,



The Slovak Foreign Service has been through another demanding year. It was a year in which all areas of social life were affected by the global economic crisis. The crisis also considerably affected the order of our priorities in the field of foreign policy, as our top priority nowadays is the fight to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the economic and social life of Slovakia.

Protection of the country's economic security, support for Slovak export activities, intensification of efforts to make Slovakia more attractive for new foreign investors, support for businesses and more focused activities in international economic organisations in close cooperation with government, the non-governmental sector and business circles were last year key parts of Slovak economic diplomacy. Slovakia also actively contributed to the search for joint international solutions and steps in the area of anti-crisis management. We thus became part of the international efforts to restore stability and sustainable development to the world, to seek ways leading to a more responsible and more consistent international dialogue, a part of the efforts to achieve unprecedented global coordination of anti-crisis measures and preventive steps to reduce new global threats.

The year 2009 was one of significant anniversaries: five years ago Slovakia joined the European Union and NATO, sixty years ago NATO was founded, twenty years ago Slovakia formed part of the important social changes also known as the Velvet Revolution. We also made use of these anniversaries to present our country positively – the message and ideas of the revolution were linked with principles and values of the integration groupings that we joined. Slovakia's dedication to democracy, respect for human rights and to efforts to achieve sustainable development both at home and worldwide was also confirmed.

In the records of Slovak modern history 2009 will go down as the year of the successful introduction of the Euro. The step was a symbolic and self-confident rounding off of the formal integration of Slovakia into all of the European Union's policies. The proper timing, good preparation and smooth introduction of the European common currency increased the country's political and economic

prestige and mitigated the adverse consequences of the economic and financial crisis. A year ago I mentioned here that in 2009 the key words of domestic and foreign policy should be solidarity and cohesion, as these are approaches to show us the way out of the crisis as well as towards greater precision in relations. The reality proved this expectation to be true as the benefits and significance of European integration, the strength of solidarity and mutual assistance among the members of the European Union became evident just at the time of crisis. It was the member countries of the European Union that in early 2009 assisted Slovakia in a solidary fashion to solve the issue of the gas crisis.

Last year was exceptionally important for the European Union from the point of view of its future functioning. Finalisation of the complex process of the *Treaty of Lisbon's* ratification in the member countries and its entry into force as of 1 December 2009 brought about several major structural changes in the institutional arrangements and practical functioning of the European Union. It is a matter for satisfaction that the *Treaty* does not weaken Slovakia's status and voice within the community. The establishment of the European External Action Service is also of major importance for Slovak diplomacy and we wish to adequately participate in its operation. A new European Commission is currently just taking over. In the Commission Slovakia is properly represented by the Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration. The fact that Slovakia succeeded in winning just this position is in my opinion a success of Slovak foreign policy.

Positive, too, in my opinion is the fact that despite an accumulation of demanding agendas of the European Union the process of Union enlargement, one of our priorities in the field of foreign policy, did not come to a halt last year. The integration process in the Balkans has, in spite of the internal problems of the nations in the region and the complex regional context, been continuing. The fact that in 2009 the Union offered the Eastern Partnership project to its Eastern partners has been perceived in Slovakia with satisfaction. The project may become an appropriate tool

for the European Union and its Eastern Partners to come together and to increase stability in Eastern Europe.

Slovakia last year formed part of the North Atlantic Alliance's responses to the dynamic developments in the international situation. The Alliance focused mainly on the military mission in Afghanistan, whose worsening security situation required decisions on further military reinforcements. The need to fulfil obligations as an ally also led Slovakia to participate in fulfilling this objective and to decide on reinforcing her contingent in that country. New security challenges, the future of transatlantic relations as well as NATO's future relations with partners or the issue of NATO's further enlargement led the Alliance to commence intensive preparation of the new Strategic Concept. It is my pleasure to state that last year Slovakia also actively participated in all the processes just mentioned.

Last year it was bilateral relations, especially those with our allies within the Union and NATO, that were of special importance. I would like to emphasise our interest in good relations with our neighbours, which is one of our most important foreign policy priorities. The issue of our bilateral relations with the Republic of Hungary, which was being limited by our southern neighbours to the only problematic issue of these relations – questions connected with the position of citizens of the Slovak Republic belonging to a Hungarian national minority – unfortunately demanded too much energy last year. Taking recent developments into consideration, our positions and course of action, aimed as they are at a pragmatic, objective and, in terms of European values, standard solution of possible disputes, are proving to be right. Slovakia could not yield to a deliberate internationalisation of the issue, a manipulation and pressure that were not good for mutual trust and that harmed the reputation of both sides abroad.

Regional cooperation and especially the Visegrad Four were of exceptional significance in the field of the foreign policy activities of the Slovak Republic. The cooperation confirmed its positive potential in relation to the Western Balkans agenda, the Union's Eastern policy and energy security, as well as in solving the issues of the Roma community. Disturbing tendencies of a reviving political extremism, revanchism, chauvinism, local manifestations of neonazism, racism and antisemitism appeared in the region. Such manifestations are capable of radicalising the social life of some of the nations in the region.

Consistent compliance with international obligations and principles of international law ranks among the fundamental principles of our foreign policy. We were active in the UN and the Council of Europe as well as in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and, despite the crisis, we still continued to provide development assistance. The Slovak Foreign Service worked more actively to protect the rights and interests of our citizens abroad. In terms of quality the consular service was advanced to a higher level that is, in terms of organisation and methods, compatible with the requirements of our membership in the Schengen system as well as with other international obligations.

Last year we enthusiastically commenced materialization of the public diplomacy concept, which was reflected *inter alia* in the multi-departmental concept of Slovakia's presentation abroad. I am convinced that the intensified involvement of other state and governmental institutions as well as the non-governmental sector in the creation of foreign policy and Slovakia's image abroad makes our operation richer in international terms, more complex and more legitimate.

Dear Readers,

2009 was an exceptional year in international relations as it brought a lot of serious new global challenges and security threats, but also many examples of unity, cohesion, solidarity and cooperation on the part of the international community in seeking the common responses of mankind to such challenges and threats. Slovakia did find her way in this common endeavour, did really contribute to it and, by a balanced policy compatible in its values with European civilisation, did prove her trustworthiness, reliability and responsibility. I very much wish that 2010 will confirm the full continuity of this direction of Slovakia.



Miroslav Lajčák
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Slovak Republic

Supreme Representatives and Foreign Policy



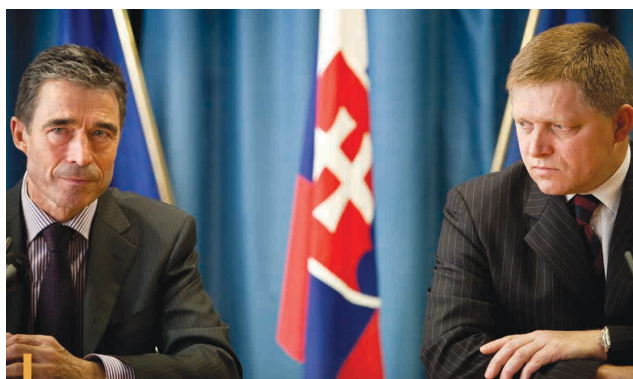
In early January the President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič negotiated with his Ukrainian counterpart Viktor Yushchenko on renewal of natural gas supplies to Slovakia.

The Act on the State Language was one of the topics discussed between Pavol Paška, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, and Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, on the occasion of the latter's official visit to Slovakia. Both representatives also discussed cooperation between the European Parliament and the National Council of the Slovak Republic as well as the situation in the European Union.



Slovak-Hungarian relations formed the main topic of the meeting of Pavol Paška and Katalin Szili, Heads of the Slovak and Hungarian Parliaments respectively, held in Belá pri Štúrove. Both speakers also assessed the discussions of the five Slovak and Hungarian parliamentary committees held in January and February. The objective of the committees to be achieved was formulation of the main requirements that are to serve the parliament speakers as a basis for solving issues.

On the invitation of the President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič, Slovakia was for the first time visited by Abdullah II bin al-Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The visit's objective was the intensification of political dialogue and revitalization of mutual visits to improve economic and investment cooperation.



For the first time in history the Slovak Republic hosted the informal meeting of ministers of defence of the Alliance. Slovakia was on this occasion visited by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary-General of NATO, who was also officially received by Robert Fico, the Prime Minister. NATO operations abroad, the possibilities of reinforced Slovak participation in Afghanistan and preparation of the new Strategic Concept of NATO were discussed first and foremost but NATO policy in the Balkans and relations between NATO and the EU and those between NATO and Russia were included in their discussion as well.

In June Slovakia was visited by Javier Solana, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, who also delivered a speech to the meeting of the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of the Slovak Republic. The main topic of Javier Solana's speech was the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union as a tool in winning recognition of the European Union as a global player. The High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union was also received by Prime Minister Robert Fico.



Slovakia in a Safe and Democratic World

In 2009 Slovakia also maintained the continuity of her foreign policy priorities. Her policy was based on fundamental respect for democratic values, human rights and support for sustainable development with the emphasis on social solidarity. Her trustworthiness was further strengthened through compliance with her obligations as an ally within the organisations and communities that the country has joined. Slovak foreign policy confirmed Slovakia's readiness to participate actively in strengthening tools of effective multilateralism as well as in solving serious global issues. Extremism, nationalism, neofascism, racism, antisemitism and religious fundamentalism were all considered to be worrying phenomena on the international scene in 2009.

Membership in the **North Atlantic Alliance** was the fundamental security pillar of Slovak foreign policy. Slovakia supported transformation of the Alliance to make it more capable of responding to current and emerging security threats. The country actively engaged itself in the creation of strategic decisions of the Alliance and for the first time also participated in preparation of the Alliance's new Strategic Concept. This fact was also confirmed by the session of the North Atlantic Council on the level of ministers of defence held in Bratislava in October 2009. Slovakia promoted continuation of the Alliance's enlargement, strengthening of transatlantic relations, strategic partnerships and the Alliance's cooperation with international organisations and regional groupings. Slovakia enhanced her participation in the ISAF forces in Afghanistan and confirmed the commitment to allied obligations as well the shared responsibility for international security. Slovakia has successfully developed relations with strategic allies from NATO countries and considers the general improvement of the international atmosphere after the formation of a new American administration and the American emphasis on making tools of multilateralism more effective to be an extraordinary opportunity to strengthen Euro-Atlantic ties.

As a member of the **United Nations** Slovakia has emphasised making the organisation's general operation more effective, including the area of peace operations. In 2009 Slovakia was leader of the United Nations activities supporting security sector reform, an active member of the United Nations' Human Rights Council, pushed through her candidature for the UNESCO Executive Board, was elected a member of the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and a member of the Executive Board of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

Within the **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe** Slovakia supported discussion on the future of European security within the framework of the Corfu Process and declared for a thorough implementation of confidence and security building measures.

In international organisations Slovakia actively participated in seeking responses to **global challenges**, such as the fight against terrorism, climate change, the global economic crisis, disarmament, uncontrolled migration, food and energy security, the future of water management, education,

science and the search for optimal technologies. During the global climate change conference in Copenhagen Slovakia supported the joint accommodating position of the EU member countries by a concrete contribution to the fund for assistance to developing nations aimed at achieving the imposition of global restrictions on harmful emissions.

In 2009 Slovak diplomacy also contributed to the continuation of the **integration processes in the Western Balkans** and did so especially by sharing Slovak transformation and European integration experiences and through positive regional collaboration with the international community. The Slovak position regarding the interpretation of principles of international law did not lead to a change of her views of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo.

A Prosperous Slovakia and Sustainable Development

International events were in 2009 substantially influenced by the global financial and economic crisis. The context of the crisis adversely influenced general efforts to achieve stability, prosperity and sustainable development in the world, stopped or slowed down positive integration trends and brought new impulses and challenges. Adverse economic development did on the other hand force the international community to seek ways to more consistent international dialogue and towards unprecedented efforts to achieve global coordination of anti-crisis measures. It was within this framework that the Slovak foreign policy was operating in 2009. Slovakia made her activities in the field of foreign policy subject to the new key priority. In close cooperation with all players in domestic economic policy, Slovakia made use of political and diplomatic tools to mitigate consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, to strengthen **the economic dimension of diplomacy** i.e. protection of the country's economic security and its national and state interests, to support Slovak export opportunities, encourage inflow of foreign investments, actively contribute to seeking joint international measures and at the same time consistently comply with her international obligations. Structural changes occurring in the global economy naturally increased Slovakia's interest in intensification of business and economic relations with key nations in Asia, Africa, Latin America as well as with Australia.

The Visegrad Four maintained its exceptional position within Slovakia's foreign policy priorities and its importance was, in the face of the global economic crisis, the threats to energy security and other global threats, a growing one. It is only natural that Slovak foreign policy regards the Visegrad Four as important for the region's stability.

Good relations with neighbours formed an integral part of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. Relations with the Czech Republic, which are above standard, preserved their special character of a strategic partnership. Friendly relations with Poland were traditionally intensive and accommodating. A considerable part of Slovakia's energy in the field of foreign policy was, despite Slovak efforts to free the bilateral political dialogue from historical resentments, consumed by minor-

ity issues in relations with Hungary and, to the detriment of both sides, a massive internationalisation of bilateral issues. Relations with Austria addressed pragmatic aspects of mutual and regional cooperation – projects in energy and transport infrastructure. As regards relations with the Ukraine, Slovakia put emphasis on economic and cross-border cooperation, security of energy supplies and on support for integration processes towards the EU, the WTO and NATO.

In providing **development assistance** Slovakia in 2009 did, even in conditions of decreasing domestic sources, continue to fulfil her international obligations of assistance to developing countries. The country focused on the efficiency of her assistance, a more rational distribution and the ensuring of its meaningful use.

The Interests of Slovakia in an Efficient EU

By joining the Eurozone on 1 January 2009 Slovakia successfully finalised her complete integration into the EU. The country's prestige was increased, adverse consequences of the global financial and economic crisis on the country's financial sector were mitigated, while currency stability was preserved. The country started to benefit more actively from its membership in the EU through more intensive use of structural funds and direct payments or through participation in specialised programmes of the EU. Slovakia seeks to return to the quality of fulfilment of the so-called Maastricht criteria of stability and growth of the period prior to the crisis. The timely ratification of the *Treaty of Lisbon* in 2008 supported the deepening of the European integration process and consolidation of the internal institutions of the EU aimed at strengthening a democratic, safe, in economic terms dynamic and prosperous and, in social terms, stable Europe.

Slovakia also supported **Turkey's integration ambitions**, but at the same also emphasised the necessity of fulfilling the pre-entry criteria. Slovakia's unique contribution is also present in relation to the situation in Cyprus, where it acts as the key mediator of negotiations in the so-called bi-communal dialogue between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

The **Eastern dimension** of Slovak foreign policy was strengthened by interest in stabilising the situation in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and in Central Asia, one that is *inter alia* capable of influencing the situation in Central Europe. The bilateral dispute between Russia and the Ukraine did in early 2009 endanger Slovakia's economic security. Slovakia's relations with Russia were despite that based on pragmatic partnership dialogue supporting the mutually beneficial economic cooperation and a strategic partnership of the EU and Russia.

Serving Our Citizens and Slovakia Open to the World

In cooperation with other domestic partners, the Foreign Ministry made efforts leading to a more effective and **consistent presentation of Slovakia abroad**. The ministries of culture, education and foreign affairs as well as other government departments provided, as far as available re-

sources permitted, Slovak communities abroad with their assistance in preserving and developing their language, cultural and national identity.

The year 2009 was the 5th anniversary of Slovakia's membership in the EU and NATO, the 60th anniversary of the NATO and the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. These anniversaries were actively utilised by **public diplomacy** to arrange worthy commemorative events at home and abroad.

Services to Slovak citizens who found themselves in an emergency abroad were the focus of attention of the **consular service** of the Foreign Ministry. The implementation of the Slovak foreign policy includes as an integral part a network of diplomatic missions and cultural centres. In view of the preference given to the region of Western Balkans, embassies were opened in Skopje and Tirana in 2009.

Modern Slovak Diplomacy

One of the elements of optimizing the internal operations of the Ministry was in the period in question the introduction of the strategic planning system. The implementation of strategic planning within the Ministry brought lessons that will be reflected in efforts to make the system more efficient in the upcoming period. In 2009 project management started to be introduced as a tool to carry out specific tasks of the Ministry. Several projects were launched on a pilot basis. ■

Priorities of the MFA in 2009

The main objectives of the MFA in 2009 were formulated in the document *Aims and Objectives of the Foreign Policy in 2009* that is based on *A Successful Slovakia in a Safe World*, the long-term MFA strategy. In 2009 the MFA focused mainly on:

- development of economic diplomacy;
- development of neighbourhood relations and cooperation within the V4;
- strengthening bilateral cooperation with key partners;
- support for the NATO transformation process and provision of adequate participation of Slovakia in the operations and missions of NATO;
- creation of a favourable global environment in the UN and its agencies necessary for effective reform of its institutions;
- effective promotion of the interests of Slovakia in the EU;
- the strengthening of the effective functioning of the EU institutions;
- support for EU enlargement;
- strong ENP and the Eastern Partnership project;
- strengthened regional cooperation aimed at increasing the energy security of the region and that of its individual countries;
- support for further development of transatlantic dialogue on the issues of global energy security;
- presentation of Slovakia's foreign policy, values, objectives and interests externally, development of tools and ways of public diplomacy;
- making implementation of diplomacy more efficient through reform and modernisation of the MFA.



Slovakia was successfully developing her relations with the USA, NATO's key guarantor of security. In the picture, President of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič informally meets President of the USA Barack Obama during the NATO Summit in Strasbourg (April 2009).

1

A Safe and Democratic World



In 2009 the Slovak Republic also successfully built up the credit and position of a well-respected member of the international community capable of helping to solve the most demanding global and regional issues. Through her activities in the UN, NATO, CoE and the OSCE Slovakia, a member country of the EU, also contributed to building a safe and democratic world, spreading the values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights.

In 2009 Slovakia effectively carried out her activities within the UN and its specialized agencies and furthered priorities of her foreign policy as well as the principles, values and interests of the Union in the field of strengthening the tools of multilateralism and an effective system of international relations, with the UN's role being central to these efforts.

The further deepening of transatlantic ties as an expression of strategic partnership between North America and Europe is necessary for security of the world. How successfully this cooperation was conceived is confirmed by the 60 years of NATO's existence commemorated in 2009. Last year, moreover, a decision on preparation of a new Strategic Concept of the Alliance was adopted.

Not only did the Alliance continue, under the baton of A. F. Rasmussen, the new Secretary-General, elected during the Kehl and Strasbourg summits (April 2009) the process of its transformation, but it also developed relations with partners. An excellent example of cooperation between NATO member countries and partnership countries is the ISAF operation in Afghanistan. In 2009, also, cooperation within the framework of the NATO – Russia Council managed to be restored.

The progress of relations between NATO and the EU is of great importance for further development of the security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area. In 2009 no progress of practical relevance was, however, made in this regard concerning the area of joint activities within operations and on the political and strategic level.

Last year the central topic within the OSCE was the discussion on the future of European security referred to as the Corfu Process. During the Ministerial Council the OSCE participating states confirmed their interest in forwarding the discussion on the future of European security on a qualitatively higher level; by adopting the *Declaration and Decision on the Corfu Process* the issues and form of discussion were defined according to which the process is to be continued under the Kazakh OSCE chairmanship.

