Slovak Foreign Policy Guidelines 2011

The success of Slovakia's foreign policy in 2011 will be determined by the ongoing social and economic consolidation of the country. Within a changing global environment, being firmly anchored in the European Union and NATO is more important for Slovakia than ever before. In line with the Manifesto of the Slovak Government, Slovakia, by taking a firm stand within its foreign policy, will promote and protect democratic values and principles, such as the right to life, personal freedom, preservation of human dignity, sustainable development and stability.

The year 2011 will see continued efforts to overcome the impacts of the economic crisis and ensure global growth. The EU will continue to seek solutions for the consolidation of the single European currency. Slovakia does not expect any changes in the leading position of the U.S. in the security, political and economic domains throughout 2011. China's growing political and economic assertiveness will have an increasing impact on the position of other stakeholders active in global issues. The economic power of emerging countries may increasingly translate into their political power, and the pressure to increase their global involvement will rise proportionately.

Simultaneously with the implementation of economic and budgetary reforms that will facilitate structural economic growth, the EU will strive to extend its influence in global issues, participate in solutions to global challenges, and implement new instruments and functions arising from the Treaty of Lisbon. The transatlantic link, strategic enlargement and strengthening of partnerships will become important elements of the EU's foreign policy. The year 2011 will be the first year of implementing the conclusions from the NATO summit in Lisbon.

Regional cooperation and neighbourly relations

Slovakia's responsible answer to a changing global environment lies in further intensification of successful regional cooperation. During the remaining six months of its **Visegrad Four** presidency, Slovakia will strive to consistently pursue its agenda in all segments. The permanent priority is to strengthen the consultation mechanism of the V4, in particular as regards the meetings of EU bodies and the promotion of shared interests during discussions on key policies and issues of the EU, such as the Cohesion Policy, the Common Agricultural Policy or the preparation of the future multi-annual budget of the EU. The Hungarian and Polish EU presidency and the Slovak and Czech V4 presidency provide an excellent opportunity for synergistic strengthening of these countries' cooperation in promoting regional interests in the European context. The Slovak Republic will accentuate the implementation of the key areas and projects, such as the new Financial Perspective, the Europe 2020 strategy, innovation, educational reform, science, research, energy security, the EU's neighbourhood policy, the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership and the social inclusion of the Roma.

The February meeting of the V4 prime ministers with partners from Germany, Austria and Ukraine, held on the occasion of the Visegrad Four group celebrating its 20th anniversary, will be a good opportunity to positively promote the group's image as a model of successful regional cooperation for regions in transition, evaluate the two decades of its successful existence, and determine a framework orientation for the future. As a follow-up, a panel discussion will be held in Brussels in March, accompanied by cultural events and a film festival. In the V4 format, Slovakia will be pleased to welcome the foreign ministers of the Eastern Partnership countries and Germany in March.

Continued strengthening of **good relations with neighbouring countries** will constitute an important part of regional cooperation.

Intensifying bilateral cooperation and building above-standard relations with the **Czech Republic** in all spheres continue to rank among the permanent priorities of Slovakia's foreign policy. The traditionally close political cooperation, underpinned by economic ties, will include further projects aimed at preserving the cultural and language proximity of the two nations. Alongside regular consultations on current international issues, Slovakia intends to continue a lively dialogue at the level of the highest state officials, preparing a joint session of governments and a meeting of the informal Czech-Slovak Forum.

As part of its special and amicable relations with **Poland,** Slovakia is keen to strengthen political and expert dialogue predominantly in areas with direct effect on the people of both countries. Slovakia expects the Slovak-Polish consultation forum of prominent personalities to strengthen mutual communication. Intensifying economic cooperation and developing cross-border infrastructure will constitute an important element of bilateral relations. Solidarity and cooperation in terms of energy security should be reflected in the implementation of the gas interconnection project between the Slovak Republic and Poland, as well as progress in interconnecting road and motorway networks.

