

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR THE YEAR 2022



MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic for the year 2022

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



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FOREWORD BY MINISTER RASTISLAV KÁČER

Slovak diplomacy has had the most difficult year since the establishment of the state. We began with the hope that, despite the turbulence in international relations and after two pandemic years, we would return to the recovery of economic growth and consolidation. This has not happened.

The morning of 24 February 2022 will remain in our memories as a turning point that marked our professional lives and the course of history. The brutal perfidious aggression of a permanent member of the UN Security Council against its smaller neighbour showed that our security environment had been fundamentally altered by the resurgence of Russia's imperial instinct. It has confirmed that the democratic world must be much better prepared to defend its values and its way of life. The role of diplomacy is indispensable in this endeavour.

In this new geopolitical situation, Slovakia has acted in a principled manner and, once again, has put itself on the right side of history. We have helped Ukraine to defend its freedom, we have stood up for the principles of the UN Charter and the international order. Slovak diplomacy has stood the test in this mission; however, we have not won the struggle over the shape of the international order yet - it will continue to be a test for our foreign and European policy in 2023.

For much of the past challenging year, Slovak diplomacy was led by my predecessor, Ivan Korčok. When I took up the ministerial chair, I thanked him for his excellent work and confirmed continuity of our policy, both, in the area of expertise, and values.

Taking stock of the past year, I wonder what lessons it has taught us.

The first and foremost lesson: evil must be confronted. The immense suffering of Ukrainians is accompanied by their extraordinary heroism and determination to defend their freedom, territorial integrity and vision of a European democratic Ukraine, even at the highest cost. A tremendous example of courage for all of Europe! However pathetic it may sound, the Ukrainians are also fighting for our freedom at this moment, and it is our moral duty to help them.

The second lesson is the power of solidarity. The democratic community's assistance to Ukraine has fundamentally helped the country in defending its homeland in the face of a much stronger enemy (at least on paper). Slovakia was among those countries that promptly delivered substantial volumes of vital military material and humanitarian aid. I dare to say that Slovak aid was also an inspiration for much larger or richer states.

The third lesson for me is the need to maintain compassion and empathy. Although some lack it, many in Slovakia have demonstrated the power of humanity. The Russian war has brought untold suffering to Ukrainian towns and villages, destroying human lives and tearing families apart. It has driven millions of people from their homes and plunged them into extreme destitution. It is precisely in such an exacerbated situation that the value of compassion for the suffering of fellow human beings has become apparent. The good-natured and spontaneous help from the majority of Slovaks, churches and civil society to Ukrainian refugees, especially mothers and children, fills me with pride and hope.

The fourth lesson is leaning on our diplomatic experience: our (European and Transatlantic) strategies must be based

on an objective assessment of reality, not on a desired state of affairs. Neglecting the warning signals from Russia has reduced our readiness to respond effectively and in a timely manner. This applies both to military capabilities and to hybrid threats, including the misuse of energy resources as a weapon. I am pleased that over the past year the Slovak Foreign Service has actively contributed to a fundamental update of the security concepts of both the North Atlantic Alliance and of the European Union.

The fifth lesson is that despite the value confusion in politics and the intense pressure of disinformation and hybrid attacks, we cannot give up on the protection of human rights as an integral part of our foreign policy. Disrespect for human rights is one of the main causes of conflict and social unrest. Value-based politics and human rights, which so much irritate the masters of the Kremlin, must remain at the centre of our attention. Only on this basis can we build free and democratic societies, and effective multilateralism, which is a prerequisite for solving global problems.

The sixth lesson is the degree of global interconnectedness, of the potential for misfortune in one part of the world to affect people thousands of miles away. As a result of Russia's war in Ukraine, populations in the poorest corners of the world have been suffering under the threat of food and resource insecurity. The global rise in inflation, the energy crisis, the economic downturn and the rise in social tensions, all augmented by the war, are affecting people everywhere.

The seventh lesson: Slovakia's strategy of integration into the EU and NATO has been proven correct. We can rely

on allies willing to defend our territory and population, as demonstrated by the creation of a NATO battle group in Slovakia. The firm anchorage of our country in Euro-Atlantic structures is the best security insurance in this turbulent world.

Dear friends,

I am aware that the lessons learned from last year's events are not, in themselves, a guarantee of success. It is the responsibility of our foreign service and the political representation of the country to consider them when making decisions in the period ahead. I believe that Slovak diplomacy has the capacity to cope with the challenges of today's world and will be able to rely on the support of the highest constitutional representatives in fulfilling this mission.

It is important for Slovakia that, after the past difficult 12 months, it is perceived by its allies and partners as a reliable partner with a clear and legible foreign policy based on the values of freedom, solidarity, justice and democracy. It is in our vital interest that this continues to be the case also at these turning points. I personally as well as the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs are ready to do our utmost in this endeavour.



Rastislav Káčer
Minister of Foreign
and European Affairs



AN INTERVIEW WITH STATE SECRETARY INGRID BROCKOVÁ

How did the Russian aggression against Ukraine affect Slovak foreign policy last year?

Fundamentally, it is the greatest **challenge in terms of global security and stability**. It affects the future of a system of international relations based **on respect for international law**. Ukraine is fighting for its future and survival. **Slovakia has been assisting it in every way** since the beginning of the war **and will continue to provide Ukraine with political, military, economic and humanitarian support and assistance to the maximum extent possible** for as long as it is necessary.

Slovakia actively supported the adoption of important **resolutions in the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council**, as well as decisions taken in other international organisations in support of Ukraine.

Slovakia was a strong advocate for Ukraine during the EU candidate status discussions. Already in July, at a **conference** in Lugano, which I attended, Ukraine presented a **recovery and reform plan**. The candidate status will help their implementation and accelerate Ukraine's integration in the EU.

Together with our partners in the EU, we have adopted broad **sanctions against Russia**, we have supported the establishment of the **Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine**.

Slovakia is one of the traditional providers of humanitarian aid to Ukraine and, by the end of 2022, Slovakia had provided over EUR 8 million worth of aid under the SlovakAid banner.

Slovakia's good reputation abroad has clearly been strengthened. In all my talks with representatives of international organisations, whether at the Ministry in Bratislava or during **my visits to New York and Geneva**, the topic of Ukraine dominated, and the appreciation for our position and concrete assistance to Ukraine resonated strongly.

Was last year a successful year for Slovak diplomacy in international organisations?

It was a specific year marked by our advocacy for Ukraine's cause. Thanks to the intensive campaign and support activities of the Ministry, **Slovakia was elected to several important bodies and positions in the UN system** - to the UN Economic and Social Council, to the Executive Board of the UN Development Programme, to the UN Population Fund and the UN Office for Project Services, to the Executive Board of the World Health Organization and to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO.

We actively participated in the **COP27** Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where **we joined the Global Methane Pledge** and the **Drought Resilience Alliance**.

I would also like to mention our public diplomacy. We organised the **second edition of the series of events called Slovakia at the UN** aimed at young people, students and the general public. The event has proven that it makes sense to publicly communicate themes such as activism, solidarity, humanitarian and development cooperation, which cultivate the Slovak public space.

What topics has the Foreign Ministry addressed in the area of development cooperation?

There is a wide and varied range of topics and projects, which are covered in this publication. I will mention just a few of them. In March 2022, **the third OECD mid-term evaluation of the Slovak development cooperation system** took place.

In an effort to achieve greater targeting of development cooperation, SAIDC (Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation) has also launched a call for proposals **to support the strategic partnership with Kenya**. The partnership focuses on several sectoral themes such as **digitisation of primary and secondary schools and digital skills for teachers and education staff, with a total funding of EUR 1 million** over five years.

We supported three projects of Slovak non-governmental development organisations in Moldova focusing on **environment, forestry and digital education with grants amounting to EUR 353,000**. A major success of SAIDC in Moldova was the **implementation of the first, two-year delegated cooperation project** with a budget of EUR 1 million from European Union funds. In Georgia, we supported **four projects on environmentally sustainable economy and local employment development for a total of EUR 539,000**.

Through the **New Business Partnerships Programme**, SAIDC supported **Slovak business projects in Brazil, Kenya, Nigeria and Serbia**.

One of the priorities of your agenda is to promote Slovakia's economic interests abroad. Have you been successful in this area in the past year?

Despite the enormously deteriorated international business environment, we have been successful. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has changed the European energy security. The Ministry has contributed to taking the **decisive steps to eliminate its dependence on Russian energy carriers**. In the **gas sector**, this was by means of LNG terminals in the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas and through supplies from the North Sea. Today, Russian gas accounts for only about one third of our imports. In the field of **oil**, Slovnaft, a. s. refinery took steps to diversify its production mix. The representatives of the Ministry – our ambassadors abroad, were part of these processes.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, we prepared the **Concept of External Economic Relations and Economic Diplomacy** for the period 2022-2030, and the Government of the Slovak Republic endorsed it. The Concept introduced the **Competitiveness and Productivity Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic** with the aim to link state and non-state actors and to collaborate on strategic decisions

needed to increase the productivity of the economy. Our ministry chairs its **Working Group on Economic Diplomacy and Unified Presentation of the Slovak Republic Abroad**.

We have also strengthened our coordination in the field of external economic relations through the informal inter-ministerial platform **Team Slovakia**. A practical result of the intensification of inter-ministerial cooperation was the signing of the Agreement on **Cooperation in the field of support and promotion of tourism with the Ministry of Transport and Tourism of the Slovak Republic and with the Slovakia Travel Agency**.

I am happy to make note of the **relevance and functionality of all the new formats of economic diplomacy** that we launched at the beginning of our mandate - the **Export Forum**, the event **From Regions to the World** and the **Innovation Days** for foreign diplomatic missions in the Slovak Republic. More details are included in this report. During my travels, I have seen for myself the enormous efforts made by our ambassadors and economic diplomats to support Slovak entrepreneurs abroad and to organise **business missions**.

The Ministry has long supported human rights advocacy and value-based foreign policy. Was this also the case last year?

The clearest answer to this question is **our position on Russian aggression and our assistance to Ukraine**. In addition, at the UN, we have joined initiatives to promote human rights around the world, including in Russia, Belarus, Iran and the Xinjiang Province in China. Slovakia was the leader of a joint statement at the UN Human Rights Council on combating anti-Semitism.

We continue the ambition to raise our profile on the issue of **media freedom and the protection of journalists** within the EU and in relation to third countries. Slovakia also became a member of the **Freedom Online Coalition**.

In January 2022, Slovakia and seven other EU Member States came forward with a formal proposal to step up **the EU's engagement in the fight against corruption** and, by doing so, strengthen the protection of democracy and the principles of the rule of law.

The promotion of a value-based policy abroad is also inseparable from the steps taken at home, at the Ministry. Otherwise, we would not be credible. I am personally very pleased that several formats continued last year such as the Women in Diplomacy series, as well as a number of events to strengthen gender equality, diversity and inclusion. I consider this extremely important for cultivating our Ministry's corporate culture of mutual respect, partnership and cooperation.



AUTHOR'S NOTE BY STATE SECRETARY ANDREJ STANČÍK

2022 - A year of crises, but also a year of strong unity

For Slovakia, as for the whole of Europe, 2022 was a year of crises and war, but also a year of unity, courage and cohesion. As a Union of democratic states, we have shown that, despite major challenges, we can not only face problems but we can also solve them together. Our country has played a constructive role in the search for European unity and solutions. We have shown that we can be a clear, transparent and responsible partner that faces challenges head-on, even with our own proposals. The bulk of this effort was achieved thanks to our professional diplomatic service.

The events of 2022 were marked by a barbaric war against our eastern neighbour. Under the onslaught of the invasion, as well as the destruction of Ukraine's energy and civilian infrastructure, assistance from EU states proved decisive.

Despite Putin's expectations, the EU mobilised from day one and we have shown unprecedented unity and cohesion on the issue of sanctions against Russia. Almost immediately, the Union provided Ukraine with financial assistance to keep the state running, to restore critical infrastructure, while, at the same time, supporting the country on its path towards European integration and providing it with EUR 7 billion in macro-financial assistance in the form of soft loans. We have agreed on a further EUR 17 billion of assistance in 2023.

This aggressive war has many negative consequences for the whole surrounding world, especially for the energy sector. We need to strengthen our energy security and to get rid of our dependence on Russia, which uses energy as a geopolitical weapon. The EU has therefore reduced the supply of pipeline

gas from Russia from 41% to 9%. At the same time, the RePowerEU plan has brought financial instruments to support energy diversification and promote green transit.

For Slovakia, which until 2022 was practically fully dependent on Russian gas and oil supplies, this challenge is all the more important. The aim is to increase our independence from Russian gas and oil and, at the same time, spend the additional RePower EU funds efficiently to strengthen our own energy security.

In addition to dependence on Russian resources, energy prices on the markets have also been a problem. For Slovakia, the main priority was to find an agreement on a price ceiling for gas. In the long term, the priority is to reform the electricity market and decouple gas and electricity pricing.

Conference on the Future of Europe

The Europe Day on 9 May marked the conclusion of the Conference on the Future of Europe - a dialogue with citizens on the future functioning of the Union. I am glad that we, as a democratic community, have embarked on this journey and listened to the views of young people who have an interest in making the Union more effective and modern. Our task now is to move this process forward.

The war has shown that citizens want a more assertive Union that strengthens its global position and stands up for its values and standards. They want a Union that is autonomous and flexible, and that requires effective decision-making processes. Therefore, a necessary debate will have to take place on the transition from voting by consensus to a qualified majority voting. This is a very important topic for Slovakia, and that is why we have initiated a cross-ministerial debate.

I believe that first and foremost we should incorporate those recommendations from citizens that can be applied on the basis of existing treaties. Any treaty change at this moment would call for a broad consensus between Member States and European institutions, which could block the whole process.

Enlargement of the European Union

Slovakia is a strong supporter of the EU integration and we therefore welcome the developments that have taken place in 2022. The EU leaders granted candidate status to Ukraine, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Georgia has been offered the prospect of EU membership. For the citizens of Ukraine, this is a clear signal of their European perspective and political and moral support in their difficult struggle. At the same time, Slovakia is coming up with initiatives that would help Ukraine to integrate beyond the standard process and enable the country to manage the process under these current difficult conditions.

The first intergovernmental accession conferences were held with North Macedonia and Albania, which are an important milestone in the integration process. We believe that the progress that has been made in the integration process will be maintained and that the momentum in the other countries of the Western Balkans will be further strengthened.

Protection of journalists and the rule of law

One of the highest values that unite us together in the EU is respect for the rule of law, which is fundamental to the progress and prosperity of our society. Slovakia is a country that respects the fundamental values of the Union, and the protection of the rule of law is a priority for us. However, these values must not be empty words on paper. We must firmly uphold them and implement them without any exceptions.

The instrument for protecting the common budget was used for the first time in the case of Hungary. We consider it important that these instruments continue to be used only in cases where neither dialogue nor constructive discussion leads to results.

In the area of media independence, Slovakia, following its own tragic experience with the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak, is actively advocating for greater protection of journalists within the EU. Only a truly independent media can be the guarantor of the rule of law and a democratic state. We raised this issue at the beginning of the year during the EU Council and, together with the French Presidency, we achieved tangible results.

The European Commission presented a proposal for a European Media Freedom Act, which will bring a new set of

rules to protect media pluralism and independence. It is to include safeguards against political interference in editorial decisions and against the surveillance of journalists.

Cooperation with France and Germany

We are bound with France by a similar set of values as well as by our cooperation on a number of European issues, of which I would particularly like to highlight nuclear energy. We are about to sign a new Mutual Strategic Partnership Agreement for 2023-2027.

Our economic cooperation is moving from 'traditional' sectors, such as the automotive industry, to new areas, such as hydrogen, digitalisation, smart cities and tourism. There are almost 400 French businesses operating in Slovakia and we are committed to further deepening our economic cooperation.

Germany is a strong strategic and economic partner for Slovakia. In addition to shared values and geographical proximity, we also share a mutual focus on strengthening the security of our continent. We appreciate Germany's help by providing the PATRIOT system to protect our airspace. We see this as a clear sign of unity and cohesion within NATO.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine shows the need for security cooperation within the EU and for building a strong, united and solidary Union. Together with Germany, we have embarked on this path by the signing of the Enhanced Dialogue between the Slovak Republic and Germany. This declaration is the basis for the preparation of an Action Plan for the development of cooperation between the partner ministries.

Summary

The year 2022 was one of crises and lessons learned. Despite initial fears, it has shown that we have not only managed to maintain, but also strengthen unity and the EU's capacity for action. It is thanks to our unity, cohesion and capacity for action that we have managed to face the unprecedented challenges that have emerged beyond our eastern borders, to contribute to solving the energy crisis, to support the integration process, to work on new challenges arising from the demands of EU citizens, while bearing in mind the challenges of climate change. The European Union has shown to the sceptics that it has what it takes to be a global player.

The Slovak Republic remains a constructive, responsible and transparent partner. It is precisely the credibility of Slovak diplomacy and its strength in foreign and European policy that has helped us to communicate successfully our positions on strategically important issues such as energy and integration; for this, I thank my colleagues immensely.

10 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY IN 2022

1. From the first moments of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, Slovakia has provided substantial diplomatic support and political, military, economic and humanitarian assistance to the attacked neighbour. It has been among the most active supporters of Ukraine.
2. In early February 2022, the Slovak National Council approved the Slovak-US Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA), signed in Washington on 3 February 2022. The agreement created legal conditions for effective defence cooperation between the two countries.
3. Throughout the course of 2022, the security and defence of Slovakia on NATO's eastern flank was substantially reinforced, including the deployment of the Alliance's Multinational Battlegroup with its effective air defence systems on the territory of the Slovak Republic.
4. The European Commission approved the key programming documents of the Slovak Republic for the use of EU funds for the period 2021-2027 - the Partnership Agreement and the related Slovakia Programme. Slovakia will be able to draw EUR 12.6 billion from the new EU funds.
5. Slovakia successfully continued to implement the Recovery Plan. In 2022, it submitted two payment requests totalling EUR 1.073 billion. In the past year, Slovakia achieved an important milestone by adopting several key reforms, which are the prerequisite for improving the lives of its citizens.