Within the context of the Russian suspension of the *Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe* Slovakia supported dialogue on the parallel action plan proposal as well as seeking solutions to the key differences in views with the aim of bringing the *Treaty on Adaptation* into force. Slovakia supported the activities of the OSCE aimed at solving the frozen conflicts and strengthening or preserving the OSCE missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo.

Within the Council of Europe Slovakia actively took part in the internal decision-making processes of the Organisation and committed herself in the area of enhancing liberty, democracy and human rights in Europe. Slovakia also continued to emphasize the importance of dialogue with civil society, is material to supporting the Council of Europe's key values. ■

In 2009 Slovakia commemorated the 5th anniversary of her joining NATO. Last year Slovakia also acted in NATO as a reliable and successful ally that in a transparent and



On 22-23 October 2009 an informal meeting of defence ministers of the NATO member nations was held in Bratislava. In the Picture, the Slovak Defence Minister Jaroslav Baška, the Alliance's Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates.

predictable fashion makes use of her NATO membership to promote her foreign policy interests.

Active in NATO

Our foreign policy priorities within NATO were strengthening the general security of the Euro-Atlantic area, the creation of favourable conditions necessary for successfully facing global challenges and threats and expanding the area of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, law and order and good governance with special emphasis on those regions representing priority areas of the foreign policy of Slovakia i.e. Ukraine and the Western Balkans.

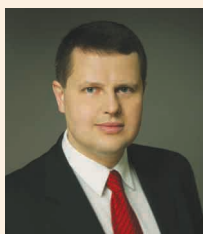


From the Forum of the Slovak Security Community (Bratislava, September 2009)

Enduring attention was also paid to the issue of development of relations of Russia and NATO. Moreover on 22-23 October 2009 the Slovak Republic for the first time in its history hosted the informal meeting of ministers of defence of the Alliance's member countries. The meeting was the largest international event so far in Slovakia. It was, in terms of contents, logistics and its social aspects, highly appreciated and was utilized to positively present Slovakia on a broad international level. NATO Secretary-General A.F. Rasmussen and Supreme Allied Commander Europe Admiral J.G. Stavridis both visited Slovakia on this occasion.

One of the main objectives of the Slovakia's foreign policy last year was support for NATO enlargement – Albania and Croatia joined the Alliance. Slovakia also actively supported other nations of the Western Balkans interested in NATO membership, especially Macedonia. We promoted granting the *Membership Action Plan* (MAP) not just to Montenegro, which was granted MAP in December 2009, but on political grounds to Bosnia and Herzegovina also, which will be offered MAP once the criteria are fulfilled.

The embassy of the Slovak Republic in Kiev successfully fulfilled its task as the NATO Contact Point Embassy for the Ukraine. Slovak experts provided the Ukraine with their experiences and expert assistance in working out her *First Annual Action Plan* and continued to carry out activities aimed at providing more information on NATO to the Ukrainian public.



Juraj Horváth, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic

We Wish to Concentrate on Renewal and Stabilization

■ **Do you think that, taking the size of Slovakia into consideration, our military and non-military contribution to Afghanistan is of any relevance?**

Slovak troops are highly appreciated by allies and NATO representatives and this is not just the case in Afghanistan. Their activities definitely contribute to strengthening Slovakia's goodwill abroad. Stability in Afghanistan and in the region is not only important for the improvement of living conditions of Afghans, but is also vital to the security of NATO member nations, including Slovakia. There are many benefits that we enjoy as an EU and NATO member nation, but there are, however, also obligations that we, as a member, have to fulfil. We are obliged to contribute to international security. As contribution by each nation is of

importance, Slovakia participates militarily in the ISAF operation and at the same time provides Afghanistan with development and humanitarian assistance. We wish to concentrate our military activities in the country on renewal and stabilization. We also endeavour to strengthen our military presence in Afghanistan and with this objective in mind there are legislative changes being prepared that enable us to send civil experts to Afghanistan and to other conflict areas as well.

■ **Why does the mandate of the Slovak troops in Afghanistan need to be enhanced right now, during an economic and financial crisis?**

36 NATO member and non-member nations promised to increase their contributions within the ISAF operation. Enhancing the mandate will enable more Afghan security forces to be trained in a shorter period of time. We do not want to remain in Afghanistan for ever, therefore quicker preparation of the Afghan

In the NATO Operations

In 2009, with the aim of fulfilling the objectives assumed and to demonstrate solidarity towards its allies, Slovakia took an active and independent approach to managing her participation in operations under NATO command. Slovakia's participation was harmonized on a continuous basis with the actual resources of the country. Within NATO, with regard to the field of international crisis management and the area of solving the issues of post-conflict stabilization and development, Slovakia supported a complex approach. In this connection Slovakia consistently promoted and supported closer institutional cooperation by NATO with the EU, the UN, the OSCE and the African Union.

In 2009 Slovakia also actively supported the efforts of the international community to stabilize and develop Afghanistan as well as the region as a whole. The main forms of support still include continued participation of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic (AFSR) in the ISAF operation. In June 2009 the National Council of the Slovak Republic passed an increase in the number of troops participating in the ISAF operation to 262 as well as enhancing their mandate. The centre of military activities within ISAF focused on the provinces of Uruzgan and Kandahar, in the territory of which Slovak troops participated in guarding important buildings, clearing mines, training Afghan national security forces, reconstructing within the Dutch provincial reconstruction team and fulfilling other important tasks.



Besides other topics, the ISAF operation in Afghanistan was also discussed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Miroslav Lajčák with his USA counterpart Hillary Clinton

The AFSR has already been active in KFOR in Kosovo for ten years already. Since February 2002 a Slovak mechanized company has, together with Czech troops, operated in a joint base at Šajkovac. In 2009 a Slovak unit of 139 troops participated within a Multinational Battle Group Centre under Irish command in the Decisive Enterprise operation. In 2009 members of the Slovak unit on a regular basis carried out patrolling of the operation space, guarded buildings and historic site and safeguarded local infrastructure as well as the safe return of refugees. Throughout 2009 Slovak troops have significantly participated in creating conditions for restoring peaceful coexistence of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. At the same time plans for a gradual decrease in number of Slovak troops in KFOR were elaborated in connection with a planned gradual curtailment and transformation of KFOR to a level of so-called "deterrent presence". ■



The high level of our troops' preparedness was personally checked by Slovakia's Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák in the Lešň Training Centre before their departure for the ISAF operation

More at:
www.nato.int (NATO)

security forces will enable us to hand over responsibility for the country more quickly to the Afghans themselves. Recent developments in the ISAF operation undoubtedly require an increase in the number of troops. The opposite approach might adversely influence the course of the operation, as a shortage of troops means higher risks of military and civilian casualties, slower development of institutions, shortage of capabilities needed to train domestic security forces and failure to keep the territories under control. A possible failure of the operation may lead to distrust of the international community among the Afghan population, with all the human and material resources invested so far going to waste.

■ **It is already eight years since the overthrow of the Taliban. Is there any prospect of improvement of the situation in Afghanistan and a return of the Slovak troops?**

Something needs to be done to improve the quality of life of the Afghan people. This is very much a concrete expression of international solidarity. Slovakia as well as the other NATO member nations and the international community as a whole is, on the basis of a mandate of the UN Security Council and its resolutions, responsible for development in Afghanistan. Our presence in Afghanistan is legitimate and we consider our commitment to be a long-term obligation. Since responsibility for the defence and security of Afghanistan should in the first place be borne by the Afghan security forces, we support efforts to build them up and train them so that as soon as possible there will be room for the gradual withdrawal of the Slovak troops. Responsibility for security will be handed over gradually in those provinces in which adequate security conditions will be created. ■

Discussions within the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) were in 2009 unambiguously dominated by the issue of the future of European security that became known as the Corfu Process. After regular specialized negotiations were held in Vienna, the process succeeded in becoming firmly anchored within the OSCE and its cross-dimensional character was strengthened through all three dimensions of the OSCE i.e. the political-military, economic and environmental and human rights dimensions.

Slovakia was visible from the very start of the discussion on the future of European security. During the EU coordination meetings as well as during the Corfu informal negotiations Slovakia

presented concrete proposals to dynamize the process and supported constructive approach presented by the other delegations, including Russia. Slovakia urged that energy security become an integral part of the Corfu Process. Slovakia also requested that all fundamental human rights be approached in the same manner and that none of them be preferred over others.

Energy Security

After the gas crisis erupted Slovakia, through her Permanent Mission to the International Organisations in Vienna (PM SR), pointed out that the OSCE could, with regard to its existing mandate, pay more attention to the issue of energy security. To revive the issue within the OSCE Slovakia brought about and, in cooperation with the Greek chairmanship, arranged the Strengthening Energy Security in the OSCE Area conference held in Bratislava in July 2009. Thanks to quality participation and useful discussions in the conference a considerably increased number of countries now support intensification of the OSCE engagement in this area. Slovakia therefore resolved to prepare a draft ministerial decision on energy security. To present and to explain the concept and the intention the PM SR organised several coordination meetings in Vienna at ambassadorial and expert levels that were also attended by energy experts from Bratislava.

On 6-7 July 2009 the conference on Strengthening Energy Security in the OSCE area was held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Marcel Peško,
Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the International Organisations in Vienna

It is Possible within the OSCE to Check CFSP Functionality

What was 2009 like for the OSCE?

There was a crisis of international relations deepening in the decade from the last OSCE summit held in Istanbul and this fact was reflected in the situation within the OSCE. It seems that 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the Warsaw Pact there is once again the will to use the numerous instruments, mechanisms and legitimate obligations of the OSCE for the purpose they were created for. The range of perceptions of common values and the security position is, however, very different in individual OSCE countries. What is, however, important is the fact that thanks to the warming of US-Russian dialogue and skilful Greek chairmanship a positive atmosphere was successfully generated. The atmosphere can be characterized by a general will to start a pragmatic dialogue on European security within the OSCE and to seek ways to solve the problems mentioned.

To what does the OSCE owe its resurrection?

Positive developments within the OSCE were catalysed by, paradoxically, the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008. Russia had, in parallel, presented a proposal on elaboration of a legally binding treaty on military and security arrangements in Europe. Approval of the treaty would de facto deny existence to the OSCE as such. Launching the Corfu Process was in fact the EU's and NATO's response to President Medvedev's initiative. Russia naturally did come to understand that the Corfu Process, anchored within the OSCE, does not provide what it originally expected from the change in security arrangements. Therefore Russia nowadays talks about the need for a parallel discussion on Medvedev's initiative within the framework of several fora, a concept which is not acceptable to NATO and the EU. I do believe that Moscow will one day come to understand that the OSCE does not present any threat to her interests.

Does it make any sense for Slovakia, a member of the EU and NATO, to engage in revitalizing the OSCE?

Slovakia was one of the facilitators of negotiations on the final wording of the decision and considerably contributed to achieving a compromise solution and to adopting the document during the Ministerial Council in Athens.

Cooperation with the OSCE Institutions

In connection with the adoption of the Act on the State Language and with the developments in Slovak-Hungarian relations Slovakia, through the PM SR in Vienna, actively communicated with the OSCE institutions (mainly with the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Secretary-General and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) as well as with representatives of the diplomatic corps. Slovakia succeeded in preventing the topic of Slovak-Hungarian relations from being discussed in individual OSCE fora. At the same time the PM SR actively supported preservation of the existing mechanism of activities and the mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities as well as an increase in the budget of his office. In connection with adoption of the Press Act Slovakia intensively cooperated with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Slovaks in the OSCE

Slovakia further promoted competent and skilled Slovak experts to positions within the



Knut Vollebaek, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, visited Slovakia several times to familiarize himself more closely with the issue of the amendment to the Act on the State Language

OSCE Secretariat as well within the OSCE institutions. There are currently three Slovak experts and six technical staff working there. As regards the OSCE missions, there are six Slovak experts including Ľubomír Kopaj, OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. Slovakia participated in the activities of the ODIHR by sending ten observers to missions to observe elections in OSCE participating states (Moldova – including repeated parliamentary elections – Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro).

Within the OSCE Slovakia continued to act as Chef de File for Croatia and also supported Croatia in its efforts towards close operation of the OSCE Office in Zagreb. On the other hand the Slovak Republic did support a strong and effective presence of the OSCE in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. ■

More at:
www.osce.org (OSCE)

The OSCE is not just a successor to the Helsinki Process, but also an organisation that essentially influenced the strengthening of democracy and stability in the post-Soviet area in general, including Central Europe. I am convinced that if it were not for the OSCE, security developments in Europe would be played out in a much more dramatic way. The role of the OSCE is to smoothen through dialogue a geopolitical perception reduced to just the politico-military dimension and sphere of influence. It is also in the interests of Slovakia to resist frustration, to mobilize the strength we need to revive pragmatic discussion and to include Russia, Belarus, the nations of Central Asia and the others in dialogue on what we all share rather than on what separates us. The OSCE's main added value at present is the fact that the participating states are, on the basis of a complex understanding of security and principles, values and rules of conduct, agreed and, as a consequence of interaction with the other participating states, willing to subsequently amend their foreign and domestic policies.

■ What has been so far and what is now the role of the EU and Slovakia in the discussion on the future of European security?

The Corfu Process offers an opportunity to influence what the security map of Europe is to look like in 5 to 10 years and this applies not only to Slovakia, but to the EU as well. It is precisely within the framework of the OSCE that the functionality and efficiency of the CFSP after the *Treaty of Lisbon's* entry into force can be checked. The EU must, however, be active and set its priorities clearly. Kazakhstan, the new OSCE chairman-in-office, was authorized to elaborate by June an interim report that is to sum up proposals tabled within the framework of the Corfu Process. The report should become a basis for a decision on an OSCE summit to be held as early as the end of 2010. From the very start Slovakia participated in the discussion in an active and constructive fashion. The main topic introduced and actively promoted by Slovakia is energy security. ■

In 2009 Slovak foreign policy still actively pursued one of its main foreign policy priorities – relations with the nations of the Western Balkans i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia (including Kosovo).

Multilateral Efforts

Within these multilateral activities Slovakia continued to contribute to stability and security using diplomatic instruments and participating in international missions. Miroslav Lajčák, the current Foreign Minister, was in early 2009 the High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the second half of the year he, as Foreign Minister, participated in the international efforts of the EU and the USA to achieve progress in the area of that country's constitutional reform. While Slovak Armed Forces participated in the EUFOR Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the KFOR mission in Kosovo, Slovak police officers fulfilled tasks within the EUPM mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and within the EULEX mission in Kosovo. In 2009 we persisted in promoting our principled approaches consisting in support for the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in relation to a solution to the issue of Kosovo.



With Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina Sven Alkalaj



With his Macedonian counterpart Antonio Milošoski



Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Vuk Jeremić during his visit to Slovakia

Bilateral Activities

In 2009, bilateral relations and economic cooperation were further developed. Contacts on the level of supreme state representatives were accompanied by business missions and business fora aimed especially in increase in trade as well as at other forms of economic cooperation. As the volume of cooperation and that of the relevant agreements between individual government departments is increasing and the

dialogue between experts connected with European and Euro-Atlantic integration as well as political dialogue is being enhanced, contacts on the level of members of government were also enhanced. Slovak embassies were opened in Tirana and Skopje.

Passing on the Experience

Of ever-increasing importance is Slovakia's passing on to partners the experience she acquired in the accession processes to Euro-Atlantic structures. As a member of these groupings Slovakia actively promoted and still promotes further enlargement of the Union as well as the Alliance's "open door policy". The following are the areas in which considerable progress was made in 2009:

- Croatia made considerable progress in her accession negotiations;
- the Council of the European Union asked the European Commission to elaborate an opinion on the applications of Montenegro and Albania, which should lead to their being granted the status of candidate countries;
- Serbia filed her EU application and, on the basis of a Council decision, implementation of the *Temporary Agreement* started;
- the European Commission recommended EU accession negotiations with Macedonia;
- Albania and Croatia joined NATO in April 2009;
- in December ministers of foreign affairs of the Alliance member nations decided to grant the *Membership Action Plan* (MAP) to Montenegro.

A specific area shared with Bosnia and Herzegovina was know-how acquired during Slovakia's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council as the former prepares for its two-year non-permanent membership.

The most important activities and meetings with representatives of Western Balkans nations in 2009 held in the Slovak Republic:

Croatia

10 January: Jadranka Kosor, Vice Prime Minister paid a working visit to Slovakia.

1 December: President Stjepan Mesić paid an official visit to Slovakia.

Macedonia

4-5 October: Prime Minister of Macedonia Nikola Gruevski paid an official visit to Slovakia. His visit also included a Slovak-Macedonian business forum.

Serbia

26 January: Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Vuk Jeremić visited Slovakia.

2 April: Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Vuk Jeremić paid a visit to Slovakia.

11-12 June: Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Vuk Jeremić paid a two-day visit to Slovakia.

21 September: Prime Minister of Serbia Mirko Cvetković paid a visit to Slovakia. His visit also included a Slovak-Serbian business forum.

Considerable progress that will stimulate acceleration of the Western Balkans' integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures was made by the decision of the EU on introduction of a visa-free regime for those citizens of Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia (except for Kosovo) who have passports with biometric data in the event of their travelling to countries of the Schengen Area. Slovakia supported this step on the expert level as well as by arranging events on the issue. It is necessary to emphasize that Slovakia promotes as rapid as possible a visa liberalization in relation to the remaining nations of the Western Balkans.

Development Assistance

The provision of development assistance to the Western Balkans was not discontinued in 2009. Our assistance was aimed in the first place at support for the integration efforts of the region's individual nations. Specific forms of cooperation and projects, including twinings and

expert exchange, were developing. Besides that the building up of infrastructure was supported, especially as regards those fields in which certain vital conditions necessary for sustainable development need to be achieved, especially as a part of settling recent conflicts. During the visit of Miroslav Lajčák, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, to Belgrade the 10th anniversary of the Bratislava Process was commemorated with our Serbian friends. ■



President Ivan Gašparovič with his Serbian counterpart Boris Tadić during the former's visit to Belgrade

The most important activities and meetings with representatives of Western Balkans nations in 2009 held abroad:

Albania

September: the foreign ministers of Slovakia and Albania met in New York on the occasion of the UN General Assembly.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

1-2 September: Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák officially visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and as a guest delivered a speech at a meeting of Heads of Diplomatic Missions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

8-9 October: Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák took part, on the invitation of the Swedish EU Presidency, in negotiations with the political representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina held in Sarajevo.

19-21 October: Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák took part, on the invitation of the Swedish EU Presidency, in negotiations with the political representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina held in Sarajevo (Butmir).

Montenegro

8-9 June: Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák paid a working visit to Montenegro.

Croatia

12 June: Prime Minister Robert Fico paid an official visit to Croatia.

9-10 July: Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák participated in the Croatia Summit 2009 conference.

6-7 September: Speaker of Parliament Pavol Paška paid an official visit to the Republic of Croatia.

Macedonia

25-26 June: Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák paid an official visit to Skopje.

10-13 November: Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Viera Petríková paid a visit to Macedonia.

Serbia

19-21 June: President Ivan Gašparovič participated in the 16th Summit of Heads of Central European Countries in Novi Sad.

7-9 August: Vice Prime Minister Dušan Čaplovič participated in the Slovak National Days in Serbia.

2-3 October: Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák paid an official visit to Serbia and during his visit also participated in celebrations of the 90th anniversary of the grammar school in Báčsky Petrovec.

9-10 October: Vice Prime Minister Dušan Čaplovič paid a visit to Serbia.

