

# Foreign and European Policy in 2017

Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



**MINISTRY**  
**OF FOREIGN**  
**AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**  
**OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

# Leaders of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



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and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

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# 2017 – another dynamic year in international relations



*"Membership of the European Union and North Atlantic Alliance provides the basic framework of our country's security, stability and prosperity."*

Declaration by the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament on the priorities of the Slovak Republic's membership of the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance.



*"This is my first visit to Central Europe, and I am thrilled that it could be right here, at this magnificent, beautiful piece of land."*

Donald Trump, President of the United States of America

*"If we begin from a clear understanding of our national interests, we can find opportunities for pragmatic cooperation that will benefit Russia and Slovakia as well as their citizens under all circumstances."*



Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia

*"The tone Slovakia sets in the context of the OSCE Security Sector Reform debate is evidence of its impact in steering the agenda of the entire organization."*



Thomas Greminger, OSCE Secretary General

# Year of multilateral opportunities and challenges

Dear readers, in our assessments of recent years, we have generally stated that the world is now being influenced by many negative trends. The common denominator in this is our limited ability to face them alone. In our interconnected world, no single state, or indeed region, can respond effectively on its own to global problems.

That is partly why multilateralism is becoming increasingly important in the face of critical security threats and instability. The international institutions continue to provide an arena for finding common solutions and are increasingly aware of the potential of their own synergies. I am very glad that we too, as a country and as diplomats, have caught on to the increasing importance of multilateralism. We too are engaged in producing joint solutions and, from 2016 to 2019, are doing so at the executive level of a number of international organizations, where we can capitalize on our own experience and formulate our own ambitions.

For the Ministry 2017 was a year in which our first presidency of the Council of the EU came to a complete close and in which we undertook preparations for fulfilling other important tasks in the multilateral field. Slovakia was elected member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2018–2020 at the Autumn General Assembly of the United Nations, we prepared for Slovakia's first presidency of the OSCE in 2019, and on 1 January 2018 we became members of the presiding trio. From 2018 to 2019, we will take up the presidency of the Visegrad Four, and there will no doubt be a number of European and external challenges that will have to be tackled under our leadership, so we can remain at the centre of European action.

Achieving these goals required timely and responsible preparation, and we had to set the content and objectives of our work. I want to pay tribute to all the efforts that went into this preparatory phase and thank all those who took part in it.



Unfortunately, our efforts to connect up are accompanied by increasing tendencies that weaken the system of international relations and agreements. In his New Year's message, UN Secretary-General A. Guterres began by stating that events in 2017 had contradicted the envisaged year of peace, and then issued a "red alert" to the international community. We absolutely cannot ignore the signals that point to the declining public confidence in national and European institutions and the strengthening of political streams that oppose the values on which the EU, NATO and multilateral architecture are founded. These values form the basis of the civilizing environment to which Slovakia unquestionably belongs. Part of the problem is the spreading of disinformation in the public domain.

Consequently the Ministry saw the need for a pro-European offensive in conjunction with public awareness raising. Our goal is to enter into dialogue with the public about the basic issues facing our country and about our relations with the world, through a series of discussions at universities and through other initiatives. This is what we want to offer our closest partners – senior officials, ministries and central government agencies – and the public in the coming year.

As far as the content of our work goes, we have become used to the unexpected and complex challenges that have emerged in previous years and which continually place new demands on us. The situation in the Middle East is fragmented, we face terrorism and radicalization, there are whole generations living below the poverty line and over 65 million people are on the move.

Migration has now become a challenge on which the international community will have to spend a great deal of effort and synergy, both systematically and in the long term. Therefore in 2017 Slovakia took part in the negotiations on

# *“Migration has now become a challenge on which the international community will have to spend a great deal of effort and synergy.”*

the preparation of the UN migratory compact. In seeking ways to solve the causes of migration, Slovakia announced it would make an extraordinary contribution of €1 million to the Trust Fund for Africa. We also expressed our solidarity as a V4 member at the December EU Council Summit, where we promised to jointly provide €35 million for the integrated protection of the Libyan border.

In addition to the external challenges, 2017 was a year of internal reflection for the EU. The withdrawal of the United Kingdom naturally affects every aspect of the EU's functioning. In the Brexit negotiations, we are of course most concerned with the issue of citizens' rights. That road, however, is an unknown and open one. We have to prepare ourselves for the fact that the withdrawal agreement will require a lot of time, effort and patience. Therefore, it is still the case that nothing is agreed, until everything has been agreed.

This process of reflection was also prompted by the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU through the Bratislava process. In Slovakia there was a debate on the future of the EU and Slovakia's position within it. We agreed to join the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO), and a number of constructive decisions were taken in relation to the Bratislava Road Map.

In addition to the challenges of the presidency, the Ministry prepared for the forthcoming special “eight year” (historically important years featuring the number eight). It is an opportunity to highlight some of our achievements and accomplishments over the 100 years since the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic and over the first 25 years of our own statehood. In history a quarter of a century is a short period, but in the fast-moving developments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in particular, Slovakia has made enormous advances. We opted for independence, European membership, integration in the most important organizations of the international community and increas-

ingly we have taken on leading posts within them. I must also emphasize the shaping of tradition, the continuity of statehood, the awareness of values and the value of Slovak membership of the European civilization arc.

It is thanks to our diplomacy that we are able to remember these important milestones. Anniversaries are therefore a good opportunity for us to tell the public something about ourselves, our diplomats and our foreign service.

The founding of the Slovak Republic, following the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia, is a unique story in European history. Continuing in this vein, by having privileged neighbourhood relations, is a value that makes us Europeans. Our transformation experience, shared with the Western Balkan countries, continues to help shape the future of the EU. The countries in this region should be part of this too.

The year 2017 was also unique for me, as I became president of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. This meant the second half of the year was challenging, in terms of the functioning of the Ministry. But the high level of professionalism and professional deployment of staff meant the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs continued to pursue its national and state interests reliably and effectively, as you will see from this publication.



Miroslav Lajčák,  
Minister of Foreign and  
European Affairs of the  
Slovak Republic



▶ President Andrej Kiska at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Review Conference on Foreign and European Policy, regularly organized by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association in cooperation with the Ministry, 16 March 2017 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)



▶ Andrej Danko met with Vyacheslav Volodin, Speaker of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, whilst on an official visit to the Russian Federation, 13 November 2017 (Photo: National Council of the Slovak Republic)

▶ Prime Minister Robert Fico's meeting with the President of the European Commission focused on dual quality food, migration and the posted workers directive, 27 July 2017 (Photo: European Union)



## Ivan Korčok, State Secretary



The year 2017 was one of good news. The economies of Slovakia, the EU and the world all grew. The Slovak economy was particularly successful – at 3.3 per cent its growth was higher than the EU average. Unemployment fell and had reached a historical minimum of below 6 per cent by the end of the year. The positive economic development in Slovakia and the Union as a whole helped renew citizen trust, which had been badly shaken. Last year's election results in several member states indicated that citizens still think the EU presents the best future for their country. For once European leaders were not forced to concentrate on immediate crisis management, but had greater opportunity to think more deeply about the functioning and future direction of the European project.

Slovakia continues to play an active role in discussions on the future of the EU. As a member of Schengen and the eurozone, we are one of the most integrated member states, and consider the EU to be our habitat. The fact that Slovakia sees its future in both the EU and NATO was underlined by a joint statement made by its three most senior officials on 23 October 2017. This goes hand in glove with the fact that we as a civilization belong to the West and share its values of democracy, rule of law and fundamental human rights and freedoms. Without these there could be no talk of security, stability and prosperity in the EU, nor in Slovakia.

Last year, especially in the second half, deepening integration was the subject of much debate. Maintaining EU27 unity remains a priority for Slovakia. Nonetheless, if the EU as a whole is unable to progress on some issues, Slovakia is ready to be among an open group of countries that integrate further, specifically in areas of benefit to us and the EU. We have a duty to our citizens to make the best of our influence on the EU's decision-making processes and benefit as much as possible from common EU policies. Being among the most advanced countries in Europe will present

us with a good opportunity to pursue the economic, technological and political modernization of Slovakia and to iron out any social and economic differences. We want our country to be internally and externally successful, capable of facing up to the challenges of a dynamically changing global environment.

The common currency, single market and a secure common area for the free movement of people are not just successful EU projects but key Slovak interests as well. They are good for our economy, investment appeal and international prestige. That is why, in 2017, Slovakia sought to make use of the window of opportunity presented by the absence of acute crises and to support the steps towards completing the economic and monetary union.

We also backed efforts to complete the single internal market. The four freedoms must be fully respected, indivisible and applicable to all citizens without restriction. Protectionism is anti-European and has no place in our sphere. To this end, Bratislava hosted a consumer summit in September at which it was openly stated that dual quality foods must end. The Union has to be an area of equals. Another important advance in the internal market was the introduction of roaming at domestic prices, benefitting citizens holidaying abroad last summer. The social agenda was another major political theme in 2017. Slovakia did its share of the work, and adopted a compromise proposal on the posted workers directive.

Nor did we forget Schengen – that important symbol of European integration. It must be fully operational, with no controls at internal borders and effective control of external borders. In 2017 Slovakia backed solutions to migratory pressures that directly addressed the causes of migration. We are a supportive partner, as our contributions indicate. As part of the EU Emergency Trust Fund, we donated up to €600,000 to

# *“We coped well with 2017, given the opportunities and overall global development.”*

the Horn of Africa, and recently made an exceptional contribution of €1 million to North Africa. We are also prepared to contribute our share of the €35 million the V4 is contributing to the Trust Fund, which is no small sum.

Besides migration, there is also the growing number of terrorist attacks, the increase in armed conflicts, cyberattacks and hybrid threats, and so it is important to emphasize that the European Union has to be more proactive on defence and security. Slovakia is well aware of its responsibilities regarding the security of our state and the integration area. Last year, in response to the changes in the security environment, Slovakia drafted new security and defence strategies, which were approved by the Slovak government on 4 October. They contain ambitious goals: from strengthening crisis management capacities to modernizing the armed forces; from increasing resilience to hybrid threats and preventing and repressing extremism and xenophobia; from providing development and humanitarian aid to assisting citizens abroad.

The strategies may have changed, but Slovakia's prime security interests have not: threats and challenges have to be addressed by the community as a whole and not just individually. Last year we joined the new Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), officially launched in Brussels on 11 December. It should not be seen as a step towards a European army, but is about building the military capabilities to strengthen European defence within NATO, with the close cooperation of the EU and NATO.

In 2017 progress was also made regarding negotiations on the United Kingdom's EU withdrawal, where the aim is to maintain, where possible, the rights of EU citizens living in the United Kingdom.

Brexit has shown that we can best convince citizens of what membership means by achieving tangible results. But equally, it has shown that conveying these to citizens in a meaningful way is of no less importance. Informing the public about the benefits as well as the commitments associated with being a member of the EU and NATO became a political priority for the Ministry in 2017. We therefore organized

a series of events at universities in Banská Bystrica, Nitra, Košice and Trnava last year called “Slovakia debates the EU”. As a follow-up this year we are planning a full National Convention on the EU.

Slovakia has experience of organizing national conventions from its pre-accession period, and shares this experience with others. Most recently Slovakia ran this successful project in November 2017 in Macedonia, the last of the Western Balkan countries in which we have done so.

Good relationships are important to us – not just with our neighbours and European partners, but also with more distant countries. In 2017 we continued our work in the V4. Slovakia's efforts were directed at making the V4 a constructive and reliable pro-European group. My September visit to the US was further testimony of the transatlantic relationship we have built up over the years with our American partners. We also devoted attention to the Asian continent. In November 2017, at the Foreign Ministers of Europe and Asia (ASEM) meeting in Myanmar, Slovakia sought to promote sustainable development and social inclusion in the world.

We coped well with 2017, given the opportunities and overall global development. I therefore believe that we will be equally successful in 2018. Important events lie ahead. In July we will be taking over the presidency of the V4 from our Hungarian neighbours. The preparations for the upcoming presidency of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe will also reach a peak. The challenges are there; we must turn them to our advantage.

Equally we must not forget that 2018 will have a festive flavour. We will be remembering special milestones in our history – 100 years since the founding of Czechoslovakia; 50 years since the Prague Spring and the Czechoslovak Revival Process; and 25 years of Slovak independence. Slovakia has made a success of its pathway. The progress made over the past 25 years is a reflection of our work and integration efforts and is the fulfilment of ambitions that seemed unattainable at the beginning of the journey. But our journey does not end here. It continues to twist and turn, and many decisions – hopefully the right ones – await us.