The priorities of the Slovak foreign policy include building corect relations with the **Republic of Hungary** and promoting positive agenda and concrete solutions for the benefit of the Slovak citizens. As a key effort in 2011, constructive and rational dialogue will be maintained at all levels, hand-in-hand with the resumption of effective work of joint committees in all respects. Energy security will be an important issue for the bilateral dialogue, with a focus on building a gas interconnection as part of the gas route between the Adriatic and Baltic Seas, as well as the development of transport infrastructure between the Slovak Republic and Hungary. Slovakia will support the preservation of the language and cultural identity of the Slovak minority living in Hungary. The relations with Hungary may be affected by the application of the amendment to the Hungarian Citizenship Act – or its possible modification in a way that will ensure its compliance with the requirements, principles and standards of international law – as well as by Slovakia's response to this Act and its application. The solution could be based on signing a bilateral inter-governmental agreement on dual citizenship initiated by the Slovak Republic.

As regards bilateral relations with **Austria**, the priority will be to provide universal support for a successful development of economic cooperation and tourism. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the approval of its action plan will open up new opportunities for cooperation. The Slovak Republic is keen to maintain intensive political and, for the most part, expert communication concerning nuclear power and its environmental effects. With the liberalisation of the labour market in Austria, the quality of bilateral relations will rise.

The priorities of the Slovak foreign policy include friendly relations with the country's eastern neighbour - **Ukraine**. Slovakia wants Ukraine to be a democratic, predictable and politically stable partner. Slovakia will place special emphasis on economic cooperation aimed at supporting investments in both countries. The creation of an economically stable environment and a functioning market in Ukraine may also generate new opportunities for the eastern Slovak region. Considering Ukraine's role in terms of energy security of the Slovak Republic and the entire EU, Slovakia will be actively monitoring and evaluating the situation surrounding the transit of energy carriers. In 2011, Slovakia will continue to organise visits at the highest political level. Intensive discussions with representatives of Ukrainian civil society will be maintained. Ukraine's integration efforts are a significant dimension in bilateral relations. Support for the transformation and modernisation processes in Ukraine with a focus on the adoption of European standards and values will constitute an important part of Slovakia's activities vis-à-vis Ukraine.

European policy

In the **European Union** and its Member States, the year 2011 will see the start of Eurozone consolidation, the strengthening of economic growth and competitiveness of the EU – by adopting new rules of economic responsibility, meeting the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and preparing discussions on the multiannual financial framework for 2014-20 – as well as the building of the European External Action Service (EEAS). It will be important to ensure that the EU remains attractive for its partner countries.

For the sake of overcoming the consequences of the crisis, Slovakia will be pursuing an **active European policy**. Slovakia will support initiatives oriented towards more responsibility of the EU as well as its Member States. It has an innate interest in seeing successful EU presidencies of its two neighbours – Hungary and Poland. Slovakia will provide support to both presidencies with an emphasis on promoting the political interests of the Slovak Republic – and also, in a broader context, those stemming from cooperation within the Visegrad Four group – in the key policies of the EU.

In terms of European economic management, Slovakia will pursue the essential strengthening of EU-level mechanisms, in particular the Stability and Growth Pact (including sanctions), aimed at stabilising the public finances of the Eurozone member countries. In this context, Slovakia will support a limited amendment to the Treaty of Lisbon. As regards the accomplishment of the Europe 2020 objectives, Slovakia will contribute its share by meeting the respective objectives at the national level; to that effect, the national objectives will be submitted to the European Commission as part of the National Reform Programme.

In the negotiations over the new multi-annual financial framework for 2014-20 and as part of the discussions on the EU budget review, Slovakia will support expenditures with the maximum possible added value for the Slovak Republic and the EU, increase of competitiveness, innovation and education, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, energy security, the strengthening of the EU's role on a global scale and the strengthening of its Neighbourhood Policy. Keeping the Cohesion Policy among the priorities on the expenditure side of the EU budget will be paramount.

The Slovak Republic will continue to cooperate in the creation of a flexible mechanism for the future common commercial policy of the EU covering investment issues and, at the same time, promote the legal certainty necessary for the protection of investors and investments during the transitional period.

In implementing the Treaty of Lisbon, Slovakia will vigorously advocate respect for balanced interests between big and small Member States. It is in the interest of the Slovak Republic to preserve the principle of **joint ownership of the EEAS** by EU Member States and institutions so that it may contribute to better coordination of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. For this reason, Slovakia will seek to strengthen its representation in the EEAS.

Increasing the number of Slovak medium- and higher-level management staff in EU institutions and hosting the headquarters of some of the agencies and institutions of the EU system that are being set up will continue to rank among the long-term goals of Slovak foreign policy.