Hundreds of people gathered in Slovak cities to show their support for Ukraine on 24 February 2022

6. Slovakia used its presidency of the Visegrad Group and in the Slavkov Format to promote concrete cooperation and an active pro-European neighbourhood policy.
7. Slovakia was an active part of European and global efforts to mitigate climate change. President Zuzana Čaputová led the Slovak delegation at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-27) and the Climate Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.
8. The Slovak Republic was elected as a member of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) for the period 2023-2025.
9. Slovakia adeptly handled the consular, diplomatic and humanitarian crisis management needed for dealing with the massive migration wave from Ukraine after the Russian aggression. It also assisted in the repatriation of thousands of foreigners to their countries of origin through its territory.
10. The voice of Slovak diplomacy was heard at all international forums important for the protection of the rule of law, democracy, human rights and media freedom.

10 MAIN MFEA SR PROJECTS IN 2022

1. Štefan Osuský Summer School of Diplomacy
2. UN Week in Slovakia
3. International Conference on Human Rights and Democracy at Home and Abroad, organized by the Human Forum platform
4. Self-standing economic diplomacy projects: Export Forum, Innovation Day, Export House, From Regions to the World
5. Expo Dubai 2022 - MFEA SR as sponsor of the Global Goals Week in the Slovak Pavilion
6. Presentation of Slovak music in three priority countries - USA, Norway and Spain and multi-genre weeks of Slovakia in the USA, Bulgaria and Turkey
7. Thematic week Women in Diplomacy
8. Analytical Days of Svetoslav Bombík on Ukraine and Visegrad Cooperation with international participation
9. Drafting of the first report on the strategic outlook of foreign and European policy of the Slovak Republic and defining its methodology
10. Improvement of communication with the public by launching a new Ministerial website and cooperation with the civil society in preparation of important events for representatives from the fields of security and political sciences (GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum, Tatra Summit 2022, Annual Review Conference of the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic - SFPA).



Participants of Štefan Osuský Summer School of Diplomacy listened to many lectures and presentations by figures from the Slovak foreign service, public and political life, along with workshops and practical activities that will help them with their career development. July 2022, Bratislava.



The project From Regions to the World, combining representatives of ministries of economy, central bodies of state administration, local governments, public administration and business, presents new possibilities for support and cooperation with foreign partners. 5-6 December, 2022, Košice.



Women in Diplomacy conference is a clear statement and commitment of the Slovak Foreign Ministry to actively support inclusion and diversity in foreign policy. 9 November 2022, Bratislava.

2022 in Pictures





30

30 YEARS OF SLOVAKIA'S DIPLOMATIC MISSION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD — 30 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE HOMELAND

It is fascinating to follow the diplomatic story of independent Slovakia - the story of a country that has emerged from the foreign policy sidelines to the centre of major integration groupings that today represent democratic Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area. It is a story of a combination of great domestic efforts, regional cooperation and the assistance of members of the Euro-Atlantic community. It is also a story of hundreds of Foreign Service personnel who have served their country and its citizens abroad with dedication and sacrifice in good times and less good times. Their achievements call for respect.

In fact, the story of modern Slovak diplomacy did not begin on the day of Slovak independence on January 1, 1993, but 3 years earlier, with the establishment of the

Ministry of International Relations of the Slovak Republic - still as part of the federal Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. Without the activities of Slovak diplomacy between 1990 and 1992, the process of the peaceful division of the federation and the international legal recognition of the young Slovak Republic would not have gone so smoothly. It was then that the main direction of Slovak foreign policy was set for the first time. This stage is associated with the names of ministers Milan Kňažko and Pavol Demeš, who surrounded themselves with young enthusiasts and experts from various fields of cultural, academic and economic life - several of them graduated from the Institute of International Relations of Associate Professor K. Rybárik at the Institute of International Relations at the Faculty of Law, Comenius University, Bratislava. Most of them became the pillars of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, which was established together with the independent Slovakia and many of them remain its pillars to this day.

Opening up to the world was not easy. Even back then Pavol Demeš had the foresight to point out the main pitfalls for Slovak diplomacy: „In any case, we must aim for Slovakia to be a country with a stable democracy and economic prosperity. When we consider Slovak interests and the challenges of their implementation, we must ultimately conclude that the main part of the answer lies at home. The struggle for cohesion, vitality and the ability to compete internationally will either be fought or lost here, in Slovakia, and nowhere else.“ This message has accompanied Slovak diplomacy with no less intensity to the present day.



Informal meeting of EU foreign ministers (Gymnich) during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU on 2-3 September, 2016, Bratislava.

A complex world and Slovakia being the safest in its history

The geopolitical anchoring of Slovakia in the international arena and particularly in the European and Euro-Atlantic integration structures was of vital interest to the country and the most important historical mission of Slovak diplomacy in the past 30 years. The current geopolitical developments to our east and on a global dimension clearly confirm this. The Slovak Republic's membership in the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE) was a necessary and also a fundamental prerequisite for the country's equal and full-fledged status as a part of the international community and a subject of international law. However, it did not speak clearly enough about its geostrategic and value settings.



OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Miroslav Lajčák visiting Ukraine, 16 January 2019, Severodonetsk.

After initial ambiguities with its foreign policy orientation, the country successfully emerged from the shadows of doubt about its civilizational direction. It is to the credit of Slovak diplomacy that, even in the difficult 1990s, it protected the hope of real integration into the EU and NATO. In 2004, after catching up with its Central European partners, Slovakia became an integral part of the political West. We joined both the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance voluntarily, not under pressure from superpowers, which gives these ties a higher quality. This stage of Slovakia's redirection to the Euro-Atlantic path after difficult years of internal political marasmus is largely linked to the personality of Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan and the generation of diplomats at that time.

By joining the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union in 2004, the contribution of Slovak diplomacy to the building of regional and European security has multiplied and its foreign policy influence has increased significantly. Allied countries from the Alliance and the Union with whom we are linked by overlapping priorities, values and interests across Europe and the world, have become a natural priority for the development of Slovakia's bilateral relations.

Today, Slovak diplomacy is present at most of the main negotiating tables of international institutions where global or regional issues are decided. We were members, and for a time chaired, the UN Security Council (2006-2007), the UN Economic and Social Council (2010-2012) and UN General Assembly committees. We were members of the UN Human Rights Council (2008-2011, 2018-2020). Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák, chaired the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly (2017-2018). Minister Lajčák also successfully fulfilled the role of OSCE Chairperson-in-Office during



Miroslav Lajčák, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic was elected President of the United Nations General Assembly's 72nd Session by representatives of the UN member states in New York on 31 May 2017. (UN Photo / Manuel Elias)



76 soldiers serving in a 210 member Slovak-led contingent of the UNFICYP Peacekeeping mission were awarded medals for their contributions to peace at the Sector 4 Headquarters in Famgusta, at Camp General Štefánik on 8 March, 2018.

the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship (2019) whose motto was the prevention of new conflicts and the non-escalation of existing ones. He thus followed-up on Slovak diplomat Ján Kubiš who served as OSCE Secretary-General from 1999 to 2005.



NATO formally invited Finland and Sweden to become full members at a Summit in Madrid on 30 June, 2022. (Photo: NATO)

Slovak diplomacy and Slovak soldiers have helped to calm down outbreaks of tension in several places around the world. In Cyprus, the Slovak Embassy has long been a provider of good services for bicomunal dialogue between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In 2018, as part of the United Nations Military Peacekeeping Mission in Cyprus, the Slovak troops unit (UNFICYP) took command of one entire sector. Over the past 30 years, Slovaks have been serving in UN peacekeeping missions in the Golan Heights, Haiti, the former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Uganda, Rwanda, Iraq, Eritrea, Ethiopia, East Timor and Sierra Leone. Slovakia has had its representatives on observer missions in Angola, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

Slovakia's foreign policy has long been based on four pillars - integration into the European Union, NATO direction, multilateralism and good relations with its neighbouring countries. In addition to bilateral relations and as part of neighbourhood relations and regional cooperation, the Visegrad Cooperation (V4 - Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) has played an important role for Slovakia. Later on, the so-called Slavkov format (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria) also gained importance, but it was the political and substantive cooperation with the V4 partners that contributed to Slovakia's successful integration into the EU and NATO.

The diplomatic story of Slovakia would not be complete without emphasising its Balkan and Eastern vector, where we have been of interest to partners for our readability, reliability and consistent performance in the

international arena. In the Western Balkans, Slovakia has used, and continues to use, its experience related to transition and its power of diplomacy to make a significant contribution to the consolidation of the post-war situation in the former Yugoslavia, including democratisation and rapprochement of the countries in the region with Euro-Atlantic structures. Increased emphasis on relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, and in particular with Ukraine, was part of the development of the Eastern Partnership programme, in particular following a fundamental reassessment of relations with Russia.

Slovakia's growing international reputation has contributed to a number of important foreign policy visits and events in Slovakia. Some of them have had a wider political and media resonance: Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip (2008), Pope John Paul II (1990, 1995 and 2003), Pope Francis (2021), President of the PRC Hu Jintao (2009), Presidents François Hollande (2013) and Emmanuel Macron (2018), and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (2015) have all paid official visits to Slovakia. German Chancellor Angela Merkel officially visited the Slovak Republic 4 times (2006, 2014, 2016, 2019). Slovakia hosted the George Bush - Vladimir Putin Summit (2005), the 18th Central European Summit of 19 Presidents (2013), the Summit of Heads of State and Government during SK PRES in the Council of the EU (2016) and the OSCE Ministerial Summit in Bratislava (2019).



Official 4-day state and pastoral visit by Pope Francis, as a spiritual and secular authority in 2021, was the peak of bilateral activities in recent years. 19 September 2021, Bratislava. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

The success of Slovak diplomacy during the 30 years of the existence of an independent Slovakia has been due to the continuous promotion of the fundamental values on which every advanced democracy is built - freedom of speech, the rule of law, respect for international law and respect for fundamental human rights. Slovakia, as



French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel at a joint press conference after the EU Summit in Bratislava, held under the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 16 September, 2016.

a member of the UN Human Rights Council and in other international organisations, has consistently defended human rights and fundamental freedoms. Within the Media Freedom Coalition and other international platforms, it has committed itself to supporting media freedom at home and around the world. It actively promotes freedom of the press, the protection of journalists and the rule of law at the EU level and within the framework of the Summit for Democracy. Despite the vicissitudes of Slovak domestic political life, the Slovak Foreign Service has always upheld the principles of freedom and democracy, as these values are an unquestionable condition for the development of our country and for increasing the prosperity of our citizens.



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon visiting University Library in Bratislava during his official visit to Slovakia, 19 October 2015, Bratislava.

Cooperation with the Slovak public, private and civil sectors, with the foreign policy and security community, has been and continues to be of particular benefit to Slovak diplomacy. Public debates, expert opinions on foreign policy issues and substantive cooperation on concrete projects at home and abroad have significantly enriched Slovak diplomacy in this dimension of public diplomacy. The analyses and events of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association and its Research Centre, the international think tank GLOBSEC, the Institute for Public Affairs and many others help shape and influence foreign policy thinking in Slovakia and create a positive perception of the country at home and in the international environment.



President Volodymyr Zelensky during his speech at the 2022 GLOBSEC International Security Forum on 2 June 2022, Bratislava.

Slovakia has never seen a better, freer and safer 30 years in its history. The Slovak Foreign Service has also played a significant role in this. Since the Second World War, however, peace in the world, and especially in Europe, has never been more fragile than it is today. Because of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, Europe's biggest security and civilisation crisis since 1989 has been created in our immediate neighbourhood. It is also a result of Slovak diplomacy that Slovakia, even in this dramatic situation, can be part of the search for solutions and, at the same time, enjoy the strongest security guarantees in its history - thanks to its membership in NATO and our NATO allies.

Slovakia - an active and strong part of the EU

Slovakia's accession to the European Union on 1 May 2004 was one of the most significant historical achievements of Slovak politics, diplomacy and civil society. It was the result of a complex domestic civilizational struggle for the country to move in a pro-Western and democratic direction. In this process, Slovak diplomacy played an essentially positive and constructive role.

By joining the EU, Slovakia has subscribed to the European values of democracy, togetherness, solidarity and economic prosperity. Slovakia's stronger voice in international relations, freedom of travel and membership in the Schengen area (2007), the single labour market, easier access to up-to-date knowledge and information, the euro common currency (2009), the acquisition of the seat of the European Labour Authority (ELA) in Bratislava (2019), are just a small list of the achievements of our accession to the EU.

We were under no illusions that we were entering an ideal community in which all our problems would automatically be solved. Every success and every advance in the European project has been the result of the tenacious daily work of politicians, lawyers, economists and diplomats with the aim of strengthening the unity of the Union, which is still today a fundamental prerequisite for its success in the world.

Today, Slovakia is an active and respected player on the European stage. Our presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2016 has definitively confirmed that the country is capable of handling both, at the managerial and diplomatic levels, even the most demanding tasks of this organisation. Finally, the results of our Presidency of the Council include, among other things, managing the immediate aftershocks that reverberated through the Union after the Brexit referendum in June 2016.

For Slovak citizens, being part of a united Europe means the ability to cope better with the crises and global challenges that have plagued Europe in the first two decades of this century, many of which persist to this day. Without EU membership, Slovakia would have found it more difficult to cope with the financial and economic crisis of 2008, would have found it harder to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences on an individual basis as well as the current energy crisis - a result of the market turbulence caused by Russia's aggressive policies. It is also due to our EU membership that the Slovak Foreign Service has the opportunity to better set Slovak positions and contributions to dealing with climate change and the migration and food crises. However, it also means not slacking off on domestic reform efforts, which alone can guarantee progress and a return to reducing the country's economic lag behind the EU average.

Despite Slovakia's undeniable success story in the EU, the efforts of Slovak diplomacy and politics to direct the mental rebirth of Slovak society towards an authentic shared Europeanism are not over. We may have more of this journey to travel, as a significant part of our society has not yet got used to seeing the Union as „our“ community and one, which is helping us to strengthen our domestic stability and prosperity. That is why it is also in our vital interest to further strengthen the EU.

Slovakia - better recognized throughout the world

One of the main missions of the Slovak Foreign Service over the past 30 years has been to make Slovakia more



Official opening of the European Labour Authority premises. 9 November, 2021, Bratislava. (Photo: ELA)

recognized throughout the world and more attractive to partners. We had no doubt that Slovakia, with its history, science and culture, is a natural part of the European civilisation. However, the task of our diplomacy, and particularly cultural and public diplomacy, was to bring this modern Slovakia closer to the rest of the world. The main instrument for this is the network of nine Slovak institutes abroad, but also each Slovak diplomatic mission throughout the world.

During the 30 years of Slovakia's independence, many of our artists, scientists, athletes and other successful personalities and cultural institutions have managed to make a name for themselves in the world. Personalities such as Edita Gruberová, Ondrej Lenárd, Mária Bartuszová, athletes Peter Sagan, Petra Vlhová, Marek Hamšík, the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra and the Lúčnica ensemble, expositions of Slovak Gothic art in the Musée de Cluny in Paris or the Quirinal Palace



Minister Lajčák awarding the honorary title of Ambassador of 'Good Idea Slovakia' to Peter Sagan, a Slovak sportsman, in the National Bank of Slovakia in Bratislava on 28 September, 2016.

in Rome, and also expositions of Slovak design - all these and hundreds of others have become exceptional



Presentation of the artistic ensemble Lúčnica within the premises of the UN General Assembly on 25 October 2017, New York. (Photo: UN Photo/Kim Haughton)

„ambassadors“ of our country throughout the world and have directly or indirectly helped diplomacy to present and represent Slovakia.

It is impossible not to mention the ever-expanding number of Slovak tangible and intangible cultural heritage on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Spiš Castle, Banská Štiavnica, Vlkolínec, Bardejov, Levoča, Carpathian wooden churches, the Roman military camps of Gerulata (Rusovce) and Kelemantia (Iža), as well as the Slovak karst caves – e.g., the Dobšinská ice cave, the Carpathian oak forests, traditional blueprint printing, the Terchová music, wire working and falconry - these are the jewels of Slovak heritage that have world value. Without the active involvement of Slovak diplomacy, this list would be considerably poorer.

Helping the Slovak economy and countries in need

For as many as 30 years, Slovak economic diplomacy has been an important pillar of the Slovak Foreign Service. It has relied on close coordination with the government's economic agencies to fulfil its economic mission. From its outset, it has presented Slovakia abroad as a competitive economy with high innovation potential and a stable economic environment. That is – a good destination for trade and investment.

One of the first major tasks of Slovak diplomacy was to get Slovakia into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a prestigious club of the world's most economically developed countries. Gaining membership in December 2000 was crucial for the fulfilment of Slovakia's EU integration ambitions, but it also helped to transform the economy and bring the Slovak economy closer to EU standards. Slovakia is working with the OECD on a range of issues - from assessing development cooperation and policies for sustainable development to producing an in-depth review of the energy sector, through to education and skills development. In 2019, the Slovak Republic was given the Chairmanship of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM).

In line with its first comprehensive brand, Good Idea Slovakia - Dobrý nápad Slovensko - Slovak diplomacy has been working to present a country offering innovative ideas that stand up to global competition. The stories of companies such as ESET, MultiplexDX, Sli.do, Sygic and AirCar are good proof of this.