## Lukáš Parížek, State Secretary

**In 2017 the Ministry continued its work on development, Slovaks living abroad and economic diplomacy, whilst also making initial preparations for the Slovak Presidency of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. When handling a heavy workload is it possible to find new challenges and solutions, and continue to promote national interests effectively?**

Since I became State Secretary I have worked with the utmost determination and always sought tangible results. It is a resolution I am trying to stick to because I believe that, despite the variety of tools available to us, public diplomacy must be reported in such a way that it is understood by every citizen of Slovakia. Roughly put, people's taxes pay for our work and so we have a duty to account for our work, and then they can see we are working on their behalf.

My recipe for managing tasks at the Ministry is simple and hasn't changed this year: our team has to work together openly and respect the code of ethics. Those who identify with this philosophy tackle great challenges with enthusiasm.

**Since you took up your post, you have attached great importance to economic diplomacy. On trips abroad you are often accompanied by business representatives so you can help them get their proverbial foot in the door. What was last year's economic roadmap?**

At the beginning of the year I launched an official appeal for the business community to actively engage with us and to indicate any particular destinations of interest on my trips. They accepted this opportunity and presented their projects in Cuba, Moscow, Israel and India. The role of the Ministry is to provide support for Slovak businesses abroad, defend their interests and establish contacts at government level.



The Ministry's long-term role is to monitor global economic trends that might have a major impact on the development of our country. It is becoming an important communication platform for dialogue at the multilateral and national levels and with non-governmental organizations. This means there has to be a tie-in with the policies of other ministries and that requires more effective information and coordination.

**Which regions and countries should we pay more attention to?**

We are now able to predict the potential growth markets for Slovak exports. The European Union is the most stable and closest of these, but we are also open to new opportunities on the global market. In the long run, good prospects are to be found in the non-European regions of Asia and Africa where we have a comparative advantage and have traditionally been commercially close, such as Egypt, Iraq or Vietnam. We should be trying to establish ourselves and make use of the opportunities in these regions as soon as possible, and we should also be striving to combine business activities with our development work.

I regard collaboration in research and innovation as key to a pro-export policy and to creating business opportunities. Alongside traditionally strong players, such as the US, EU countries, Japan, South Korea and Israel, China is starting to come to the fore. In our relations with China, the focus is on food, energy, tourism and, of course, innovation. China's new initiatives, the One Belt, One Road and the New Silk Road hold attraction for us as means of advancing our economic relationships.

**What progress was there in 2017 on the important issue of energy security?**

Slovakia has long supported the Easting gas pipeline project, which has been developed to ensure the effective di-

# *“The role of the Ministry is to provide support for Slovak businesses abroad, defend their interests and establish contacts at government level.”*

verification of sources from Western Europe to the Balkans and on to Turkey. But the real advantage of the gas pipeline lies in the opposite direction – from the Caspian region and the Middle East. We are pushing for a natural gas distribution system that will go through Central and South Eastern Europe and in which Slovakia will be a key transit country.

Slovakia will also benefit from the fact that whilst we are supporting the gas infrastructure, we are also developing green energy and green industry projects, as well as improving energy efficiency, water and waste management and transport.

**Your portfolio also includes policies on Slovaks living abroad. What are the lives of Slovaks abroad like and how can we help them?**

Meeting Slovaks abroad when on foreign trips is a very enjoyable part of the job and I find them tremendously encouraging. Meeting them, listening to them and being inspired by them presents a truly unique opportunity. Through personal encounters I learn to understand their problems, and most of all find ways of preserving the identity of new generations in the future.

**Has the Slovak Government Council for Slovaks Living Abroad proved a success?**

The Council met twice in 2017, when it addressed the concept of long-term cooperation, and assessed financial assistance and the issuing of certificates, often referred to as Slovak abroad cards. I trust that with the input of our fellow Slovaks and the cooperation of the ministries, especially the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, we will create conditions for maintaining Slovak identity, traditions and culture wherever Slovaks live.

**Slovakia will chair the OSCE in 2019. What is the OSCE and why are we undertaking this presidency?**

The Slovak Presidency of the OSCE is an extremely responsible mission for the country. With the current state of international relations, the loss of mutual trust and the absence of proper dialogue between countries, the OSCE has an indispensable role to play in maintaining peace in Europe. The organization is a unique platform for dialogue between

countries of different political perceptions and with differing views of the present. Even after 45 years, the OSCE remains the only organization that promotes the idea of global cooperative security.

Slovakia's determination to chair the organization with the support of all the participating states demonstrates that Slovakia is not just a participating state, but an active international policymaker as well.

**What are the objectives of our presidency of the OSCE?**

It is not just about the actual holding of the presidency of the OSCE in 2019. Our three-year presidential duties begin in January 2018 when Slovakia becomes one of the presidency trio, led by the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group and ends with the Asian Partners for Cooperation Group in 2020.

The role of the working teams in Bratislava and Vienna will be to provide an appropriate environment for formulating the political priorities of our presidency. These will reflect the international political situation in the OSCE member countries. It is in our interest to build on the thematic priorities of past presidencies and to actively promote areas of our own interest and to respond to current challenges when setting priorities.

Our goal is to achieve continuity, openness and bridge-building between the 57 participating countries and 11 partner countries across three dimensions: military and political, economic and environmental, and human rights.

As Special Representative for Slovakia's OSCE Presidency, my main tasks will include coordinating the drafting and realization of the presidency's content priorities, working alongside the OSCE institutions and advisory bodies, and communicating with the media, the public, state administration bodies and the non-governmental sector on issues related to the presidency.

We also need to make sure the presidency is understood more broadly. It is a nationwide project involving not just Ministry staff but experts from all Slovak governmental and non-governmental institutions as well.



▲ In 2017 we organized public discussions on the European Union at Slovak universities (Photo: MFEA)

# EUROPEAN POLICIES

## THE EUROPEAN AGENDA AND THE FUTURE OF THE UNION

Slovakia's first ever Presidency of the Council of the EU has reinforced our European identity. It encouraged us to engage in frequent cooperation as we continued to fulfil our commitments to shape the European agenda. The latter was dominated by the debates on the future of the EU and Slovakia's position in a united Europe, a reflective process prompted by the Bratislava Summit. The statements made on 23 October 2017 by the three most senior officials on the priorities of Slovakia's membership of the EU and NATO were a political re-declaration of our pro-European direction and intention to belong to the emerging EU core. Slovakia would like to have a say on its future shape by participating in the negotiations and by reiterating some of its basic messages.

In 2017 the Ministry launched a community-wide discussion on the future of the Union and Slovakia's position within it.

It centred on the idea that the best solution for the future of Slovakia and the EU is deeper member-state integration in areas of citizen benefit. Clearly the public cannot be merely a passive observer of EU events but should play an active and integral part.

In communicating with the public, our goal is still to improve public awareness about Slovakia's membership of the EU and the advantages it brings, and about member states' associated responsibilities for what happens in the EU. The Ministry hopes to receive feedback from citizens on the EU and the policies it adopts, as a means of fostering a European identity.

Our main focus in the discussions at the European level was the implementation of the Bratislava Declaration and the Bratislava Roadmap, both of which have seen solid progress in many areas over the past year. Particular areas worth



▲ Robert Fico signed the Rome Declaration on 25 March 2017 at the EU summit in Rome. It is one and a half pages long and acknowledges the benefits integration has brought so far and is a joint declaration on the future of the European project (Photo: European Union)



▲ In October the V4 Prime Ministers Summit on “Equal Quality of Products for All” was held in Bratislava, 13 October 2017 (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)



▲ At the April meeting of the EU27 General Affairs Council the proposed guidelines for the Brexit negotiations were discussed, 27 April 2017 (Photo: European Union)

mentioning are the Council of the European Union and European Parliament agreement on the conditions for extending the European Fund for Strategic Investments, EFSI 2.0; the introduction of the External Investment Plan for Africa; and the expansion of the capabilities of the European Border and Coast Guard.

We will be continuing these discussions in 2018. Following on from last year’s debates about the European Union

at Slovak universities, a National Convention on the EU – #MYSMEEU – will be organized in the capital and seven discussion events will be held in the Slovak regions and will engage Slovakia in the dialogue between member states and citizens on the future direction of the European project that will be held across Europe. We believe the National Convention on the EU will stimulate greater voter turnout in the Slovak Republic during the European Parliament elections of 2019.



▲ Slovakia was represented by State Secretary Ivan Korčok at the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held in the Gymnich format on 7 September. The meeting was preceded by a joint meeting with defence ministers, where discussion focused on deepening European integration in defence and the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) (Photo: Arno Mikkor)



In 2017 Slovakia was guided by the principle of safety – stability – prosperity. We reacted promptly and responsibly to issues concerning the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy. We gave notice of Slovakia’s intention to participate in the EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation in security and defence (PESCO), aiming to strengthen our own defence capabilities, be a valid player on a wider scale, and share in the EU’s ability to respond effectively to future security challenges.

The Ministry was also involved in other, no less important, issues affecting citizen needs. Of key importance were the social sphere and uniform product quality. We signed the declaration on the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg in November 2017, as we wanted to emphasize that equal opportunities, guaranteed access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection should be the European response to the increasingly globalized world. The holding of the Consumer Summit in Bratislava in October 2017 was a means of highlighting the way in which the double standards in product quality violates the principles of the functioning of the EU Single Market.

#### THE UNITED KINGDOM’S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EU

Slovakia regretfully accepted the United Kingdom’s decision to withdraw from the EU. The decision has led to the need to address specific issues, so we participated in the talks with London on the UK leaving the Union. Tens of thousands of Slovak citizens live in the United Kingdom, and we have been actively involved in creating and adopting the EU’s negotiating framework documents. We have concentrated on the rights of member state citizens living in the UK and on the financial settlement.

London’s decision to leave the EU means that two European agencies had to be relocated to continental Europe. The Banking Agency and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) had to be moved to the capital of one of the EU’s member states. The Slovak Republic was greatly disappointed that none of the European agencies were relocated to Slovakia, despite our candidacy for the EMA headquarters receiving a very good evaluation from the European Commission and the fact that no European agency is currently based in Slovakia. The decision did not take account of these facts. Ultimately Slovakia came fourth in the General Affairs Council’s vote in November 2017. We had hoped the selection would be based on the quality of the applications, that it would be carried out in a transparent manner and according to the applicable rules. These are principles Slovakia will promote in the future.

#### EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

Migration became a sensitive issue in all the capital cities in the European Union. Although the problem has receded, it still persists and needs to be resolved in line with European



▲ The EU foreign ministers at an informal Gymnich meeting in the Maltese city of Valletta. Discussions centred on assessments of developments in Turkey following the constitutional referendum and the effects on future relations between the EU and Turkey – a candidate country, 28 April 2017 (Photo: European Union)

and international law. Slovakia and the other countries in the Visegrad Group agreed to make an exceptional contribution to the Trust Fund for Africa to help solve the migration issue by tackling it in the country of origin.

Regarding the internal dimension of migration policy, Slovakia continued to promote solutions based on effective member state solidarity, especially in relation to the controversial reform of the asylum system. The European Court of Justice dismissed the Slovak and Hungarian cases against the Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 2015 on the introduction of temporary international protection measures for Italy and Greece. However, the court also confirmed that the consequences of contesting the council decision ceased to apply in September 2017.

Slovakia’s position on the subject continues to be based on the principles of effective solidarity, the rejection of compulsory redistribution mechanisms for refugees and strict protection of the EU’s external borders.



▲ State Secretary Ivan Korčok at a press conference on 27 June 2017 conveying Slovakia’s position on Brexit to the media (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák was elected President of the 72<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations by the UN member states on 31 May 2017. This was the first time a representative of the Slovak Republic had gained such a high position in the UN (Photo: UN Photo/Manuel Elias)

# SECURITY AND EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

# 2

## STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

Our strategic thinking is based on knowing the environment we live in and determining our place within it. It is on this principle that Slovakia undertook to update its national strategic documents. The innovative conception behind the new Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic was a response to the series of military and non-military threats reflecting the rapid pace of development in the security environment, and pointed to the blurring of the boundaries between internal and external security. In terms of strategic thinking, approving the Security Strategy, the Defence Strategy and the Military Strategy was a significant step. We have taken an innovative approach to the way we look at security, defence and military issues, and have adapted it for the twenty-first century.

Within the Ministry, we have improved our strategic communication. Our intention is to hold a constructive dialogue on security issues with experts and public alike. This is a response to the changed communication environment, the decentralization of communication channels and the way information is disseminated.