3-4 December: President Ivan Gašparovič paid a visit to Serbia. His visit also included a Slovak-Serbian business forum focused on energy.



The Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed the 64th session of the UN General Assembly

Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon



Activities in the UN

Within the framework of her activities in the United Nations and the UN system of organisations and in coordination with the EU member nations, Slovakia supported processes aimed at mitigating adverse consequences of the crisis on maintaining order in international relations. The committed approach of the Slovak Republic was expressed by the active participation of Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák as head of the delegation of the Slovak Republic to the official part of the 64th session of the UN General Assembly in New York on 20-26 September 2009. Slovakia actively participated in intergovernmental negotiations on the reform of the UN Security Council and continued to promote the consistent and complex approach by the UN to security sector reform (SSR), acted as a coordinator of the so-called basic group for SSR and led the Group of Friends of SSR. In cooperation with Argentina we arranged an international seminar to support the role of the UN in the field of SSR in Latin America and the Caribbean that was held in Buenos Aires on 28-29 September 2009. Co-

chairs of the seminar were J. Taiana and Miroslav Lajčák, foreign ministers of Argentine and Slovakia respectively.

In 2009 Slovakia, in accordance with the concept of her activities in the international crisis management operations approved by the Government, continued her activities in UN peace missions. Members of the Slovak Armed Forces participate in the mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and in the UN observer mission operating on the borders of Israel, Syria and Lebanon (UNTSO).

During elections held in New York on 26 October 2009 Slovakia was for the first time in her history elected a member of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for three years (2010-2012).

Slovakia was, during the 36th session of the Conference of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) held in Rome in November 2009, elected a member of the 49-strong FAO Council for 2009-2012.

Slovakia was, during the 35th Session of the General Conference of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) held in Paris in October 2009, elected a member of UNESCO's Executive Council for 2009-2013. Another important success that Slovakia achieved within UNESCO was the enhancing of the entry to the Castle of Spiš and sites situated in the surroundings of the City of Levoča and the work of Master Paul of Levoča in the World Heritage List approved by the World Heritage Committee during its 33rd Session held in Seville in July 2009.

Within the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva Slovakia was last year commended in connection with the implementation of a project of relocation to third countries of a part of the Palestinian refugees from a UNHCR refugee camp situated on the border of Iraq and Syria.

In 2009 Slovakia also, through the activities of Slovak experts, succeeded in participating in the operation of the Geneva-based European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN). On 21 November 2009 Slovakia successfully joined the launch of the large hadron collider (LHC) repeated after a 14-month break.

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

In 2009 the international community faced the continued threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and concerns about such weapons being obtained by terrorists. Issues connected with arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of WMD were consider-

Slovakia in Bodies of International Organisations

- from January 2010: a member of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for 2010-2012;
- a member of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) for 2008-2011;
- from October 2009: a member of UNESCO's Executive Board for 2009-2013;
- a member of the following bodies of UNESCO:
 - for 2007-2011 Slovakia is a member of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme of UNESCO;
 - Slovakia was elected Vice-chair of the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP) for 2005-2009;
 - in 2005-2009 Slovakia was a member of the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC)
- from 1 January 2008: a member of the Executive Board of the UN Development Programme/UN Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) for 2008-2010;
- from November 2009: a member of the 49-strong Council of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for 2009-2012;
- a member of the FAO European Forestry Commission;
- for 2008-2011: a member of the UN Commission for Social Development;
- a member of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP);
- a member of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development;
- a member of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board for 2007-2009;
- a member of the Committee on Budget and Finance of the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO);
- for 2007-2009: a member of the Executive Board of the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)

ably revived in 2009. Slovakia supported those processes, including prevention, that help identify threats of proliferation of WMD and eliminate them effectively. In this regard Slovakia continued her long-term policy of support for and promotion of effective multilateralism.

Today we are witnessing a renaissance in the use of nuclear energy, which is one of those solutions that can be depended on to meet growing energy demands and at the same time face the threat of global warming. A pre-condition of the successful use and development of nuclear energy is its safe and peaceful exploitation. Important for the achievement of this objective is the activity of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In 2009 the organisation represented for Slovakia an area of natural interest and Slovakia promoted the balanced development of all the fundamental pillars of the agency, continued to provide national expertise applicable to a wide range of the Agency's activities and at the same time continued cooperation with the IAEA in the field of technical cooperation projects in Slovakia.

In the summary of trends in the field of nuclear non-proliferation 2009 was an important period for the *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty* (CTBT). There is once again a real opportunity for the treaty to come into effect and thus to introduce a unique instrument of supervision of compliance with the global ban on nuclear explosions in the shape of the CTBT organisation. Slovakia's concrete contribution to its activities in 2009 was a CTBTO NG09 field training in Stupava that served to check the capabilities of the organisation, currently being built, in the important field of detection of inert gases.

Slovakia's chairmanship of the Executive Council of the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) came to its end in 2009. Thanks to the progress made in the area of the ongoing liquidation of chemical weapons, improving mechanisms used to monitor facilities producing toxic chemical substances and the increased number of OPCW member states, which nowadays amounts to 188, it is possible to consider Slovakia's one-year chairmanship as successful.

Protection of Human Rights

An important milestone of Slovakia's membership so far in the UN Human Rights Council was the consensual adoption of the resolution on the establishment of a Working Group to explore the possibility of elaborating an optional protocol to

the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* that took place during the June session of the Council. Slovakia successfully handled the role of chief sponsor of the resolution, which was co-sponsored by another 50 UN member nations from all regional groups. Appreciation of Slovakia's merits in relation to this initiative was confirmed by the selection of a Slovak representative to chair the first stage of the working group's negotiations held successfully in December.

In 2009 the first review of the human rights record of Slovakia was carried out within the framework of the new Council's mechanism – *Universal Periodic Review*. The UN Human Rights Council in September acknowledged Slovakia's open approach and consensually adopted the final review report in which Slovakia accepted most of the recommendations made by the UN member states.

In 2009 the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the UN in Geneva was elected a member of the Working Group on Situations, a consultative body of the Council. In 2009 a Slovak expert started his four-year term in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The expert is the first Slovak representative elected a member of a UN treaty human rights body in the history of the independent Slovakia.

In September 2009 Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák signed the *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which provides individuals or groups of individuals with the option to file notices on violations of this category of human rights.

From 1 July 2009 Slovakia has been chair of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015* international programme aimed at improving the status of Roma in Europe. ■



Pavol Paška, Speaker of the Parliament, paid an official visit to Cyprus on 16-18 March 2009. On in picture, he is entering the UNFICYP Headquarters.

More at:
www.un.org (UN),
www.unhcr.org (UNHCR),
www.fao.org (FAO),
www.iaea.org (IAEA),
www.unesco.org (UNESCO),
www.cern.org (CERN),
www.opcw.org (OPCW)

Slovaks in Bodies of International Organisations:

- from 2003: Peter Tomka – acts as a judge and from 2009 as Vice-President of the International Court of Justice in the Hague;
- from 2009: Ján Kubiš acts as Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) based in Geneva;
- from 2008: Miroslav Jenča acts as Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan;
- from 2007: Mária Kadlečíková acts as Representative of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in Budapest;
- from 2009: Peter Guráň, a Slovak expert, acts within the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- Dana Farkašová is for the period between 2007 and 2010 a member of Standing Committee of the Regional Office of the World Health Organisation (WHO);
- Elena Sopková was repeatedly elected a member of the Budget and Finance Committee of the International Criminal Court (CBF ICC) based in the Hague.



A Successful and Prosperous Slovakia



The global recession and threats to the stable development of our economy predetermine new priorities for Slovak foreign policy. In view of the fact that our economy is extremely open and export oriented, with the proportion of exports to GDP amounting to 85%, one of these priorities is strengthening the economic dimension of the Slovak foreign service. Slovakia's international linkage is even more emphasized by the considerable share of foreign businesses in our GDP.

The Foreign Ministry's key priority in 2009 was the mitigation of adverse impacts of the crisis on Slovakia. This objective also regulated the internal, organisational and conceptual changes that helped us focus on several principal areas of our activities, namely enhancing coordination of all the players in the field of external economic relations, support for pro-investment and pro-export promotional activities abroad, search for the best experience and practice of other nations, intensified activities within international organisations and institutions aimed at better, in economic terms, valorisation of our membership, proactive dialogue with business circles and enterprise as well as at the creation of Slovakia's modern economic image abroad.

In March 2009 the Foreign Ministry organised a conference aimed at enhancing coordination in the area of external economic relations in overcoming consequences of the economic and financial crisis for Slovakia.

The Foreign Ministry's objective in the context of support for pro-export and pro-investment activities is to prevent a drop in our ex-

ports, to provide Slovak exporters with consistent help in promoting their products in foreign markets and in diversifying exports, which are at present to a considerable extent oriented towards EU markets (86%). We are trying to be quite clear about all the tasks assigned to the foreign service in individual segments of business and the economy.

The Ministry also seeks possibilities to fight the crisis within international organisations and does so first and foremost within the EU. This is not just a matter of drawing euro funds, it also concerns the application of all the stimulation measures we are offered by international institutions as well as the broadest possible engagement of Slovak businesses within the framework of such measures.

Another area of activities is creating a modern economic image of Slovakia abroad through presentational, expert and information events that aim at spreading goodwill for Slovakia among foreign businesses and experts.

The gas crisis of January 2009 hit Slovakia hard and prompted the creation of a coordination and consultation mechanism to operate in the field of energy security under the auspices of Ministry of Economy. Constructive coordination of both government departments leads to active support for projects and to the common EU policy aimed at diversification of sources and transport routes as well as at exploitation of renewable sources of energy and alternative technologies.

We do believe that the Foreign Ministry will in 2010 be an active player in the start-up of sustainable growth of the Slovak economy. ■

The course of the global financial crisis and the subsequent economic recession also made the Foreign Ministry to among other things significantly change its priorities vis-à-vis current issues of economic diplomacy. Thanks to its consistent approach the Ministry was able to exactly establish its real contribution to the measures taken by the Government and was on a regular basis providing the Government as well as the supreme representatives with various information materials. The Ministry was, however, also preparing events of its own aimed at supporting the economic interests of Slovakia.

An important place among the activities of the Foreign Ministry connected with the economic crisis belonged to the Ministry's own analysis of developments. The network of embassies and permanent missions abroad was actively involved as a whole in the process of evaluation of situation and trends emerging in connection with the crisis. The Foreign Ministry was then able to prepare materials on cooperation with EU member countries in remedying consequences of the economic crisis or an analysis of the measures taken by the EU and its member countries in the field of solving consequences of the economic crisis on employment and several other reports as well. All activities, especially preparation of positions to be presented in multilateral fora in which Slovakia participated in 2009 in or in which Slovakia was called on to

Snapshot of Ivan Šramko, Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia speaking at the Foreign Ministry



cooperate (such as the G20 meeting in London), were elaborated in close cooperation with the other partners, the Office of the Government, Ministry of Finance, Slovak Academy of Sciences, the National Bank and other institutions.

One of our particular activities in the period in question was preparation of a detailed overview of the rules applied by the international organisations in procurement of goods and services. The resources of these international organisations are not at all exploited by Slovak businesses.

Certain project activities of the Foreign Ministry were aimed at remedying consequences of the economic crisis. Within the framework of our cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (the OECD) we provided financial support e.g. for preparation of the Economic Analysis of Instruments to Overcome Consequences of the Financial Crisis in the Slovak Republic, a project sponsored by the Ministry of Finance or Competitive Policy in a Period of Economic Crisis, a project sponsored by the Antimonopoly Office.

Visible within the OECD

Slovakia's activities within the OECD were in 2009 of special importance. The key activity was the February visit of the OECD's Secretary-General Angel Gurría to Slovakia. The Secretary-General presented the Economic Survey of Slovakia, a report that is an important instrument for the Government to identify those areas needing to be targeted in the implementation of its economic policy. The favourable results of the survey only confirmed the generally positive perception of Slovakia by the organisation.

Through its participation in the activities of the OECD Financial Markets Committee and in the activities of the OECD Economic Outlook Committee Slovakia also actively joined the process of seeking solutions to the present crisis situation and the stabilisation of the economy. The same attention is also being paid to monitoring developments in the labour markets in relation to the crisis and post-crisis developments as well to monitoring measures taken by governments to improve the situation in labour markets and the social situation of the population.

Through her membership in the International Energy Agency (OECD/IEA) Slovakia actively participated in analysing and creating a policy of energy security and energy efficiency. An important part of Slovakia's activities was cooperation with the Nuclear Energy Agency (OECD/NEA).

Slovakia highly appreciates the current activities of the OECD directed at climate change and supports the OECD "green growth" strategy. We consider an integrated and coherent approach as an opportunity to achieve this ambitious global objective in the area of climate change and adaptation.

Within International Financial Institutions

The activities of the Foreign Ministry in relation to international financial institutions were based on their complementarity to the

activities of the Ministry of Finance and those of the National Bank. The dynamism of developments connected with the global financial crisis and the measures taken to overcome the consequences of the crisis provided sufficient room to formulate our own position on issues such as agreement on joint representation of the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, general allocation of special drawing rights or granting a loan to the IMF aimed at strengthening the Fund's own sources.

Within the UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Slovakia supported preparation of projects aimed at eliminating the consequences of food crisis, poverty and hunger, protection of the environment, creation of conditions for sustainable development and creation of jobs.

As the political dimension of business policy is ever more noticeable, the Foreign Ministry participates in those activities connected with solutions to current issues of world business and Slovak participation in it. Attention is first and foremost paid to the manner in which the common business policy of the EU is implemented, but also the operation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The multisectoral character of business issues was also shown in the solution of several problems of bilateral business relations with Ukraine brought about by the Foreign Ministry.

Cooperation with the Business Sector

An intensification of dialogue with the Slovak business community and their interest associations aimed at turning their expectations into actual Foreign Ministry policies is an important challenge for the operations of this Ministry. Through active interaction the Foreign Ministry endeavours to receive knowledge and information on what enterprise expects the Foreign Ministry to do at present and which areas the Foreign Ministry should be active in.

New impulses were brought by the conference on increase of coordination in the area of external economic relations in overcoming consequences of the economic and financial crisis organised by the Ministry in March 2009. Participants emphasized that priorities of cooperation were support for Slovak exports as well as their diversification, efforts to obtain investments in industries with high added value, care for existing investors, exploitation of our membership in international organisations to better promote our economic interests as well as maximum



The Foreign Ministry was strengthening the dialogue of government with enterprise and specialized economic organisations

drawing of any available development funds to secure sustainable economic growth.

Many of these activities are not new for the Foreign Ministry. Naming them appropriately meant, however, that these activities were granted appropriate relevance and quality.

It is also in our interest to focus, besides on traditional partners, on investment capital from Asia and from the nations of the Persian Gulf, which are, in 10 to 15 years time, expected to have the highest volume of surplus capital.

The Ministry also endeavours to create room for direct contacts between businesses in Slovakia and our supreme representatives abroad. The first contact exchange of business and investment opportunities was organised during the meeting of Heads of Diplomatic Missions held between 30 June 2009 and 3 July 2009. The Heads of Diplomatic Missions were in this way provided with an opportunity to respond directly to requests and queries from Slovak enterprise. The objective of the contact exchange was to identify new opportunities for further expansion of existing markets by Slovak producers and service providers. The exchange was opened by the Minister, who said that upon his taking over as Minister he had declared the objective of strongly engaging the Ministry in the fight against the current financial and economic crisis through a new dynamism of relations with enterprise.

Our efforts are aimed at ensuring that the representations and cooperation already started do not remain just declarations, but that we endeavour to prepare further concrete opportunities and help Slovakia's foreign trade. Representatives of Slovak enterprise are becoming members of official delegations of the supreme representatives.

An economic forum was held during the working visit of Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák to Belarus (6-7 September 2009). Seventeen Slovak companies and organisations and over 60 representatives of Belorussian enterprise participated in bilateral negotiations. ■

The year 2009, one in which we commemorated the 20th anniversary of fundamental political and social changes in Central and Eastern Europe that became an impulse for the creation and development of the Central European model of regional cooperation, has once again confirmed the growing importance of the V4 brand name.



In September the Polish city of Sopot hosted the summit of the V4 Presidents, also attended by the Slovenian President Danilo Türk

The V4 means concrete projects and exchange of young people, students and experts in the field of culture and arts, science and research, academic and scholarship exchanges and cross-border cooperation. Nowadays we are able to proudly state that a common Visegrad identity, following from the closeness of our nations, common history and culture, and at the same time strengthened by common membership in the EU and NATO is being gradually created. Slovakia tried to strengthen the internal cohesion of the V4 and its external and internal balance, including presenting concrete inward outcomes – i.e. ones towards the citizens of the V4 nations. Regular meetings on the political and expert level were continued. The most impor-

The June meeting of Prime Ministers during the V4 summit in Wieliczka, Poland



tant, in terms of influence, were the meetings of prime ministers and individual members of governments, which adopted material decisions for future pragmatic interdepartmental cooperation amongst the V4 nations. In January 2009 Bratislava hosted an extraordinary summit of prime ministers of the V4 nations and the President of the European Commission J.M. Barroso covering the gas crisis. The prime ministers at the same time participated in a celebration of the introduction of the euro in Slovakia.

The Polish Chairmanship of the V4 was concluded in June 2009 by a summit of prime ministers of the V4 nations held in Krakow-Wieliczka that adopted a decision on renewal of the working group of high representatives for energy security and decided on the creation of a working group of high representatives for the integration of the Roma population. Both working groups help to find consistent and long-term solutions to these two sensitive issues.

As regards new impulses for future cooperation, a positive contribution was also made by a meeting of presidents of the V4 nations. During the last summit of presidents held in Sopot, Poland, President Ivan Gašparovič presented the idea of promoting the Visegrad region as one of the new EU macroregions and proposed the creation of an International Visegrad Prize of Presidents to be awarded to citizens or to organisations that have considerably contributed to strengthening the Visegrad identity.

Slovakia actively and constructively used the coordination and consultation mechanisms of the V4 and supported promoting common interests of the V4 nations within the EU. Initiated by the V4 countries' foreign ministers, there was a continuation of the intensive diplomatic efforts of the V4 in the area of support for the prospects of European and Euro-Atlantic integration of nations in the Western Balkans as well as those included in the Eastern Partnership.

A special meeting of the foreign ministers of the V4 nations plus Spain, Belgium and the nations of the Western Balkans was held under the Hungarian Chairmanship (1 July 2009 – 30 June 2010). The meeting covered support for stabilisation of the nations of the Western Balkans and their integration into the EU and NATO. During this meeting Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák told about the experience he obtained while acting as High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. He confirmed that Slovakia was still prepared to provide the Western Balkans with assistance and to pass on her experience of V4 regional cooperation and proc-

List of Activities and Meetings of the V4 in 2009:

8 January	mini-summit of the V4 countries' prime ministers and EC President J.M. Barroso held in Bratislava on the gas crises
1 March	meeting of the V4 prime ministers and those of B3, Bulgaria and Romania on the occasion of the extraordinary summit of the EU on the economic crisis in Brussels
8-9 May	meeting of the V4 countries' ministers of justice in Wrocław
21 May	meeting of the foreign ministers of the V4 countries and Sweden in Warsaw
25-26 May	meeting of the foreign ministers of the V4 countries and Japan on the occasion of the meeting of foreign ministers of the ASEM countries held in Hanoi
28-29 May	meeting of the V4 countries' ministers of culture in Warsaw
2-3 June	meeting of the V4 countries' speakers of parliaments in Warsaw
3 June	summit of the V4 countries' prime ministers in Krakow-Wieliczka
24-25 June	meeting of V4 countries' deputy ministers of transport in Warsaw
25 June	meeting of the V4 countries' ministers of health in Warsaw
1-2 July	meeting of the V4 countries' regional development ministers and those of Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia in Sopot, Poland
8-10 July	meeting of the V4 countries' ministers of the environment in Krakow
11-12 September	summit of V4 countries' presidents in Sopot, Poland
6 October	meeting of the foreign ministers of the V4 countries and those of Belgium, Spain and the countries of the Western Balkans in Budapest
8 October	meeting of the V4 countries' ministers of defence in Budapest
29 October	meeting of V4 countries' prime ministers and those of Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia prior to the session of the European Council

esses for building a market mechanism as well as democratic mechanisms in society.