The Foreign Service tries its best to help Slovak companies make a name for themselves around the world and, vice versa, to support the arrival of foreign investments in Slovakia. For this goal, it uses creative formats such as the forums „From Regions to the World“, „Innovation Days“ or export forums. This helps to develop business relations and also to promote Slovak innovations and pursue Slovak economic interests abroad.



The slogan 'Good Idea Slovakia' presents the country as a place of good ideas and a good choice for people from abroad. Success stories such as Eset, MultiplexDX, Sli.do, Sygic demonstrate how Slovakia is an incubator for innovations and ideas, while for foreigners, Slovakia can also be a 'good idea' as a tourist or investment destination, a source of interesting exports or a place of inspiring culture and innovative thinking.

A particularly important chapter of Slovak economic diplomacy is Slovak development cooperation and humanitarian aid. By changing from a recipient of aid to a provider of aid, Slovakia is fulfilling the ethical dimension of solidarity.

In 2007, the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC) was established. The agency enables state, academic, business and non-governmental organisations to participate in the implementation of Slovak development cooperation and to carry out projects in target countries.



Slovakia delivered 440,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to its two partner countries - Rwanda and Kenya. The ambassador Katarína Zúfka Leligdonová handed over the vaccines to our partners in Kigali and Nairobi on 8 October 2021 in the city of Nairobi.

For almost 20 years now, we have been providing humanitarian aid to countries around the world by means of the SlovakAid brand (established in 2004). Via this channel, we sent a rescue and medical team to earthquake-stricken Haiti (2010), have helped with the education of Kenyan students (since 2012), provided medical care in the Dawoodiya camp in the Middle East or in Dohuk in Iraq, and built a water reservoir in Baalbek, Lebanon. Since the outbreak of the Russian war in Ukraine, we have been tirelessly helping our eastern neighbour with all available forms of aid worth several million euros. Slovakia is also developing partnerships in the field of development cooperation. By signing a Memorandum of Understanding, Slovakia has strengthened its cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). For the first time, in 2016, Slovakia took part in a joint

Visegrad 4 development project in Kenya. In 2022, SAIDC was given the opportunity, over the next two years, to involve Slovak entities in the first ever pilot project of the so-called EU Delegated Cooperation, which allows larger projects to be implemented in common priority countries with EU resources.

Three decades of the mission to help Slovak citizens abroad

Serving the citizen has been the „holy grail“ of the Slovak Foreign Service throughout its existence. Every minister has put it at the centre of the service's attention. It has focused on, but has not been limited to, consular assistance and assistance to Slovak citizens in need abroad. Global crises and turbulent international developments, especially in recent years, have created crises, in which the importance of crisis management and the protection and repatriation of Slovak citizens has increased sharply.



Minister Korčok and USAID Administrator Samantha Power signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and USAID on international development cooperation in Washington D.C. on 3 February 2022.

The Foreign Ministry has successfully dealt with the repatriation of hundreds of citizens from abroad during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evacuation of persons from Afghanistan and the evacuation of the staff of the Slovak Embassy in Kyiv after the Russian aggression. A specific feature of the war in Ukraine was



The course and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented crisis. The priority in its early stages was to assist Slovak citizens with their return to Slovakia. The repatriation of over 6,000 Slovak citizens represented the biggest crisis management operation since the Slovak Republic was established. The hectic development, however, did not disrupt continuous consular assistance to our citizens abroad.

the involvement in repatriations of citizens of other states.

With EU accession, the possibilities of consular assistance for Slovaks and the Slovak consular service have expanded. Since 2004, Slovak citizens have enjoyed the consular protection of EU citizens according to which every citizen of the Union, when in the territory of a third country where its national diplomatic representation is not present, has the right to diplomatic or consular protection by any Member State, with the same conditions applicable, as nationals of that State.

In December 2007, Slovakia joined the Schengen area and border controls at the internal borders with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Austria were abolished, making it easier for our citizens to travel within the Schengen area. Thus, Slovak citizens can travel freely to EU countries based on a valid passport or ID card. The free movement of citizens has fulfilled one of the great expectations of the Slovak democratisation and integration process, and diplomacy has been most helpful in this respect.

Professional diplomacy

Two generations of Slovak diplomats have proven that Slovak diplomacy has the ability to work competently, with a deep understanding of the country's national interest and respect for its citizens. The beginnings of the Slovak Foreign Service were not easy. But the synergy of a generation of experienced „federal“ Czechoslovak foreign service personnel with a generation of enthusiastic, talented and dedicated young diplomats from the Slovak Ministry of International Relations have managed, in a historically short period of time, to make the Ministry a modern, efficient and professional institution that has succeeded in promoting Slovak interests and serving its citizens abroad over the past 30 years. They have thus helped Slovakia in its mission to establish itself as a fully-fledged and respected democratic member of the international community.



Minister Káčer and State Secretary Brochová receiving commemorative medals at a celebration commemorating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Diplomatic Academy - Karol Rybárik Institute of International Relations in Bratislava on 28 September 2022.

Personalities of Slovak diplomacy

Leading personalities of Slovak diplomacy have contributed to making Slovakia better known throughout the world (and several are still contributing). The list of Slovak personalities in positions of world and European diplomacy commands respect:

- **Eduard Kukan**, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Balkans (1999-2001)
- **Ján Kubiš**, OSCE Secretary General (1999-2005), EU Special Representative for Central Asia (2005-2006), Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe - UNECE (2009-2011), UNSG Special Representative for Tajikistan (1998-1999), Afghanistan (2012-2014), Iraq (2015-2018) and Lebanon (2019-2021), Special Envoy for Libya and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (2021)
- **Brigita Schmögnerová**, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe - UNECE (2002-2005)
- **Peter Tomka**, Judge of the International Court of Justice (2002 to present - elected a total of three times, most recently in 2021), President of the ICJ (2012-2015)
- **Miroslav Lajčák**, EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, EU Special Envoy for the Montenegro Referendum, overseeing the organisation and conduct of the referendum on Montenegrin independence (2006), High Representative of the International Community and the EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2007), President of the 72nd Session of the UNGA (2017-2018), OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (2019), EU Special Representative for Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Balkan Affairs (2020 to present)
- **Ján Figel'**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth (2004-2009)
- **Maroš Šefčovič**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture and Youth (2009-2010), Vice-President of the EC responsible for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration (2010-2014), Vice-President of the EC responsible for Energy Union (2014-2019), Vice-President of the EC responsible for Inter-Institutional Relations and Strategic Outlook (2019-present)
- **Vladimír Šucha**, Director-General of the EU Joint Research Centre (2014-2022)
- **Miroslav Jenča**, Deputy UNSG for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, UN Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs (2015 to present)
- **Peter Burian**, EU Special Representative for Central Asia (2015-2021)
- **Olga Algayerová**, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe - UNECE (2017 to present)

Ten milestones from 30 years of Slovak diplomacy

- 1993** International recognition of the Slovak Republic and admission to the United Nations Organisation (UNO), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe (CE)
- 2000** Admission of the Slovak Republic to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- 2004** Accession of the Slovak Republic to the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO)
- 2004** Accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union (EU)
- 2006** The Slovak Republic - a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (2006-2007)
- 2007** Accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU Schengen area
- 2009** Adoption of the euro single currency - joining the euro area
- 2016** The Presidency of the Slovak Republic in the Council of the European Union
- 2017** Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic Miroslav Lajčák - President of the upcoming 72nd session of the UN General Assembly
- 2019** The Presidency of the Slovak Republic in the OSCE

1 GEOPOLITICAL POSITION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the struggle of Ukrainians for freedom and the preservation of their statehood and sovereignty has meant a breakthrough in the global and European security environment. The new security context has required a strong attitude from Slovak diplomacy towards real values in international relations and in our lives. The Government of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Foreign Service confirmed, by their actions, the unacceptable violation of the fundamental principles of international law and the determination to derive responsibility from it in close cooperation with allies. By providing concrete assistance to Ukraine and moving it to the centre of our foreign policy priorities, we showed real solidarity with this victim of aggression. The security support for Slovakia in this situation have been our allies and NATO guarantees.



Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy receiving three Slovak ministers in Kyiv on 8 December 2022. (Photo: Ministry of Defence of the SR)

GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Ukraine: The attitude toward the attacked neighbouring Ukraine determined Slovak diplomacy in 2022. The military aggression of Russia (24 February 2022) destabilised the international order. The new security situation in the immediate neighbourhood of the Slovak Republic represents our biggest foreign policy challenge in the last decades. After the Russian invasion, the Slovak Republic even more strongly supported the sovereignty, independence and restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Slovakia has provided Ukraine with comprehensive assistance, including the supply of weapons for self-defence against its aggressor and the provision of humanitarian aid. On a political level, it actively advocated for Ukraine to be granted candidate status for EU membership, which was achieved at the European Council on 23 June 2022. The Slovak Republic has already started to engage in the restoration and reconstruction of Ukraine, which was confirmed by the visit of foreign ministers, ministers of defence and economy of the Slovak Republic in Kyiv at the end of the year.

The Czech Republic: In 2022, the exceptionally high dynamics of political and expert dialogue continued, multiplied by the Czech Presidency in the Council of the EU. Cooperation has also intensified with regards to Russian aggression in Ukraine. The Czech Republic took over the role of the lead country in the NATO combat group in the territory of the Slovak Republic and together with Poland ensured the protection of our airspace. It helped in coping with the refugee crisis from Ukraine by sending police officers to the Slovak-Ukrainian border and building a refugee camp near Liptovský Mikuláš. Slovak fire fighters actively helped to overcome a large-scale fire in the Bohemian Switzerland National Park

(Národní park České Švýcarsko). Particular attention was paid to secondary migration, for which the Czech side renewed border controls with the Slovak Republic. The high dynamics of the meetings of constitutional officials were maintained. President Zuzana Čaputová visited the Czech Republic twice, the first visits of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic and the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in January were traditionally to Bratislava and the first trip of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in October was to Prague.



President Zuzana Čaputová receiving the Speaker of the Czech House of Parliament Markéta Pekarová Adamová during her first official visit to Slovakia on 18 January 2022 in Bratislava. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

Poland: Slovak-Polish relations were intense at all levels – presidential, parliamentary and governmental (3 Slovak-Polish intergovernmental consultations), as well as at the professional level, especially in the political and security area. It was confirmed that good neighbourly relations and constructive cooperation with Poland have the dimension of a strategic regional partnership for Slovakia. In the economic area, Poland maintains its leading position and is our third most important trading partner in the long term – the volume of trade is steadily increasing (+15% compared to 2021). An important milestone in the energy sector was the opening of the Slovak-Polish pipeline interconnector between Velké



Minister Káčer during his talks with the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Zbigniew Rau in Warsaw on 11 October 2022.

Kapušany and Strachocina, in cross-border cooperation the meeting of the SK-PL Intergovernmental Commission and the launch of the new Interreg Program for the years 2021-2027.

Hungary: Slovak-Hungarian relations in 2022 were primarily based on pragmatic and constructive agendas that unite both countries. These include strengthening mutual trade, transport infrastructure and cross-border cooperation, as well as a dialogue aimed at seeking responses to current crises (migration, energy security, food security). The regular dialogue between foreign ministers and expert commissions within the framework of the mechanisms of the basic treaty also included open issues of bilateral relations. Slovakia interpreted its interest in deepening mutual cooperation, but at the same time it emphasised that any activities and programs of the Hungarian Government in Slovakia are to respect the standard framework of bilateral cooperation. Within the framework of the European and security agenda, different views were expressed on the issues of the rule of law, EU sanctions against Russia, EU aid to Ukraine, and the EU's common approach to solving certain crisis.



Minister Káčer after meeting with his Hungarian counterpart Péter Szijjártó. The ministers discussed current challenges in the bilateral, regional and European agenda, including the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, energy security and migration. 5 December 2022, Bratislava.

Austria: Year 2022 confirmed the good relations of the Slovak Republic with Austria at all levels. It was possible to intensify the cooperation of national parliaments. The potential for departmental cooperation remains untapped. Bilateral cooperation and cooperation in the Slavkov format was particularly important in dealing with the consequences of the war in Ukraine. Effective joint solutions were found in helping refugees, including humanitarian aid, as well as in the transport of Ukrainian grain through Central Europe. Coordination in the energy security agenda was essential. The results of cross-border cooperation projects, including the cooperation of emergency medical services in border areas, are a success. The multi-year project of a Slovak-Austrian history book was officially launched, the main purpose

of which is the consensus of historians on a common interpretation of the history of both countries.

Regional and Bilateral Partnerships

Visegrad Group (V4): On 1 July 2022, the Slovak Republic took over its sixth rotating presidency in the V4 from Hungary and, at the same time, initiated reflection on further cooperation in this format. Russian aggression in Ukraine and the reactions of the Visegrad countries revealed a different perception of the situation and development in our region and Europe. In the first half of its presidency, Slovakia put emphasis on pragmatic and flexible cooperation where common interests were identified. It continued to highlight the need for a positive contribution of the V4 to a common European approach and focused on concrete practical benefits for the region's inhabitants.



The Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová receiving presidents of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary at the Meeting of the V4 Presidents in the Primate's Palace in Bratislava on 12 October 2022 in Bratislava. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

Slavkov format (S3): In mid-2022, Slovakia took over the annual leadership from the Czech Republic in this format of regional cooperation. The meetings were held at the level of the speakers of parliaments, foreign ministers and other departments. The priorities of S3 in 2022 were to strengthen cooperation in the fields of transport, energy, digital transformation, European policy coordination, international law, development cooperation and the Western Balkans and, in particular, Russian aggression in Ukraine. A new element was the joint trips of the S3 foreign ministers to third countries (Ukraine and Moldova) to support their western direction.

Central 5 (C5) Initiative: This still relatively new regional format is made up of five Central European countries: Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. In 2022, two meetings were held at the level of foreign ministers of the C5 – in the Czech Republic in April 2022, and in Hungary in July 2022.



The heads of diplomacy of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary and Slovenia discussing the war in Ukraine and its impact on energy and food safety under the informal Central 5 Format in Budapest on 13 July 2022.

Germany: Last year was characterised by the enhancement of strategic partnership between the two countries as part of commemorating the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourly and Friendly Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany in February 1992. At the departmental level and under the coordination of the ministries of foreign affairs of both countries, work was carried out on the finalisation of the Cooperation Action Plan for the period 2022-2024, implemented based on the Deepened Dialogue between Slovakia and Germany. Russian aggression toward Ukraine resulted, among others, in the extension of the bilateral strategic partnership with a strong security and political dimension in the form of German armed forces participating in the multinational NATO group in Slovakia. The negotiations between the ministries of defence of both countries on the addition of military equipment (the "Ringtausch" programme), which was provided by the Slovak Republic to Ukraine, were successful.

France: Cooperation continued in 2022 on the basis of the Strategic Partnership Action Plan 2018-2022. The preparation of a new action plan also progressed with the ambition to strengthen the partnership in the political, economic, regional and cultural spheres. Coordination on European policies was dynamic in the context of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2022. The proximity of the positions of both countries was crucial in shaping a common European response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, in addressing the energy crisis, in strengthening the resilience and strategic autonomy of the Union, but also in supporting the granting of candidate country status to Ukraine and Georgia and opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia.



On Tuesday, 6 December 2022, in Bratislava, the State Secretary Andrej Stančík received the Minister of State for Europe and Climate at the Federal Foreign Office, Anna Lührmann.

Italy: The intensive political dialogue between the Slovak Republic and Italy continued in 2022. Important for the further development of bilateral relations were official visits by the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová, in Italy in April 2022 and the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Eduard Heger, in September 2022. The partners appreciated the provision of comprehensive Slovak assistance to Ukraine and the attitudes of the Slovak Republic toward the promotion of democratic values, the protection of human rights, solidarity and the rule of law. Both visits had a strong economic dimension. In order to diversify energy sources, an agreement was signed between SPP and Exxonmobil on natural gas supplies. The cooperation of universities was also significantly strengthened – a series of seminars were held under the name of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová at the University of Padova.



President Čaputová with Italian President Mattarella discussing bilateral relations, current developments in Ukraine, the impact of the war on both countries and the need to continue to protect values of democracy and the rule of law in the European Union in Rome on 20 April 2022. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: 2022 laid the foundations for further

strengthening of bilateral relations. The most important bilateral meeting was the meeting of the Prime Ministers on the sidelines of the Visegrad Group summit with the United Kingdom in London.



V4 leaders and the British Prime Minister jointly condemned Russian aggression against Ukraine. The representatives of Slovakia and Great Britain also discussed cyber security. Our British partners expressed readiness to offer their expertise and intensify cooperation between Slovakia and Great Britain. 8 March 2022, London. (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)

The Holy See: The intensive relations were confirmed by the visits of the President of the Slovak Republic, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament in the Vatican. The Secretary for Relations with States, Archbishop P. R. Gallagher, attended the GLOBSEC 2022 conference. An extraordinary event was the death of Cardinal Jozef Tomko as the most important Slovak personality with the Vatican Curia background.



The Prime Minister of Slovakia Eduard Heger received a personal audience with Pope Francis during his first official visit to the Vatican City. 14 March 2022, Vatican. (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)

Netherlands: Last year was exceptionally successful for Slovak-Dutch relations. Visits by high Dutch officials to Slovakia and by Slovak officials to the Netherlands, sending 150 members of the NL Armed Forces to Slovakia and providing the complete PATRIOT air defence system confirmed the solidarity of this NATO ally with Slovakia.

The 2022 also marked the intensification of Slovakia's political, security and economic cooperation with other European partners – especially with **Slovenia, Norway, Iceland, Greece and Switzerland**.