## UNITED NATIONS

Slovakia has been a founding UN member since it was part of Czechoslovakia, and we nominated a candidate for the post of UN General Assembly president – duly appointed in 2017. This illustrates the esteem with which our service is regarded. Miroslav Lajčák was elected President of the 72<sup>nd</sup> UN General Assembly in May 2017 and he took office in September 2017.

The world needs a UN that functions as an organization and that has meaning for its member states and their citizens. That is why we support the reform agenda of the new UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. We believe that the move away from dialogue towards unilateral solutions has led to growing tensions and gradual polarization at the global level, and as such it is a negative development. Slovakia has therefore entered into the global agreement on a safe, managed and regular migration and refugee policy.

To promote the sustainable development agenda, we initiated a discussion, as part of the Slovak Government Council for

Agenda 2030, about the kind of country we want to be living in twelve years from now and on the quality of life we should provide for our citizens. We see Agenda 2030 as a method of achieving a just life in peace, eliminating inequality, hunger and poverty. Slovakia has made a commitment to devoting greater attention to topics such as the silver economy – one in which the elderly generate a high proportion of consumption – education, a healthy environment and the sustainability of cities in relation to climate change.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA

We have long viewed the Human Rights Agenda as being a key component of diplomacy. Much of our involvement in this has been taken place at the UN multilateral fora in New York and Geneva. We consider our election to the United Nations Human Rights Council – the most important UN human rights body – to be both a reflection of international recognition of Slovakia's work on human rights and an opportunity to implement priorities approved by the Slovak government. During our three-year mandate, we should particularly like to address the fight against all forms of racism and xenophobia and to implement the sustainable de-



▲ Speaking at the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council at the United Nations in Geneva, Minister Miroslav Lajčák noted that conflict prevention begins with the protection and promotion of the rights of individuals, not only in Syria, but also in Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Ukraine, 27 February 2017 (Photo: MFEA)



President Andrej Kiska attending a meeting of the Heads of States and Governments of NATO in Brussels on 25 May 2017. The main topic of discussion was the fulfilment of member states' commitments, including investment in NATO's defence and anti-terrorism activities (Photo: NATO)

velopment goals. Our ambition to discuss these challenges internationally largely reflects our national efforts concerning the issues of growing extremism.

## NATO

We continued our multilateral activities in NATO, which forms the cornerstone of Slovakia's and broader European security. With the new presidential administration in Washington, NATO members have repeatedly begun focusing on defence investment. We therefore gladly accepted the results of the Brussels summit, where we jointly succeeded in establishing annual action plans for defence investment and formally emphasized the commitments made three years ago in Wales. Slovakia considers the declared gradual increase in defence investment to be a responsible move and supports it.

We also sought to be an active member of the club by participating in international crisis management operations and missions. The flagship of our foreign engagement in the fight against terrorism under the auspices of NATO was our continued presence in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and our voluntary financial contribution towards the sustainability of the Afghan National Security Forces.

We also advocated continuing of Alliance support in the fight against illegal migration, notably through maritime activities in the Aegean Sea. We listened and responded to our Allies' requests that we join the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh. We fulfilled our commitment to the Iraqi side by providing

humanitarian aid, and parliament approved the mandate for training the military police contingent. The future of Iraq is a complex issue for the international community. We have made our partners aware of Slovakia's long-standing view that the military campaign must run parallel to the political process leading to reconciliation and engage all actors.

We have always carefully followed NATO's open door policy, which we once benefited from. We backed it as soon as we had joined NATO. We were therefore keen to welcome Montenegro as another Western Balkan addition to the Allied Councils.

Slovak diplomacy also carefully assessed Slovak public perceptions of the value of our membership. Our work alongside the NATO Public Diplomacy Division has produced the first fruit and we have joined the first phase of NATO's #MYSME-NATO / #WEARENATO campaign, on raising public awareness on the importance of Slovakia's membership. We have greater internet visibility thanks to our audiovisuals, and information on the work we do has been made more accessible.

Slovakia is a member of both the EU and NATO, and so as part of deepening cooperation between the two Brussels headquarters we were naturally interested in providing support through the implementation of a package of 42 activities, and by taking practical steps in relation to the Joint Declaration on Enhancing Cooperation between NATO and the EU. The activities of the two organizations will be linked through the building of complementary defence capabilities, through cyber security, strategic communication, co-ordinated activities in the Aegean Sea and joint military exercises.

## OSCE

The idea that in this period dominated by global tensions and uncertainty we should return to the roots of the organization also holds true for the OSCE. Mutual accusations and admonishments should be replaced by constructive dialogue and a re-examination of the ways and means of overcoming our differences and different perceptions of the threats. With this knowledge and experience, we began preparing responsibly to take over the presidency of the OSCE in 2019.

We took the opportunity provided by the Slovak visit and high level meetings of newly elected OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger to highlight the OSCE topics we have long felt strongly about. These are migration, energy security, security sector reform, cyber security, the fight against terrorism and extremism, as well as the development of the rule of law institutions. Our aim is that the Slovak presidency will:

- be a committed presidency, which means actively and passively involving as wide a section of society as possible,
- be an intelligible presidency – it will provide the general public with a simple explanation of what effective multilateralism is, and convey the basic message that more can be achieved through cooperation,
- be a mature presidency, one that shows that diplomacy requires a high level of professionalism, and that Slovakia has to nurture and protect its high-performing foreign service as it is unique to Slovakia and therefore brings benefits that cannot be substituted,
- be a collaborative presidency that will be much more involved in the Troika, the Security Cooperation Forum

and the Mediterranean Contact Group and will listen to others rather than act alone, and thereby justify the relevance of the 57 OSCE participating states,

- be a wise presidency, capable of harnessing the annual dynamic interaction between the OSCE participating states within the multilateral forum, and for nurturing potential bilateral relations.

## DISARMAMENT

Slovakia continues to firmly believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons can only be achieved through the constructive and substantive engagement of all states, otherwise the activities of international bodies and organizations remain declarative in nature. In June 2017 we took on the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, where the leitmotiv is to resume substantial negotiations. We consistency upheld the position expressed at the First Committee of the 72<sup>nd</sup> UN General Assembly, where we advocated a pragmatic and progressive step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament, taking account of the security environment.

The same logic applied during the first preparatory committee meeting in connection with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, where our aim was to help restore the credibility and stability of the global non-proliferation regime. In addition to maintaining a clear stance at international disarmament forums, we sought to bring relevant experts to Slovakia. To this end we supported the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and organized courses for its inspectors and chemical specialists in Zemianské Kostolány.

### Slovak participation in international crisis management operations and missions

#### Current Slovak Armed Forces contributions to operations and missions:

| Operation/mission  | Under the command of | Area                   | Number of Slovak members |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Resolute Support   | NATO                 | Afghanistan            | 34                       |
| EUFOR Althea (European Union Force Althea)                     | EU                   | Bosnia and Herzegovina | 41                       |
| EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA (European Union Naval Force Mediterranean) | EU                   | Mediterranean Sea      | 10                       |
| UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)          | UN                   | Cyprus                 | 169                      |
| NTCB I (NATO Training and Capacity Building Activity in Iraq)  | NATO                 | Iraq                   | 25                       |
| UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization)          | UN                   | Egypt, Syria           | 2                        |

#### Current Slovak Police Force contributions to operations and missions:

| Operation/mission   | Under the command of | Area            | Number of Slovak members |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| EUAM (European Union Police Mission)                            | EU                   | Ukraine         | 2                        |
| EUBAM (European Union Border Assistance Mission)                | EU                   | Ukraine/Moldova | 2                        |
| EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission)                        | EU                   | Georgia         | 4                        |
| EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission Kosovo)               | EU                   | Kosovo          | 1                        |
| UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)           | UN                   | Cyprus          | 5                        |
| MINUJUSTH (United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti) | UN                   | Haiti           | 2                        |
| Special Monitoring Mission                                      | OSCE                 | Ukraine         | 2                        |

#### Slovak civilian experts delegated abroad:

2 customs experts (Ministry of Finance) as part of the EUBAM mission in Ukraine and Moldova



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák's conversation with his US counterpart Rex Tillerson in Washington concerned the fight against terrorism and Slovakia's contribution to the fight against Daesh, meeting the commitments of the NATO summit in Wales, the situation in Ukraine, relations with Russia, developments in the Western Balkans, and the situation in Syria, 8 May 2017 (Photo: MFEA)

# REGIONAL INITIATIVES, NEIGHBOURHOOD RELATIONS AND BILATERAL COOPERATION

## REGIONAL INITIATIVES

### Visegrad Group

The Visegrad Group was the closest and most logical geographical group in which to pursue our foreign policy priorities and identify partners. It also ensured that Central Europe remained politically stable and prosperous. Being part of a brand with a good reputation and the best performing platform in Central Europe does not, however, mean that we always share the same opinion on all issues. Nonetheless, the added value of cooperation with all our Visegrad partners has always underpinned our efforts to maintain open dialogue and find common ground.

The Slovak Prime Minister had a clear mandate from the entire Visegrad Group in the negotiations with the President of the European Commission on ensuring that products sold throughout the EU are of the same quality. We found common ground on migration policy and on the joint contribution to the Rome Declaration.

The extended V4+ format for cooperation was of benefit in the political dialogue with our Visegrad partners both in relation to neighbouring countries and partners within the EU and as a joint platform for the initial contacts we fostered with countries in more distant regions, for example Egypt or Israel. We consider the Slovak Presidency of the Conference of International Visegrad Fund Ministers to have been a joint Visegrad success, as was the approval of the new rules for its strategic management.

### Slavkov format

The Slavkov format was of political importance, and we saw it as a pragmatic tool for regional cooperation, especially for joint projects between the three neighbouring countries. The discussions were primarily about cooperation in industrial and innovation policy, partly due to its importance to the competitiveness of the three economies.

As leader of the Slavkov format, we initiated a trilateral project involving Slovakia, Austria and the Czech Republic on exploiting the available tools in sectors such as transport infrastructure, dual education, industry 4.0 and energy security. The meeting between the prime ministers of the Slavkov format countries and French President Emmanuel Macron

in August 2017 showed that the platform has a future and will be useful for coordinating positions on current European issues.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD RELATIONS

### Czech Republic

Slovakia and the Czech Republic have long maintained exceptionally positive relations. In the geopolitical landscape of Central Europe, this is a historically rare experience and is particularly important in times of turbulent change in international relations. Preserving such good relations as well as protection and remembrance should be our message for the future.

Recently the importance of European values and the need to confirm the shared anti-fascist tradition of the Slovaks and Czechs have taken on new meaning. These were therefore some of the themes the two cabinets considered at their fifth joint meeting in Lednice. The busy intergovernmental agenda included the culture of remembrance, preparations for celebrating the anniversaries and declaring 2018 the



▲ Presidents of the V4 countries on a two-day summit in Szekszard, Hungary, where they discussed the situation in the Balkans and the circular economy, 13 October 2017 (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Trilateral meeting between the prime ministers of Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Austria in the Slavkov format, a follow-on from the first meeting in January 2015 in Slavkov u Brna, 22 June 2017 (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)

year of Slovak–Czech and Czech–Slovak mutuality Other key areas were security and defence. The outcome of discussion on this was reflected in the new contractual basis for cooperation on the mutual protection of our airspace and, on internal security the launch of cross-border testing on e-identification systems. One key area is the Multiannual Financial Framework and the proposed changes to the allocations under cohesion policy, which will affect economic growth. The joint Slovak–Czech and Czech–Slovak process was meaningful in all these areas, and we therefore hope to continue coordinating our positions.

**Poland**

Amongst other foreign policy issues, the Three Seas Summit stands out as one of Poland’s most important initiatives, with potential for Slovakia and we have a clear position on this important topic. If in the future the Three Seas concentrates on supporting energy and transport infrastructure, it could have positive consequences for us and the EU as a whole. Nonetheless, it cannot be allowed to become a political alternative to the EU or indeed within the EU, but should be about helping achieve common goals.

Slovak diplomacy also sought to ensure that expectations concerning this initiative did not overshadow other aspects or indeed the positive direction of Slovak–Polish bilateral relations on defence cooperation for instance, and the related NATO Counter-intelligence Centre of Excellence in Krakow jointly led by Slovakia and Poland, or cooperation

within the three border Euroregions, where the focus is on tourism, conserving historical heritage and cultural exchanges.