The mutual diplomatic and consular representation of the V4 nations represents their common interests, which has practical and positive implications for their citizens. In May 2009 a working group of the V4 foreign ministries came into existence to specify the idea further, including the joint use of premises and buildings of diplomatic or consular representations.

Slovak Chairmanship of the International Visegrad Fund

In 2009 Slovakia was the chair of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF). In this period the IVF intensified its activities within the V4 and focused predominantly on implementation of projects and awarding grants in accordance with the prioritized strengthening of Visegrad cohesion and identity, and at the same time opening the V4 Group and the IVF to other countries and regions. On the initiative of Slovakia an ethical code of the IVF was elaborated and approved. At the same time in accordance with IVF rules there was a regular change of Executive Director. Kristóf Forrai (Hungary) was replaced by Petr Vágner (the Czech Republic).

Under the Slovak Chairmanship there were over 100 small and 244 standard projects approved (nearly all of these projects applied to V4 nations and were aimed at e.g. culture, arts, science, research and cross-border coopera-

tion). Besides that 21 grants for artists from V4 countries within the framework of the Visegrad Artist Residency Programme (VARP) and 8 so-called strategic grants were approved. 153 scholarships were also granted for students from outside the V4 to attend universities in V4 countries (39 of them were awarded for study in Slovakia), 51 scholarships for students from V4 countries to study within the V4 and 16 scholarships for students from V4 countries to study outside the V4.

Under the Slovak Chairmanship transparent rules of the Visegrad+ projects were elaborated and approved. At the same time four Visegrad+ projects were approved (two of them for Serbia and another two for Belarus).

The active participation of Linda Kapustová-Helbichová, the Deputy Executive Director of the IVF (Slovakia), also contributed to the successful operation of the IVF. ■



Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the V4 countries and Sweden in Warsaw

In January Bratislava hosted an extraordinary meeting of the V4 prime ministers with EC President J.M. Barroso on the situation that arose following the Russian suspension of natural gas supplies transported through Ukraine



Good relations with all her neighbours still remains Slovakia's undoubted and permanent priority in the field of foreign policy relations. The year 2009 was characterized by efforts to cooperate in an accommodating, mutually beneficial and comprehensive fashion in the field of politics, the economy, internal affairs, culture, education, science, health, environment, tourism, cooperation of non-governmental organizations as well as in many other areas. The most important contribution was the strengthening of interpersonal relations.

In 2009 there was, just as in previous years, a high dynamism of meetings of supreme representatives, who discussed current issues in the area of further development of bilateral relations.

At present the creation and implementation of joint bilateral projects funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) have become a priority of neighbourhood cooperation. Projects exceeding 50% of the financial means allocated for individual partnerships from the ERDF for the period 2007-2013 were approved in the case of all of Slovakia's partnerships (Slovakia – the Czech Republic, Slovakia – Poland, Slovakia – Hungary, Slovakia – Austria). The projects presented especially target support for the social, cultural and economic development of regions, availability of cross-border territory and protection of the environment.

The Czech Republic

Cooperation with the Czech Republic is still characterized by relations that are above

standard. It is Slovakia's closest partner. We are pleased to note that the relation is natural, unforced and requires no useless administration. The level of our relations was best proven by the immediate assistance provided by the Czech Republic to Slovakia during the energy crisis in January 2009 through historically the very first reverse motion of the gas pipeline that safeguarded the gas supply necessary for the existence of Slovak citizens.

Tradition of mutual first and last visits paid to the other closest neighbour was confirmed by President Ivan Gašparovič, who on 9 February 2009 paid a farewell visit to the Czech Republic at the end of his first term and on 29-30 June 2009 made his first foreign trip in his second term to Brno and Prague.

In 2009 both countries commemorated historic milestones of their common existence. The most important historical event was the 20th anniversary of the historic changes that occurred during the velvet revolution in 1989. These events were in Prague commemorated by the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, while in the territory of Slovakia they were commemorated by the Speaker of the First Chamber as well as the Speaker of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic together with their Slovak host.

The leader of the Velvet Revolution and former President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic Václav Havel was on this occasion granted honorary citizenship of Bratislava.

Considerable and appreciable steps were also taken in the area of maintaining the cultural and language closeness of the Slovak and

President Ivan Gašparovič during his first official foreign visit of his second term paid to the Czech Republic while delivering a joint statement with his counterpart Václav Klaus





Current issues of bilateral relations were the main topic of the meeting of prime ministers of Slovakia and Hungary, Robert Fico and Gordon Bajnai, respectively, held in Szechenyi, Hungary, on 10 September 2009

Czech nations. Besides the existing regular guest performances by theatre companies or quality events organized by the Embassy of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Cultural Centre in the Czech Republic, viewers paid considerable attention to joint projects of the Slovak and Czech television companies.

Hungary

Development of good neighbourhood relations with Hungary ranks among the integral priorities of the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic. There were positive tendencies in mutual relations present within the European and transatlantic agenda. Cooperation within the V4 Group chaired by Hungary in the second half of 2009 was also effective. There were very good developments in the field of the two countries' regional and cross-border cooperation that resulted in many concrete projects on the level of self-governing regions, cities and municipalities. Interdepartmental cooperation also developed positively and the mixed commissions for implementation of the *Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Hungary* worked actively as well.

In 2009 the Good Neighbourhood and Understanding joint prize of foreign ministers was for the first time awarded at the Slovak Foreign Ministry to one Slovak and one Hungarian subject that had played significant roles in improving Slovak-Hungarian relations.

Positive developments were in 2009, also, to a certain degree obscured by controversial factors following from differing perception of

history and approaches to the national minority issue. The Hungarian side failed to respond to objections by the Slovak Parliament to the institutionalization of the Forum of Hungarian Representatives of the Carpathian Basin in the Hungarian National Assembly. Slovak-Hungarian relations were also influenced by the adoption of the amendment to the Act on the State Language. This legitimate step was immediately questioned in international fora by Hungary. The Slovak foreign service therefore patiently provided information on the essence of the Act as well as on the purpose of the Act's adoption and did so not just in relation to Slovakia's Hungarian partners within the framework of bilateral dialogue, but also cooperated intensively with the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities Knut Vollebaek and with the international organisations and their bodies (Council of Europe, European Commission etc.)

The Hungarian side was in the long term rejecting bilateral dialogue on the highest level. Hungarian president László Sólyom wished to pay a visit to Slovakia in August, but only wanted to do so in the Hungarian national minority circles and without the participation of his Slovak counterpart. In the event his visit did not take place at all.

The meeting of prime ministers of both countries held in Szechenyi on 10 September 2009 helped to ease mutual relations and to start a pragmatic working dialogue. A Joint Statement including as its very essence steps aimed at development of all-round cooperation was a positive outcome of the meeting.



With Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Jan Kohout



Foreign Minister of Hungary Péter Balázs during a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



With his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Khandogyi

Minister of Foreign Affairs Miroslav Lajčák and Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger during their March meeting in Vienna



Poland

The intensity of contacts with Poland was reinforced by a large number of visits of Slovak representatives to Poland connected with participation in many events organized successfully by Poland as chair of the V4 Group in the first half of 2009.

In September 2009 the very first meeting in history of the presidencies of the parliaments of Slovakia and Poland was held in the High Tatras. The meeting adopted a joint declaration supporting further all-round cooperation, especially cooperation of border regions.

In 2009 there were such fora of personalities related to the neighbouring country being created in both countries whose joint meetings should deepen dialogue and encourage further activities to directly benefit both countries and their citizens.

Poland received Slovakia's joining the Euro Zone with appreciation as well as her handling of economic, technical and administrative steps. Slovakia did several presentations in Poland and confirmed her readiness to pass on experiences of the process.

With the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk during negotiations in Bratislava



Austria

Cooperation with Austria is, in accordance with the approach of the other V4 partners, traditionally widely developed and was in 2009 being further deepened.

Austria's fundamentally rejectionist position on the use of nuclear energy is connected to the country's critical view of the completion of the 3rd and 4th blocks of the Mochovce Nuclear Power Plant. Thanks to the open approach of the Slovak side as well as to constructive discussion on a variety of issues and concerns of the partner, the requirements provided for in international agreements were successfully complied with. Thus adverse effects on the level of mutual relations were also prevented.

Austria is also an important partner in the field of energy industry, especially in the context of diversification of energy sources. In 2009 the ministers of economy signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation in this area.

An important moment is represented in the further progress made in the development of road and railway infrastructure in the border region, facilitating closer cooperation of neighbouring regions.

Ukraine

Ukraine ranks among our priorities. A democratic, politically stable and economically prosperous Ukraine is in our interests. Besides the dimension obtaining in the fact that we are two neighbouring countries, Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration ambitions add one more significant dimension to this relation. In 2009 Slovakia actively joined the preparation and implementation of the Eastern Partnership project. Slovakia's Embassy in Kiev acted in 2009 as the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Ukraine (Slovakia was again appointed for the period 2009-2010).

Mutual relations in the field of economics were in 2009 affected by several adverse factors that harmed the economic interests of Slovakia. These negative aspects were, however, gradually settled. The visit of the then foreign minister of Ukraine to Slovakia paid in October showed that there was a need for regular dialogue as an instrument to create an opportunity to present the interests of both sides and to help to solve possible problems.

As regards the economic field, the activities of Slovak enterprise will be facilitated by the *Agreement on Mutual Support and Protection of Investments between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine* which became effective in August 2009. ■

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' strategic objective was in 2009 increasing the efficiency of provision of development assistance. The *Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013* was elaborated for this purpose by the Ministry and the Strategy was approved by the Government on 4 March 2009. The document specifies the priorities, principles, concrete objectives and partners of our development assistance, with emphasis being put on the programme approach in providing the priority countries (Afghanistan, Kenya and Serbia) with assistance. A greater degree of participation by the embassies of Slovakia through projects in programme and project countries as well as in implementing the so-called micro-programmes is also expected under the document.

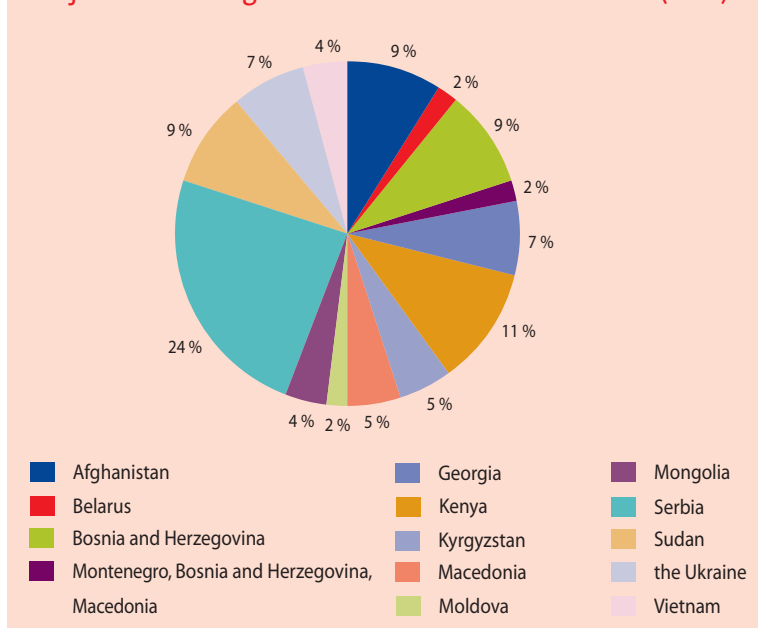
In 2009 the consolidation of our development assistance continued. A new director of the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC) was appointed, cooperation with other ministries in the statistical reporting of development assistance was improved, an information and database system of development assistance began to improve and the monitoring and assessing of projects of development assistance of Slovakia was started. The consolidation also continued through improved communication among individual government departments providing development assistance or financial means reported as development assistance, and non-governmental organisations and enterprise.

In 2009 there were two sessions of the restored Coordination Committee of Development Assistance, which is a consultative body to the Foreign Minister. This forum covers fundamental issues of the orientation and coordination of Slovakia's development assistance and combines a wide spectrum of players ranging from representatives of ministries to representatives of associations of cities and municipalities.

Bilateral Assistance

2009 was the first year of implementation of the *Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for the years 2009-2013*. The assistance was aimed at four sector priorities – building up democratic institutions, social development, economic development and building infrastructure. As regards territories, three programme countries were provided with assist-

Projects according to Individual Countries in 2009 (in %)



ance – Afghanistan, Kenya and Serbia, while there were sixteen project countries situated in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa that received assistance. The agency in 2009 announced nine public calls for projects. The SAIDC in 2010 contracted 45 development projects, the value of which amounts to 6.37 million euro with the total costs for development projects amounting to 7.1 million euro. In 2009 implementation of the micro-grant scheme introduced as a new instrument in 2008 continued. The projects were implemented by the final recipients through embassies in

Number of Projects according to Individual Countries in 2009:

Country	Projects
Afghanistan	4
Belarus	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4
Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia	1
Georgia	3
Kenya	5
Kyrgyzstan	2
Macedonia	2
Moldova	1
Mongolia	2
Serbia	11
Sudan	4
Ukraine	3
Vietnam	2
Total	45



Afghanistan also receives our assistance

Belgrade (in the case of projects for local subjects in Serbia and Montenegro), in Sarajevo (projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina), in Nairobi (projects in Kenya), in Minsk (projects in Belarus) and in Bucharest (projects in Moldova). Within the framework of the scheme 64 projects the value of which amounted to 237,857 euro were contracted in 2009.

Cooperation with Other Subjects

In 2009 cooperation with other donors continued on a trilateral and multilateral level. Within the framework of current division of work there is cooperation with Luxembourg in the area of small grants in the Balkans. An important partner of the SAIDC is the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). In 2009 the *Memorandum on Cooperation* was signed with the ADA in cooperation with which joint projects are being

prepared in Serbia and Ethiopia. Programme and geographical closeness also enables closer cooperation in the area of building capabilities. There were working meetings on different levels with other donors aimed at strengthening cooperation in Afghanistan (Canada, the Netherlands) and at cooperation in the area of humanitarian assistance (Greece, Switzerland).

Also relevant is cooperation with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in Eastern Europe as well as in the Western Balkans. The exchange of experience with the Czech partners on all levels is in no way less significant and leads to closer cooperation. As regards the regional level regular V4 development agencies directors' meetings have already become a tradition and last year such a meeting was held in Bratislava. Cooperation leads to coordination of activities and thus to increase in the quality of programming of development assistance and in its efficiency.

The Foreign Ministry continued its cooperation with international organisations, especially with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Bratislava UNDP Regional Centre. In October 2009 the amendment to Trust Fund of Slovakia and the UNDP was signed. The fund is to finance the Programme of Slovak Trust Fund 2008-2010: Spreading the Experiences of Slovakia from Transformation and Support for Human Resources Employed in Official Development Assistance.



Eva Kolesárová,
Director of the Slovak
Agency for International
Development
Cooperation

We Wish to Strengthen the Efficiency and Trustworthiness

▪ How were the consequences of the global economic and financial crisis reflected in Slovakia's provision of official development assistance?

The crisis had already influenced the budget of the public administration in 2009 and with regard to the character of projects covering a period of several years this fact was not reflected in the implementation of the development assistance planned. The crisis, however, influenced developing countries needing more assistance. Up to 60% of Slovak citizens agree with this view according to the outcomes of a poll carried out by the Focus agency in 2009. The domestic social and economic situation and the provision of assistance are not mutually competing objectives. Development assistance is one of the priorities of foreign policy and in Slova-

kia enjoys wide political support. Despite that the budget approved for 2010 implies a reduction in assistance. The Foreign Ministry tries, however, to find a solution within its own internal reserves. It is necessary to realize that elimination of poverty in developing countries requires substantially less money than elimination of conflicts caused by poverty, hunger and malnutrition. This is the global aspect. From the point of view of Slovak foreign policy and the home economy, development assistance brings indirect benefits that consist in the creation of stable partnerships, in transfer of experiences of transformation and time-proven reform procedures.

▪ What is the current situation in the field of implementation of projects of bilateral development cooperation? Are there sufficient capabilities available to handle this task?

Being in existence for three years now, SAIDC has established itself well in the system of development

An initiative was also taken to commence cooperation with other agencies within the UN system active in the field of development and humanitarian assistance (UNICEF, FAO, ILO, WFP).

Public Awareness

An important part of development assistance policy is making the public aware of its implementation and obtaining a higher degree of social support for the objectives set. This intention was fulfilled by activities aimed at priority development topics and selected target groups. These activities took place through specific projects and events of the Foreign Ministry and the ODA such as seminars, conferences, educational programmes and exhibitions.

On 28-29 January 2009 the First Annual Conference *Slovakia and Development Assistance: Challenges and Experiences*, which assessed the provision of development assistance, was held at the Foreign Ministry. The *Sharing Transition Experience* international conference was organized by the Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the UNDP Regional Centre on 25-26 June 2009. Donors as well as assistance recipients from Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Ukraine, Germany, Austria, Sweden and from the new EU member countries participated in the conference.

Humanitarian Assistance

Eight countries (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Macedonia, Palestine, Tajikistan, Taiwan



In 2009 the first Annual Conference: Slovakia and Development Assistance was held

and Ukraine) were provided with humanitarian assistance that amounted in total to 293,000 euro. As regards urgent humanitarian assistance, the Foreign Ministry for example provided the UNICEF with the financial means needed to purchase polio vaccines used to vaccinate 250,000 children in Afghanistan. In November 2009 the Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior promptly provided 200,000 hygienic gauzes for the people of Ukraine stricken with the flu epidemic. The value of the supply including its transport amounted to 30,500 euro. The Foreign Minister subsequently allocated 25,000 euro from the budget for development assistance to purchase immunological drugs for Ukraine. ■

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

assistance. The absorptive capacity of the capabilities built is proved by the ever-increasing volume of contracted financial means for bilateral projects. This does not, however, mean that there is no room for improvement. In 2009 new instruments – the micro-grant scheme, co-financing projects of the EU and cooperation with donors – were strengthened. At the same time we work on improving the quality of the Agency's capabilities and on improving the Agency's internal procedures. Likewise for the purpose of increasing efficiency and transparency we in close cooperation with the Ministry revise rules of coordination, funding and implementation of development and humanitarian assistance.

■ What challenges does the Agency face?

It is our ambition to strengthen the efficiency and trustworthiness of the assistance, with efficiency in the first place. It is connected with the completion of the monitoring, controlling and assessing

system. At the same time, new elements are being introduced into the system. In 2010 it is planned to test a *demand driven system* as a model to the effect that projects will be designed by the Agency so that they are tailor-made to a higher degree for the end users and harmonised with our assistance policy. At the same time we plan to put a *B to B: business to business scheme* into practice. The objective is to create room for strengthening our economic relations in developing countries. Another of the new elements is the issue of climate change as a new sector priority.