Strong Transatlantic Bond

In Slovakia's relations with **the United States of America (USA)**, the key event was the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement in Washington on 3 February 2022 by Minister of Defence Jaroslav Naď and US Secretary of Defence Antony Blinken. The excellent relations were confirmed in October in Washington, D.C. by the third year of the Strategic Dialogue between the Slovak Republic and the USA, at which the largest Slovak delegation of five ministries and four energy companies negotiated with American partners on support for mutual defence, assistance to Ukraine and energy security. The US Department of Defence contributed to the defence capability of the Slovak Republic by providing the PATRIOT air defence systems, by deploying US troops to the multinational NATO combat group in Slovakia, as well as by providing financial support for the modernisation of the Slovak Armed Forces. On 6 December 2022, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for her services in strengthening democratic principles awarded the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová.

Also in 2022, the relations with **Canada** were based on a shared value orientation, alliance in NATO, and fundamentally close positions on major international challenges. The successful operation of Slovak soldiers

continued as part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia under Canadian leadership. The Canadian side announced a plan to open a full-fledged embassy in Bratislava.

Eastern Partnership

This EU strategic program entered 2022 with new medium-term priorities and concrete measures and goals until 2025 under the name Recovery, Resilience, Reforms. It relies on development resources for partner countries for more than EUR 17 billion. A fundamental change in the circumstances of the functioning of the Eastern Partnership (EP) occurred as a result of Russia's military aggression in Ukraine and the European Council's strategic decision of June 2022 on the granting of candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova and the recognition of Georgia's integration aspirations. Also in this situation, the EU concluded that EP did not lose its relevance.

However, it will be necessary to adapt it to the changed conditions and to increase its efficiency, among others, by strengthening the security dimension and greater involvement in solving frozen conflicts.

Eastern Europe

In 2022, there was a fundamental decrease in the level of bilateral relations with **the Russian Federation** due



The Slovak Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Ivan Korčok, Minister of Defence Jaroslav Naď and the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken signing the Defence Cooperation Agreement between the Slovak and US governments. 3 February 2022, Washington D.C.



The Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová handing over humanitarian aid (food, medicines and medical aids) on behalf of the Slovak Republic at the Centre for Refugees in Kishinev that she visited together with Moldovan President Maia Sandu on 30 March 2022, Kishinev. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

to the unjustifiable Russian military aggression toward Ukraine. From the beginning, Slovakia took a principled political position. Russia has ranked Slovakia among the non-friendly countries. Bilateral cooperation in many areas was interrupted, the validity of several bilateral agreements was suspended, and there was considerable mutual restriction of the activities of diplomatic missions. The Slovak Republic continued economic ties with Russia exclusively where vital economic interests of the Slovak Republic required it. Slovakia was involved in the preparation and implementation of all restrictive measures that the EU adopted against Russia with the aim of forcing it to return to compliance with the principles of international law.

The Belarusian regime continued its repression against its own population. It provided its territory for Russian ground, air and missile attacks against Ukraine, thereby becoming jointly responsible for Russian military aggression. Bilateral relations between Belarus and the Slovak Republic were significantly limited. However, Slovakia carried out several projects supporting disadvantaged groups of the Belarusian population.

The Slovak Republic supported the granting of candidate status to **Moldova** as an expression of the appreciation of its integration and reform efforts. The Slovak-Moldovan political dialogue at all levels was intense, including a visit by the Slovak President to Chisinau. The Slovak Republic continued its bilateral official development cooperation projects under SlovakAid, in particular in the areas of sustainable use of natural resources, water management and forestry.

South Caucasus and Central Asia

In 2022, the full-fledged activity of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Armenia began. In view of the ongoing



On 24 August 2022 the State Secretary Martin Klus held talks on current issues with the Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, Miltiades Varvitsiotis.

conflict between **Azerbaijan** and Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh, Slovakia supported European efforts to negotiate peace between the parties on the delimitation and demarcation of borders and on the unblocking of transport and economic links. The Slovak Republic supported **Georgia** in its gradual integration into the EU, moving closer to NATO and strengthening its resilience. There were also visits by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Slovak Republic to Azerbaijan and by the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs to Georgia.

In the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, **Kyrgyzstan**, **Uzbekistan**, **Tajikistan** and **Turkmenistan**, Slovak diplomacy sought to strengthen mutual cooperation.



Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Roman Vassilenko at the official opening of the new premises of the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan during his visit to Slovakia. 5 October 2022, Bratislava.

South-East Europe

The Slovak Republic, also due to the changed security situation in Europe, continued to engage intensively with the **Western Balkans** – its long-term foreign policy priority. Moving the region toward democratic values and EU standards, coping with the war past, and therefore prevention of new conflicts with support for the enlargement policy of the Union were a common denominator in these efforts.

Slovak diplomacy actively contributed to unblocking EU accession negotiations with **North Macedonia and Albania**, with which the Slovak Republic is linked by participation in the NATO mission in Latvia (*NATO Enhanced Forward Presence*). In **Northern Macedonia**, the implementation of the “National Convention on the EU” project aimed at strengthening the country’s compatibility with the EU continued. The Slovak Republic, contributor to EUFOR Althea military operation, supported the granting of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** the status of candidate country for accession to the EU as a strong signal of encouragement for a country struggling to achieve a constitutional balance between ethnic and civil principles. In relation to **Montenegro**, the Slovak Republic drew attention to the degradation of the quality of democratic constitutional processes and began to implement a special grant for the development of media freedom in the country. In relation to **Serbia**, the Slovak Republic maintained an intensive and versatile political dialogue and advocated for a stronger attachment of the country to the EU, especially in the area of the EU’s common foreign and security policy. Particular attention was paid to Slovak compatriots in the country and their socio-political position. Slovakia also actively supported the normalisation of relations between **Belgrade and Pristina**, which have security consequences for the whole region. During the transfer and exchange of experience with the countries of the region, the Slovak Republic focused on the management of public finances and illegal migration, also through *twining* projects.



The State Secretary Ingrid Brochová during her visit and negotiations with political representatives of all three constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) and civil society representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 25-27 May 2022.

The relations with **Turkey**, an important partner for the Slovak Republic and the EU and a member of NATO, were marked by increasing tensions in the **Eastern Mediterranean** region around the disputes in setting the boundaries of the marine economic zones and the unification of Cyprus. The Slovak Republic, a contributor to the military UN peacekeeping mission, continued to

provide good services to both communities **in Cyprus** and to seek solutions through dialogue and in accordance with international law.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP AROUND THE GLOBE

Asia and the Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region is gaining importance in global politics. Slovakia has also closely monitored the level of confrontation between regional actors.



Minister Korčok receiving Subrahmanjam Jaishankara the head of Indian diplomacy during his historically first visit to Slovakia. 3 June 2022, Bratislava.

The biggest progress was reached in launching a political dialogue and increasing foreign trade with **India**. Slovakia also played an instrumental role in the successful repatriation of 1,400 Indian citizens from Ukraine through its territory. **Slovak-Chinese relations** focused on economic cooperation; while cooperation has also continued at the regional and municipal level. However, relations with the People’s Republic of China reflected the complex dialogue between the EU and China, including long-standing unresolved issues. Diverging perspectives on applying the principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, as well as the issue of Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, have affected the quality of bilateral dialogue. Respecting the one-China policy, Slovakia has deepened informal dialogue and economic cooperation with **Taiwan** under the umbrella of the Economic Cooperation Commission. Slovakia has intensified cooperation with countries like **South Korea and Japan**, with whom it shares the values. Consultations with both countries were held within the V4+ format. The dialogue with ASEAN countries - **Indonesia, Malaysia and Cambodia** - was also resumed at the State Secretary-level.



State Secretary Martin Klus on 21 April 2022, in Jakarta, during a working visit to the Republic of Indonesia. In the Indonesian capital, he held talks with with the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, Mahendra Siregar.

Middle East and Africa

In 2022, Slovakia experienced/had intense contacts with **Israel**. The Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Bratislava and the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Boris Kollár, inaugurated the Slovak Institute in Jerusalem. The Slovak Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Agriculture and Health also held talks in Israel. Negotiations with the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs and consultations with the State Secretary of the Foreign Ministry of the Slovak Republic in Ramallah, **Palestine** proved to be a balanced approach by Slovakia within the Middle East peace process. These contacts supported efforts to achieve stability, prosperity and democratic development in Palestine and to revitalise the peace process between Palestine and Israel. Contributions to UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), among other things, significantly strengthened the humanitarian dimension of mutual relations.

The growing importance of the Gulf region and the political, economic and energy importance of **Saudi Arabia** prompted Slovakia to move its embassy from Kuwait to Riyadh in September 2022. Slovak relations



Minister Ivan Korčok receiving the Israeli head of diplomacy Yair Lapid on 14 March 2022. The ministers discussed the further enhancement of already thriving relations and practical cooperation, dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the development of relations and the security situation in the Middle East.

with Iran have been marked by the general cooling of Iran's relations with the West, as well as by its support for Russia in its aggression against Ukraine.

Slovak relations with **Egypt** were predominantly focused on an economic dialogue. In 2022, Egypt hosted the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-27) and the Climate Summit. The event strengthened Egypt's regional and global position. Slovakia was represented by a delegation led by the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová.

The **Levant region (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq)** has been less stable and increasingly dependent on foreign aid, mainly due to the frozen war in Syria. SlovakAid projects in **Lebanon** follow the needs of local communities and have targeted the areas that will make the life of locals and Syrian refugees easier. A visit by Minister Korčok together with a trade mission to Jordan aimed at deepening cooperation between Slovak and Jordanian businesses.



Minister Korčok holding talks with Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan. Ivan Korčok showed interest in the current situation in the Middle East, expressing his appreciation for the Jordan government's efforts to deal with the complex situation of refugees from Iraq, Palestine and Syria. 24 June 2022, Amman.

In Africa, the Slovak Republic actively strengthened its presence in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Simultaneously, it has been actively contributing to discussions on regional topics pursued by UN Headquarters, in particular implications of the climate crisis on regional security and migration. For the first time in the history of UNEP, the Slovak Minister of the Environment, Ján Budaj, was elected to the position of Vice-Chairperson. Slovakia also chairs the Working Group on Migration and Mobility of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in **Kenya**. The Slovak Republic has joined efforts to combat the drought crisis in the Horn of Africa and has contributed

to international funds for the World Food Programme (WFP) in Kenya and to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Somalia. SlovakAid activities supported projects in 4 sectoral priorities of the *Medium-Term Development Cooperation Strategy*, while in Kenya, the initiatives focused on activities with higher added value - human rights (empowerment of women/girls) and combating the impact of climate change.

Central and Latin America

Slovakia has proven its interest in cooperating with Central and Latin America through its full membership in the founding agreement of the EU-LAC Foundation. In the post-pandemic period, Slovakia's attention focused on strengthening bilateral dialogue with priority countries of the region - **Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Cuba**. Slovakia supported the promotion of broader EU trade agreements (EU-MERCOSUR, adapting the Global Agreement with Mexico to new realities as well as the Association Agreement with Chile).



State Secretary Ingrid Bročková with Maximilian Reyes, Secretary of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs discussing the strengthening of relations, primarily economic ones. 12 October 2022.

A SECURE SLOVAKIA IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

Slovakia's security environment has deteriorated significantly due to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. Slovakia's eastern neighbour is fighting for its independence, territorial integrity and its very existence. A full-scale war is taking place in our immediate neighbourhood, which undermines the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and threatens Slovakia. It is clear that peace on the European continent will be preserved only if Russia's aggression and violations of international law are met with a strong and united response from the international democratic community.

The North Atlantic Alliance

NATO membership provides indispensable guarantees for security and defence of Slovakia. The decision by the heads of state and government of the Alliance resulted in a substantial strengthening of the security and defence of NATO's eastern flank, including the deployment of the Alliance's Multinational Battlegroup on the Slovak territory with its effective air defence systems. Slovakia has continued to fulfil its NATO commitments and announced the achievement of 2% of GDP to defence spending, of which a minimum of 20% is geared towards the modernisation of its armed forces. It also continued to deploy troops to Latvia and provide substantial military assistance to the besieged Ukraine. Beyond its bilateral assistance, Slovakia has also been actively involved in NATO-coordinated supplies of non-lethal material.

The Slovak Republic made the collective defence a main priority in the new **2022 NATO Strategic Concept** at the Madrid Summit. The Concept identified Russia as a direct threat for the Alliance and China as a security challenge. Aligned with its commitments, Slovakia continued to modernise and develop the military capabilities of its Armed Forces, focusing on the heavy mechanised brigade and the air force. With an eye on replenishing stocks of weapons and ammunition, cooperation with the domestic defence industry has been activated. Slovakia became a founding member of the NATO Defence Innovation Accelerator and the NATO Innovation Fund, which promote technological cooperation between allies, create new opportunities for the Slovak academic, scientific, and defence sectors.



Minister Káčer during talks with the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg in Brussels on 10 October 2022. The partners assessed the current security situation in Europe, especially after the illegal 'referenda' in Ukraine.

Slovakia ratified the **accession protocols of Finland and Sweden** to the North Atlantic Alliance and supported the continuation of the open-door policy, including the 2008 decision on the Euro-Atlantic future for Ukraine and Georgia. The Slovak Republic has also actively supported

activities to stabilise the Western Balkan region and those focusing on NATO's most vulnerable partners. The Alliance has mandated Slovakia to represent the organisation in Israel as a NATO Liaison Embassy for the upcoming two years (until December 2024).



Minister Korčok at a press briefing talking about Finland and Sweden joining NATO. 22 May 2022, Bratislava.

EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

The united response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine has been a decisive factor for the **EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)**. The Union responded to developments by adopting unprecedentedly robust restrictive measures against the Russian Federation and Belarus. The Slovak Republic was among the leaders in shaping the European response to Russian aggression and in taking steps to support and reconstruct Ukraine.

A proposal to create a horizontal EU sanction regime to tackle the most serious corruption cases in third countries constituted a part of the Slovak value based foreign policy execution. Slovakia has been part of the Union's coordinated approach in supporting the international community peaceful solutions in many conflict affected regions and countries, particularly in the Middle East and Africa.

Slovakia continued its active participation in the EU crisis management with 6 members of its Armed Forces serving in EU operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR Althea), the training missions in Africa through deployment in the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) and the EU Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM CAR). At the end of 2022, the Slovak Republic was also supporting the establishment of an EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine

(EUMAM UA) aimed at being actively involvement in the training of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Slovak experts have been deployed in civilian missions as part of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy – the Advisory Mission in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia), the Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) and the Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia).

Hybrid Threats

In 2022, Slovakia supported international initiatives aimed at increasing resilience to hybrid threats, including strengthening the EU's response to targeted foreign disinformation activities following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The Slovak Republic has been involved in the development of EU toolkits against hybrid actions as well as against foreign manipulation and meddling with information. The toolkits are designed to enable more effective detection and prevention of such activities against the EU and its Member States, as well as a coordinated EU response, including possible retribution against foreign perpetrators.

The Slovak Republic has also engaged in activities aimed at strengthening cyber security and cyber diplomacy. Slovakia in international organisations is advancing the model of an open, free, stable and secure cyberspace that follows the norms of responsible behaviour, protection of human rights, freedoms and international law, and which reflects the confidence building and transparency measures. To this end, we also supported the adoption of the *UNGA Resolution on the Programme of Action for Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace* when using information and communication technologies in the context of international security in coordination with other EU countries.

Counterterrorism

Slovakia is a part of the international community's fight against terrorism. The Slovak military is part of the crisis management missions in Iraq and Mali, which have a counter-terrorism mandate. The Slovak Republic also financially contributes to the UN mechanism to investigate crimes committed by Dá'ish/ISIS.

Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of WMD

In the area of arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Slovakia promoted the preservation and strengthening of the existing system of international arms control norms and its universal implementation. It has categorically condemned Russia's unacceptable nuclear rhetoric and its threats against Ukraine's nuclear facilities during its invasion. Slovakia supported the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in conducting its mandate in Ukraine. We continued to promote our national interests concerning the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We have actively exercised our membership in the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague, advocating for support of Ukraine and demanding a thorough probe into the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, along with addressing outstanding issues of Syria's chemical programme. Slovakia at the Review Conference in Geneva promoted full implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and its stronger institutional position in the area of biotechnology development.



Delegations at the 27th meeting of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention mainly discussed the war in Ukraine and the Syrian chemical programme. 28 November 2022, The Hague.

MULTILATERALISM - COMMON SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL PROBLEMS

Weakening of efficiency of numerous multilateral institutions and mechanisms, violations of the principles and norms of international law, global regress in the implementation of democratic principles and human rights violations are not in Slovakia's interest. Therefore, the Slovak diplomacy has intensified its actions in the multilateral arena.

United Nations

In 2022, Slovakia focused on promoting the following three, mutually intertwined, priorities in the UN: 1. conflict prevention, peace and security 2. sustainable development and climate protection and 3. engagement in global challenges.

In 2022, **multilateralism** faced major challenges, particularly as it pertained to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The Slovak Republic to an even greater extent vigorously supported a rule-based international order and well-functioning institutions. Also, it clearly and unequivocally supported Ukraine and the need to respect international law in the UN Security Council, in the UN General Assembly and at other UN fora. Our voluntary financial contributions were aimed at mitigating consequences of Russian destruction in Ukraine. Slovakia has also intensively cooperated with the UN specialised agencies, which have significantly increased their presence in our country due to the refugee crisis. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) contributed to humanitarian aid as well as to the integration of Ukrainian children in Slovakia.



State Secretary at a meeting with the representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Raouf Mazou, expressing gratitude to these organizations for their support in dealing with the Ukrainian refugee crisis in Slovakia and neighbouring countries. 13 December 2022, Geneva.