▲ Miroslav Lajčák attended a bilateral meeting with Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski in Warsaw where they discussed bilateral, European and international issues, 5 September 2017 (Photo: MFEA)



## Hungary

Slovakia and Hungary have jointly invested a great deal of energy and effort in building positive relationships and maintaining a good neighbour dialogue. Both countries and their citizens benefit from this. We have therefore sought to broaden our relationship to accommodate a wider, regional perspective, and we hope to continue in this.

A positive moment and symbolic step in removing historical barriers is the construction of a new bridge connecting Komárno and Komárom on the Slovak and Hungarian sides of the Danube respectively, using EU resources which will greatly improve the transport infrastructure. Other important milestones in strengthening energy security were the signing of a contract for the construction of cross-border power lines and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Easting gas pipeline. The outcomes of the meetings of the joint Transport Infrastructure and Economic Commissions indicate dynamism in the two areas.

## Austria

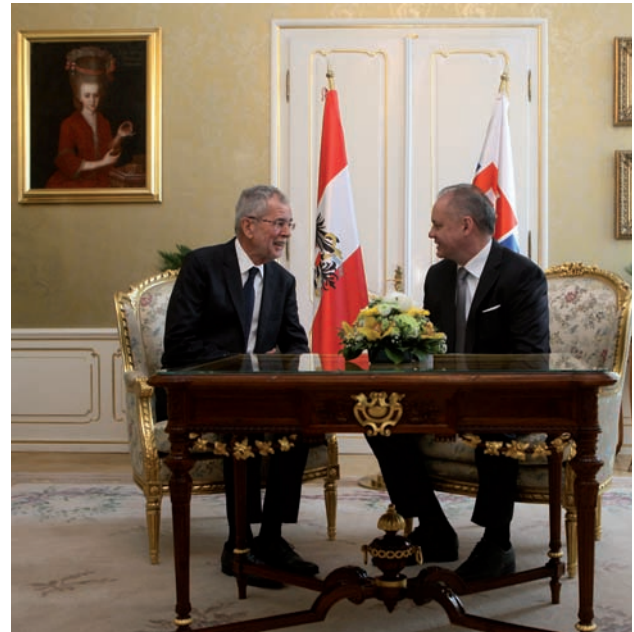
Slovak–Austrian relations continued in a satisfactory manner and were based on strong economic links and practical cooperation. We are close neighbours and the growing contact between the citizens of our two countries is very important. Nonetheless, there is further room for improvement and so we are pleased that Austria is our second largest economic investor, and see great potential in the northern road link between Bratislava and Vienna and the modernization of the existing rail network.

Our contact with Austria was not limited to bilateral cooperation. As part of the increasing demand for coordination in multilateral areas, the following issues took prominence: the need to share experience, the forthcoming Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU and knowledge sharing from our own Council of the EU Presidency, and Slovakia's upcoming OSCE Presidency, where we hope to draw on the Austrian experience.

## Ukraine

Ukraine is both a neighbour and a friend, and therefore we have a natural interest in helping Ukraine secure a better life for all its citizens, and this can partly be achieved through the transfer of Slovak know-how. Ukraine having a closer relationship with the European Union will lead to greater stability in the area to the east of our borders. We have therefore acknowledged Kyiv's European aspirations and commitment to political association and economic integration. We viewed visa liberalization with the EU as a tangible result of this. In hindsight, it is clear recognition of the reforms achieved so far and an expression of the EU's trust and encouragement for Ukraine to take the next steps and continue on the reform course.

We conveyed our position on assessments of the security situation in the south-east of the country consistently and with clarity. We have long expressed support for the Minsk Protocol and its implementation.



▲ President Andrej Kiska met with Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen, when on his first official visit to Slovakia on 26 April 2017 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

## BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH EU SELECTED COUNTRIES

### Germany

Germany is guarantor of European integration and a world economic and political power, and as such remains a strategic foreign policy partner. It makes sense to begin looking at Slovak–German bilateral relations from the perspective of mutual trade. This accounted for about one-fifth of our total foreign trade turnover, reflecting Germany's continued position as our prime export country. However, our



▲ At meetings with Ukraine's leading officials Minister Miroslav Lajčák expressed strong support for Ukraine's reform process and its attempts to stabilize the political and economic situation. He visited Ukraine with his Hungarian and Czech counterparts, 11 April 2017 (Photo: MFEA)

contact with Germany was not only determined by business interests.

Having identified room to strengthen and deepen mutual cooperation, we went even further. This is particularly important at a time when we, along with Germany, are considering EU measures to further improve the European model in several key areas. It was therefore in our shared interest to establish a system of political and expert consultations, and this we succeeded in accomplishing. There was clear agreement on the goals. We would like the ministries to hold regular bilateral assessments at the political level to identify the potential for closer mutually beneficial cooperation. This is of special political significance, since new impetus and initiatives are emerging as part of the European process. Bratislava and Berlin were able to work together to make good progress on issues relating to the future of the EU, on the need to bring the European project closer to citizens, and on issues relating to migration or the fight against terrorism.

#### France

France remains a very important partner for Slovakia, both bilaterally and in European and global areas. We have successfully cooperated for 25 years, and this means our dialogue on EU reform is now far more substantial.

We see France as a major driver of change in Europe and therefore welcome the calls for a public debate on the European Union, including the French proposal that national conventions should be organized in the member states. Slovakia has considerable know-how, obtained through our own experience of national conventions, that is relevant to the concept of a broad public debate on the EU.

One of the more prominent outcomes of our bilateral cooperation was that work began on what is now the third Strategic Partnership Action Plan for 2019–2024, which will



▲ Brexit, the rights of Slovaks in the UK, bilateral relations, security in Europe and the Western Balkans were all topics discussed by State Secretary Ivan Korčok and the British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson, 26 September 2017 (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák discussing economic cooperation with Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, in Kaliningrad on 6 June (Photo: MFEA)

support mutual political and sectoral cooperation over the next five years.

#### United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

While much attention has been focused on the EU's negotiations with London on the Brexit conditions, bilateral ties between Slovakia and the United Kingdom are also important. Our relations are based on the strong ties that stem from the large Slovak community living in the British Isles through to mutual trade and economic cooperation. Great Britain is Slovakia's seventh largest trading partner and the Jaguar Land Rover plant is one of the biggest direct foreign investment projects in Slovakia.

Slovakia firmly believes that the United Kingdom will remain one of our closest political, economic and security partners even after its withdrawal from our shared European commitments. Our efforts have been coordinated within the EU and we are committed to finding a constructive and favourable final agreement on Brexit and will continue to do so in the future as well.

#### BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH SELECTED COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD

##### Russia

Russia's role in international relations and impact on security and stability in the world is indisputable. Since the dynamic pace of international developments makes it impossible to respond individually to the growing number of questions,

we have always favoured mutual open-minded communication, even on issues where our attitudes differ to those of our Russian partners. We have sought to make appropriate use of the tools at our disposal in support of Slovak–Russian bilateral relations: political dialogue, parliamentary cooperation, economic relations, and improving ties in science, culture and education.

We have halted the decline in mutual trade, and are aware there is potential for businesses. Enhancing cooperation in this area is something we would like to promote in the future. We also have to improve relations in the field of education. The issues concerning the cyclotron centre and its handover to the Russians have been brought to a successful close and in exchange Slovakia obtained a free higher education for 200 students in nuclear energy and other subjects for a period of 15 years.

One example of the growing role of the parliamentary dimension of diplomacy is the visit by Speaker of Parliament Andrej Danko to the Russian Federation, where he delivered an address in the upper chamber of the Russian parliament at the invitation of State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin.

#### Eastern Partnership countries

There is a new dynamism in relations between the Eastern Partnership countries and the EU. We view the reform processes achieved by our Eastern partner countries as a commitment to maintaining the trend set.

The Association Agreements with the Eastern Partnership countries have gradually come into force and visa liberalization has been extended. These are positive signals for the European Union and a challenge for countries seeking to complete these processes. Slovak assistance to the Eastern Partnership countries went beyond its commitments in this area within the EU.

We worked with Ukraine on energy, renewable resources and the adoption of EU legislation and programs. The Republic of Moldova is one of three programme countries receiving Slovak Official Development Assistance. As part of this we focused on a Slovak–Czech–Hungarian project designed to strengthen the capacity of the Moldovan parliament and to help Moldova approximate its norms to EU ones. We were also active in the Caucasus, where Slovakia shared its experiences with Georgian partners to help establish the Eastern Partnership European School.

#### Western Balkans and Turkey

Having reflected on our foreign policy towards the Western Balkans, we became even more convinced that the Western Balkans require much more of our attention and that we have to ensure it is firmly incorporated within priorities of the EU. Developments in the Western Balkans remain a matter of good faith and bringing it closer to the EU is in our interests as well.



▲ State Secretary Ivan Korčok officially launching the National Convention on the EU in Macedonia project in Skopje, 9 November 2017 (Photo: SFPA)

We therefore viewed the announcement of the drafting of the Strategy for the Successful Accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the European Union as a positive moment. It has altered the dynamics of the enlargement process, most notably by setting the time limit for further EU enlargement as 2025. In relation to Belgrade, we were also active in helping to secure increased protection of the Bulgaria–Serbia border and responded appropriately to the growing interest in the Slovak labour market.

In Macedonia, we welcomed the democratic change in political power and supported the country's reform potential. We launched the National Convention on the EU, co-funded through the SlovakAid scheme, thereby providing our Macedonian partner with unique expertise on the integration process. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, our embassy in Sarajevo has assumed the function of a NATO contact embassy, meaning that in addition to our state responsibilities in this area, we have been able to stimulate discussion on the current security threats and on any corresponding responses. Although the Slovak Republic has not changed its position



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák and his Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu discussed the issues of Cyprus, Russia and Ukraine, 26 May 2017 (Photo: MFEA)



▲ President Andrej Kiska and Minister Miroslav Lajčák on an official visit to Israel, which included a working visit to Palestine, 28 March 2017 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

as regards the non-recognition of Kosovo's unilaterally declared independence, we have contributed to the socio-economic development there. Over the years we have backed the region's European prospects and the overall progress on the Belgrade–Priština dialogue.

Due attention was paid to Slovak–Turkish relations, especially in the context of the increasing tension in Turkish territory. The attempted coup, the ongoing state of emergency and the generally dramatic regional development have had a negative impact on communication with the EU and its member states, further slowing Turkey's accession process. Nevertheless, the migration agreement between Brussels and Ankara remains in place.

#### **United States of America, and Canada**

The Slovak Republic and the United States have long-lasting ties. We are NATO allies, we implement joint activities in our foreign policy priority regions, and we have consistent positions in key areas of common interest such as energy, security or the fight against terrorism. However, the recent past has reminded us that the Euro-Atlantic Partnership not only has to be cultivated and protected, but we also need to ensure it has the requisite financial support.

We responded quickly and positively to the election of President Donald Trump and the creation of a new administration by organizing a meeting between ministerial counterparts Miroslav Lajčák and Rex Tillerson. We viewed President Trump's visit to the Three Seas Summit as an indication of the new US administration's interest in Central and Eastern Europe.

Together with our US partners, we have begun developing allied efforts to reaffirm NATO's security guarantees and to build on the promising cooperation between it and the EU. The importance of the strategic Slovak–American Partnership in security and defence was underlined by the delivery of new military equipment – the first two UH-60 Black Hawk multi-purpose helicopters – and the acceleration of



▲ Andrej Kiska talking about cooperation in innovation, science, research and culture at the Senate of the Mexican Parliament, 23 November 2017 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

joint exercises between the Slovak Armed Forces and US units from the Indiana National Guard. The uptick in contact between Slovakia and the federal state of Indiana could be seen in the launch of cooperation in trade and investment support. As regards development aid, Washington again supported joint Slovak–American SlovakAid projects in Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries. Having very good relations will also pave the way for a strengthening in the political dialogue with the US. This continues to be a priority.

The national celebrations for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary provided us with an opportunity to promote Slovakia as a modern country with a Canadian–Slovak community that is naturally and actively participating in a diverse Canadian society. The promotional events that comprised Slovak Day were the largest since Slovak independence and were attended by several thousand visitors. Canada was seen as a partner with which dialogue could be held in a broader format. The previously established format of holding consultations between the political leaders of the V4 and Canada continued, and a new platform was formed to further deepen political ties and trades between Brussels and Ottawa, which of course has a multiplier effect.

#### **Latin America**

We continued to revitalize our dialogue with Latin American countries, and emphasized the commercial and economic dimensions of relations. The most important event was the first ever official visit by a Slovak president to Mexico. The main outcomes of which were the expansion of agreements between Slovakia and Mexico and exchanges between businesses and heads of scientific institutions, part of our work promoting our national interests in economic diplomacy.