All of the issues will need to be communicated, in a more consistent way, to our partners. The most important of them is the non-governmental sector, which achieved the trust of the public as well as that of the recipients through its activities in the field of development assistance. The logical result of our cooperation is its institutionalization. ■

The year 2009 was first marked by the impact of external factors present in the field of Slovakia's energy security. The principal event of the year was undoubtedly the gas crisis of January, which fully revealed the security risks connected with a one-sided dependence on a sole supplier and transport route of energy carriers. It pointed out the seriousness of non-military threats to the security of Slovakia and the European political and economic area. Developments in the energy security agenda recently confirmed the importance of energy security's external, foreign policy dimension.

The Gas Crisis and Slovakia

January's commercial and political dispute between Russia and Ukraine resulted in an unprecedented eleven-day cutting off of natural gas supplies to Slovakia and other European countries. Slovakia had to announce a state of emergency and to urgently solve a situation in no way caused by it and to which it had become hostage. On the bilateral level as well as on the EU level Slovakia actively promoted the search for an early solution to the crisis situation, at the same time underlining the unacceptability of the steps taken unilaterally by Russia and Ukraine. In seeking solutions to the

crisis situation Slovakia cooperated intensively with the Czech EU Presidency and the European Commission. Appreciation is needed for the collaboration of the players and partners concerned in the solution of the crisis.

Enhancing Energy Security

For Slovakia and the EU the crisis was an important cue to prioritize the area of energy security. The fact that the issue became a matter discussed on a regular basis by the European Council also proves its importance. Within the framework of the European Plan for Economic Recovery Slovakia succeeded in putting through an increased number of projects relevant from the point of view of its energy security as well as an increased volume of financial means allocated for individual projects. In 2009 Slovakia also participated in forming the rules of the European internal energy market and in implementing directives of the climate and energy package, continued to support development in the use of renewable sources of energy and for the sake of international cooperation joined the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

Significant successes also include detabulization of the nuclear energy industry and the positive opinion of the European Commission



Maroš Kondrát,
Chairman of the
Committee on Economic
Policy of the National
Council of the Slovak
Republic

Our Energy Security is Satisfactory

■ **Is Slovakia, which in January experienced the cutting off of natural gas supplies, now better prepared to face such situations in the future?**

Cutting off natural gas supplies needs to be seen in the context of the economic crisis that came into existence in consequence of the imbalance between available energy sources and economic activity that resulted in the increase of energy prices in world markets. As long as the economy was able to absorb an increase in energy prices economic growth continued. The rapid increase of energy prices dating back to 2007 triggered, however, a change in economic activity; there was a rapid drop in it and a considerable decrease in energy prices. A new balance with considerably lower energy prices was achieved. The issue may be solved by reduction of energy consumption per production unit and at the same time by a substantial increase in the use of renewable sources of energy. A combination of the two processes represents a long-term solution to the issue. Short-term measures are being implemented in the shape of sufficiently large reserves and their availability for use within our economy. The interconnection of our gas

system with that of Hungary and securing reverse motion of the Czech gas line are being prepared in the medium-term prospect. These measures, together with the changes of legislation approved, create a sufficient and systematic solution. What may be objectively considered as a criterion is the fact that none of the investors active in the Slovak Republic closed his business due to temporary cutting off of natural gas supplies. Their presence is a signal that our energy security is considered satisfactory.

■ **How do you perceive the prospect of creation of a regional gas market in Central Europe?**

Building up a strong gas company is a right move and this is what even justifies such a subject's temporary monopoly position in the market. Each monopoly will finally, however, find a way of making above-average profits. It follows from the principle of monopolies and one may list many examples from history to the effect that no regulator was ever able to find a solution to the phenomenon. The market must from the very outset be built to become effective and should only be launched once none of the participants enjoys a monopoly position. It is possible to prove that if there are good rules in the market, it will be an asset. These are rules that

on the completion of the 3rd and 4th blocks of the Mochovce Nuclear Power Plant. The Foreign Ministry cooperated in this connection by organising and securing public discussion of the cross-border influences of Mochovce's completion on the environment. Conditions for building a new nuclear power plant in the vicinity of Jaslovské Bohunice were created on the occasion of the 4th session of the European Nuclear Forum.

Within the framework of discussions of the 3rd Platform of the Eastern Partnership Slovakia succeeded in pushing through that security of supplies of energy raw materials be discussed with the nations concerned within this new format. Slovakia also succeeded in drawing attention to the issues of energy security within the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe when in July 2009 Bratislava hosted an OSCE conference on the issue. The subsequent adoption of a ministerial decision on energy security during the Athens session of the Organisation in whose preparation Slovakia had also participated created room for intensification of the OSCE engagement in the area.

In 2009 Slovakia focused on renewal of mutual trust among partners in the chain of sup-



Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico during negotiations with his Ukrainian counterpart Yulia Tymoshenko on renewal of natural gas supplies on 14 January 2009 in Kiev

pliers and consumers, cooperation of neighbouring countries in the field of energy security as well as on progress to be made in dialogue with nations offering alternative energy sources and energy transport routes. Although a series of measures was taken that better prepared us for short-term crisis situations in the area of supplies of energy raw materials, many challenges to European and Slovak energy security still remained unsolved. ■

are crucial for a market serving the consumer. If we are, however, to witness a situation in which a dominant market participant dictates prices, then an increase in costs as a result of the dominant position of just one market participant may be expected and it is the customer that will suffer in the end.

■ Is Slovakia ready for a possible crisis in crude oil supplies?

Slovakia or MOL-Slovnaft receives one hundred per cent of its supplies from Russia through the Družba crude oil pipeline. A possible crisis in supplies may at present be covered either through the use of reserves of crude oil and crude oil products which in the Slovak Republic are created up to a level of ninety days consumption or by supplies of crude oil transported through the Adria crude oil pipeline. The other alternatives such as crude oil supplies transported by railway or by river transportation on the Danube are so demanding in economic terms that they may only be considered theoretically.

Both options may cover short-term crisis periods, but it is only possible to avoid persisting and continuing crisis if Slovakia also builds up a system of crude oil pipelines that will enable a permanent diversification of crude oil purchases from various provenanc-

es. A real competitive capacity of crude oil supplies from non-Russian sources may only be considered if such supplies will have a market share on a regular and permanent basis. Adria is not able to provide such a luxury and this is also proved by the fact that Slovnaft does not use this crude oil pipeline.

The interconnection of Bratislava with Schwechat would also create an interconnection of the Western European crude oil pipeline system and the Družba crude oil pipeline and would thus result in the creation of a Central European market with the refineries of Italy, Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia being part of one crude oil pipeline system. Transpetrol would then become an important transit element in Central Europe and the other refineries would start using its capabilities as well. Besides the undoubted benefits following from transportation of higher volumes, the creation of a much more attractive market of customers and therefore a permanent presence of Russian and non-Russian crude oil companies would be an important element of energy security. Technical solutions would of course include the possibility of reverse flows from East to West and *vice versa*. ■



Javier Solana, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, addressed a meeting of the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of the Slovak Republic held on 30 June-3 July 2009

The Interests of Slovakia in an Efficient EU



From the point of view of the EU's operation 2009 was, for several reasons, a breakthrough year – the elections to the European Parliament were held, the *Treaty of Lisbon*, which renders the functioning of the EU institutions more efficient and brings a strengthening of the democratic legitimacy, entered into force on 1 December 2009 and the process of creation of the new European Commission was also commenced. In this changing political environment Slovakia successfully carried out her activities and made herself heard. The elections to the European Parliament held in Slovakia on 6 June 2009 changed the number and composition of the members of the European Parliament for the Slovak Republic. The creation of the new European Commission brought the appointment of Maroš Šefčovič as the new European Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration and at the same time Vice-President of the European Commission. The *Treaty of Lisbon's* entry into force brings new job opportunities within the European External Action Service.

In view of the seriousness and extent of the world financial and economic crisis the Foreign Ministry in 2009 also contributed to seeking solutions and developing a harmonized EU response leading to a renewal of trust within the economy and to reforms within the financial system. Slovakia considered as important a coordinated action by the EU based on the principles of solidarity, a continued rejection of any possible protectionist efforts and the taking of relevant measures with conditions in individual countries being taken into consideration in a balanced way.

Protection of the environment, especially issues of climate change in the light of preparations for the Copenhagen summit, was last year a major topic of talks on the EU level. Although the summit did not fulfil the expectations of the world public, its outcome is, in Slovakia's view, the maximal yield that could have been achieved under the present conditions.

In view of the crisis occurring in early 2009 following the cutting off of gas supplies transported from Russia through Ukraine to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, energy policy became a priority agenda of the EU. The gas crisis showed that it is not just the region of Central and Eastern Europe but also the EU as a whole that is vulnerable in the area of energy supplies. It is therefore necessary to pay more attention to energy security and diversification of energy sources. The gas crisis also drew attention to the necessity of solidarity among the EU Member States as well to the necessity of completing infrastructure and transportation routes among the member countries. In view of these events Slovakia in 2009 actively participated in advocating short-term and long-term priorities of the EU that fully reflect our priorities.

All that these facts demonstrate is that in the present situation the idea of the EU and European integration, affected as it is by the global crisis, is as relevant and necessary as it was before. The processes of EU internal reforms based on the *Treaty of Lisbon* going on at the same time as the EU enlargement process bring challenges for the future continuation and progress of the EU, but they are in our opinion equally needed and should continue in parallel. ■

The *Treaty of Lisbon* is in our opinion a good response to the challenges the EU faces at present and will be facing in the future, too. The *Treaty* means an addition to the democratic legitimacy of the EU, a more exact specification of competencies within the EU and a higher degree of unity it presents. What is positive is the fact that the solution was found jointly and no disintegrative tendencies or concepts of a multi-speed Europe were supported.



In 2009 Maroš Šefčovič became a member of the European Commission

In 2008 the process of ratification of *Treaty of Lisbon* faced the negative result of the Irish referendum on treaty ratification. A solution in the form of the so-called Irish guarantees adopted during the EU summit held on 18-19 June 2009 became a pre-condition for successful completion of the ratification process and led to a successful Irish referendum on *Treaty* ratification held on 2 October 2009.

Once constitutional objections were settled, the *Treaty of Lisbon* was ratified in Germany as early as 25 September 2009 and the successful Irish referendum led to the completion of ratification in Poland on 10 October 2009.

Good news for Europe was the completion of the ratification process marked by the signature of the Czech President Václav Klaus on 3 November 2009 immediately following the positive decision of the Czech Constitutional Court on the *Treaty's* compliance with the Czech constitutional order. The signature was preceded by agreement on the wording of the "Czech exception" that was adopted during the session of the

European Council held on 29 October 2009. The EU Member States agreed that the Czech Republic would be allowed to have the same exception to the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU* as had been successfully achieved by Poland and Great Britain. An expression to the effect that the *Charter* would only be applied in the member countries in those cases where EU law is implemented was incorporated by Slovakia in the conclusions of the European Council. As the so-called Beneš Decrees form no part of EU law, the *Charter* does not cover them. Slovakia thus succeeded in achieving two objectives: interconnection between the *Charter* and the Beneš Decrees was excluded for good and the *Charter* will be fully in force in the territory of Slovakia.

The *Treaty of Lisbon* subsequently entered into force on 1 December 2009.

Implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon

As the *Treaty of Lisbon* issue was sensitive, all preparatory talks and negotiations on it could only be of a preliminary and informal nature. Slovakia counts among the countries welcoming renewal of such talks which were held under the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council in the second half of 2009.

From the point of view of the Foreign Ministry, the creation of the European External Action Service appears to be the most important element. The Service will in its operation work with the foreign services of the member countries. It will include officials of the relevant units within the General Secretariat of the Council and units of the Commission as well as staff seconded by foreign services of the member countries. From the point of view of human resources policy Slovakia advocated that at least one third of diplomatic staff come from national foreign services of the member countries and the idea was successfully embodied in the final recommendation presented by the European Council to the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. An agreement was also achieved with regard to the necessity of an adequate geographical balance of staff representation and that of meaningful representation of citizens of all Member States. Throughout 2009 there were several videoconferences held between the headquarters and the Permanent Representation of Slovakia to the EU in Brussels on the preparation of the European External Action Service. Creation of the Service as well as other issues connected with implementation of the *Treaty of Lisbon* remains an important task of 2010. ■

Overview of Ratification of Treaty of Lisbon in 2009

	Country	Instrument of Ratification Handed Over on
1.	Germany	25 September 2009
2.	Poland	12 October 2009
3.	Ireland	23 October 2009
4.	The Czech Republic	13 November 2009

Slovaks in the EU institutions

Slovakia in 2009 continued to increase representation of her citizens within the EU institutions. Several of our institutions played their roles within the framework of this process. The Office of the Government together with the Foreign Ministry and in co-operation with the Permanent Representation to the EU provides other departments of state with information on job opportunities within the EU and coordinates individual steps taken in the process of personnel selection related to vacancies in European institutions.

Slovaks in Brussels

With the approaching end of the seven-year preferential period during which Slovakia is able to preferentially fill 279 vacancies within the European Commission (EC) by the end of 2010, there is still an increasing number of Slovak citizens employed within the EU. As of 31 December 2009 there were, according to the statistics of the Directorate-General for Personnel and Administration (EC), 324 Slovaks working on a permanent or temporary basis (Officials and Temporary Agents) within the structures of the EC and the quota was then filled up to 116%.

Just as important as the number of Slovak citizens employed within the European institutions is the level of such representation. As of 31 December 2009 there were 200 Slovaks working in administration, while another 124 Slovaks were working as assistants. Slovaks still tend to be chiefly employed at lower job levels. It is necessary to emphasize that before the preferential period is

Representation within Individual Directorates of the EC in 2009

COLLEGE	12	JLS	11
SG	5	RELEX	4
SJ	2	TRADE	7
COMM	5	DEV	1
BEPA	0	ELARG	2
ECFIN	8	AIDCO	1
ENTR	9	ECHO	2
COMP	12	ESTAT	6
EMPL	7	ADMIN	2
AGRI	10	DIGIT	3
TREN	18	BUDG	1
ENV	16	IAS	0
RTD	7	OLAF	6
JRC	7	SCIC	11
INFSO	5	DGT	70
MARE	3	OPOCE	14
MARKT	7	OIB	2
REGIO	19	PMO	0
TAXUD	8	OIL	0
EAC	7	EPSO	1
SANCO	11	RELEX DEL	2
		Total	324

Overall Representation of Slovak Citizens in the EC

Year (December)	Overall Number	Out of which			
		Women	Per cent	Men	Per cent
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
2008	306	202	66.01	104	33.99
2009	324	210	64.71	114	35.29

Representation according to Level of Positions within the EC

AD Positions		AST Positions	
AD16	0	AST11	0
AD15	1	AST10	0
AD14	2	AST9	0
AD13	0	AST8	0
AD12	7	AST7	1
AD11	1	AST6	0
AD10	1	AST5	0
AD9	3	AST4	16
AD8	13	AST3	37
AD7	20	AST2	11
AD6	49	AST1	59
AD5	102		
AD in Total	200	AST in Total	124

over we need to focus especially on higher management positions (director of department) as Slovakia's having just one position of this rank out of three reserved only fills her quota to 33.3%.

Besides the EC there are Slovak citizens working for other EU institutions as well (Council of the EU, the European Parliament, European Economic and Social Committee, European Court of Auditors, Committee of the Regions etc) and it is possible to conclude that approximately 650 Slovaks are at present working within the EU institutions.

Besides our citizens working in EU institutions on a contract basis in 2009 there were another 20 Slovak citizens working as national experts sent by individual competent government departments.

Upon the entry into force of the *Treaty of Lisbon* the building of the European External Action Service started. Within the framework of human resources policy related to EU institutions this is a new area for sending representatives of Slovakia to the EU structures. Now that we have succeeded in pushing through that at least one third of diplomatic staff are to come from national foreign services of the member countries, attention needs to be paid to preparing and sending diplomatic staff from Slovakia to this new organisation. ■

More at:
http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/about/figures/

Participation in Mitigating the Impacts of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis

The Slovak Government welcomed the plan of the European institutions to boost growth in European Union and from the beginning of the crisis supported the idea of immediate, short-term, focused and coordinated support to accelerate demand through efficient instruments of fiscal policy. Slovakia shared the idea of support for job creation through long-term public investment projects that would contribute to the sustainable development and that would enable quicker, simpler and more efficient use of available European instruments such as structural funds or instruments of the European Investment Bank.

Slovakia committed herself to the conclusions of the European Council (29-30 October 2009) referring to the reparation of a coordinated approach for exit strategies and consolidation of public finances once recovery is secured within the framework of the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact.

Slovakia supported creation of a new system of financial supervision within the EU (which was adopted during the ECOFIN session held on 2 December 2009 and was subsequently approved by the European Council held on 10-11 December 2009). There are two dimensions to the creation of the new financial supervision institutions: the establishment of the European Systemic Risk Board for macro-prudential supervision and the establishment of the European Su-

pervisory Authorities for micro-prudential supervision. The new system should be functional in 2010.

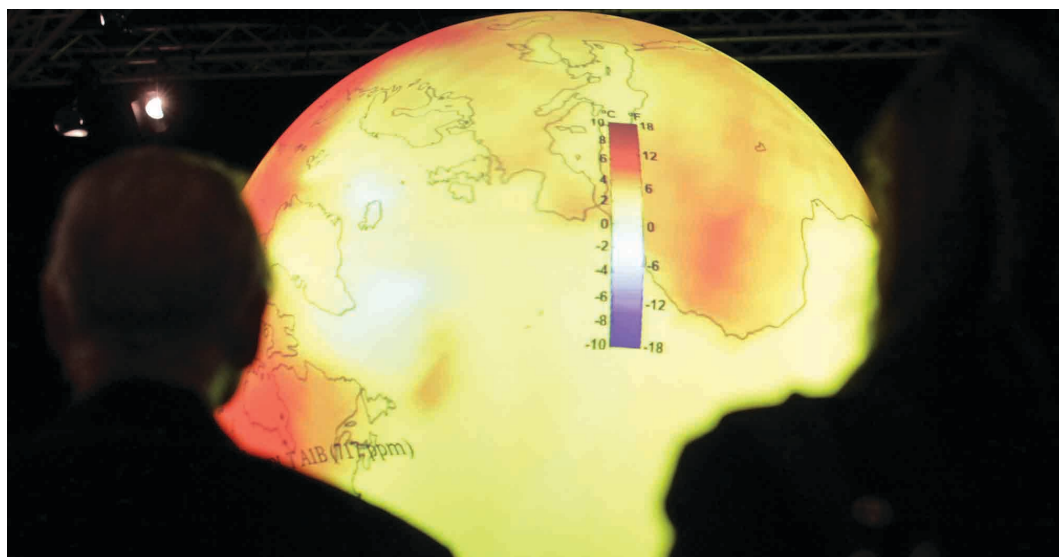
Area of Climate Change

The intensity of international negotiations on climate change was considerably increased in the second half of 2009 and prior to the December conference in Copenhagen sessions of the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* were held in Bonn (August 2009), Bangkok (October 2009) and finally in Barcelona (November 2009). What is important in relation to Slovakia is the fact that we actively participated in preparation of the EU position in particular, which is generally considered as the leader in the field.