Climate change continues to be an important topic for Slovakia on the UN agenda, with emphasis on the achievement of existing commitments. The Slovak Republic confirmed its ranking among the states with the most ambitious climate goals globally, even at the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP27) held in November in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

The Slovak Republic maintained its contributions to the UN peacekeeping operations, namely through the deployment of 240 members of the Slovak Armed Forces



President Zuzana Čaputová participating in the UN Climate Change Conference COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt on 7-8 November 2022. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

and 5 police officers of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic in the UNFICYP missions in Cyprus. Slovakia also signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Slovak Republic and UN WOMEN. Our country actively participated in reviewing the implementation mechanisms of the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, implementing joint activities with agencies and organisations within the UN system.

The Slovak Foreign Service strongly emphasized the communication of global topics to the Slovak public, actively involving young people in various events and initiatives, thus enhancing awareness about the role of the UN, its goals and tasks. The second edition of a series of events titled “Slovakia in the UN” designed to provide information about current global challenges on the UN agenda, with a main emphasis on the conflict in Ukraine and crisis of multilateralism, took place in October 2022.



The head of Slovak diplomacy, Rastislav Káčer taking advantage of his presence at the UN General Assembly to hold further talks. During his meeting with Sima Bahous, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, they signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Slovak Foreign Ministry and UN Women. 22 September 2022, New York. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

Slovakia in the UN main bodies and specialized UN agencies

In June 2022, the Slovak Republic was elected to the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** for the period 2023–2025. Thus, Slovakia can participate in the governance of the UN development system, promote its development policy in an international environment, focusing on water and health for all agenda, as well as sustainable urban development. Slovakia was also elected to the **Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** and the **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** for the period 2023–2025. Slovak membership in the **Executive Board of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** continued through 2022. The UNICEF Executive Board elected the Permanent Representative of Slovakia as its Vice-Chair to the UN in New York for 2022. The Slovak Permanent Representative was also appointed as Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the UN Security Council Reform during the 77th session of the UN General Assembly.

Following the successful UNGA High-Level Meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Slovak Republic initiated the establishment of a **new Group of Friends of UN HABITAT, Sustainable Urbanization and the New Urban Agenda**.

With regards to the pandemic, the Slovak Republic supported the exchange of information, sharing of data and best practices within the World Health Organization (WHO). In 2022, for the first time ever, the Slovak Republic was represented on the WHO Executive Board by Prof. Jozef Šuvada.



Ingrid Brocková at the opening of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of ECOSOC in New York on 14 July 2022.

In 2022, Slovakia held the coordinating position for regional groups in the **World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)**, thus significantly raising its profile in the intellectual property agenda.

Slovakia's engagement with the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)** concentrated on support for Ukraine, promotion of the human rights agenda and the safety of journalists. The election of the Slovak Republic to the **Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage** in July 2022 can be considered as a particular successful in this field. The Slovak Republic will also have a say in decisions on new inscriptions of elements on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Slovakia can take pride in the recent inscription of the ninth „living heritage“ element for the Slovak Republic - Tradition of Lipizzan horse breeding.



State Secretary Andrej Stančič received the Bavarian State Minister for European and International Affairs, Melanie Huml, in Bratislava on 27 October 2022. They also visited the memorial dedicated to Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová at the SNP Square in Bratislava.

2030 Agenda for sustainable development

In 2022, Slovakia started to cooperate with the OECD on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals embedded in the 2030 Agenda. The Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic took the lead on the project "Broader Systemic Framework for Sustainable Development in Slovakia" in cooperation with the MFEA SR. Its focus was the synergies between the public and private sectors, civil society and academia. The Slovak Republic continues to be involved in EU joint programming and implementation of cooperation projects carried out within V4 countries framework and the Slavkov format. The Foreign Ministry has initiated innovative partnerships with international actors, both within and beyond EU countries. In June 2022, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the Second Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

International law

The Slovak Republic supports the rule of law principles and the work of the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**. One of its current judges is Peter Tomka. Slovakia has advocated for strengthening and deepening cooperation with the **International Criminal Court**. It is a member of the Bureau of the Assembly, International Criminal Court (2021-2023) and actively participates in the meetings of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In December 2022, the Slovak Republic submitted a declaration of intervention to the International Court of Justice in the open case concerning the dispute between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the interpretation and implementation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Human rights, democracy, freedom of media and protection of journalists

In 2022, the multilateral arena recorded gross violations of international law and human rights, growing differences in the perception of shared values, and rising polarisation in attitudes towards human rights and democracy. Slovakia has strengthened its **values-based foreign policy**. The Foreign Ministry has launched a scheme **to promote human rights and democracy on the ground**. Projects in 2022 prioritised the fight against anti-Semitism, media freedom, the safety of journalists and gender equality.



The International conference Human Rights and Democracy as Pillars of Stability and Prosperity and Strengthening Democracy in the EU Neighborhood. State Secretary Ingrid Brochová confirmed at panel discussion on regional cooperation to promote human rights and democracy as a common agenda for both the foreign ministry and civil society. 22 November 2022, Banská Bystrica.

The Slovak Republic has not ignored human rights violations around the world. It has supported initiatives adverting to the unsatisfactory human rights situation in some countries in the **UN Human Rights Council**. Russia's expulsion from the Council of Europe and the suspension of its membership in the UN Human Rights Council was the only possible reaction of the international community to its aggression against Ukraine.

Slovakia's thematic priorities were the strengthening of **media freedom and the safety of journalists**. Journalists must never face the dilemma of whether to publish an article or save their lives. Therefore, Slovakia has joined informal platforms such as the **Media Freedom Coalition**, the **Summit for Democracy** and the **International Partnership for Information and Democracy**. At the UN Human Rights Council, it has supported initiatives concentrating on media freedom and the safety of journalists.

In 2022, Slovakia, together with a group of EU Member States, presented a proposal to strengthen the European Union's engagement in **anti-corruption activities** around the world, thereby strengthening the global protection of democracy and the rule of law. Thanks to our initiative, Brussels began discussing the possibility of including serious corruption cases in third countries as grounds for sanctions.

Civil society is one of the pillars of a functioning democracy and an important partner in promoting human rights. In November 2022, the MFEA SR and the civic platform Human Forum organised an international conference on human rights and democracy at home and around the world.

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Russia's war in Ukraine had a direct impact on the work of the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (OSCE). The participating states were unable to agree on the basic modalities of organising major events or on the 2022 budget. Slovakia supported the principled position of the Polish OSCE Chairpersonship in the management of the organisation, which could not remain neutral in a situation when Russia had violated almost all the principles that the organization stands for. Russia's disagreement led to the discontinuation of two OSCE missions in Ukraine - the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine (PCU). In order to investigate human rights violations in Ukraine committed by the Russian army and to assess

the state of Russia's compliance with its commitments in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Slovak Republic supported the launch of the so-called OSCE's Moscow Mechanism.

Council of Europe

The unprecedented events of 2022 began with Russia's expulsion from the **Council of Europe** (CoE) in response to its aggression against Ukraine. The pandemic and Russian aggression in Ukraine have been accompanied by a long-observed retreat from democracy and human rights in Europe. These two fundamental circumstances have triggered process of self-reflection and the setting of a new CoE strategy reflecting the new geopolitical situation. The decision was made to set up a High-Level Reflection Group (of which Prof. Iveta Radičová was a member), which prepared a draft of 30 recommendations for the future direction of the CoE. These will represent the basis for the agenda of the forthcoming 4th CoE Summit in 2023. The Slovak Republic /presented itself as a responsible member of the CoE, giving particular emphasis on the rights of minorities, especially the Roma, the freedom of journalists and children's rights. Slovakia contributed financially to support the work of the Platform for the Protection of Journalists and the functioning of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The consensual adoption of the fifth evaluation report on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in the Slovak Republic was an important event.



Representatives from 46 member states discussed the reaction of the oldest pan-European political organization to the Russian military aggression against Ukraine at the annual meeting of the top body of the Council of Europe organized at the end of the Italian Presidency. The Slovak Republic was represented by the State Secretary Martin Klus. 20 May 2022, Torino.

2 EUROPEAN POLICY

The war in Ukraine has underlined the importance of common European responses to the most fundamental challenges and dilemmas faced by the European continent. Common solutions will play a key role in determining, whether Europe emerges as a stronger and more respected player from the accumulated global and regional crises.

SLOVAKIA IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The COVID-19 crisis was followed by the large-scale Russian military offensive against Ukraine, which has led to an energy crisis. These events have affected all segments of society and have been unfolding along with a sharp rise in inflation. The current combination of crises, the need to preserve EU unity and cooperation with global democratic partners has dramatically moved to the forefront.



The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Eduard Heger representing Slovakia at the European Council meeting in Brussels on 20-21 October 2022. The discussions focused on Ukraine with regards to the ongoing Russian aggression and support from the EU, as well as critical infrastructure, the energy sector, economic issues and external relations. (Photo: European Union).

Partnership Agreement and Plan Slovakia

The 2022 approval of the key programming documents of the Slovak Republic for the new multi-annual budget period 2021-2027 - the **Partnership Agreement** and the related **Programme Slovakia** was an important milestone. Slovakia will benefit from almost 12.6 billion euro from the new EU schemes, thus improving energy security, digitalisation and green solutions and the lives of people in all regions. Investments will be directed towards modernisation, innovation, decarbonisation, education, social area and others.

Migration

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has led to a massive influx of Ukrainian war refugees, mainly women, children and older adults, into EU countries. In response to this unprecedented situation, the **Temporary Protection Directive** was activated at the EU level, allowing displaced persons from Ukraine to enjoy harmonised rights across the EU, including residency, access to the labour market, housing, medical assistance and education.

In addition to crisis management, the EU has continued to negotiate the structural reform of its migration and asylum policy, i.e. the **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**. Both the French and Czech Presidencies of the Council of the EU have worked on defining the key political principles of the reform, successfully developing the concept of solidarity and responsibility, which should bring greater national ownership and a predictable degree of solidarity and flexibility. Slovakia appreciated the fact that discussions have brought a definitive rejection of the so-called mandatory quotas for the relocation of asylum seekers, hand in hand with firmly establishing the idea of a flexible form of solidarity with those Member States that find themselves under migratory pressure.

In the second half of 2022, the situation in the EU and Central Europe was marked by developments on the **Western Balkan migration route** where the number of illegal migrants heading to the EU increased by almost 180% compared to 2021. Slovakia has found itself at the centre of transit migration flows from Hungary to Western Europe, with the Czech Republic and Austria introducing temporary controls along their internal borders with Slovakia. In this situation, the Slovak Republic underlined the importance of refraining from unilateral steps that would jeopardise the integrity of the Schengen area. It called for European solutions aimed at strengthening the protection of the EU's external border, strict implementation of EU readmission agreements with third countries, as well as cooperation with key partners along the migration route, such as Serbia and Turkey. Simultaneously, the readmissions between Member States within the Schengen area remain to be a challenge for the future.

Energy security

The war in Ukraine has significantly shaped **Slovakia's energy security**. Shortly after the Russian invasion, the leaders of the EU Member States agreed on the earliest possible phasing out of the Union's reliance on the imports of Russian fossil fuels, which have been used as an economic and political weapon. Therefore, the European Commission presented the REPowerEU plan in May. In addition to measures increasing energy efficiency or accelerating the deployment of renewable energy sources, the Plan stresses the need to diversify gas supplies, with an emphasis on LNG. Given the high dependence on imports of energy carriers from Russia till now, the addition of new chapters to the Member States' **Recovery and Resilience Plans** was particularly important for Slovakia. It allows additional investments to support an energy transition, away from Russian fossil fuels.

In 2022, **electricity and gas prices** soared. During the autumn, the EU adopted a number of emergency measures in both the electricity and gas markets. The aim was to stabilise the markets without disturbing their fundamentals and contribute to lowering energy prices without jeopardising their availability. The European Commission adopted the idea presented at the initiative of the Slovak Republic to **use unspent EU funds** to finance national measures related to the rise in energy prices. This was a clear diplomatic success for Slovakia.



State Secretary Andrej Stančík at the regular meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council. The main topic was Russian aggression against Ukraine and the EU policy on Iran. 12 December 2022.

Climate policy

Intense negotiations on legislative proposals from the **Fit-for-55 climate package** continued throughout the year. The package intends to revise European legislation on climate, energy and transport to reflect the ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. In the second half of the year, the Czech Presidency successfully negotiated the conclusion of a large part of the proposals with the European Parliament. Reduction of CO₂ emissions for passenger and commercial vehicles by 100% by

2035, coupled with ending the sales of combustion engine vehicles was one of the key proposals for Slovakia. Together with our partners, we pushed for the possibility of revising this target, as well as for the possibility of continuing to produce emission-neutral vehicles beyond 2035.

Recovery plan

Slovakia has successfully continued to implement the **Recovery Plan**, developed in response to the poor economic situation following the pandemic. The Plan is a combination of systemic changes to be achieved through reforms and a financial boost for Slovakia amounting to a 6 billion EUR investment. The measures must be implemented by 2026. In 2022, Slovakia submitted two payment requests. The first for EUR 458 million; which has already been received, and the second for EUR 815 million; currently being assessed by the EC. Over the last year, Slovakia has adopted several key reforms and met important milestones important for the payment requests. The reforms, essential for improving the lives of citizens, include optimization of the hospital network, reforming the judicial map, public procurement, the Slovak Academy of Sciences, university management, management of national parks, reforming management and support, development and innovation, and simplifying the recognition of educational and professional qualifications.

Conference on the Future of Europe

The **Conference on the Future of Europe** was successfully concluded in May 2022. Its Final Report contained 49 proposals developed into 326 concrete recommendations for the future direction of the Union. These were used by the European Commission to prepare its work programme for 2023. The MFEA SR initiated an inter-ministerial discussion on streamlining the Council's decision-making processes, which was one of the most resonant demands of the citizens.



The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Eduard Heger addressing the meeting participants. The conference was also attended by the State Secretary Ingrid Brochová, members of the Slovak National Council, European Parliament and representatives of civil society, industry and the diplomatic corps participating in various panel discussions. 30 May 2022, Bratislava.

3 PRESENTATION OF THE SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS

Each case of the successful and positive representation of Slovakia in the international environment in 2022 was also a great tool used by Slovak diplomacy to promote the country's foreign policy and economic interests and improve Slovakia's brand on a global level. In this sense, successful artists, athletes, scientists and those good at communicating with the foreign and domestic public have proved to be some of Slovakia's best ambassadors.

Strategic communication and public diplomacy

In 2022, the foreign ministry improved the quality of communication with the public. On 1 September, it launched a **new**, more user-friendly **website**, adapted to current trends in the consumption of online content. The change of visual identity and the unification of communication on social networks, making online communication clear and easily identifiable with the Ministry, was of crucial importance.

The **Russian military aggression against Ukraine** had a significant impact on the Ministry's communication, affecting both the form and structure of the topics and outputs communicated. Immediately after the outbreak of



The 20th Review Conference on the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic focused on the extraordinary situation in Ukraine, the loss of public consensus regarding the foreign policy orientation of Slovakia and the search for a new communication strategy towards the public.

The conference titled *The Role of the UN in the World after 24 February*, which took place on the 77th anniversary of the founding of the UN, was the introductory event to the second edition of a series of activities named *Slovakia in the UN*. The series aims at raising broader public awareness about the activities of this international organization. Rastislav Káčer awarded the Silver Plaque of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic to Juraj Riečan and Otto Gušťafík at the conference. 18 October 2022, Bratislava.

the invasion, the Ministry presented clear baseline narratives to the public - Russia is the aggressor, Ukraine is the victim, Slovakia owes its safety to its membership in NATO and helping Ukraine is in our own interest. In this respect, communication with municipalities was important, as they received leaflets with basic communication messages and useful contacts. The Ministry regularly provided summaries of Slovakia's positions and actions through social media, as well as those of its allies in the EU and NATO. Thanks to long-term monitoring of **the disinformation ecosystem** and the exchange of information with foreign partners, the Ministry was able to respond adequately to disinformation related to the war in Ukraine. To do this, it used the method of **prebunking** (pre-emptively warn against disinformation before it is disseminated) and **debunking** (refuting disinformation).



HlbokáOnline discussion broadcast by the foreign ministry for the first time ever from abroad, with viewers from Brussels. 16 May 2022, Brussels.

In 2022, the Ministry continued to organise online discussions titled **HlbokáOnline**, aimed at bringing the priorities of the Slovak and European foreign policies closer to the audience. The debates were hosted by experts from academia and civil society in addition to the representatives of the Ministry. In 2022, the MFEA SR organised 9 debates in a new format (with more than 120,000 views). The edition on the current situation in Ukraine had the highest number of views (28,000 views, broadcasted on 2 March 2022). The Ministry also carried out a pilot broadcast of a **HlbokáOnline** debate abroad - in Brussels, with over 200 face to face participants.

The Ministry organized the **Women in Diplomacy** event again, using **online and offline communication** to discuss the position of women in society, the role and professional contribution of women diplomats to foreign policy, as well as the importance of education and career development for women in diplomacy. Follow up activities to the **UN Week** format focused on bringing the UN's functioning and relevance closer to the public, as it pertained to Russia's aggression against Ukraine.



The Women in Diplomacy conference offered the possibility to review progress on inclusion and diversity in Slovak diplomacy and foreign policy. 9 November 2022, Bratislava.

LOBSEC 2022 Bratislava Forum - implemented by the international think tank Globsec in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic is a special contribution to the strategic communication of Slovakia with international experts. With more than 130 panelists - including several presidents, prime ministers, ministers, diplomats and Ukrainian leaders, along with internationally renowned political scientists and journalists - and 1,500 participants from 80 countries, the GLOBSEC 2022 Bratislava Forum ranked among the most important strategic security conferences in the world. The 17th edition of the Forum in June 2022 was the largest conference of its kind in Central Europe and thematically focused on Ukraine, its support and post-war reconstruction. **Tatra Summit** - another Globsec event - focusing on European and economic topics, fulfilled a similar role in the field of strategic communication.