We have maintained dialogue at all levels with Brazil, Latin America's largest country. Within the Slovak–Brazilian Chamber of Commerce, we succeeded in paving the way for the further expansion of mutual trade and economic cooperation. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding

on Tourism should, we believe, encourage tourists from Brazil and other Latin American countries to visit Slovakia.

Interaction with Cuba was fairly upbeat. Our relations with Cuba, like those between the EU and Cuba, have entered a positive period. Our bilateral relations have a new dynamism partly because of the Cuban government's new politics and reform policy. We are ambitious about the future, too. Slovak firms will be involved in the reconstruction of the energy system of two power stations in Cuba, and 70 applicants from Slovakia are preparing for postgraduate visits to Cuba. We were also able to implement an agreement on the application and testing of a drug for treating diabetic foot disease in Slovakia. It is used in more than 25 countries, but has not been certified in the EU yet, and we are the first country to hold clinical trials.

#### South-east Asia

India is an important regional player seeking to increase its influence in the globalized world, and is a country with extraordinary economic and human potential. Fresh winds have brought a new perspective to Slovak–Indian relations, with cooperation between the Slovak–Indian Business Forum and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce, and the opening of a new Slovak Honorary Consulate in Bangalore proving that. Both countries want to use shared platforms to establish contacts and share experience and technology so new opportunities can be identified and business projects completed.

China has played an increasing role in addressing global and regional challenges, including climate change and the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda. We are

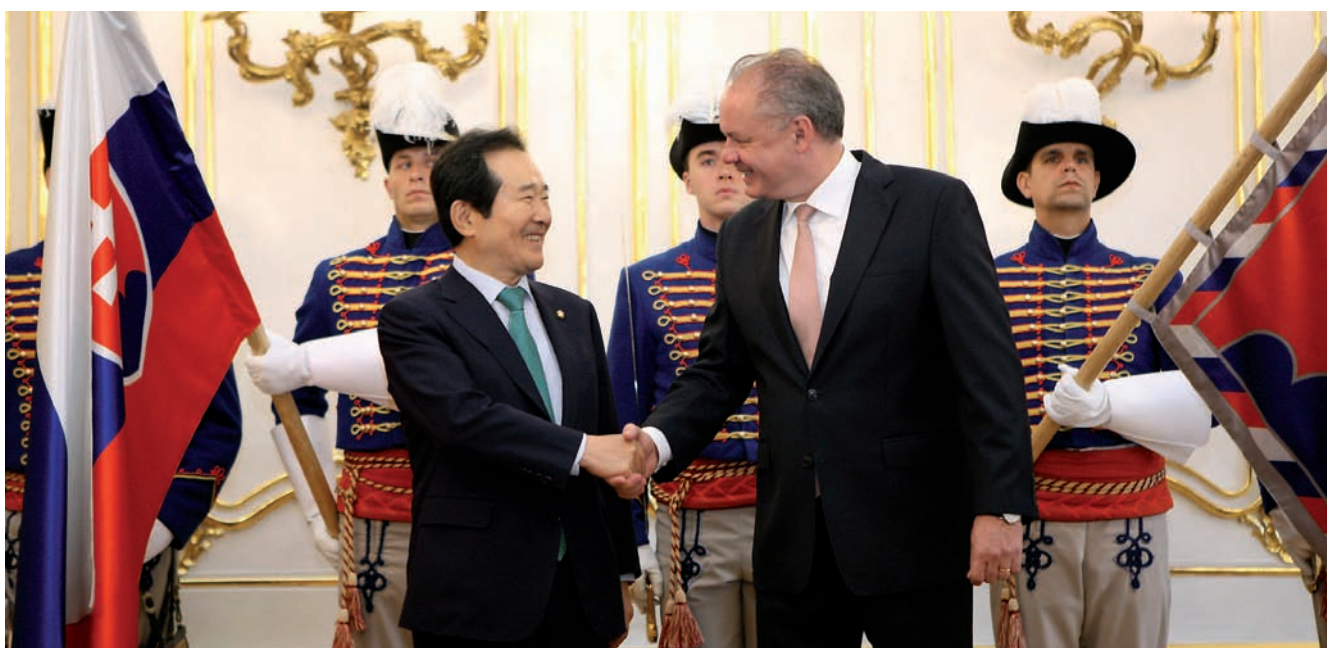
convinced that mutual cooperation has something to offer both countries. China's 19<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress showed that China has ambitions to further strengthen its external influence.

The One Belt, One Road and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road economic and political initiatives have helped China on its path to becoming the world's strongest economy and strengthening its position in its immediate neighbourhood and in more distant regions. Slovakia should therefore seek to exploit similar economic projects and initiatives pursued by Beijing. The presence of the Slovak Prime Minister at the summit of 16 Central and Eastern European countries and China undoubtedly contributed to restoring the potential in Slovak–Chinese relations, which we hope will give them new dynamism and direction.

#### Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa

Our continued interest in the Middle East is underpinned by the development of both existing and promising new relations.

Relations with Israel are increasingly taking on a strategic and multi-faceted character. We hope to take advantage of the potential offered by Israel's cities to foster links with our own R&D centres. Tel Aviv is the second most innovative place in the world, while Haifa is the global centre of cyber security. They are a promising part of Israel's rich potential, and we would like to connect these with the aspirations of our own innovative and scientific community. In this spirit, political contact was conducted at the level of leading representatives of the Slovak and Israeli foreign ministries.



▲ President Andrej Kiska welcoming Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea Chung Sye-kyun on his official visit to Slovakia on 19 October 2017. The two sides underlined the good bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Republic of Korea, the keystone of economic cooperation (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)



▲ The joint 10<sup>th</sup> SET PLAN Conference 2017 and 11<sup>th</sup> Central European Energy Conference was held for the second time in Bratislava from 29 November to 1 December. This was the first time the SET PLAN Conference had been held twice in a row in the same member state (Photo: SFPA)

# ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY IN A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

# 4

Slovakia's economy is performing well and the unemployment rate is at its lowest ever. Our economic diplomats abroad therefore have an opportunity to exploit this potential. The Ministry's role in economic diplomacy is best seen as coordinator, integrator and process accelerator. Nowadays, economic diplomacy is an integral part of foreign policy, and almost every embassy is engaged in it. We therefore have better links with the business environment, and information about its capacities.

Slovakia has 76 key bilateral diplomatic missions that are responsible for economic diplomacy, and these handle the economic diplomacy priorities in conjunction with several other bodies, including the Government Council for Export and Investment Support, and the Board for the Strategic Management, Coordination and Control of the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency SARIO. Pursuing and promoting successful economic diplomacy require good analysis. Over the long term we have been analysing regional groupings of countries across the world, looking at their current and expected development and assessing Slovakia's standing within them, so to help us identify business opportunities for Slovak companies. The positive outcome of this is that we now have clear and measurable data.

In 2017 we successfully dealt with 3,796 queries and offers from Slovak and foreign businesses regarding the import and export of goods and services. We also provided information on 775 public tenders and held 474 presentations in accreditation and pre-accreditation countries. In addition, Slovak delegations participated in 376 exhibitions and trade fairs abroad and organized a total of 223 business missions and business forums. At the Ministry we approved 23 new economic diplomacy projects in investment, export, science, and education and tourism.

Our bilateral economic efforts were most visible in specific sectors, with the aim of turning the Slovak economy into a higher value one. High-level visits to Israel, Oman and the United States of America were used to reflect our desire to have contacts in countries we consider to have innovative, scientific and technological potential. Business relations with Berlin also occupied a prominent position, especially following the signing of a Memorandum on

deeper structural dialogue between Slovakia and Germany. It is no surprise then that Volkswagen Slovakia remains the most visible symbol of Slovak–German economic cooperation.

Our foreign policy activities have tended to concentrate on more geographically distant countries, which may initially appear more exotic. The EU dialogue with Central Asian countries and the new treaties with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan concerning enhanced partnership and cooperation suggest our relations with these countries will be more energetic, and visible on the diplomatic map. The ongoing New Silk Road project was motivation for us to use the Slovak pavilion at Expo 2017 in Astana and the business missions accompanying the ministerial delegations as opportunities for developing economic and business relations. In the context of the growing strategic importance of the Central Asian region and the conclusions of the 13<sup>th</sup> EU–



▲ In cooperation with the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO), the Ministry organized the Slovak Export Forum, as part of a regular meeting of economic diplomats, providing an opportunity for economic diplomats sent on foreign missions and other national business diplomats to share their experience with Slovak businesses, in Bratislava on 21 June 2017 (Photo: MFEA)

Central Ministerial Meeting in Uzbekistan, we supported the EU's commitment to developing mutual relations with Central Asian countries. We hope these countries will form a firm basis in the region based on the principles of responsibility, cooperation, stability, security and sustainable development.

We continue to view South-east Asia as a dynamic centre of world trade and finance that contains the fastest growing economies. This region presents many opportunities for cooperation with Slovak businesses and research bodies, and requires careful monitoring. Asian countries were an important source of foreign direct investment in Slovakia, providing higher added value and Research and Development potential. It is worth noting that the total amount of Asian foreign direct investment in Slovakia was almost three and a half billion euros, and countries such as the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and Japan have so far created more than 18,000 jobs.

There was also greater Europe–Asia cooperation. The free trade agreement between the EU and Japan reached the final stage of negotiations last year. If implemented, it will represent up to 30 per cent of the world's GDP. Last year the Brexit prism provided us with a new perspective on the Asian continent. The UK has been the gateway for Asian investment in the EU, so it would be realistic to seek more direct foreign investment from this part of the world once

the UK leaves the EU. We therefore backed stronger cooperation via the Visegrad–Japan platform, with an emphasis on science.

In multilateral economic diplomacy, our most important activities were those promoting the interests of the Slovak Republic when preparing agreements within the European Union's structures. The most discussed of these was probably the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with Canada and its provisional implementation, which began last year. Negotiations by the EU Council's Trade Policy Committee on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) were also very important. When seeking new opportunities for economic cooperation, our diplomats focused on all parts of the world, hence we also welcomed the start of negotiations on updating the trade section of the Global Agreement between the EU and the United Mexican States and the Mercosur countries.

#### **STARTUP SYSTEMS, INNOVATIONS AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY**

Our diplomacy continues to keep up with developments in this area. We paid particular attention to the knowledge economy, the feasibility of industry 4.0 goals, robotics, and the ever pressing need for informatization and the creation



State Secretary Lukáš Parížek jointly launching the China and Central Eastern Europe Innovation Forum 2017, the second three-day ministerial conference on cooperation in innovation, held in the China + 16 Central and Eastern European Countries format on 27 November 2017 (Photo: MFEA)





▲ Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy of the Vietnamese Socialist Republic Vương Đình Huệ speaking at the Slovakia–Vietnam Trade Forum. Since the reopening of the Slovak representative office in Vietnam in 2008, trade between the two countries has risen 30-fold (Photo: MFEA)



▲ The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Commission for Economic and Trade Cooperation between the Ministry of Economy and the Indian Ministry of Industry and Commerce. In cooperation with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, SARIO organized an accompanying business forum, 21 April 2017 (Photo: SARIO)

of intelligent cities. We have also begun organizing innovation forums as we consider them a key tool for economic diplomacy.

One such example is *Ville intelligente – Intelligent City*, a Slovak–French business forum launched in October 2017, which included the foreign and economy ministries, the French–Slovak Chamber of Commerce, the French Institute in Bratislava and the Slovak Business Agency.

Another is the Smart Cities Summer School, part of Swedish–Danish cooperation, which was presented by the mayor and local and central government leaders. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic was also behind the Slovak start-up ecosystem and their outreach in the world. We also left our mark at Cybersecurity V4 + US in Washington, the CEEC Innovation Summit in Warsaw, Startups and Innovation in Dublin, the Business Forum in San Francisco, and the Startup Hub in Bangalore. We are also trying to establish conditions for sharing science, research and technology using the China + 16 Central and Eastern European countries format. The setting up of the Virtual 16 + 1 Technology Transfer Centre and its Secretariat in Bratislava is therefore a significant achievement.

#### EXPO ASTANA 2017

The Slovak pavilion was once again an Expo feature. Last year the focus was on future energy, and 115 countries and 22 international organizations presented their ideas on the potential uses of modern technologies in renewable energy. Since this area is a national priority, Expo 2017 was of key interest to us. The Slovak National Pavilion won second place for its design and attracted more than 311,000 visitors.