The Copenhagen Summit held on 7-18 December 2009 unfortunately did not fulfil the expectations of the world public. The outcome of the negotiations held in Copenhagen is a political declaration combined with decisions of the Conference of Parties.

The position of the EU remained basically unchanged in the very last moments of the summit (the Annex to the declaration includes a legally binding reduction objective of the EU – reduction of 20% as compared with 1990). The document as a whole is perceived as the beginning of a process that is to result in a legally binding agreement during the 16th Conference of Parties. Positive elements present in the final “hybrid” compromise include reference to 2°C, transparency, of the need for international monitoring, verification and reporting as well as reference to the so-called fast-start financing. A negative element consists, however, in the insufficient ambition (deletion of

During the Copenhagen Summit Slovakia supported the united position of the EU countries by a specific contribution to an assistance fund for developing countries which is aimed at achieving global restrictions on harmful emissions



the reduction objective of 50% by 2050) and the legally non-binding character of the outcome of the conference on climate change.

The costs of alleviating the burdens on developing countries and helping them to adapt are estimated to amount to approximately 100 billion euro a year by 2020. Developing countries will therefore not be able to manage without international assistance and will also need international financial assistance or the fast-start financing mentioned above as early as the period between 2010 and 2020. Slovakia declared during the European Council held on 10-11 December 2009 that her contribution to the assistance planned for the period between 2010 and 2012 will amount to 9 million euro. The total contribution to be made by the EU should amount to 2.4 billion euro a year.

Energy Policy

The negative consequences of the gas crisis increased the importance of measures to increase energy security and supported efforts to advocate more proportionality in the funding of energy projects. Agreement on the reallocation of a financial package amounting in total to 5 billion euro was achieved during the European Council held in Brussels on 19-20 March 2009. The list of infrastructure projects includes a total of 17 projects in the gas sector and 9 projects in the electricity sector. Projects relating to Slovakia also include the gas interconnection of Slovakia with Hungary (Veľký Krtíš – Balassagyartmat) funded by an EU contribution which amounts to 30 million euro, and securing reverse motion of the gas flow in the event of a short-term gas cut-off, for the implementation of which the EU allotted 80 million euro for Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia. The Slovak Republic thus succeeded in putting through an increase in the number of projects of relevance to the energy security of Slovakia as well as in achieving an increase in funding allotted for individual projects.

In 2009 the European Council adopted a package of legislative measures regarding the internal energy market – specifically a directive on common rules for the internal electricity market, regulation on conditions for access to the system of cross-border electricity exchanges, regulation on the establishment of an Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, a directive on common rules for the internal natural gas market and regulation on conditions for access to natural gas transportation networks.

In 2009 Slovakia did her best to become a host country of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators. Although its candidature was not finally successful, support by major EU countries confirmed that Slovakia was perceived as a country with all the preconditions for hosting one of the significant EU agencies.

In 2009 Slovakia did not forget about the development of the nuclear power industry and the use of nuclear power was continuously defended and advocated as an instrument to achieve the objectives of the energy policy as well as one of the elements of a transformation to an ecological, low-carbon economy.

Area of Justice and Home Affairs

One of the most important tasks in 2009 was the preparation and adoption of a new multi-annual programme for the area of justice and home affairs referred to as the so-called “Stockholm Programme”. The Programme defined strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning within the framework of freedom, security and justice for the next five years. Slovakia actively participated throughout the process of preparation and adoption of the programme and successfully put through several of its positions and suggestions. The programme’s approved wording represents a balanced compromise that strictly reflects the new reality of the *Treaty of Lisbon*.

From a certain point in time onwards migration has formed a stable part of the Foreign Ministry’s agenda. The fact is also confirmed by a strategic objective of the ministry (“to contribute to the elimination of risks connected with migration in accordance with the interests of Slovakia”). In late 2008 the Foreign Ministry proposed strengthening the position of a multidepartmental working commission for the coordination of procedures connected with fulfilling tasks following from the Concept of Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic. The outcome of the initiative, also supported by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Affairs, was transformation of the commission into the Steering Committee for Migration and Integration of Foreigners, the statute of which was on 24 June 2009 approved by Government. The Committee will be the principal coordination, interdepartmental, expert and initiative body in Slovakia.

Migration was, in view of the issue’s increasing importance in the field of foreign policy, for the first time included in the agenda of regular meeting of Heads of Diplomatic Missions of the Slovak Republic (30 June-3 July 2009). ■

More at:
<http://europa.eu> (EU)

In 2009 Slovakia actively participated in the preparation and start-up of an ambitious Eastern Partnership (EaP) project that forms a part and is a continuation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Slovakia was one of spiritual fathers of the initiative as long ago as the period when it was being formed with-in the V4. The EaP represents an evolutionary step in the EU neighbourhood policy in relation to the nations on the EU's eastern margin. As the EU enlargement wave moved EU borders eastward, it was logical to redefine and enhance possibilities of cooperation with nations in immediate proximity to the EU. The EaP is at the same time one of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities.

The initiative represents a new strategic dimension of cooperation with the six countries on the Eastern borders of the EU and covers Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The EaP offers prospects of free trade agreements and improved access to markets, prospects of concluding association agreements, assistance in safeguarding energy security, financial assistance and simplified travel into the EU.

The Preparation Stage

The EaP was officially inaugurated during the Prague Summit held on 5 May 2009 under the Czech EU Presidency. Adopting a joint declaration during the Prague Summit the EU member countries and the EU partner countries specified the main objectives, principles and general

framework of further steps to be taken in cooperation. Although the EU membership prospects of the partner countries is not defined within the initiative, it is not out of question in the future.

Policies in relation to Eastern partners are based on different approaches to individual countries and on individual support provided to each of them, with the progress that the countries have made in the area of building democratic structures or in the process of change in general also being taken into consideration. The bilateral framework should reflect specific needs of each of the partner countries with the individual approach of each of the partners being the key instrument in the area.

The vision of the political association, economic integration and overall modernisation of the nations of Eastern Europe on the basis of the values and standards of the EU may be implemented through the Eastern Partnership. The main added value of the EaP is the creation of a multilateral cooperation format representing the intention to solve problems and common challenges faced by the countries involved in the EaP as a whole and providing room for activities of cooperation as well as for open and free dialogue.

The EaP enables the participation of third countries that will be able on an individual basis to participate in specific projects, activities and sessions of thematic platforms, should their participation contribute to fulfilling specific objectives of such platforms as well as to achieving general objectives of the EaP.



Pavol Hamžík,
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary
of the Slovak Republic to
Ukraine

2010 and 2011 will be of Key Importance for the Eastern Partnerships

■ Which objectives and opportunities of the Eastern Partnership are the most important and attractive for Ukraine?

Through several instruments of a bilateral and multilateral regional dimension the Eastern Partnership (EaP) offers many opportunities for cooperation between the EU and the Eastern partners. Both forms of cooperation are important for our Ukrainian friends, although they emphasize the bilateral one in which they have made greatest progress of all the Eastern partners. Focus in the field consists in early completion of talks on the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* including the *New Enhanced Agreement on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area*. Ukraine is at present approaching their

finalisation, although there are several issues that still need to be resolved. As talks are only going on for just over a year and a half, the results achieved so far may be considered as very encouraging.

The issue of visas is also one that Ukraine considers extremely important and her objective in the field is achieving as broad visa liberalisation as possible as well as the prospect of the complete cancellation of the visa requirement by Schengen countries. We also consider the issues to be important, as visas – according to our own experiences – represent a definite obstacle to human relations, business, cultural exchange etc.

A third and very important element of the *Association Agreement* is of course represented, besides business and visas, by the field of energy. Ukraine is one of the key transit countries through which gas and crude oil are transported to the EU, and therefore provisions covering this field also form part of

The Implementation Stage

The Prague Summit concluded one stage of building this EU policy within whose framework Slovakia advocated achieving as strong as possible a collective commitment of the EU members in relation to this important area, as robust as possible a project and as early a launch as possible of its practical steps.

Slovakia wishes that an implementation stage with tangible outcomes be visible, especially with regard to as early as possible a start to overcoming consequences of the global financial crisis. At the same time one of the objectives is to render the EaP a real policy aimed at practical projects of interest shared by the EU and its partner countries as well as those shared by the group of partner countries itself. It was just this framework basis that Slovakia relied upon in 2009 when she supported four thematic platforms of the EaP aimed at democracy, human relations, energy security and economic integration.

Slovakia wishes to pay special attention to deepening relations with all partner countries, but in the first place to deepening relations with Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. Already in 2009 some countries of the EaP were offered specific projects and once common elements of interest are found, projects within the territory of country in question will be implemented. Slovakia's bilateral relations with Ukraine were advanced furthest and in the past there was an Action Plan implemented in a wide range of areas. In 2009 Slovakia advocated in the EU the advancement

of negotiations on the *Association Agreement* between the EU and Ukraine that are still going on at present. In relation to Belarus a policy of conditional cooperation with the regime and support for civil society were advocated. This is just the area in which Slovak non-governmental organisations actively operate. In relation to the new government of Moldova Slovakia is preparing cooperation in the area of joint projects on the basis of the EaP.

From the practical point of view Slovakia is considering passing on experiences from its pre-entry process to partner countries as a possible benefit. It will be possible to pass on such experiences on the bilateral level or within a multilateral framework. At the same time Slovakia is the EU Member State that with regard to geography and history can benefit most in political and security terms, and directly in economic terms as well, from the Eastern neighbourhood's reform.

Slovakia considers the operation of the EaP, in existence now for over half a year since the Prague Summit, to be successful. Another impulse to successfully implement the EaP arose from a session of the Forum on Civil Society (17 November 2009) and from the session of foreign ministers meeting on 8 December 2009 in the 27+6 format that confirmed the commitments of the Prague declaration. The persisting and unambiguous message of the EaP is solidarity, support for democracy- and market-oriented reforms and development of human rights. Support for these values will contribute to the stability, security and prosperity of all parties concerned. ■



In talks with Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valery Voronetsky

More at:
http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm (the ENP),
http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/index_en.htm (the EaP)

the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*. The completion of talks on Ukraine's joining the *Energy Community Treaty* may be considered as an important outcome of 2009. The step will bring a perceptible standardisation of the Ukrainian energy market and its interconnection with the European market will be beneficial for all parties concerned.

Compared with ENP, the previous EU initiative, the multilateral dimension of the EaP represents a novelty. Its objective is strengthening ties among partner countries in many areas that were generally outlined within four thematic platforms. Ukraine is the country of the region that for many reasons is complicated and heterogeneous. It is, however, encouraging that several Eastern partners negotiated among themselves and sought to find opportunities for cooperation in joint projects within the framework of the partnership. Ukraine has potential to be a leader of the region in this field, too.

■ What are the areas that Slovakia considers to be opportunities to contribute to achieving the EaP's objectives in cooperation with the Ukrainian partners?

2009 was the year of starting the EaP, while 2010 and 2011 will be of key importance as regards the specific contents of the EaP – concrete projects. We are in regular contact with our Ukrainian partners and the objective is to clarify and to jointly define the intersection between their needs and our capabilities. Slovakia and Ukraine both perceive strengthening capabilities on central and regional levels as one of the key fields. Absorbing “the European standards” in the form of EU *acquis* is very important for the country's capability to conduct negotiations on the *Association Agreement* as well as on the *Free Trade Agreement* and to really implement what has been agreed. We ourselves have a lot of experience in this area and are at the same time willing to share it. The sectors concerned are discussed and the possibilities are wide. ■

President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč (1995-2000) and **President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel** (1989-2003) are seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. The President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel is on the left, and the President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč is on the right. They are surrounded by other officials and staff members.

President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč (1995-2000) and **President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel** (1989-2003) are seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. The President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel is on the left, and the President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč is on the right. They are surrounded by other officials and staff members.

President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč (1995-2000) and **President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel** (1989-2003) are seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. The President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel is on the left, and the President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč is on the right. They are surrounded by other officials and staff members.

President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč (1995-2000) and **President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel** (1989-2003) are seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. The President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel is on the left, and the President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč is on the right. They are surrounded by other officials and staff members.

President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč (1995-2000) and **President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel** (1989-2003) are seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. The President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel is on the left, and the President of the Slovak Republic Michal Kováč is on the right. They are surrounded by other officials and staff members.

Alexander Dubček (1921-1992), first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, is seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. He is surrounded by other officials and staff members.

Alexander Dubček (1921-1992), first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, is seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. He is surrounded by other officials and staff members.

Alexander Dubček (1921-1992), first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, is seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. He is surrounded by other officials and staff members.

Alexander Dubček (1921-1992), first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, is seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. He is surrounded by other officials and staff members.

Alexander Dubček (1921-1992), first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, is seen in a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 13 October 2000. He is surrounded by other officials and staff members.

MINISTERSTVO ZARUKANÝCH VEČÍ SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY

CESTOU ZAMATOVEJ REVOLÚCIE: SLOVENSKO PO ROKU 1989
FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE VELVET REVOLUTION: SLOVAKIA AFTER 1989
PAR LE CHEMIN DE LA RÉVOLUTION DE VELOURS: LA SLOVAQUIE APRÈS L'ANNÉE 1989

Students Bratislavských vysokých školy sa stretli v zrkadle Univerzity Comenius v Bratislave (Students of Bratislava universities met in the hall of Comenius University Bratislava on 22 November 1989)
Students of Bratislava universities met in the hall of Comenius University Bratislava on 22 November 1989
Průběh akce v Bratislavě (Prague)
Prague of the Velvet Revolution: the so-called Bratislava candle rally, the first free and peaceful demonstration in Slovakia (22 November 1989)
Prague of the Velvet Revolution: the so-called Bratislava candle rally, the first free and peaceful demonstration in Slovakia (22 November 1989)

Slovenský republikán sa stal súčasťou prvej vlády SR (The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993
První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

SLOVENSKO VOZNAJME SVETOVÉHO KULTÚRNEHO A PRÍRODNÉHO DEDIŠTVA
SLOVAKIA ON THE UNESCO LIST OF WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE
LA SLOVAQUIE SUR LA LISTE DE PATRIMOINE CULTUREL ET NATUREL DE L'UNESCO

Banka Slovenska (Central Bank of Slovakia) is a technical monument of the 20th century, designed by architect Jozef Hrubý (1927-1997). It is a masterpiece of modernist architecture, designed in the 1930s. The building is a symbol of the Slovak Republic's independence and its modernization efforts.

Banka Slovenska (Central Bank of Slovakia) is a technical monument of the 20th century, designed by architect Jozef Hrubý (1927-1997). It is a masterpiece of modernist architecture, designed in the 1930s. The building is a symbol of the Slovak Republic's independence and its modernization efforts.

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

První člen první vlády SR (Prague)
The first member of the first government of the Slovak Republic was elected on 22 November 1993

An exhibition surveying the developments that the Slovak Republic had gone through in the previous twenty years was prepared on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of November 1989. The project was presented at all of the diplomatic missions of the Slovak Republic abroad. There is a collage made of some of the posters presented in the exhibition in the picture above.

Serving Our Citizens and Slovakia Open to the World

The provision of protection and assistance to those citizens who find themselves in distress abroad ranks among the key activities of our diplomatic missions. In 2009 our consular service prioritized assistance to those citizens of the Slovak Republic who live abroad on a permanent basis or who just travel abroad temporarily. The missions actively participated in solving many emergency situations and in many cases tried to provide assistance far beyond their legal obligations. Following the smooth transition to Schengen cooperation that took place last year we actively engaged ourselves in the process of information exchange on EU citizens who found themselves in crisis areas. Our embassies in these areas cooperated intensively with the embassies of other countries also through electronic systems for consular cooperation within the framework of which coordination among foreign ministries of the EU Member States in the field of consular assistance was implemented.

In 2009 activities in the area of public diplomacy were significantly enhanced. The Foreign Ministry understands public diplomacy as a long-term process of communication that must reflect the key identification factors of Slovakia as an important player in the area of foreign policy. Contacts with non-governmental organisations as well as with civil activists, academic circles and the media play a very important role in this regard. The effectiveness of our activities in the field of foreign policy as well as the credibility of the country as such was strengthened through this kind of cooperation.

Last year Board of the Government for Integrated Presentation of Slovakia was established. The objective of the Board is to make various presentation activities performed by a wide range of Slovak subjects more efficient and better arranged. Coordination of such activities by the Board is also needed. Hence the presentation of Slovakia abroad should be lucid as far as its structure, concept and focus are concerned.

Activities in the field of cultural diplomacy carried out abroad were provided with a new impulse in the form of an agreement with the Ministry of Culture the very basic meaning of which consists in the coordination of cooperation between the two government departments in arranging and preparing cultural events, projects and other activities abroad. The fundamental cultural activities to be performed during 2012 were specified. Consistency, efficiency and rationalisation should thus be introduced in this specific area of foreign policy activities.

The Slovak Cultural Centres, the key players in the field of presentation of Slovak culture beyond its frontiers, were active last year too. A wide range of varied events to present and to promote Slovakia abroad were offered by the centres, which at the same time participated in extra-cultural projects such as promotion and presentation of Slovakia's smooth joining of the Euro Zone in 2009.

An important part of our foreign service is a network of honorary consulates that through their specific activities in 2009 also participated in developing bilateral relations and contributed to the promotion of Slovakia abroad. ■

Protection of the interests of citizens of Slovakia and assistance to persons who found themselves in distress abroad also belonged to the key tasks performed by the consular service in 2009. The position of the service within the foreign service system was greatly strengthened by the ever-increasing level of qualification of the consular staff as well as the deepening cooperation of the EU members' consular corps.

Cooperation within the Union

Consular cooperation within the EU focused especially on the exchange of necessary information on those EU citizens who found themselves in crisis areas. The information was exchanged between embassies situated in the crisis areas and through the electronic systems of the COCON working group for consular cooperation within the framework of which the activities of the foreign departments of all EU Member States in the area of consular assistance were coordinated. The Brussels crisis centre organised operative teleconferences among EU Member States and on the basis of the information received analysed the situation as well as the possibilities of assistance to EU citizens in the crisis regions. The effectiveness of procedures by EU Member States in providing consular assistance to their citizens in distress in various regions of the world was thereby increased. The SITCEN (Information Sharing Forum) web site was also established to satisfy the needs of EU Member States. The web

site provides basic information on events occurring in crisis-stricken regions. Teleconferences of representatives of consular services of EU Member States organised on a regular basis in response to the swine flu pandemic and in East Asia focused on surveying the world under threat, on monitoring EU citizens in such areas, on

providing conditions needed to give them early warning and to assist them, could all serve as examples of efficient cooperation within the framework of the COCON group.

We Assist Abroad

With regard to the considerable number of citizens of Slovakia whose habitual abode is situated abroad or who travel abroad, an overwhelming part of the issues that the consular units of our embassies deal with on a regular basis focus on providing them with consular services. There was a substantial increase in the volume of services provided to Slovaks who either live or work abroad.

Some of the Slovak diplomatic missions assisted in repatriating Slovak tourists who were, while staying in holiday destinations, hit by the bankruptcy of the SkyEurope airline. Diplomatic missions and consular authorities helped to arrange their return to Slovakia and also helped them solve many problems that occurred in connection with the airline's downfall. Our Embassy in Rome for example on its own initiative arranged substitute bus transport for Slovaks who were waiting at Fiumicino airport.

The families of three Slovak citizens who died during the early June crash of the Airbus A 330 over the Atlantic Ocean were provided with efficient assistance by the embassies concerned (Paris, Brasilia) and the Foreign Ministry. The same was the case during the evacuation of a Slovak citizen from Gaza back home through Damascus.