The traditional **Annual Review Conference on the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic**, organised by the Foreign Ministry in close cooperation with the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, played an important role in the field of strategic communication and within the domestic and external environment. Its 20th edition in February 2022, with the participation of top constitutional representatives, leading experts and members of the diplomatic corps, reviewed the development of Slovak and European foreign policies and their strategic direction.

Face-to-face meetings and presence in the regions constitute an important element of strategic communication. This was one of the reasons why the Ministry set up information stands at the Piešťany Air Festival and the European Olympic Festival in Banská Bystrica. The intention was to present Slovak foreign policy priorities, in particular our membership in NATO and the European Union, through various interactive quizzes and activities.

In 2022, the Ministry followed up on the **20th anniversary of the reconstruction of the Palugyay Palace** that is a part of



Slovak visual art in the Palugyay Palace.

the MFEA SR, opening an exhibition of Slovak fine art in its representative lounges. The Ministry taps into the potential of the Slovak visual art, capitalizing on the paintings by the most important Slovak artists, such as Ladislav Medňanský, Martin Benka, Ester Martinčeková Šimerová and Milan Laluha, presenting the country to foreign delegations and visitors of the palace.

Cultural diplomacy

In 2022, cultural diplomacy continued to be an effective instrument of Slovakia's foreign policy engagement and an integral part of our country's presentation throughout the world. The Ministry was implementing the Concept of the Ministry's Procedure in the Field of Presentation of Slovak Art and Culture Abroad for the Years 2020 – 2024. This consists of the long-term planning of large flagship projects and multi-genre weeks of Slovakia in selected priority countries throughout the world.

2022 focused on the **presentation of Slovak musical art** in three priority countries - USA, Norway and Spain:



A flagship event of cultural diplomacy in the USA in 2022, the second edition of Slovaks in Concert, organized by the Consulate General of the Slovak Republic in New York in the prestigious Carnegie Hall. (Photo: Paul Martinka)

renowned Slovak musicians presented themselves under the 2nd edition of Slovaks at Carnegie Hall in New York; Oslo, the capital of Norway, enjoyed a concert by the Žilina State Chamber Orchestra, complemented by side events. The first Norwegian version of three children's books and an anthological exhibition of children's books by Slovak and Norwegian illustrators from the collections of the International House of Art for Children BIBIANA were presented at the National Library in Oslo as part of the Day of Slovak Culture. The event was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. A gala concert by the State Philharmonic Košice took place at the Auditorio Nacional de Música in Madrid.

Weeks of Slovakia were also successfully implemented in the USA, Turkey and Bulgaria. A multi-genre and multi-thematic project called the Year of Slovakia took place in the USA, offering a unique presentation of Slovak glassmaking, the Slovak Crystal Show, a performance of the Túlavé divadlo and a concert by Slovak and American musicians and performers called ONENESS FESTIVAL. The Slovak cultural diplomacy was presented in Ankara and Istanbul under the title Days of Slovak Culture and Art in Turkey. It featured, among other things, the Debris Company – a Slovak theatre group, an exhibition on the history of Slovak theatre and the Echoes of Gestures – an exhibition of Slovak visual arts organized by the Theatre Institute. A series of events named Days of Slovak Culture in Bulgaria were organized in Sofia, Bulgaria.



A presentation of the first ever Norwegian version of three books of children's tales written by Slovak authors in the main building of the National Library, Deichmanske Biblioteket. 14 November 2022, Oslo.

The network of Slovak Institutes (Berlin, Budapest, Jerusalem, Moscow, Paris, Prague, Rome, Warsaw, Vienna) is the institutional basis for the presentation of Slovak art and culture abroad. In April 2022, the Slovak Institute in Jerusalem

was officially opened in the presence of the Speaker of the Slovak Parliament, Boris Kollár, Foreign Minister Ivan Korčok and the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid.

Multi-genre events organized by **Slovak institutes** and diplomatic missions presented the best of Slovakia to the general public abroad. The highlights of numerous successful presentations include the Days in Malta in the capital Valletta, the Week of Slovak Culture in the Polish cities of Warsaw, Wrocław, Zabrze, the exhibition Svetelné pasce sklárov (Glassblowers' light traps) by Jan Zoričák and Péter Bots in Budapest and the opening exhibition of the Slovak Institute in Jerusalem, EXPEDITION 10, which was a spectacular presentation of Slovak contemporary art.



Minister Ivan Korčok together with the Israeli Head of Diplomacy Yair Lapid and the Speaker of the Slovak National Council Boris Kollár and at the official opening of the Slovak Institute in Jerusalem. 13 April 2022, Jerusalem.

Slovak art has been presented at many renowned events, including the 5th Révelations International Biennial of Crafts and Creation in Paris or the Jerusalem Design Week. A theatre project represented Slovakia at the Quartieri di vita (Quarters of Life) in Naples, the European cultural festival Babylon Europa in Berlin and the Croatian-Slovak Classical Concert in Austria, all under the platform of international cooperation EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture).

We supported the Slovak presidency of the **Visegrád Group** with a concert by the V4 Jazz Quartett in Vienna and a concert by the V4 and Italian jazz ensemble Voice of Colours in Perugia. The project *Forgetting means letting them die again* commemorated the first transports of Slovak Jews from Poprad as part of the Memorial Day activities in Terezín. The first residency programme at the Slovak Institute in Jerusalem was received with great enthusiasm. Artists indulge in creative work at the premises of the Institute, collaborate with representatives of the local artistic community and their artworks emerge from joint work in an inspirational environment.

Renowned Slovak **art ensembles** represented a high level of Slovak art. The Slovak Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra performed in the Berlin Dome and in the oldest abbey in Paris, Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Audiences highly appreciated the 4-day tour by the Slovak National Theatre in Prague, featuring 4 productions and the performance by the Lúčna art ensemble in the Teatr Polski theatre in Warsaw.

Coordinated presentation of Slovakia abroad

In May 2022, the newly established Slovak Government Council for Competitiveness and Economic Growth established the **Working Group for Economic Diplomacy and Unified Presentation of Slovakia Abroad**. The working group, operating within the framework of the Council shall coordinate unified presentations of Slovakia abroad. It has the ambition to function as an expert platform for designing, planning and preparing specific projects for economic diplomacy and the unified presentation of Slovakia abroad.

In 2022, the Foreign Ministry presented the communication messages and visual identity of the Slovak Presidency in the Visegrad Group for 2022-2023. At the end of the year, it also presented a proposal for visual identity for the upcoming 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic in 2023.



Meeting of a Working Group for Economic Diplomacy and the Unified Presentation of Slovakia Abroad. Its members include representatives of ministries, institutions and implementation agencies who contribute the most to promoting Slovak economic interests and the presentation of the country abroad. 31 May 2022, Bratislava.

4

PROSPERITY AND SOLIDARITY

The post-pandemic period and the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 have fundamentally changed the global environment and posed new challenges for economic diplomacy and development cooperation. Slovakia has focused on strengthening trade partnerships with reliable trading partners and reducing strategic dependence in sensitive sectors. Slovak development cooperation and humanitarian aid was aimed at assisting the people and communities affected by the war in Ukraine.

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

In 2022, the Ministry, as the coordinator for promoting Slovak trade and economic interests abroad, primarily focused on facilitating business contacts, supporting mutual partnerships and providing patronage for Slovak companies

at trade fairs and exhibitions. The Foreign Ministry created new formats for balancing interests and strengthening inter-ministerial coordination. According to the Foreign Ministry, the approval of a joint document from the MFEA SR and the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic - was of crucial importance. The Action Plan for 2023 and 2024 defines options for promoting a more effective pro-export policy.

The Foreign Ministry chairs the **Working Group on Economic Diplomacy and a Unified Presentation Abroad**. The Group functions under the Slovak Government Council for Competitiveness and Productivity. The informal inter-ministerial platform **Team Slovakia** strengthens the coordination role in the field of external economic relations. Throughout 2022, it had five meetings. A practical result of intensified cooperation in the area of supporting and promoting tourism was the signing of an **Agreement on Cooperation with the Slovakia Travel Agency**.



State Secretary Ingrid Brochová together with the Prime Minister Eduard Heger opening the 2nd edition of the Export Forum in Šamorín. 27 September 2022, Šamorín.



During its visit to the Košice Self-governing Region, a delegation visited the Slovak company Ryba Košice, ANTIK Telecom and the Technical University in Košice, where it also met representatives from the P.J.Sašárik University in Košice, the University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice and the Innovation Centre of the Košice Self-governing Region. 5-6 December 2022, Košice.

Activities of the Slovak economic diplomacy

Export Forum: is an interactive communication platform of economic diplomacy designed for Slovak **exporters**. It is unique in offering a direct contact between entrepreneurs and economic diplomats and other state administration actors. More than 320 participants, including 145 business representatives, attended the second edition of the Forum held on 27 September 2022 in Šamorín. The Minister of Foreign Affairs presented a gold plaque for contribution and cooperation in the field of economic diplomacy to representatives of three successful innovative companies - Microstep-MIS, spol. s r.o., Chemosvit Fibrochem, s.r.o. and ESET, spol. s r.o.

Innovation Day: the Ministry regularly promotes examples of good practice in Slovakia, thus supporting the expansion of **Slovak innovations abroad**. As of September 2020, the State Secretary Ingrid Brocková has overseen the regular visits of ambassadors accredited to Slovakia to Slovak innovative companies and research institutions with strong international potential. In 2022, the ambassadors visited 10 partner entities: ESET, the Kempelen Institute of Intelligent Technologies and Innovatrics, Powerful Medical, the Nitra Region, Space Industry in Slovakia and Slovakia's associate membership of the European Space Agency (ESA), Sensoneo, the Banská Bystrica Region, the Slovak Alliance for an Innovative Economy (SAPIE) and Vacuum Group, Glycanostics and the Capital City of Slovakia Bratislava.

From Regions to the World: this joint initiative by the Ministry and the regions is aimed at **enhancing the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises together with scientific and educational institutions in foreign activities**. In 2022, four events were organized: in



Innovation Day at Glycanostics. The company developed, tested and registered an affordable and non-invasive prostate cancer test. This high precision test can detect 11 types of the disease. 23 November 2022, Bratislava.

the Nitra Region (15-16 March), in the Prešov Region (25-26 April), in the Banská Bystrica Region (22-23 June) and in the Košice Region (5-6 December).

Export House: these are **pro-export services** by state actors under the auspices of the MFEA SR at major **trade fairs and exhibitions in the Slovak Republic**. Participating state and public agencies include SARIO, SBA, Eximbanka SR, SOPK, Slovakia Travel and others, all of which provide information, consulting and financial services for export promotion.

Economic Diplomacy Support Project Scheme: is the Ministry's **financial instrument** for financing activities of economic diplomacy involving businesses. In 2022, 36 economic diplomacy projects submitted by diplomatic missions were approved. The total amount of support amounted to EUR 209,000.

EXPO Dubai: From 16 to 22 January 2022, the MFEA SR sponsored the **Global Goals Week** in the Slovak Pavilion at EXPO Dubai 2022. A trade mission consisting of seventeen innovative Slovak companies accompanied the delegation of State Secretary Ingrid Brocková and State Secretary Karel



State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ingrid Brocková opening a workshop for sustainable investments and a presentation of Slovak start-ups on 18 January 2022. The events were organized under the Sustainable Global Goals Week in the Slovak Pavillion at the Dubai EXPO.

Galek. The focus of the week was sustainability - the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. The top event under the **Global Goals Week** in the Slovak Pavilion was the world launch of the first universal chip by Tachyum in the presence of over 200 participants from all over the world.



Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová opening the Slovak National Day at the Dubai EXPO on 27 January 2022. (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

Services for entrepreneurs

Activities to support entrepreneurs in 2022:

- 767 inquiries from the business community processed by the Business Centre of the Ministry.
- 36 implemented projects aimed at supporting economic diplomacy worth EUR 209,000.
- 4 implementation protocols with a total value of EUR 37,000 (in cooperation with the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry) approved.
- Weekly News Digest on industry, energy, tenders, etc. was published.
- Information provided on the website under 'Business Support' and on the Economic Diplomacy profile on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Strategic communication in economic diplomacy

The Ministry published a **Weekly News Digest in order to promote business activities abroad**. The digest contains a country specific list of events and news in the field of industry, energy, tenders, etc. The Ministry provided further information on its website under Business Support and on

the Economic Diplomacy profile on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Bilateral economic diplomacy

Bilateral economic diplomacy was primarily executed through the activities of the economic departments of the Slovak Government and the Slovak Agency for Development, Investment and Trade (SARIO), often in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry. These endeavours have also resulted in foreign investments in Slovakia; the most significant by the multinational corporation Volvo Group. Further bilateral events included meetings of inter-governmental commissions (e.g. the first meeting of the Slovak-Kazakh inter-governmental commission), trade missions abroad (e.g. to Jordan) and foreign trade missions to Slovakia (e.g. a trade and investment mission from the UAE focusing on renewables, the environment, science, research and innovation in the health and pharmaceutical industries).

Multilateral economic diplomacy

Slovakia supported the activities of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** aimed at increasing its global reach by accepting new members. There has been a significant shift in the OECD's analytical work regarding the consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann paid two visits to Slovakia in 2022: in January, he presented an economic overview of the Slovak Republic and in October, he participated in the GLOBSEC Tatra Summit. The Slovak Republic, together with the EU, Latvia and Lithuania, financially supported an OECD project to help Ukraine enhance its decentralisation processes.



Minister Ivan Korčok receiving a trade mission from Abu Dhabi led by Rashid Abdul Karim Al Balooshi in Bratislava on 20 June 2022.



The destroyed city of Irpin and supply of food aid for local inhabitants organized through SlovakAid project implemented in cooperation with the ADRA NGO, 3 January 2023. (Photo: ADRA/Ludovít Činčala)

In an effort to boost the activities of the Slovak Republic as they pertain to the **Central European Initiative (CEI)**, the MFEA SR has set short-term and long-term priorities. As part of the implementation of the *Central European Initiative's Plan of Action for 2021-2023*, the SR continued to support the integration efforts of the Western Balkan countries, as well as the enhancement of economic reforms within the framework of the Eastern Partnership and financial assistance to Ukraine.

Slovakia continues to consider the **Three Seas Initiative** as an interesting platform for cooperation in building regional connectivity with implications for the cohesion of European and transatlantic cooperation.

Energy safety

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has fundamentally weakened European energy security. Eliminating EU and Slovak energy dependence on Russia has become a pressing issue for Europe's economic security. Thanks to the launch

of the Slovak-Polish gas interconnector built as part of diversification activities, we have become a part of the North-South gas interconnection. Slovakia has taken other decisive steps: it has started buying **liquified gas** through terminals in the Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea and now takes non-Russian natural gas from the North Sea area. Russian gas now accounts for only about 1/3 of our imports.

The Slovnaft Refinery has taken steps to diversify its production mix. In 2023, it plans to reduce the volume of processed **Russian crude oil** from the current 95% to about 60%.

The future of energy security is linked to non-fossil energy sources, while the backbone of the future EU hydrogen transport network should be the current gas systems. Slovak entities have therefore established partnerships in Ukraine, Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany to secure the future transit of green hydrogen produced in Ukraine. Looking for pathways how to diversify **sources of nuclear fuel** was also high on the agenda. The deployment of new **renewable and carbon-free sources** and energy saving

measures is being accelerated. Slovakia meets the EU targets for the share of renewable energy sources (their current share in the energy mix is about 22%). Full commissioning of the new nuclear units at the Mochovce nuclear power plant will also contribute to **reducing greenhouse gas emissions**.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID

The military conflict in **Ukraine** and the provision of assistance to the war-affected population made up a large part of Slovak development cooperation and humanitarian aid activities in 2022. Ukraine has thus become the main



The EU Monitoring Mission with the World Food Programme in Sudan pointed out the need to deal with acute food insecurity, exacerbated due to the war in Ukraine, in the countries of the African Horn. The mission also visited the Otash refugee camp in South Darfur where humanitarian organizations, supported by the EU, help to fight malnutrition. 20 September 2022.

recipient of Slovakia's official humanitarian aid, which has amounted to more than EUR 8 million since February 2022. Of this, material humanitarian aid amounts to more than EUR 5 million and financial contributions to the Ukrainian and Slovak public humanitarian actors' EUR 2 million. The Slovak Republic has also financially supported the activities of the international humanitarian and local NGOs providing support and assistance to Ukraine for almost EUR 1 million.

The Slovak Republic has also actively participated in addressing the causes and consequences of the **migration crisis**, which has also been exacerbated globally due to the war in Ukraine. In addition to the continuously provided material assistance to Ukraine, more than EUR 1,3 million was allocated to grant support of 4 other humanitarian projects. Distribution of basic food and hygiene packages to people in need, medical care and psychosocial support was secured

thanks to the SlovakAid projects. Furthermore, Slovakia financially supported assistance to people affected by the military conflict in Ukraine through several international humanitarian and local NGOs for almost EUR 1 million.

Slovakia has also provided material support to **Moldova**, which neighbours Ukraine, by covering urgent humanitarian needs, providing specialised medical services for Ukrainian refugees, and assistance in coping with a profound energy crisis.



Opening of the SlovakAid project in Iraqi Kurdistan, Bersava municipality, that facilitated the construction of already the 17th well in the region. Access to clean drinking water secured through the SlovakAid project, implemented in cooperation with the Slovak Catholic Charity, has significantly improved the quality of life for local inhabitants, negatively impacted by the presence of Da'esh and climate change. 6 december 2022.