#### ENERGY SECURITY

For us energy security was partly about backing the diversification of resources and transport routes. Our policy on this has been consistent – retain the Ukrainian transport corridor and delivery capacity via Slovakia infrastructure. We also stuck to our principles on Nord Stream 2. We stressed that projects had to conform to the European *acquis* and argued for the diversification of routes and, above all, the gas supply to Europe.



▲ The Slovak stand at the Transport Logistics 2017 trade fair, which took place in Munich, Germany, on 9–12 May 2017. More than 2,000 exhibitors from 60 countries had stands at the exhibition (Photo: MFEA)

Songa Mbele Na Masomo Children Centre  
 Moving ahead with Education  
**WE WORK AND SERVE  
 AT THE BEST INTEREST  
 OF THE CHILD.**

Songa Mbele Na Masomo Children Centre  
 Moving ahead with Education  
**CHILD PROTECTION  
 IS EVERYONE'S  
 RESPONSIBILITY.**

**WELCOME TO**  
**SONGA MBELE NA  
 MASOMO CHILDREN  
 CENTRE**  
**MR. PRESIDENT**

Songa Mbele Na Masomo Children Centre  
 Moving ahead with Education

**Vision:**  
 To be the leading organization in enhancing provision of relevant skills and knowledge to children living with disabilities and other vulnerable children in Kenya.

**Mission:**  
 To reduce illiteracy, dependency and improve health care among children living with disabilities and the vulnerable children from Mukuru Slums by providing academic coaching, therapy and day-care services.

**Motto:**  
 Transforming lives for a hopeful future.

**Core Values**  
 Service  
 Team work  
 Commitment  
 Value for Children  
 Integrity and Accountability

President Andrej Kiska is the first Slovak President to visit Kenya, where he saw, for example, the Songa Mbele na Masomo education and rehabilitation centre, 14 February 2017 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

# DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID

# 5

In 2017 the Ministry continued implementing development projects and making use of its available tools and mechanisms as part of its Slovak development cooperation in priority countries and sectors. The Medium-Term Development Cooperation Strategy for 2014–2018 and the 2017 Bilateral Development Cooperation Plan provided the basis for this. A significant proportion of the aid was directed at the EU Trust Funds set up in response to the migration and refugee crisis. Given the poor situation regarding the Mediterranean migration route, we donated an extraordinary financial contribution of €1 million to the Africa Emergency EU Trust Fund for the North of Africa Window (Libya). In early 2018,

as part of V4 cooperation, we contributed to the additional €35 million for the Libya package. In the same period, the Slovak Republic donated €500,000 to help the Sahel countries.

December 2017 saw the official launch of a V4 country project in Kenya, worth a total of €2 million and funded out of the EU's Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The main project manager is the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation. Getting the project approved was the result of our long-standing commitment to introducing new forms of development cooperation.



▲ On his official visit to the Republic of Kenya, President Andrej Kiska viewed a number of projects implemented by the Slovak organizations and funded by SlovakAid (Photo: MFEA)



State Secretary Lukáš Parížek officially launched a joint Visegrad Group project aimed at tackling the causes of illegal migration and at stabilizing African countries, 14 December 2017 (Photo: MFEA)

The first official visit by the President of the Slovak Republic to the Republic of Kenya in early 2017 was both an important event and a signal to our partners on the African continent.

The visit was mainly economic-related and was testimony to Slovakia's long-term involvement in development cooperation in Kenya. We will continue to cooperate with selected African countries in the future with renewed enthusiasm



The completion of a successful project in Moldova in 2017 by Adventist Development and Relief Association (ADRA) Slovakia. Only a third of the population has access to safe drinking water and only 1 per cent are connected to the public sewerage system (Photo: ADRA Slovakia)



On 2–3 November 2017, a training course was held in Moldova for teachers as part of the Bardar Water Pipeline Project – Access to Safe Drinking Water, which covered water, improving citizens' health and developing sustainable water management. It was run by the Senec-Pezinok Regional Development Agency (Photo: Peter Tomášek)

and implementing a wider regional scope. The worsening political, security and humanitarian situation in Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda will require the strengthening of specific and targeted EU activities in the region. Slovakia has always stressed the role of regional players, as without their involvement, particularly that of the African Union, it will not prove possible to end the struggle and find political solutions aimed at the overall stabilization of this part of the world.

In addition to a Visegrad Four pilot project in Kenya, funded by the European Union, we also made progress in other forms of development cooperation. A positive example was a project implemented in Macedonia aimed at sharing our experience of association with the European Union through the National Convention on the EU. Another example was a regional course for partners from Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia on Gender Issues in Business, run in cooperation with MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development. Slovakia aims to further promote this cooperation in the future.

We also conducted bilateral negotiations with the designated national development agencies of other donors and international organizations such as the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in order to pave the way for common activities in this area.

As part of Slovakia's humanitarian assistance in 2017, we continued to successfully implement humanitarian projects via Slovak and local non-governmental organizations in our target region of Syria and neighbouring Middle Eastern countries. These projects are about providing health care and education. The Slovak Republic plans to continue implementing humanitarian projects in the future and will extend its list of recipients to include African countries such as South Sudan.



▲ The conclusion of a successful People in Need project in Iraq. New classrooms were built in Northern Iraq, the children of displaced persons received tutoring, children were given psychological assistance and teacher training was provided (Photo: The People in Need, Slovakia)



Expo 2017 Astana represented an opportunity to promote the Slovak Republic in a region with high potential for cooperation (Photo: MFEA)

# ADVANCES IN ASSISTANCE FOR THE PEOPLE

The consular service is an extremely important part of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs's work, and has in a sense always been closest to the people.

The Slovak Republic's consular staff ensure that our citizens are protected abroad, and provide assistance in emergency situations.

In an assessment of the achievements of the Slovak Republic's consular service in 2017 one must take into the

consideration key factors such as the number of consular offices and staffing levels, the degree of electronization, the security situation and terrorist threats in the world as well as changes in visa and residency policies.

In 2017 the Slovak Republic provided consular services to Slovak citizens and foreigners from its 72 Slovak consulates. These were staffed by 82 diplomatic staff and consular officers; 57 of whom executed these duties as part of their wider consular responsibilities (such as deputiz-

**From:** Štubňová Dana  
**Sent:** Friday, June 23, 2017 10:14 AM  
**To:** Motesická Viera /ZU Kodan/MZV  
**Cc:** Cisarova Andrea; Pagac Juraj  
**Subject:** Vynesenie (priaznivého) rozsudku v prípade maloletého Martina Horvátha

Vážená pani Motešická,

dovoľte mi, aby som Vám v mene *Centra pre medzinárodnoprávnu ochranu detí a mládeže* vyjadrila úprimné poďakovanie za Vašu svedomitú prácu a profesionálny i osobný prínos k úspechu dosiahnutému v tejto právnej veci.

S úctou,

Mgr. et Mgr. Dana Štubňová, BSBA

*Medzinárodnoprávne oddelenie/Legal Department*

*Centrum pre medzinárodnoprávnu ochranu detí a mládeže/  
Centre for the International Legal Protection of Children and Youth*

*Špitálska 8, P. O. BOX 57  
814 99 Bratislava  
Slovak Republic*



Letters of thanks from satisfied citizens



▲ In 2017 we opened a number of honorary consulates. The photographs show the ceremonial openings of the consulates in Seoul, Haife, Beirut and Brest (Photo: MFEA)

ing for consulate heads, conducting political business and economic diplomacy, overseeing the day-to-day running and carrying out economic business and security work). In

five cases the service was provided by the consular head. Three administrative employees, and contract and local staff, carried out consular work as well.



▲ Performing arts groups frequently travel abroad, increasing the demand for a range of good quality consular services. The photo shows Dopravár performing at a folk festival in Beijing (Photo: MFEA)



In terms of foreign and European policy, the consular service concentrated on providing comprehensive and reliable consular assistance to Slovak citizens abroad. The primary objectives were to provide consular assistance and undertake crisis management, improve the level and availability of consular services, protect the interests of Slovak citizens abroad and advocate for law enforcement, which is key to protecting citizens abroad.

Our visa responsibilities were affected by the EU decision on visa liberalization for Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports. Consequently the work of the Slovak Embassy and Consulate General in Ukraine is now more focused on residency issues. We also continued concluding bilateral agreements on issuing visas on behalf of other countries.

Under the national project that is part of the Information Society Operational Programme the number of consulates

now capable of handling the majority of consular services electronically rose to 63. There are now only nine consulates with responsibility for consular services that do not have the technological wherewithal to do so electronically.

In response to the high level of cross-border mobility among Slovaks, the consular services sought to raise awareness before travel abroad. This was mainly achieved through additional consular services, such as the work of the Consular Information Centre, information published on the Ministry website, welcome text messages, Svetobežka – a mobile app – and press conferences relating to the tourist season. The voluntary app for pre-registering travel abroad was also expanded and made more accessible. The network of Slovak embassies and consulates that provides assistance and services to Slovak citizens abroad includes those led by an honorary consular officer.

#### Comparison of consular activities provided in 2013 – 2017

| Type of consular service/activity  | Year                               |                                    |                                    |                                    |                                      |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|  | 2013                               | 2014                               | 2015                               | 2016                               | 2017                                 |
| Consular assistance for Slovak citizens in need                                      | 3,091                              | 3,460                              | 4,079                              | 4,073                              | 3,885                                |
| Certifications performed at embassies and consulates abroad (including translations) | 33,637                             | 38,033                             | 43,669                             | 47,875                             | 51,209                               |
| Certifications provided by the Ministry's legalization department                    | 4,287<br>(of which 679 apostilles) | 4,319<br>(of which 726 apostilles) | 4,359<br>(of which 745 apostilles) | 4,118<br>(of which 885 apostilles) | 5,247<br>(of which 1,047 apostilles) |
| Processing passport requests   | 10,733                             | 13,556                             | 14,430                             | 14,695                             | 15,384                               |
| Issuing diplomatic and service passports   | 649 + 528                          | 642 + 396                          | 558 + 270                          | 685 + 478                          | 691 + 604                            |
| ID card applications   | 627                                | 978                                | 1,332                              | 1,081                              | 3,691                                |
| Driving licence applications   | 544                                | 545                                | 615                                | 618                                | 685                                  |
| Registrar work and applications for registrar documents                              | 7,690                              | 8,122                              | 8,087                              | 8,324                              | 8,253                                |
| Certification/confirmation of Slovak citizenship                                     | 1,999                              | 2,226                              | 2,387                              | 2,368                              | 2,418                                |
| Applications for Slovak citizenship  | 36                                 | 23                                 | 71                                 | 76                                 | 159                                  |
| Renouncement of Slovak citizenship   | 218                                | 194                                | 65                                 | 140                                | 231                                  |
| Criminal record extracts   | 794                                | 1,005                              | 950                                | 848                                | 1,327                                |
| Accompanying letter for the transport of physical remains                            | 68                                 | 84                                 | 49                                 | 67                                 | 63                                   |
| Various forms of assistance relating to the death of Slovak citizens abroad          | 690                                | 755                                | 770                                | 803                                | 826                                  |
| Issuing replacement travel documents for Slovak citizens                             | 3,950                              | 4,326                              | 5,324                              | 5,039                              | 4,447                                |
| Marriages performed at an embassy or consulate                                       | 35                                 | 40                                 | 32                                 | 28                                 | 38                                   |
| Replies to email requests for information  | 59,448                             | 58,935                             | 77,653                             | 86,232                             | 78,625                               |
| <b>Total number of selected consular tasks</b>                                       | <b>129,024</b>                     | <b>137,639</b>                     | <b>164,700</b>                     | <b>177,548</b>                     | <b>177,714</b>                       |
| Visa applications  | 132,898                            | 106,417                            | 77,921                             | 64,958                             | 44,540                               |
| Visa applications on behalf of other countries                                       | 821                                | 1,259                              | 1,706                              | 1,175                              | 1,406                                |
| Revenue from visa fees   | 3,464,902                          | 2,652,801                          | 1,994,227.50                       | 1,576,163,00                       | 1,271,710,66                         |
| Revenue from consular fees   | 1,108,154                          | 1,291,187                          | 1,507,859.50                       | 1,722,614,50                       | 2,142,302,95                         |
| <b>Total revenue</b>   | <b>4,573,056</b>                   | <b>3,943,989</b>                   | <b>3,502,087.00</b>                | <b>3,298,777,50</b>                | <b>3,414,013,61</b>                  |



▲ Peter Bondra and Marián Hossa attending Slovak National Day at Ottawa Welcomes the World (Photo: MFEA)

# PUBLIC AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

# 7

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY – COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC AT HOME AND ABROAD

In public diplomacy the Ministry focused on the credibility and clarity of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities, and this was achieved by sharing information, reinforcing the two-way dialogue and developing long-term relations with the external world. Slovakia's modern image as a dynamically developing country was conveyed via open communication, centred on the values embedded in the European structures. Tried and tested methods were used alongside new projects to inform both experts and the general public about the foreign policy steps we undertook and the significance of them.