In August 2000 the Slovak Embassy in Bucharest provided assistance to people when the bus they were travelling in crashed. 12 out of the 41 Slovak citizens involved were hurt.

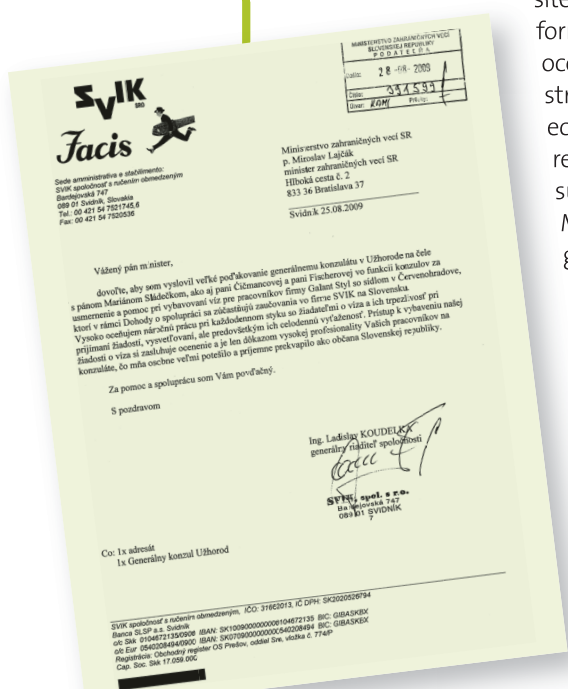
In September 2009 the Embassy of Slovakia in Ankara in cooperation with the consular department of the Foreign Ministry helped nine Slovak citizens who got hurt in a bus crash when travelling to that holiday centre.

The consular unit of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Vienna and the consular department of the Foreign Ministry were from the very outset providing efficient assistance to students who were, following a bus crash in June 2009, admitted to hospital in Graz, Austria. There were 48 students of a Senica business high school returning on the bus from their trip to Italy.

Mutual Representation

The consular department in 2009 continued to negotiate with certain EU Member States

One of the thank you letters to the Slovak Consulate General in Uzhgorod for the flexible and professional, yet kind, approach in issuing visas to employees of the Galant Styl company



on mutual representation through diplomatic and consular missions in the field of issuing visas within the meaning of common consular instructions. There were talks with France (issuing visas in Algeria, Bangladesh, Morocco, Nepal, Russia (Yekaterinburg), Sri Lanka and Tunisia), Hungary (Moldova, Saudi Arabia and Albania), Germany (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Georgia, Cambodia, Russia (Novosibirsk)), Poland (Angola, Georgia, Pakistan, Russia (Kaliningrad), Ukraine (Odessa)) and Austria (the Philippines, Lebanon and Jordan). With regard to the complexity and demandingness of the issues concerned there were negotiations held on both bilateral and multilateral levels. On 3-4 December 2009 there were meetings of Heads of Consular Departments held in Vienna, Brussels, Budapest and Bern.

The first agreement on representation in granting visas was signed with Austria in Bratislava on 23 October 2009. The agreement took effect as of 1 December 2009. Austria will, under the agreement, provide issuance of visas on behalf of Slovakia through her embassies in Beirut (Lebanon) and Amman (Jordan). The agreement is not being implemented yet as the implementation protocol thereto was not approved.

Another country in whose case there was progress made is Hungary. Agreement on the wording of the document was achieved and in 2010 the legislative approval process will be started. Hungary is supposed to issue visas in the name of the Slovak Republic in their embassies in Kishinev (Moldova), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) and Tirana (Albania). Although we have an Embassy in Tirana, granting visas is not planned there at the moment.

Negotiations on a possible agreement with France were suspended as the other party conditioned the conclusion of the agreement on granting visas for all travel documents acknowledged by France, while Slovakia insists upon granting visas just for those documents that are acknowledged by Slovakia. The dispute had not been settled by the end of 2009.

Representation in granting visas in Baku (Azerbaijan) and Phnom-Phen (Cambodia) was agreed upon with Germany. The wording of the agreement is at present being decided on by the German side.

Negotiations with Poland were temporarily renewed in connection with representation in Kaliningrad, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates.

In 2009 Lithuania proposed to represent Slovakia in granting visas in Georgia and request-

In 2009 we:

- authenticated 35,365 documents and 2,315 translations;
- made 4,485 entries of vital statistics;
- issued 5,099 passports, 1,485 certificates on citizenship and 1,768 Abstracts from Criminal Records;
- assisted in the repatriation of 72 dead citizens of the Slovak Republic;
- assisted in solving problems connected with the death of 390 Slovak citizens;
- provided non-financial consular assistance to 2,870 applicants, while financial assistance was provided to 9 persons;
- issued 3,257 temporary travel documents;
- performed the marriage ceremony for 56 couples;
- issued 65,438 visas;
- were dealing with 2,217 applications for temporary residence permits in Slovakia and 101 applications for permanent residence permits in Slovakia;
- replied to 35,981 e-mail requests.

ed at the same time to be represented in Uzbekistan. Slovenia offered her diplomatic mission to Podgorica (Montenegro) and requested to be represented in Bucharest (Romania), Nicosia (Cyprus) and Uzhgorod (Ukraine). The Slovenian side is at present considering the draft agreement presented by Slovakia.

Spain proposed representation in the countries of South America and requested to be represented in Belarus and Uzbekistan. The proposal is also under consideration.

The Slovak-Czech consular consultation held on 17 December 2009 brought the Czech proposal to represent Slovakia in granting visas in Yemen, Moldova and Mongolia that is at present being considered by the Slovak side.

New Passports

As of 23 June 2009 Slovakia began to issue new passports which include two biometric elements (photograph and the fingerprints of both index fingers). With regard to this fact, Slovak embassies began as of 29 June 2009 to receive applications for this type of passport. As of this date there was a new application of an information system enabling electronic reception and processing of applications in accordance with the European Union requirements to be installed within the consular units of embassies. Due to technical and construction conditions the start of reception of applications for passports of the new type was slightly postponed at embassies in Canberra, Lisbon, Tokyo and at the Consulate General in Cracow. A longer delay needs to be allowed for at embassies in Helsinki, Mexico City, Paris, Sarajevo and Taipei. ■



More at:
www.mfa.sk (MFA)

The Archives and Library Department continued in 2009 to carry out its activities aimed at improving the Foreign Ministry's communication and contacts with the public and the external environment. The efforts were supported by all three units organised within the department – archives, library and museum.

Diplomatic Archives

Diplomatic Archives enhanced the existing documentation base of the department of foreign affairs and new archive documents dating back to 1998 and 2001 arrived from embassies abroad. The documentation chronologically supplemented archive funds of individual diplomatic missions. Also supplemented and enhanced were the principal archival collections of:

- bilateral international agreements of Slovakia between 1992-2009;
- multilateral international agreements of Slovakia between 1993-2009;
- letters of credence (credentials) and letters of recall of foreign titulars accredited to Slovakia between 1993-2009;
- letters of credence (credentials) and letters of recall of titulars of Slovakia accredited abroad between 1992-2009;
- letters of recognition of Slovakia and on establishment of diplomatic relations with individual countries between 1993-2009.

The continuous building and enhancing of the information and documentation base of foreign policy, diplomacy and international relations is connected with increased interest in research and study of the archives. In 2009 there were a hundred research visits

made mostly by students, historians and political scientists from Slovakia, but also from the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany and Canada.

Library

The Library of the Foreign Ministry continued to acquire and to make available periodical and non-periodical literature on all types of media as well as to build up library and information funds. The services of the library, access to the daily and periodical domestic and foreign press, information databases and an extensive library fund was made use of by the staff of the Ministry especially, but consultations and study opportunities were also used by students and interns at the Ministry. Besides that the library systematically managed the reference libraries of individual diplomatic missions and provided them with acquisitions of periodical and non-periodical literature.

Diplomatic Museum

Through receiving image and text documentation from Slovak, Czech, English, French, Austrian and Italian archives and sources the Diplomatic Museum continued to enhance its store of acquisitions needed for its permanent exhibition. As a considerable part of the museum will be presented virtually, an important part of the store of acquisitions was digitised.

Within the Museum the *Commemoration of the 90th Anniversary of the Death of M. R. Štefánik* project was implemented and there was on this occasion an international conference held at the Ministry. For the purpose of presentation within our Embassies, Permanent Missions and Cultural Centres the *M.R. Štefánik – a Great Slovak and European Diplomat* exhibition was also prepared and arranged in Slovak, English and French versions. The topic of the project in question was continued with the *Štefan Osuský – a Co-founder of Czechoslovakia and the League of Nations* exhibition, which was also made to be presented in our diplomatic missions. In connection with the project and exhibitions the Museum prepared presentations at the Slovak Cultural Centres in Prague and Vienna.

The Museum also prepared the *A Concise History of Diplomacy* exhibition, which was held at the Ministry. The digital version of the exhibition is available for Slovak diplomatic

In May the Slovak translation of *Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Archival Documents of the Historical Service of the French Ministry of Defence* was presented at the Foreign Ministry



Honorary Consulates

missions. An overview of representatives and authorities that carried out the foreign policy of the states of which Slovakia was a part was also prepared.

With its lectures on the history of diplomacy the museum joined the attestation education process. There were also presentations held at the Matej Bel University, the Protestant Lycee and the University Library of Bratislava as well as within the framework of the *Senior Players of the Slovak Foreign Service* association. Events aimed at diplomatic personalities of our common history were prepared in cooperation with the embassies of France, Italy, the United States and Great Britain. The museum in cooperation with the ASA Institute participated in a seminar on the diplomat Vladimír Clementis. Within the framework of public diplomacy the Museum also gets a showing on TV, on the radio and in the press.

In 2009 the institution was registered as a museum in the register of the Slovak National Museum.

Cooperation with the Senior Players of the Slovak Foreign Service association

In 2009 *the Senior Players of the Slovak Foreign Service* civil association (the SSD) was also carrying out its activities in cooperation with and under the auspices of the Foreign Ministry. The association was also active through the six sections it was gradually developing: political, economic, legal, consular, cultural and information. During the second general meeting of the SSD held on 7 October 2009 Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák and Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Juraj Siváček confirmed the support of the Ministry for the activities of the SSD and called for coordination between the SSD and the competent units within the Ministry. ■

Honorary Consulates

The network of Honorary Consulates (HC) of Slovakia undoubtedly represents an important and basically irreplaceable part of the worldwide network of our foreign service. Activities by individual HC in 2009 included a wide range of activities from co-organisation of visits of supreme representatives through the important strengthening of the capacity for action of permanent representations from presentation of events of larger extent and coverage to participation by Slovakia in significant scientific projects of supra-regional importance. Through particular activities many HC participated in developing bilateral economic and business exchanges and projects of scientific cooperation, or by arranging exhibitions or cultural and sports events promoting Slovakia.

A possible efficient optimalization instrument for the HC's operation is a more active exploitation of modern global communication tools. The desk of the HC in the Foreign Ministry elaborated a proposal on a web portal of the HC to provide them with current news from Slovakia according to specific individual areas of interest and to provide them with access in real time to efficient information sources needed for their operation. The portal in the

English language is interconnected with the web site of the Ministry, was put into operation in June 2009 and its location is as follows: www.mzv.sk/honorary.

As of 31 December 2009 there were in total 147 consular offices of Slovakia led by Honorary Consuls operating in 83 countries on six continents. Out of this number there were 11 Honorary Consulates General led by Honorary Consuls General. The largest number of HC operate in Europe with 72 HC in total, followed by Asia with 25, North America with 17, the countries of Central and Latin America with 15, Africa with 15 and Australia and Oceania with three HC. In 2009 there were 15 proposals for establishment of new HC elaborated and four out of this number were HC to be established in Europe, six in Asia, two in North America, two in Central and Latin America and one in Australia. three honorary consuls were replaced. nine HC in total were newly established in 2009 and six of them began to operate in Europe, two in Asia and one in Latin America. Due to the resignation of honorary consuls four HC were shut down. Due to long-term passivity and on the proposal of the embassy one HC was also shut down. two HC were shut down due to the death of the honorary consuls. ■

More at:
www.mzv.sk/honorary
(Honorary Consulates)

Within a government department, public diplomacy is understood by the Foreign Ministry to be a long-term process of communication with the domestic and foreign public focused on increasing Slovakia's attractiveness and credibility as well as understanding of her objectives in the field of foreign policy. Public diplomacy needs to be embedded, in terms of values, within the characteristics of Slovakia's identity as a player in the field of foreign policy. This is, however, a long-term process that took the countries that are now through it several years. From the point of view of credibility and continuity it is important that creation of bases that public diplomacy helps to formulate in relation to target groups abroad should come into existence at home and on the basis of broad consensus. An irreplaceable role is played in this process by the cooperation of the Foreign Ministry with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which we perceive as our natural partners. Taking their autonomous and independent position into account there may be differences in opinions and views, but it is important to communicate and to defend the justness of our positions in discussions. Such an approach creates a proper basis for cooperation.

In other words, the expert and often specific potential and points of view represented by individual NGOs are a valuable and, in the first place, complementary component present in the operation of the Slovak foreign service. The NGO sector is our important partner in the field of development assistance, in relation to the Eastern Partnership or NATO's Strategic Concept, and represents a source of experience that may contribute to a better and deeper knowledge of facts, individual territories or mutual relations and connections. It helps to consider priority areas of Slovak foreign policy in a more complex fashion. In 2009 we once again focused on maintaining and deepening cooperation with the third sector, which is now already turning into a good tradition and a well-established form of mutual interaction.

Regular Support

The grant programme of the Ministry together with the services of suppliers represents an important part of the support provided to NGOs. In 2009 there were 16 NGOs applying for grants that presented 44 projects to the Ministry to assess. Within the Ministry's

budget 100,000 euro were allotted to cover the projects, which was divided among the 22 projects selected. The Ministry offers the opportunity to apply for a grant to all NGOs wishing to do so and having the capabilities to implement the projects proposed, as the financial contribution by the Ministry is in many cases just partial so that as many applicants as possible can be supported.

The same amount as in the case of the grant programme was in 2009 allotted to services of suppliers connected with publishing, consultative and conference activities.

Department of Public Diplomacy

As regards other activities of public diplomacy the Ministry was not passive either. The Department of Public Diplomacy communicated with colleges and universities, at which representatives of the Ministry delivered lectures on several important issues of foreign policy and international relations. We also focused on current issues of economic diplomacy, energy security or the role of the UN in the present globalized world. Several conferences held at the Ministry were *inter alia* organised in cooperation with NGOs and two of them focused on public diplomacy. The issues of consistent and coherent cooperation with the third sector were discussed during these two conferences. Cooperation is to bring more openness into the operation of the Ministry in general as well as into the Ministry's activities.

Slovakia's Presentation Abroad

An important step in the field of communication of activities carried out in support of Slovakia's promotion abroad was establishment of the Board of the Government for Integrated Presentation of Slovakia. The Board's Secretary-General works at the Foreign Ministry. The Ministry is in this connection the main coordinator of interdepartmental activities and steps leading to the creation of an efficient mechanism for the integration of Slovakia's presentation abroad. In 2009 Oľga Algayerová, Deputy Foreign Minister, managed the Board of the Government for Integrated Presentation of Slovakia's activities. The Board consists of representatives of the several governmental, non-governmental and regional authorities concerned. For the purpose of better coordination of the Board's operation there was an expert forum of its most committed members established. ■



The snapshots from two conferences held at the end of 2009 on issues of the integrated presentation of Slovakia and public diplomacy at the Foreign Ministry with the participation of experts and guests from Slovakia and abroad



The basic framework of the cultural dimension of foreign policy is set by fulfilling the provisions of the *Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic on Cooperation in Performance of Tasks of Cultural Diplomacy and Presentation of Slovak Art and Culture Abroad*. This activity is coordinated by an intradepartmental group that proposes joint priorities in the field of presentation of culture in accordance with the priorities of Slovakia in the field of foreign policy and with regard to the bilateral and multilateral commitments of Slovakia.

The presentation of Slovak art and the cultural dimension of diplomacy was implemented especially by a network of Slovak Cultural Centres that represents an institutional framework for presentation of Slovak culture abroad, but it was also assisted by our embassies. Varying in genre, events, exhibitions, musical events, concerts, discussions, presentations of new books and other events brought the best and the most up-to-date of what is going on in Slovak culture now. Important anniversaries and events such as the 65th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising, the introduction of the euro etc. were presented in the form of exhibitions, discussions and documentaries. In 2009 the presentation of Slovakia was dominated by the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution.

Successful events focusing on a wider public included e.g. participation in film festivals in the framework of which Slovakia presented successful films that were awarded prizes abroad. One of the most successful events was *A Man in Conflict*, a showing of original Slovak films held in Rome, Forli and Naples. There were filmmakers and theoreticians participating in the showing. From among many other events it is necessary to emphasize the following: a presentation of Slovak regions in several European cities, a series of news reports on current events in Slovakia that, as The Slovak Day, was pre-

sented as a special broadcast on Czech Radio, a presentation of the publication *Slovak-Polish Relations in the period 1918-1945 as Perceived by Diplomats*, a presentation of *The Slovak Way to the Euro* exhibition, which also included an expert seminar and was held in the Polish Parliament, *the Slovak Days* in Wroclaw which included presentation of an exhibition, a discussion forum at the University of Wroclaw and a concert which was held in the Wroclaw Philharmonic dedicated to the Velvet Revolution of



1989, a panel discussion at the Faculty of Arts of the Lóránd Eötvös University in Budapest held in the presence of direct participants in the Velvet Revolution, a concert of the Bruno Walter Symphony Orchestra and Slovak artists in the home of the Vienna Philharmonic on the eve of the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, a concert of the Žilina State Chamber Orchestra on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution held in Berlin, the *Most Beautiful Books of Slovakia* travelling exhibition within the framework of the Slovak Republic's exhibit at the International Fair of Books for Children and Youth in Bologna, the *European Integration of Slovakia* conference (2004-2007-2009) in Compiègne, France as a part of a series of lectures on Slovakia and *Line of Destiny—Man and War in the Slovak Visual Arts of Three Decades*, an exhibition of Slovak wartime visual arts in the museum of Great Patriotic War in Moscow. All of these events need to be mentioned.

One of the key activities of the Department of Public Diplomacy also includes projects of the Platform Culture – Central Europe (in the format of the V4 countries + Austria and Slovenia). In this connection we participated in two events held in the Czech Republic (Slavonice, the Skrat Theatre) and in Sweden (Göteborg, *the Century of Memory* exhibition). At the same time a project of implementation of exhibition projects presented through compact discs was launched by the *Walk Through Slovakia* pilot project. ■

On 17 November 2009 the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution exhibition was opened at the Slovak Cultural Centre in Budapest. Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament Béla Katona, Slovak Ambassador to Hungary Peter Weiss and the Czech Ambassador to Hungary Jaromír Plíšek participated in the exhibition's opening.



Minister of Foreign Affairs Miroslav Lajčák upon opening the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution exhibition at the Waseda University of Tokyo



The Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs Building in Bratislava

Modern Slovak Diplomacy

5.