To support the management of the ongoing **COVID-19 pandemic**, the Slovak Republic provided humanitarian aid (antigen tests) worth almost EUR 130,000 to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which at the beginning of 2022 ranked as the second most impacted country by coronavirus in Europe (by deaths).

Last year, Slovakia supported 5 humanitarian projects in the **Middle East region** (Syria, Iraq and Lebanon) with almost EUR 1 million, mainly in the field of building water infrastructure and providing emergency health care. These projects contribute significantly to improving living conditions and the development of local communities affected by armed conflicts and migration crisis. In order to provide assistance to countries in the **Horn of Africa**, whose populations are facing famine caused by drought and armed conflict, the Slovak Republic has made a financial contribution to support the activities of the World Food Programme (WFP) in these countries.

The Slovak Republic continues to implement programmes under the *Development Cooperation Strategy* with the programme countries of **Georgia, Moldova and Kenya**. With an eye on improving the targeting of development

cooperation and tailoring it to the needs of partner countries, as well as to achieving better and longer-term results, we have opened a pilot *Strategic Partnership Call for Kenya* in addition to the standard call. The amount earmarked for this call with a 5-year implementation period (2022-2026) was EUR 1 million. Its target was to support a digitalisation project for primary and secondary schools and increase the digital skills of teachers in Machakos County, Kenya.

Throughout 2022, the Slovak Republic continued to actively support the shaping of the EU development cooperation policy by strengthening its coordinated approach under **Team Europe**. Slovakia has been involved in a number of activities implemented under this project in the EU Neighbourhood countries and in Kenya.



During her official visit to Kenya, State Secretary Ingrid Brochová also monitored development aid projects. On 30 March 2022, the State Secretary visited a joint V4/EU project targeting the planting, processing and production of heshu nuts that aims to contribute to restoring the original biotope in the region of Malindi (East Africa). The project also assists in improving the social and economic situation of 15,000 small farmers in the region.

The first ever pilot project of the **delegated EU cooperation**, to be implemented during the next 2 years by the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC), has also become an opportunity for the involvement of Slovak entities in the EU development cooperation which enables implementation of larger cooperation projects with EU funds in countries that are a common foreign policy priority for both the Slovak Republic and the EU. The project in Moldova supports local independent media and helps print and digital media to sustainably, independently and professionally enhance their competences in producing quality journalistic content. The EU has allocated EUR 1 million from the **European Neighbourhood Instrument** for the project's implementation.

As part of the **OECD Mutual Accountability Mechanism** for Development Cooperation, Slovakia underwent an important interim assessment mission in March 2022. This international evaluation showed a high degree of professionalisation by



State Secretary Ingrid Brochová participating in an informal ministerial meeting of the OECD Development Assistance Committee also known as Tidewater. 14-15 June 2022, Neuchâtel.

the Slovak Republic in relation to international development cooperation and confirmed a progressive trend in the area.

The MFEA SR has not let up on its efforts to **intensify involvement of the private sector** in development cooperation. Another call was open within the framework of the strategic partnership in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the Slovak Challenge Fund. The Fund is aimed at engaging the business sector in sustainable development in Moldova and North Macedonia through the transfer of innovative Slovak ideas.

The Slovak Republic has strengthened its existing practical cooperation with the **United States Agency for International Development** (USAID) by signing a new three-year Memorandum of Understanding. This has expanded opportunities for joint project activities in the field of development cooperation, human rights and democratic reforms in the Western Balkans and the EU Eastern Partnership countries. This joint effort by SlovakAid and USAID will translate into the implementation of a project in Georgia, which will strengthen the financial sustainability of its civil society by capitalizing on the knowledge and experience of Slovak NGOs.

Two events were important in the context of **global education** in 2022. The first one was the adoption of the new *Declaration on Global Education in Europe to 2050*, which sets out a long-term vision, political support and commitments for raising the quality of global education in Europe. The second one was the drafting of the Global Education Strategy by the Ministry of Education, which took over this responsibility from the MFEA SR. SlovakAid continued to support global education projects by opening a separate call for proposals.

5 ASSISTANCE TO SLOVAK CITIZENS

After two pandemic years, international mobility has increased sharply despite the deteriorating security context. It has brought new challenges to the Slovak Consular Service, which has responded by improving the standard of services and their digitalisation. Assistance to Slovak citizens in need and contacts with the expatriate community abroad continued to be at the centre of the Slovak foreign service's attention last year.

Consular service

The Foreign Ministry worked on **improving the performance and quality of the consular and visa services** in order to strengthen the positive image of Slovakia abroad, focusing on the respectful and dignified treatment of its clients. The consular service is the first point of contact between a citizen and the diplomatic service and, in the case of a foreigner, also the first point of contact with Slovakia as a state. Also in 2022 there was a growing demand for services (document issuance, civil registry and state-civil affairs agenda). Simultaneously, the interest in services in the visa or residence permits decreased due to the decrease in the mobility of foreigners and the persistent travel restrictions.

The current consular challenges can be grouped into two clusters: the first is the need for a proper and functioning **digitalisation of consular services** and further acceleration of digital reform in the consular area. The second is to ensure **sufficient staff working in consular services**, especially in countries where a large number of Slovak citizens are staying for a short or long period.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated persisting trends such as teleworking, virtual meetings, e-government, electronic document delivery, and online banking. It has also triggered long-lasting changes in citizens' behaviour - significantly increasing **interest in consular online and remote services**, i.e. by mail, courier, phone, email, website and social media. Citizens have become more willing and apt to use these types of services, and the number of email requests and searches for information on consular websites has grown. The obligation of taking **biometrics** from citizens applying for passports, identification cards and foreign visa applicants, however, has no digital alternative. The main challenges in the development of digital consular services include personal data protection, an existing legislative framework that requires personal presence during the application process, cyber security and the time and cost to develop and implement these systems.

Growing global mobility also applies to Slovak citizens. An increasing number of Slovaks are travelling abroad or settling there permanently or for a long term. More foreigners are also coming to Slovakia. International mobility is a great opportunity for exchanging knowledge and for the enrichment of Slovak society with new stimuli but can also be a challenge. The consular service is thus an important stakeholder in the process of regulating the entry or stay of foreigners within our territory or in the Schengen area.

Crisis management

2022 was not only a year of learning from the unprecedented challenges of recent years when it comes to crisis management, but also of applying the lessons learnt directly



A diplomatic convoy with the Slovak Ambassador to Ukraine Marek Šafin and other employees of the Slovak Embassy in Kiev arriving in Slovakia. There were not only Slovak employees in the convoy, but also foreign nationals, journalists from Britain and Germany, as well as citizens from Ukraine, Afghanistan and children. 4 March 2022, Bratislava.

to the new challenges of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. After many years, the Slovak Embassy found itself amidst a direct military conflict. It was necessary to evacuate the Slovak Embassy in Kiev. The sharp deterioration of the security situation in Ukraine also affected the activities of other embassies in and around Ukraine as well as the situation on the Slovak territory. Crisis management was not limited solely to the needs of citizens in need abroad. The Ministry was fully involved in the state and civil society activities aimed at managing the situation. In particular, it assisted in the repatriation of citizens from other states, who were fleeing Ukraine, back to their homelands.

Against the backdrop of these pressing tasks, the Ministry continued to reflect on its activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the evacuations from Afghanistan and other instances of the use of crisis management mechanisms. The aim was not only to review the internal rules of the MFEA SR, but also to transfer them into the forthcoming reform of the security system of the Slovak Republic as a whole. It is in the interest of the MFEA SR that the response of the Slovak Republic to crises at home and abroad will be more effective, predictable and time and cost efficient in the future.

Expatriates

In June 2022, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted a **new Concept of State Policy in relation to Slovaks living abroad for the period 2022-2026**. The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad had two priorities - the provision of subsidies for expatriate projects and the issuing of certificates for Slovaks living abroad. The Office rolled out full support of expatriates' projects, including those that could not be

supported previously due to the pandemic. Thus, the Office financially supported 882 expatriate projects in 33 countries in the total amount of EUR 2,274,849. In 2022, it issued 705 certificates for Slovaks living abroad.

In 2022, the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad also fully resumed other activities that were curtailed in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. A series of events was organized within the territory of Slovakia, aiming at the enhancement of the linguistic, cultural and national identity of expatriates and building their ties to the Slovak Republic, e.g. a cultural programme in Bratislava to commemorate the Memorial Day of Slovaks Living Abroad, festivals *Krajanská nedela* (Ex-pats' Sunday) and *Krajanský dvor* (Ex-pats' Yard) in Detva, summer camps for children of expatriates in Slovakia, etc. In October 2022, the Office organised the *14th Annual Permanent Conference on the Slovak Republic and Slovaks Living Abroad*, which was attended by expatriates from all around the world.



Consular days in Calgary organized by the Slovak Embassy in Ottawa. 22 October 2022, Calgary.

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak embassies also focused on enhancing direct cooperation with the expat community. Diplomatic missions in the USA continued to implement the Pilot Project of systematic cooperation with the new Slovak diaspora in the USA. The project concentrated on building networks in the fields of economy, science, education, innovation, IT and culture.



A reception for Slovak expatriates in the USA held at the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington on 25 March 2022. The main goal of the event was to reconnect and renew relations with the wider expatriate community after a nearly two-year break caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMPARISON OF CONSULAR ACTIVITIES 2017–2022

TYPE OF CONSULAR SERVICE/ACTIVITY	Year					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Consular assistance for Slovak citizens in need	3 885	5 490	6 094	39 604	17 372	7 586
Certifications performed at embassies abroad (including translations)	51 209	44 029	46 518	39 581	47 126	42 547
Certifications performed by the Ministry's legalisation department	5 247 (of which 1047 apostilles)	4 680 (of which 1070 apostilles)	3 960 (of which 954 apostilles)	2 706 (of which 888 apostilles)	3 430 (of which 1243 apostilles)	4 197 (of which 1362 with apostille)
Passport applications	15 384	13 856	16 428	14 465	22 649	22 800
Diplomatic and service passports issued	691 + 604	604 + 457	603+530	626+385	685+425	659+505
Identity cards required	3 691	3 245	3 660	4 633	7 362	7 100
Driving licences required	685	579	543	376	565	632
Registry records and applications	8 253	7 779	9 134	7 844	8 843	8 023
Slovak citizenship certificates/confirmations	2 418	2 427	2 386	1 838	2 121	1 964
Slovak citizenship applications	159	136	137	124	181	168
Renouncement of Slovak citizenship	231	264	235	202	239	176
Criminal record extracts	1 327	1 533	1 728	1 381	1 296	1 297
Accompanying letters for the transport of physical remains	63	75	69	60	114	97
Varying types of assistance relating to the death of a Slovak citizen abroad	826	917	913	945	1 106	1 099
Replacement travel documents for Slovak citizens	4 447	4 354	4 671	3 062	3 288	3 463
Marriages performed at embassies	38	34	28	5	10	21
Replies to email requests for information	78 625	88 610	101 442	215 480	199 965	198 625
Total number of selected consular actions	177 783	179 069	198 166	333 317	316 777*	299 662*
Visa applications	44 540	29 788	32 088	7 889	9 294	20 797
Visa applications on behalf of other states	1 406	1 262	1 382	441	394	920
Income from visa fees	1 271 710,66	1 096 867,59	1 080 065,71	247 162	397 502	968 097
Income from consular fees	2 142 302,95	1 921 744,17	1 986 342,10	1 731 849	1 879 263	1 881 791
Total income	3 414 013,61	3 018 611,76	3 066 407,81	1 978 951	2 276 765	2 849 888

*Data including e-mail requests.

6

EFFECTIVE FOREIGN SERVICE

In autumn 2022, there was a change at the post of Minister for Foreign and European Affairs. Rastislav Káčer, who confirmed continuity in Slovak foreign policy, the orientation of the country and the Ministry, as well as the intention to further modernise the Foreign Service, succeeded Ivan Korčok.



President of Slovakia Zuzana Čaputová appointed Rastislav Káčer as the new head of Slovak diplomacy. 13 September 2022, Bratislava.

The 2021 strategic reform document *Improvement of the System of Human Resources Development in Foreign Service* continued to guide internal processes at the Ministry. In 2022, the *Directive on Hiring Civil Servants and Selection Procedures* entered into force. The Ministry has also taken an innovative approach to connecting political, financial and personnel planning in three-year budget cycles. This was also possible thanks to the completion of the Process Analysis Unit (OPAN) at the Analysis and Planning Division.

In order to improve the qualification of its staff, the Ministry has strengthened the internal **training processes**.

Communication with the external foreign policy community is also being strengthened. In cooperation with the Research Centre of the Society for Foreign

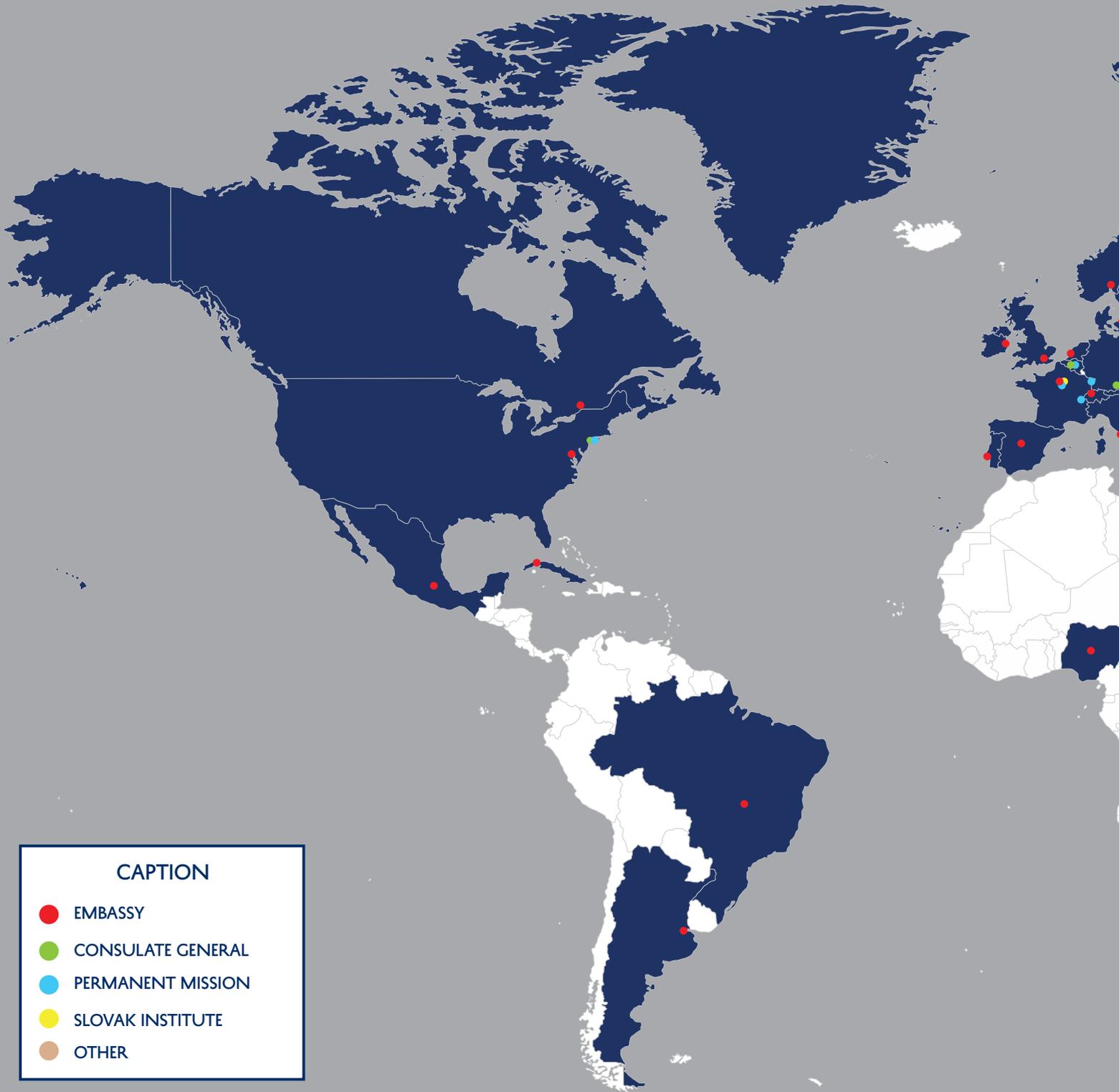
Policy Association (RC SFPA), the non-governmental platform Think Visegrad and the International Visegrad Fund, the Analysis and Planning Division organised the second edition of the Analytical Days of Svetoslav Bombík in November 2022, also with international participation. The event discussed V4 cooperation and Ukraine. In order to identify key mega-trends and drivers of change from the perspective of the Slovak Republic and define possible future scenarios, the Analytical Section has implemented the strategic foresight method in the conditions of the Ministry.