## TWO-WAY DIALOGUE

Engaging the public in discussions on the wider context of our foreign policy direction gives citizens the opportu-

nity to shape development rather than just being mere observers. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs therefore supports projects that improve the flow of information and build external relations at multiple levels. One such project is a webzine called *Zahraničná politika [Foreign Policy]*, which has provided information on international relations, security and the economy for many years. The Ministry's leading officials also provide an arena for dialogue with the public and to communicate its key positions.

One of the Ministry's priorities is to support civil society and engage it appropriately in cooperation. Our most important public diplomacy partners are non-governmental non-profit organizations. The synergy and complementarity between state and non-state sectors is achieved in part by involving experts who are qualified to communicate specific themes to the general public and take part in a variety of activities, such as development cooperation.



The screenshot shows a red header with the logo 'ZP' and the text 'ZAHRANIČNÁ POLITIKA'. Below the header, there is a photo of Ivan Korčok speaking at a podium. The background of the photo features the logos of Slovakia (SK) and the European Union (EU). Below the photo, there is a headline in red: 'Ivan Korčok: EÚ je stavba, ktorú treba dobudovať.' followed by a short text paragraph in grey. At the bottom of the article, there is a small blue triangle icon.

Discussions on current issues in foreign and European policy is a public diplomacy priority



Bratislava Castle Open Day on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, 1 September 2017. The information materials conveyed something of the Ministry's work to the people (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Martin grammar-school student Adam Jesenský learns at the MemoGym project that his namesake, the writer Janko Jesenský, did not surrender to the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century but fought against both fascism and communism (Photo: Adam Jesenský)

An example of our work with non-governmental organizations on public diplomacy is an interactive project called MemoGym: Meetings of the European kind, which is a memory gym for the young generation funded by the Ministry. It is aimed at young people, and its appeal lies not just in its name but also in the activity itself. Life-size models of key historical figures travel around Slovak sec-

ondary schools with the aim of preventing loss of historical memory.

For some years now Ministry officials have met with secondary school and university students, providing an opportunity for lively discussion and the exchange of views on the issues affecting society today.



▲ Puppets of key Slovak figures with brief summaries captured student interest at secondary schools across the Slovak Republic (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the Children’s University at Comenius showing an interest in the “Good Idea Slovakia Ambassador” award, currently held by internationally renowned Peter Sagan (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Students at Rotterdam Business School displaying their excellent knowledge of national brand building. The future entrepreneurs correctly estimated the economic potential of a carefully targeted promotional campaign and the importance of a country’s image abroad (Photo: MFEA)

The Ministry also welcomed its youngest audience so far – the participants of the fifth year of the Children’s University at Comenius University. The children particularly liked the visual depiction of the Slovakia brand in the “Ideas from Slovakia – Good Idea” exhibition.

Part of the Ministry’s PR strategy is to provide information about its priorities and the assistance and services we provide our citizens. We are proactively seeking out opportunities to meet the public.

Publications and information materials are an integral part of presenting Slovakia. Via our embassies we have provided over 80,000 promotional publications. One particularly popular project is “Did you know? This is Slovakia”, in which foreign audiences learn interesting and engagingly presented facts about our past and present.

The Minister of Foreign and European Affairs annually presents awards to Slovaks who have played an important role in spreading Slovakia’s good name abroad. Mr. Štefan Nosál, who has long been the artistic director and choreographer of folk group Lúčnica, was awarded a gold plaque for his outstanding lifelong artistic contribution. At this event, Lúčnica became the bearer of the brand “Lúčnica & Slovakia – Good Idea”, and it now represents Slovakia under this brand all over the world.

#### COORDINATION OF THE PROMOTION OF SLOVAKIA ABROAD

Under the Competency Law the Ministry is mandated to ensure that the Slovak Republic is uniformly promoted abroad. The long-term goal is to create a stakeholder mod-



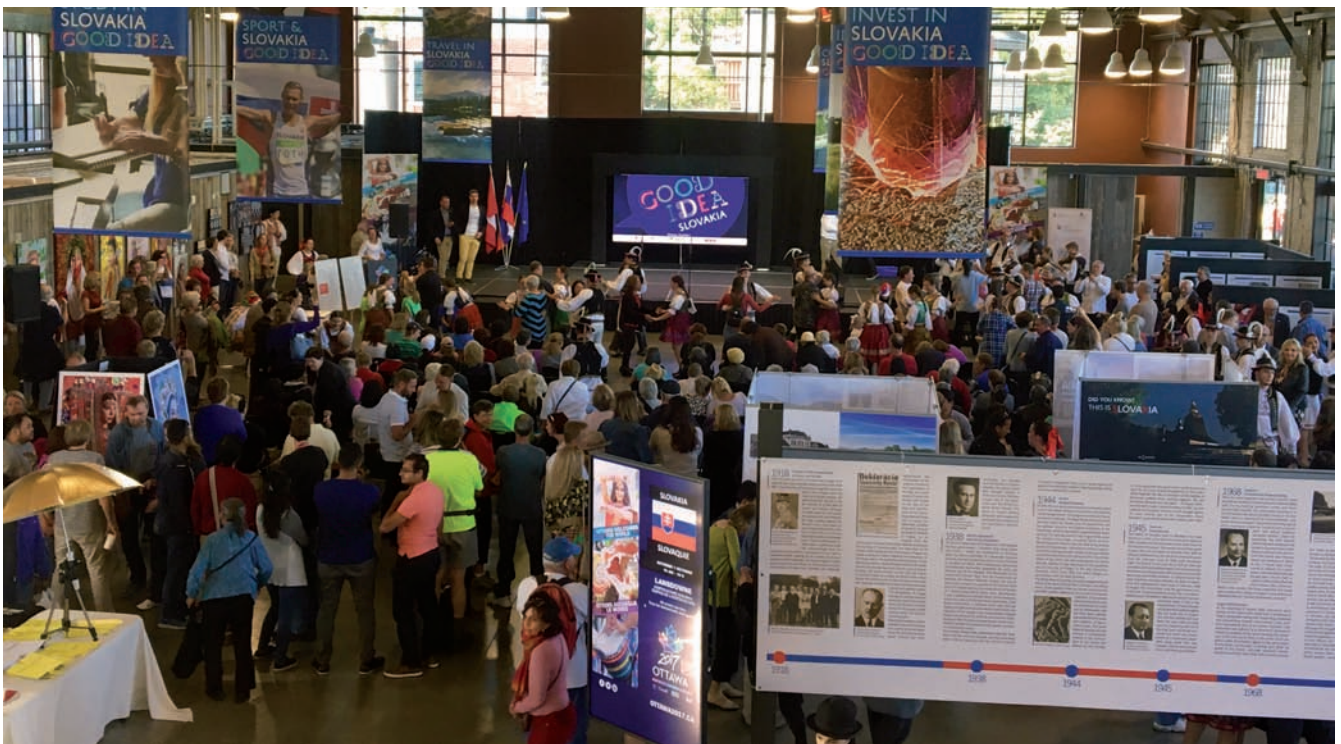
▲ Did you know that Château Palugyay was served on board the Titanic or that the first film about Dracula was filmed at Orava Castle?



▲ Ecocapsule in the Slovak Pavilion at the Expo 2017 Astana International Exhibition (Photo: Bakhytzhany Batyrkhanuly)

el of coordination. The Inter-ministerial Working Group for the Coordinated Presentation of the Slovak Republic Abroad succeeded in fulfilling one of its main objectives – to actively participate in the preparation and implementation of an appealing and credible PR identity for Slovakia

– whilst concentrating on coordinating and synergizing its work. The Slovakia brand has been used to bring together important activities encompassing the international dimension, such as the Slovak pavilion at Expo 2017 Astana, which captured Slovakia’s innovative potential. At the Min-



▲ Modern-day Slovakia, with our history and cuisine, featured at Ottawa Welcomes the World (Photo: MFEA)



▲ *“Ideas from Slovakia – Good Idea”, an exhibition aimed at economic diplomats, showcasing successful innovations from Slovakia (Photo: MFEA)*



▲ Presentation of Slovak wines at the World Wine Museum in Bordeaux held under the auspices of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Gabriela Matečná (Photo: MFEA)

istry’s behest, successful technologies were presented under the exclusive logo “Energy & Slovakia – Good Idea”. It showcased the successful startups Ecocapsule and Chargebrella, highlighting the fact that Slovakia has good ideas to offer the world.

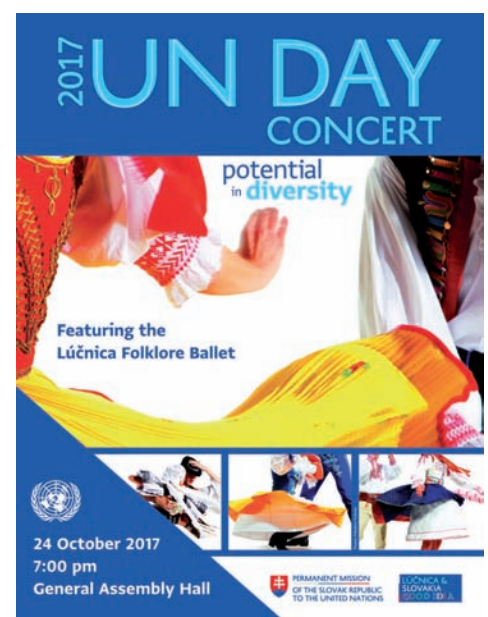
During the celebrations for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada, a Slovak National Day was held, and more than six thousand visitors had the opportunity to discover Slovakia.

#### THE LAUNCH OF THE GOOD IDEA SLOVAKIA BRAND

The Ministry considers quality and effective PR based on true messages to be a prerequisite for strengthening positive perceptions of Slovakia abroad. 2017 was the year in which the Slovakia brand was launched. Responsibility for actively bringing the brand to life was set out in Government Resolution no. 52/2016. The Ministry, with overall responsibility for the process of creating the brand, is primar-



▲ Minister M. Lajčák with members of the Lúčnica ensemble in the hall of the UN General Assembly in New York (Photo: Pavol Harum)





▲ The Slovakia presentation at the Frankfurt IAA Fair included both the Aeromobil and Slovakia's innovative potential in the automotive industry (Foto: SARIO)

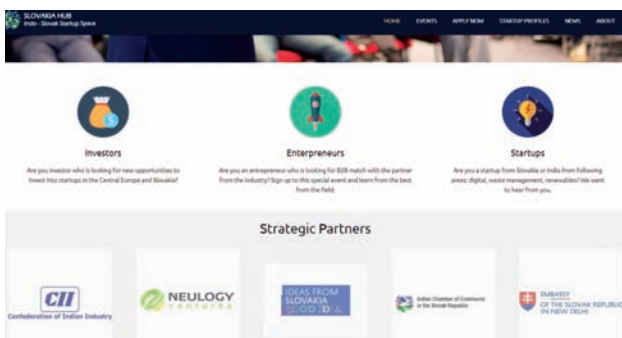
ily tasked with ensuring that, thanks to the Slovakia brand, Slovakia is seen as being both attractive and credible and as a cultural and educated country with many good ideas and solutions.

In the spirit of the slogan “Lúčnica & Slovakia – Good Idea”, the Lúčnica artistic ensemble, presented Slovakia to representatives of the 193 countries in the United Nations on 24 October 2017, under the motto “Potential in Diversity”.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, SARIO unveiled the latest model of the innovative Aeromobil vehicle at the 67<sup>th</sup> International IAA Motor Show in Frankfurt am Main.

From 9 to 11 November 2017, Slovakia Hub took place in Mumbai, where Slovak startup companies promoted intelligent solutions, green energy, financial technology and digital security. This unique project, exhibiting 15 Slovak startups to Indian investors, was organized by the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in India, the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia and the Slovak Business Agency.

The Slovakia brand is for all of us. The Ministry provides free licences to any enterprises seeking to promote Slovakia in a new, contemporary way, through brand messaging highlighting successful projects, investments, export potential, tourism or culture. More than one hundred of these were granted in 2017.