The economic interconnection of countries, the globalization of international relations, the internationalization of national policies and the development of information technologies generate global issues requiring global approaches and solutions. These irreversible processes represent a natural challenge for a foreign service, become a subject of considerably enhanced interest to the foreign service and turn the diplomat into a kind of “manager of globalization”. The modern foreign service does not just consist in coverage of political events, official visits and participation in social events, but in actively advocating principles of democracy, human rights, good governance, freedom of the individual, control of WMD, the fight against terrorism, criminality and illegal migration, the prevention of conflicts, the fulfilment of commitments following from membership in supranational groupings etc. Support for the business activities of the nation, protection of investments and in the first place provision of first-rate services to the citizens of Slovakia are all challenges of a special demandingness that are present in the global era. Handling this wide range of activities requires in the first place an active approach to the modernisation process to be applied in the field of management of human resources, financial flows, information and technical appliances and continuous adaptation of the foreign service system to developments taking place in the external environment. Modernisation is therefore perceived as a consistent creation of conditions for the Ministry’s mission, which consists in:

□ efforts in favour of a secure, prosperous, successful and democratic Slovakia;

- protecting and advocating the interests of the state and its citizens in the international environment based on the values, principles and interests of Slovakia;
- contributing to increasing security, spreading freedom, democracy and advocating sustainable development and prosperity in the world;
- coordination of integrated performance of the tasks of the foreign service of Slovakia;
- provision of professional and competent services to citizens and partners in Slovakia and abroad.

Through the increasing professional skills, flexibility and abilities of the Ministry’s staff to respond quickly to fundamental issues the Ministry in 2009 continued to strengthen the capabilities of the organisation to influence events in the field of foreign policy in favour of the interests of Slovakia and its citizens. On the basis of experiences gained in the reform processes put into practice in the previous years there was innovation in the strategic and financial planning system, crisis, project and process management, assessment of staff, their training and motivation as well as improvement of services provided to the citizens. The fundamental moment within the process was the decision taken on a new organisational chart within the framework of which a fourth level of management was introduced in selected units, certain departments were done away with, new organisational units were created and agendas and personnel capabilities were re-grouped. The new organisational chart fully reflects priorities in the field of foreign policy, unambiguously separates the principal activities from supporting activities and underlines the importance of economic and public diplomacy. ■

A New Quality in the Approach to the Development of Human Resources

Management of human resources and their needs is continuously at the centre of the Ministry's attention. In direct proportion to the increasing qualification requirements the Ministry of Foreign Affairs creates such conditions for the staff of the foreign service as are necessary to improve their professional and language preparedness. The allotment of an amount exceeding 300,000 euro to cover expenses connected with our staff's training simply confirms the importance of the area.



The Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs Building in Bratislava, Palugyay Palace

In accordance with the objectives of the Desk for the Training of Staff (DTS) its activities in 2009 focused on two main areas: the area of primary training activities included training programmes aimed at promotion in diplomatic rank (attestation training and its A, B and C levels, 50 participants), training prior to joining staff at an embassy/permanent mission or cultural centre abroad (94 participants), programmes of professional training (more than 300 participants), adaptation training of new staff (32 participants) and language education (more than 150 participants), while the field of secondary activities included participation of the Ministry's staff

and employees of the civil service in courses held in Slovakia and abroad, cooperation with Slovak universities in the area of exchange of teachers and provision of practical training for university students. A milestone in the organisation's approach to the management of human resources was approval of the operation of the Diplomatic Academy which, as of 1 January 2010, started its activities as a separate unit within the Personnel Department of the Foreign Ministry.

Due to the need to harmonise the system of personnel rules and procedures with the amendment to the Act on the Civil Service as well as for the purpose of increasing the staff's motivation a new *Career Order* was approved.

Consistent Approach to Handling Crisis Situations

Recent events connected with the spreading of a pandemic of type A flu (H1N1), increasing piracy close to the shores of Somalia, the evacuation of citizens of Slovakia as well as the earthquake in Sumatra or recent events in Haiti confirm that to minimise and eliminate the risk of crisis situations occurring a foreign service must be prepared and have all necessary instruments available.

In June 2009 the Department for Crisis Management (DCM) was formed and its objective was the creation of a complex system to cover tasks of crisis management. The main task of the department is to operate a simple, sufficiently flexible and effective system of crisis management compatible with the system of national and international crisis management including the capability to actively contribute to such systems. The present priority of the DCM is improvement of early warning capabilities and a higher degree of efficiency as regards the operative fulfilment of tasks in the event of a crisis occurring. Within the framework of implementation of its activities the department can rely on the outputs of its advisory bodies – the Situation Centre (SITCEN) and Operation Centre (OPCEN). The role of SITCEN is the preparation of comprehensive analyses of security threats and crisis situations with a possible or actual impact on the interests of Slovakia, especially as regards the security of the citizens and the state. OPCEN on the other hand fulfils operational tasks connected with preventing, solving or removing consequences of a crisis situation.

Services to Citizens

The creation of the Citizens Assistance and Services Centre resulted in an integration of communication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the wider public. The role of the Centre is especially to provide the first contact information as well as information on conditions of travel abroad. Thus throughout 2009 the Centre provided 7,217 telephone consultations regarding current travel restrictions, contact details of embassies of the Slovak Republic abroad, authentication of public instruments to be used in other countries or handling the issue of heritage abroad. The Centre secured assistance to citizens who found themselves in distress abroad. In cooperation with other departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially with the Consular Department and the Department for Crisis Management, the Centre's staff coordinated assistance in cases of traffic accidents and loss of travel documents as well as in cases of the search for missing relatives or the death of Slovak citizens abroad. The justness of the unit's existence was also confirmed by an extraordinary accident – crash of the Air France airliner in the Atlantic Ocean with Slovak citizens aboard.

For the purpose of improvement of services provided to citizens the Centre introduced the possibility of voluntary registration of citizens who travel abroad at the Ministry's web site. In cases where these citizens become involved in a crisis situation, the Ministry or an embassy may provide the Slovak citizens who were registered with necessary information.

Strategic Planning

A pilot operation of the strategic planning system in 2008 through the *Balanced Scorecard* methodology brought some valuable experiences that in 2009 were taken into account in creating and implementing the new planning cycle. Decrease in administrative demandingness and the creation of room for the initiatives of departments and embassies/permanent missions or cultural centres resulted in an increasing flexibility in implementation of objectives in the field of foreign policy and adaptation of the system to the resources and needs of the Ministry. The updated version of the strategy consists of five strategic priorities containing 23 strategic objectives.

Project Management

The purpose of the introduction of project planning within the Ministry of Foreign

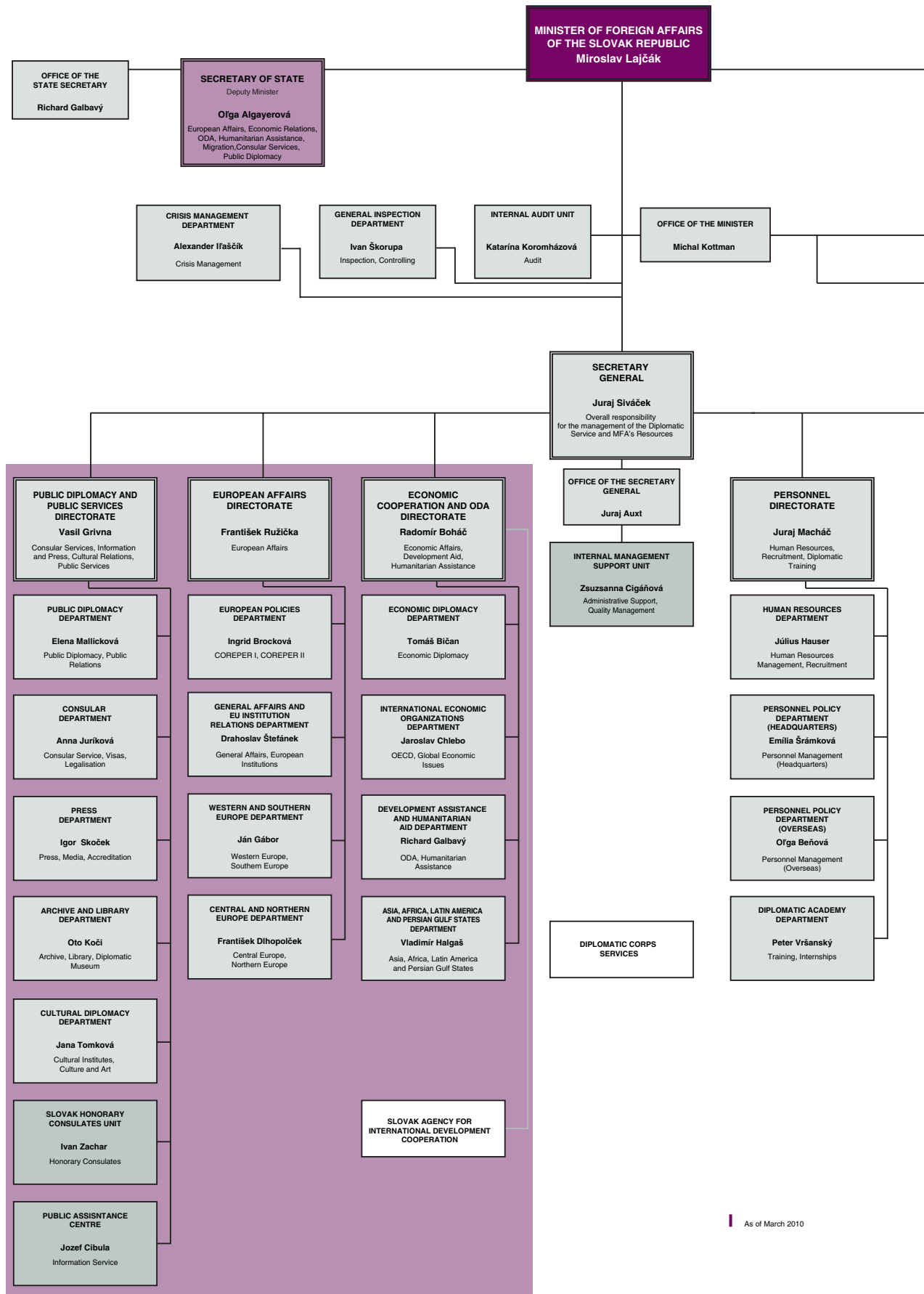
Affairs was to create an instrument enabling the fulfilment of those objectives of the foreign service of the Slovak Republic the scope of which exceeds the possibility of their implementation by the application of classical (line) management and at the same time was to create logistical support (financial means, human resources) for the tasks that can be considered as projects, that have already been implemented in the past, but without any efficient system of support, control and responsibility. 2009 was the first year in the history of the Foreign Ministry in which several projects were launched and in which individual stages of these projects were implemented. The experiences gained in the implementation process will in 2009 be used to increase the quality and efficiency of the work performed through the application of project mechanisms.

Improvement of Internal Processes

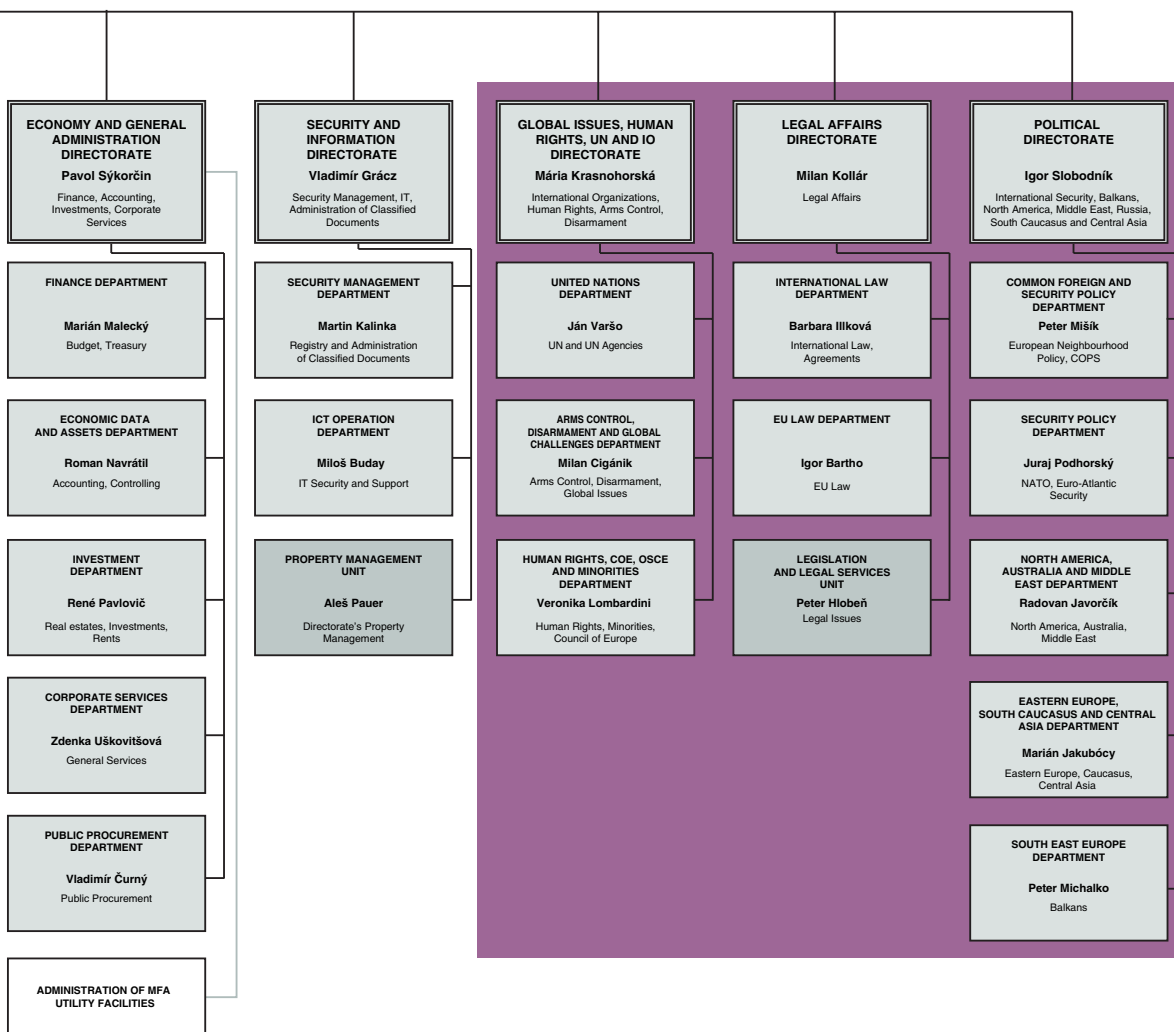
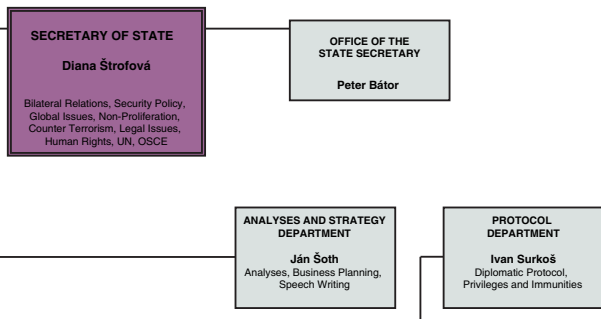
2009 could be labelled as a year of solid foundations in process management. Throughout the year the process map of the Ministry was updated and supplemented, there was harmonization of the process map with the existing flow of processes under the new organisational chart, an interconnection of processes with internal management acts and the matching of owners, organisational units and internal management acts with individual processes took place. There were also presentations and trainings of Ministry staff in the use of the software instrument for the process model, the elaboration of procedures for process management and the publication of the final version of the process map on the Ministry's intranet.

An inseparable element in the improvement in efficiency of processes is the optimisation of internal management acts (IMAs). The objective of the optimisation was the creation of a transparent and updated *Collection of the Ministry's IMAs* available both in headquarters as well as available on line at embassies/permanent missions or cultural centres abroad, a unified form and structure of rules, an information system for the purpose of creation and administration of regulations and a unified process of creation and updating of rules. The unified creation, registration and administration of the Collection of the Ministry's IMAs will be secured through a separate software instrument – Editor of Internal Management Acts. ■

MFA Organisational Chart



As of March 2010



Independent Organisations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

The Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 596/2008 Coll. on the State Budget for 2009 and the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 448/2009 Coll. changing and amending the Act No. 596/2008 approved the obligatory indicator of income for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic to the sum of 2.556 million euro.

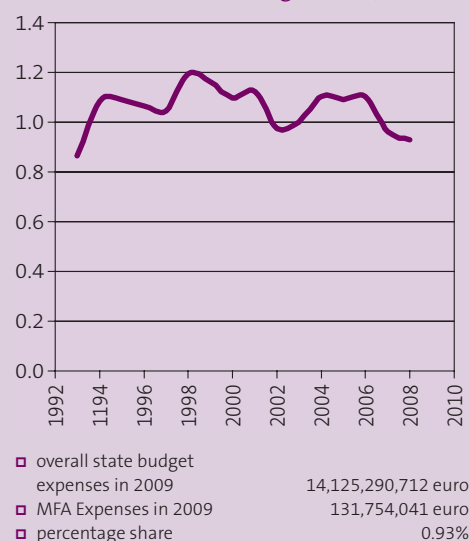
In 2009, the total expenditure of the Foreign Ministry was 131.754 million euro. Salaries, business incomes, and other personal settlements were capped at 49.373 million euro and capital expenditure at 13.195 million euro.

Over the year 2009, the expense budget was reduced by budget measures to 125.296 million euro. The actual amount spent was 123.683 million euro (99%).

The Capacities of Our Diplomatic Service in 2009

- The Slovak Republic was represented by 61 Embassies (the new embassies in Albania and Macedonia were opened in 2009), 7 Permanent Missions, 9 Consulates General (the Consulate General in Brno was closed in 2009), 3 Diplomatic Mission Branches, 1 Consular Mission, 8 Slovak Institutes and 1 Slovak Economic and Cultural Office.
- The MFA had a total of 1,063 employees, of whom 433 worked at the MFA headquarters and 630 at the diplomatic missions.
- 152 MFA employees were rotated or delegated – 87 diplomats and 53 administrative employees of the MFA along with 12 employees of other Ministries.

MFA Budget Share of the State Budget (in %)



MFA Expenditure in 2009*

(simplified summary of the overall structure – actual expenses in millions of euro)

□ Programme: Development of Foreign Relations	107.282
Slovakia in a Safe and Democratic World	9.137
A Prosperous Slovakia and Sustainable Development	6.797
The Interests of Slovakia in an Efficient EU	11.652
Serving our Citizens and Slovakia Open to the World	41.442
Promotion of Modern Slovak Diplomacy	38.254
□ Official Development Assistance	5.832
Operating Costs	0.491
Capital Expenditure	0.025
Resources on ODA	5.316
□ Slovakia's Contributions to International Organisations – MFA	10.569
NATO Headquarters Capital Transfer	0.124
Slovakia's Contributions to International Organisations	10.445
□ Total	123.683

* The data shown is not binding. It bears only informative character based on the account records of the MFA.

The closing account of the MFA for 2009 will be compiled in accordance with the Act No. 523/2004 Coll. on Budgetary Regulation of the Public Administration and the Measure of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic on the Elaboration of Closing Accounts of State Budget Chapters and subsequently submitted to the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, and the Foreign Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic in April 2010.

Diplomatic Posts of the Slovak Republic



The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Miroslav Lajčák with his Macedonian counterpart Antonio Milošoski upon opening the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Skopje



Group photograph of the Ambassadors and Heads of Missions and Cultural Centres of the Slovak Republic with the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (July 2009)