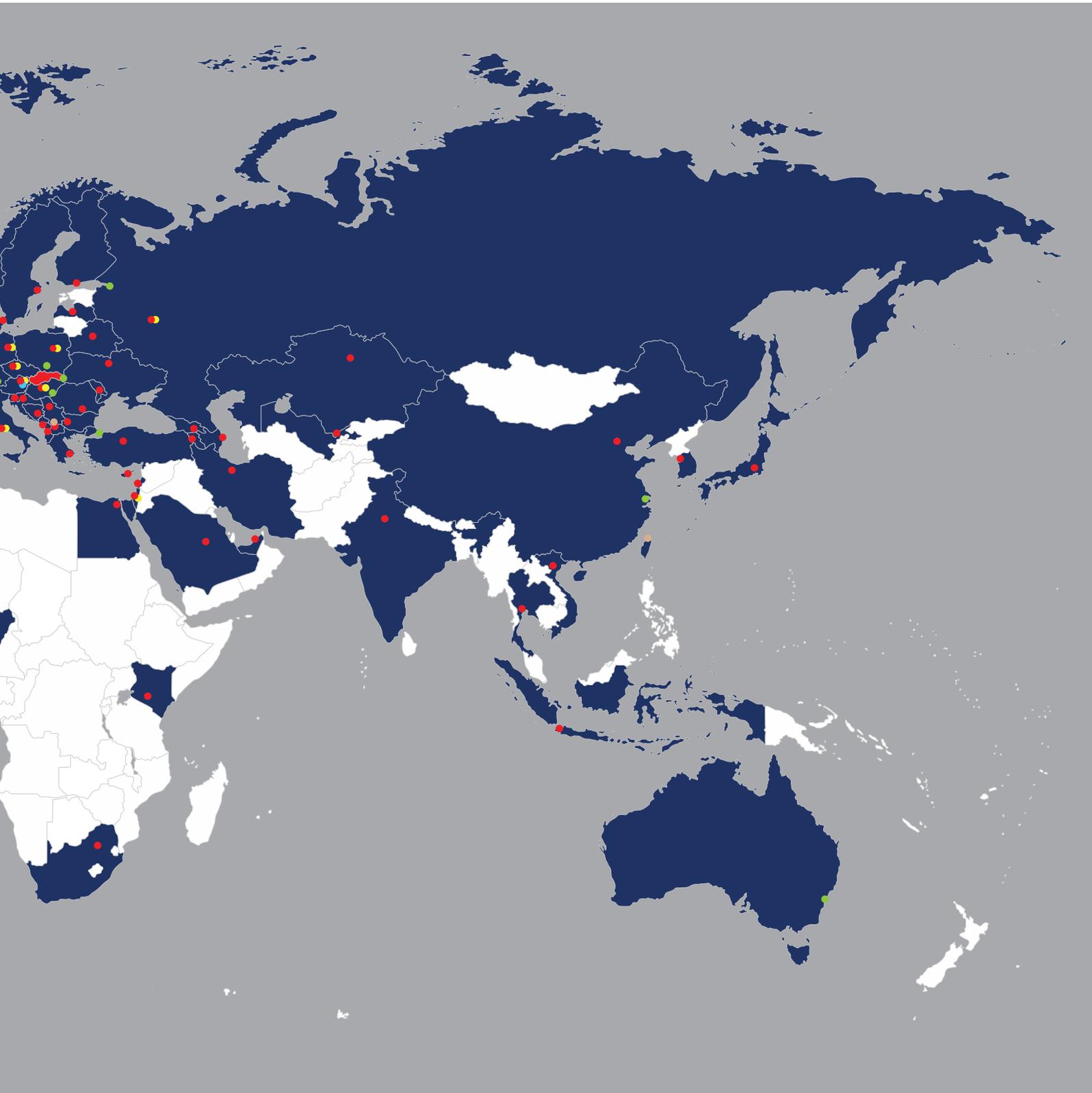
Diplomatic missions abroad are an institutional tool of the Slovak Foreign Service. As of 1 December 2022, the Slovak Republic had 90 diplomatic missions globally, including 62 embassies, 7 missions to international organisations, 10 consulates-general, 1 liaison office, 1 Slovak Economic and Cultural Office (SECO) and 9 Slovak Institutes. To complement the network of diplomatic missions, perform a wide range of consular functions, economic tasks, and spread Slovak culture, we have established and used a network of 184 consulates led by honorary consuls, with 7 new honorary consuls joining in 2022.

During the period under review, the Slovak Government decided to close the Slovak Embassies in Ethiopia and Kuwait and transform the Slovak Embassy in Belgium into a Consulate General. Simultaneously, a new embassy was opened in Saudi Arabia and a consulate-general in Sydney. By the end of 2022, the Slovak embassy in Australia has been closed, bringing the total number of embassies down to 61 in 2023.

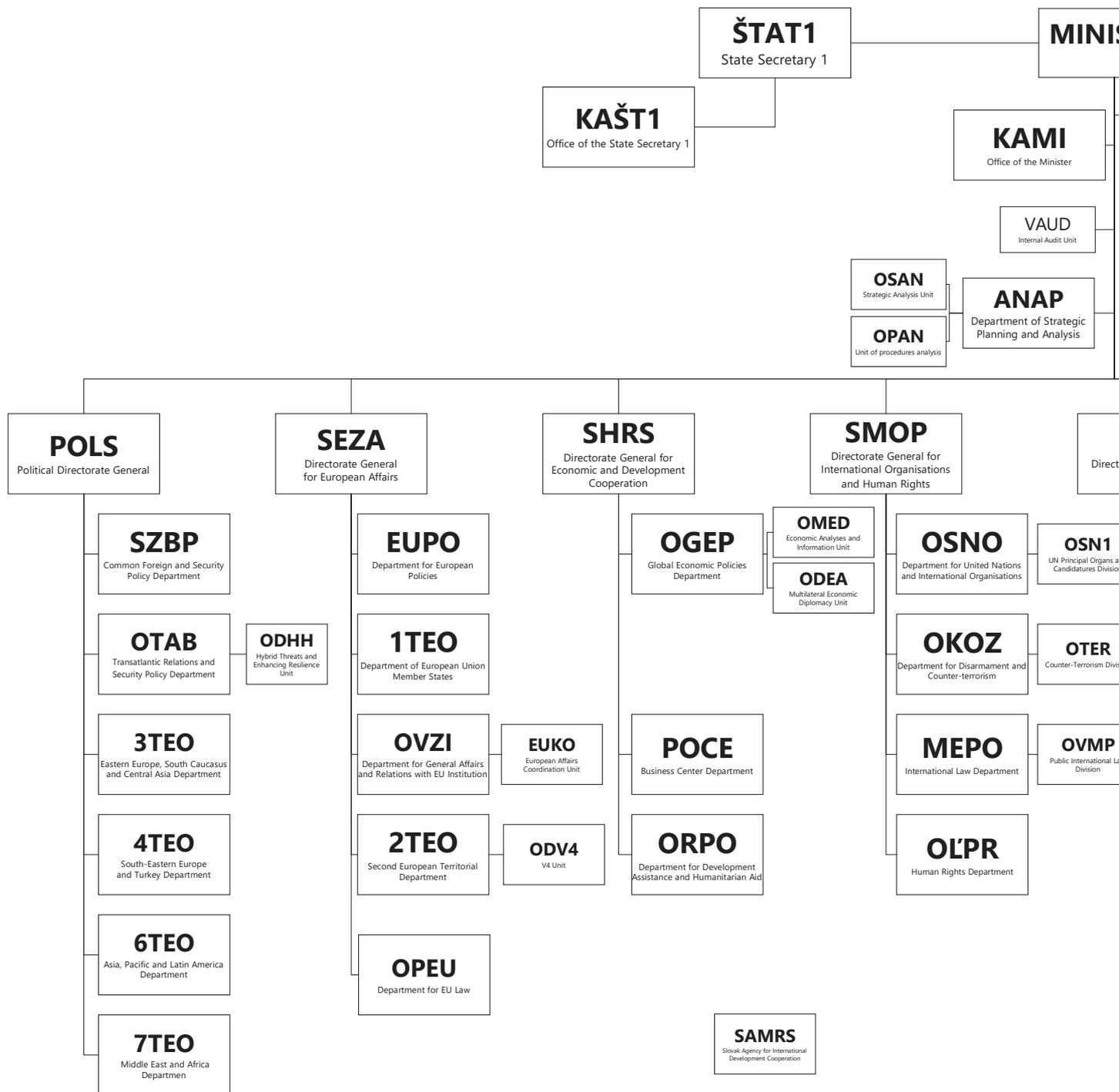
The revenue of the MFEA SR budget chapter for 2022 was set at EUR 2 million. Out of the total expenditure of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic for 2022 (EUR 154,381,428), the obligatory limit for wages, salaries, service income and other personal compensations was set at the level of EUR 56,388,601. The limit for capital expenditures was set at the level of EUR 1,389,558.

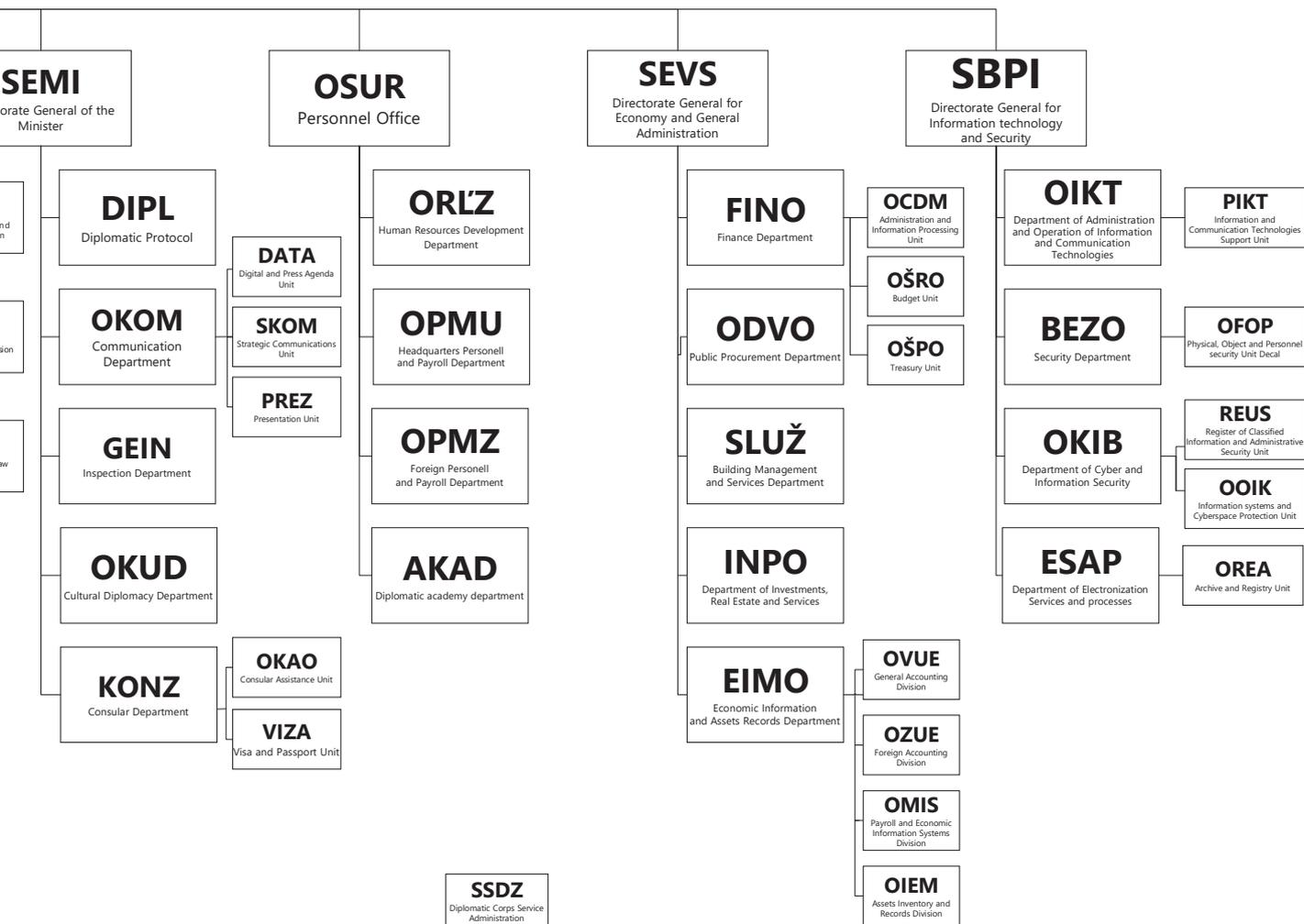
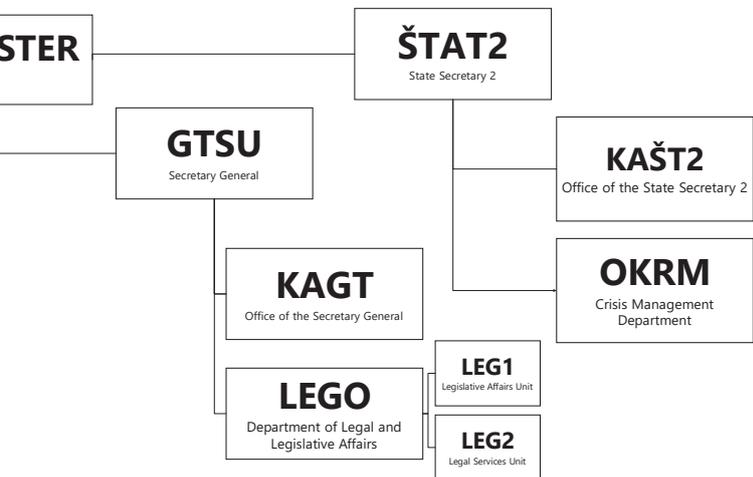
Map of the network of representative offices of the Slovak Republic





Organisational Structure of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



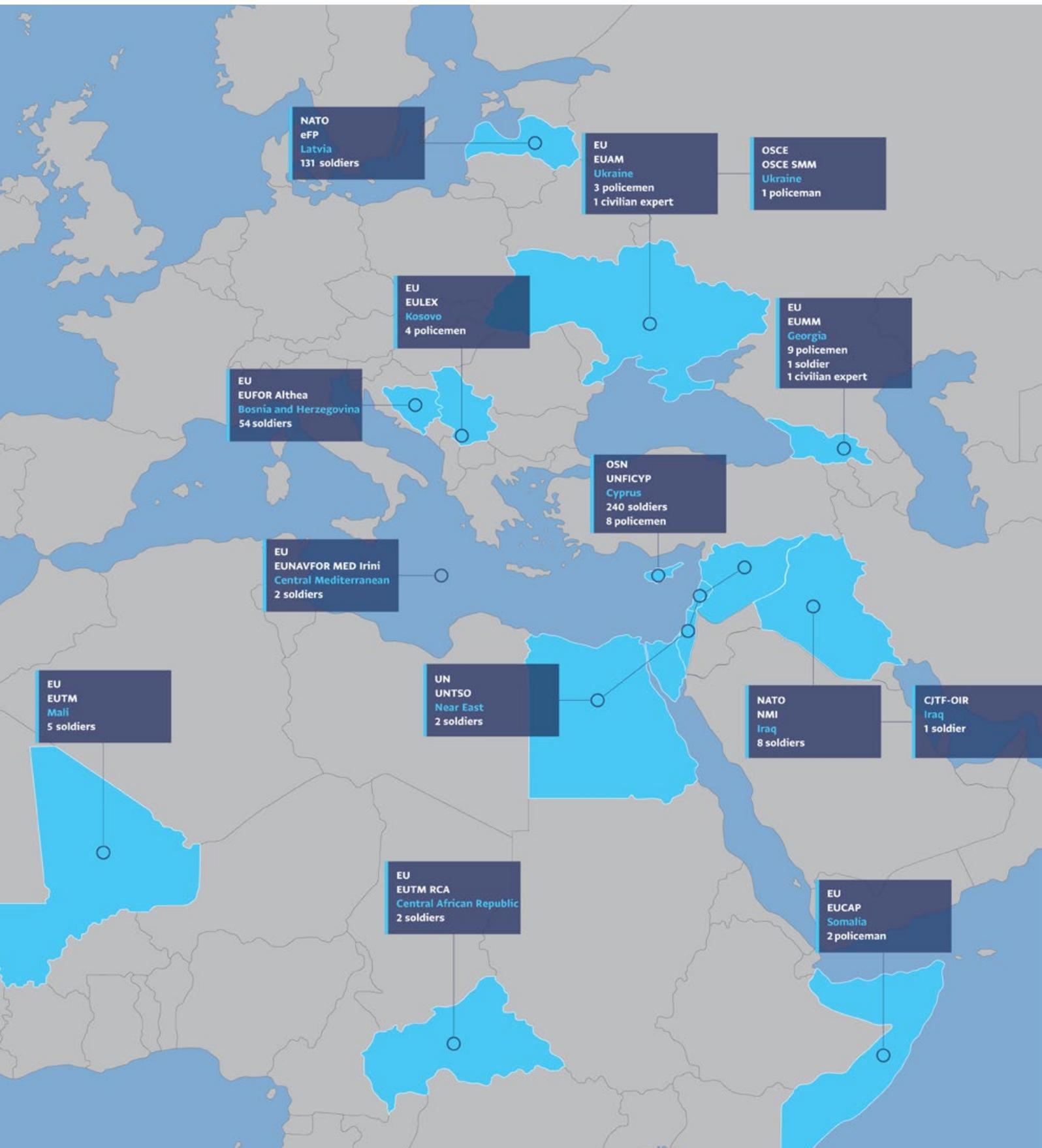


Expenditures of MFEA SR in 2022

(simplified overview of the program structure - actual spending in EUR)

MFEA SR programs:	134 508 910
development of international relations	131 072 691
out of that:	
Program Management	43 652 855
Cooperation with the NGO sector	154 738
Training of Employees	208 649
Reimbursement of Expenditure under the Technical Assistance Operational Program	456 134
Economic Diplomacy	296 817
Diplomatic Representation of the Slovak Republic Abroad	80 557 142
Cultural Representation of the Slovak Republic Abroad	1 606 472
Labour Force from Foreign Local Sources	4 139 884
state policy toward Slovaks living abroad	3 436 219
Inter-Ministerial Programs:	33 408 304
development cooperation — MFEA SR	8 456 184
information technologies financed from the state budget - MFEA SR	9 931 323
contributions of the Slovak Republic to international organisations — MFEA SR	15 020 797
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	167 917 214

Slovak Representation in Foreign Military Missions



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