▲ Good ideas from Slovakia were the main theme at the B2B events in Mumbai, India



▲ The number of organizations using Slovakia sub-slogans is on the increase





▲ Minister M. Lajčák meeting Olympic winners, the Škantár cousins. They also discussed the possibility of using the “Sport & Slovakia – Good Idea” brand in sport diplomacy (Photo: MFEA)



▲ The World Volleyball League match between Slovakia and Japan in Poprad (Photo: SVF)

## SPORTS DIPLOMACY

Sports diplomacy has an increasingly positive impact on diplomatic, economic and political relations between states. It has become part of the Ministry’s public diplomacy and is an effective contribution to the presentation of Slovakia abroad.

Examples of successful cooperation include the strengthening of sports diplomacy activities through the Memorandum

of Cooperation between the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Slovak Olympic Committee (SOC). The Memorandum was ceremoniously signed by Minister Miroslav Lajčák and SOC President Anton Siekel in May 2017.

The SOC Foreign Relations Commission was recently established to help promote Slovakia abroad via Slovak sports figures, to support candidates seeking appointment to international sports structures and to promote training in sports diplomacy. The Public Diplomacy Division represents the Ministry on this body. In 2017 SOC members had the op-



▲ The signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry and SOC (Photo: MFEA)

portunity to learn about the work of the Ministry at the SOC Information Seminar and at the SOC General Assembly in June 2017.

The Ministry granted several sports associations a licence to use the “Sport & Slovakia – Good Idea” slogan in their promotional activities. It was used, for example, by the Slovak Volleyball Federation during the World Volleyball League in Poprad, the Slovak Floorball Association during the Women’s World Floorball Championships and the Slovak Cycling Federation during the Race around Slovakia. Sports diplomacy also includes working with the Slovak Special Olympics Movement, which uses the new brand in its projects for mentally disabled athletes. One example was the 10<sup>th</sup> National Special Olympics Games in Šamorín.

### COOPERATION WITH THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

The Ministry launched two public tenders in this area, funded out of its subsidy schemes:

1. International Relations and Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic (MVZP/2017). The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic supported 33 projects to a total of €118,820. Interest from non-governmental and non-profit organizations in obtaining funding rose by approximately 100 per cent compared to the previous year, with 86 applications received. Most of the projects concerned the organization of professional events, seminars and conferences, followed by the preparation of recommendations and expert papers on European and global security issues and the production of analytical studies and thematic publications.
2. International Relations and Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic aimed at strategic communication projects (MVZPSTRATCOM/2017). The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic supported five projects totalling €28,000. The strategic communication activities were aimed at raising public awareness of foreign, European and security policies and their performance in our geopolitical arena.



“We see civil society as a natural partner to the Ministry’s work. We value their expertise and listen to their constructive comments,” stressed Miroslav Lajčák at the annual meeting with non-governmental non-profit organizations and the academic community (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Minister Lajčák meeting Professor Nosál and Marián Turner, general director of the Lúčnica artistic ensemble (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Fragile sang Slovak and world Christmas songs at the 15<sup>th</sup> Slovak Christmas Concert in Paris on December 18 (Photo: MFEA)

### CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND SLOVAKS LIVING ABROAD

The ideas underpinning the work of the Slovak embassies are contained in the Framework Priorities for the Promotion of Slovak Art and Culture Abroad – a document we adopted in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture. Priorities included the Slovak figures featured in the UNESCO calendar of Maria Theresa’s 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary and events celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Master Ján Pavol of Levoča’s masterpiece.

We are proud of the fact that the Slovak institutes were able to organize a number of high quality cultural events. Many of the directors were particularly active in working with the EU National Institutes of Culture in their respective countries of work, and organized several joint events. Slovakia actively engaged with its partners in the Central European Cultural Platform, namely the Visegrad Group countries, the Republic of Austria and the Republic of Slovenia. In addition, as presiding country, we organized a joint international pres-

entation, the Night of Architecture, in Belgrade on World Architecture Day.

We have always paid special attention to Slovaks living abroad. Last year the Slovak Government Council for Slovaks Living Abroad continued with a whole range of activities. An example reflecting the value of its work in 2017 was the drafting of an action plan based around the State Policy on Slovaks Living Abroad for 2016–2020. We clearly identified specific tasks to achieve its goals. We also organized our traditional events involving Slovaks living abroad. Our aim was to focus attention in Slovakia on the lives of Slovaks living abroad and to encourage children and young people to develop an active relationship with the Slovak language and reinforce their national identity. Finally, with a sense of great satisfaction we note that the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, which has issued certificates to Slovaks living abroad for many years now, recorded the highest-ever interest last year, and by October 2017 it had issued 1,605 certificates.



▲ The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Government Council for Slovaks Living Abroad, held at the Ministry on 5 December 2017, (Photo: MFEA)



▲ The collection of periodical and non-periodical literature held by the Ministry Library is open to both staff and the general public (Photo: MFEA)

# PROFESSIONALISM – DIPLOMACY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

# 8

The Ministry is always reflecting on how it can provide an up-to-date, flexible foreign service capable of responding promptly to the increasingly unpredictable changes in the world of today and tomorrow. In our desire to continually improve, we adapt our tool set. We therefore choose carefully both the words we use to convey our thoughts and the people communicating them to our partners. When seen through the lenses of an independent Slovak diplomacy, the evolution of European and global policies over the last quarter of a century has placed greater demands on the expertise and professionalism of the foreign service.

Therefore the Ministry's HR department has concentrated on drafting and implementing a new law on the civil service and on amending the Foreign Service Act. The new legislation on the civil service, drafted in accordance with the Strategy for Human Resources Management in the Civil Service for the years 2015–2020, establishes relations between public sector workers and several new institutes and makes substantial changes to the recruitment process. In

2017 the Ministry recruited 63 times to fill 68 civil service posts.

We have been a member of a united Europe for more than a decade. This is reflected in the human resources aspects of our engagement with the European External Action Service. The excellent outcome of this is perhaps best reflected in the twenty Slovak citizens employed there, six of whom are former employees of the Slovak diplomatic service. It is with great satisfaction that we can report that two important posts in the senior EU Delegation team were held by Slovaks in 2017 – Ambassador Ivan Surkoš was Head of the EU Delegation in the Arab Republic of Egypt, and Ambassador Peter Michalko was Head of the EU Delegation in the Republic of Moldova. The Ministry also displayed a high level of professionalism in its expressed support for all candidates interested in working for European diplomacy. We have always viewed successful returnees as of great long-term benefit to the country, since they hand down their experience to the next generations.



▲  
Palugay Palace – a building of the Ministry (Photo: MFEA)



▲ Ambassador Peter Michalko took over as Head of the EU Delegation in Moldova in 2017 (Photo: European Union)



▲ Ambassador Ivan Surkoš was appointed Head of the EU Delegation in the Arab Republic of Egypt on 20 March 2017 (Photo: European Union)

A new round of Junior Professionals in Delegation traineeships for the European External Action Service and the European Commission was launched. In response the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs oversaw the pre-selection of Slovak candidates for the years 2017–2019. In addition, we are proud of the fact that last year short-term internships were taken up by 100 students at our headquarters and by up to 74 students at our embassies, consulates and other diplomatic missions abroad.

Last year the language skills that are essential to the diplomatic profession were another area that received attention. French, historically the lingua franca of diplomacy, was promoted under the Slovak Francophone Initiative 2015–2018.

Additionally the Ministry also ran its Civil Service French Annual Training Program.

#### MODERNIZATION OF THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

We have continued to modernize our information systems to ensure our work places reflect the technological demands of today and the principles of an electronic administration (eGovernment). We have installed an electronic system for managing the registry that uses the government repository infrastructure, and this has fundamentally changed internal and external communication at the Ministry.

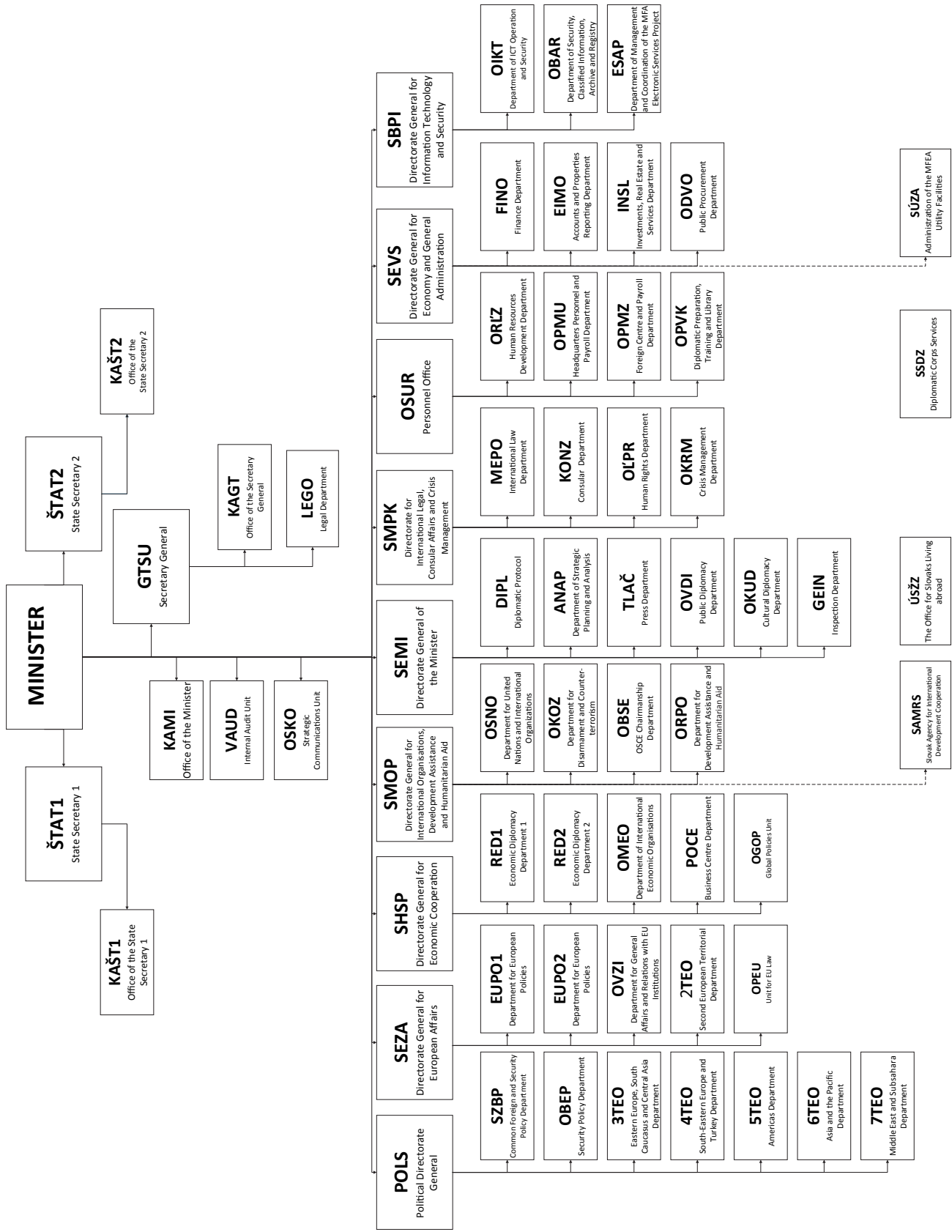
#### Ministry expenditure in 2017

(simplified overview of programme structure – actual spending in euros)

Ministry programmes:

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Foreign relations</b> .....  | <b>113,528,442</b> |
| of which:   |                    |
| Programme management .....  | 37,467,432         |
| Gabčíkovo Nagymaros legal dispute.....  | 94                 |
| Cooperation with third sector.....  | 146,820            |
| Staff training .....  | 68,927             |
| Reimbursement of expenditure from Technical Assistance Operational Programme..... | 368,952            |
| Economic diplomacy .....  | 92,564             |
| OSCE presidency.....  | 138,581            |
| Diplomatic representation of Slovakia abroad.....                                 | 70,731,104         |
| Cultural representation of Slovakia abroad .....                                  | 1,101,619          |
| Staff employed locally abroad .....   | 3,412,349          |
| <b>State policy on Slovaks living abroad</b> .....                                | <b>1,810,892</b>   |
| Inter-ministerial programmes:   |                    |
| <b>Development cooperation – Ministry</b> .....                                   | <b>9,043,743</b>   |
| <b>Slovakia’s EU Council Presidency 2016 – Ministry</b> .....                     | <b>3,367,405</b>   |
| <b>Slovakia’s contributions to international organizations – Ministry</b> .....   | <b>25,868,592</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b> .....  | <b>153,619,073</b> |

# Organisational Chart



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