Slovakia is interested in a more effective **Common Foreign and Security Policy**. It will continue to actively promote the enlargement process. The European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans is of strategic importance for Slovakia. Active support to this endeavour will be the Slovak contribution to stability and security in this region and on a larger scale. The Slovak Republic will support the completion of pre-accession negotiations with Croatia in the first half of 2011 as well as the signing of the Treaty of Accession to the EU by the end of 2011. Slovakia will also promote the opening of negotiations with

Montenegro and Macedonia. Following a positive recommendation of the European Commission in the second half of 2011, Slovakia will also promote the granting of candidate status to Serbia and the opening of accession negotiations with this country. Slovakia will support Albania's and Bosnia and Herzegovina's effort to meet the criteria of European integration. As a member of the EU and NATO, Slovakia will encourage solutions to ongoing challenges in the region, such as initiating a dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, as well as progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, Slovakia will contribute to the strengthening of regional cooperation in the area of the Western Balkans. Slovakia will make sure that the high level of bilateral political dialogue with the countries of this region encourages economic cooperation while opening up new options for Slovak businesses. Hand-in-hand with political support for integration, Slovakia will continue its practical activities and pass on its experience from the accession process and reforms.

Slovakia will promote speedy, yet impartial, accession negotiations with Iceland, as well as the continuation of negotiations with Turkey.

As part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Slovakia will continue to actively support the **Eastern Partnership** project. The most important activities will include bilateral assistance in the modernisation and reform endeavours of the six partner countries and passing on experience. Slovakia will place a special emphasis on the continuation of the visa liberalisation process and the adoption of association agreements and free trade zone agreements. Within the currently ongoing revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Slovakia will promote an increased differentiation of political relations and instruments for the individual partner countries. Slovakia is interested in seeing that cooperation within the Eastern Partnership develops in the area of its multilateral dimension.

In March 2011 in Bratislava, Slovakia will organise a meeting of the V4 ministers with the Eastern Partnership countries to find opportunities for more intensive cooperation and implementation of the Eastern Partnership projects. Vis-à-vis individual Eastern Partnership countries, Slovakia will promote a more active and politically ambitious approach of the Union. Slovakia will support the EU's negotiations with **Ukraine** with the purpose of signing the Association Agreement and an Agreement on a deep and comprehensive free trade area, including further liberalisation of the visa regime. As for the **Republic of Moldova**, Slovakia will support its pro-European orientation and continue to pass on its experience from the transformation and reform processes, as well as support the building of democratic institutions with the use of official development assistance. Development of further cooperation between the EU and **Belarus** will be contingent on the release of political prisoners, their rehabilitation and the observance of human rights. Slovakia will continue to promote the development of civil society in Belarus.

Security policy

In terms of **security**, Slovakia will continue to pursue the strategy of building effective defence capabilities and systems of the **North Atlantic Alliance**, which is the primary guarantor of the country's security. Slovakia's activities will focus on the application of conclusions from the Lisbon Summit with a focus on the implementation of the new Strategic Concept and the Lisbon Summit Declaration. Slovakia will support the reinforcement of the Alliance's internal unity and the transatlantic link. It will remain a staunch supporter of NATO's "open door" policy. Slovakia will continue to be actively involved in the formulation of the Alliance's policy on the Western Balkan and eastern European countries.

Slovakia will give concrete expression to its allied commitments through continuing participation of its armed forces in international crisis management operations and missions. The Slovak Republic will reinforce its military and civilian contribution to the effort by

NATO and the international community aimed at stabilising the situation in Afghanistan. It will focus on assistance in building and training the Afghan National Security Forces. Slovakia will seek adequate representation in the operations of international organisations in the Western Balkans. Even after the Slovak KFOR contingent ends its mission in Kosovo, Slovakia will continue to support this operation based on UN Security Council Resolution No. 1244. The Act on the secondment of civilian experts participating in crisis management activities will ensure a unified approach of the Slovak Government concerning comprehensive arrangements related to Slovakia's involvement in both NATO and EU crisis management activities.

Slovakia will by all means promote intensified cooperation between NATO and the EU, as well as further development of partnerships.

Slovakia will continue to support the development of a political dialogue and practical cooperation between NATO and Russia in all areas of common interest, in particular missile defence, stabilisation of the security situation in Afghanistan, defence against terrorism and combating extremism.

New challenges such as terrorism, uncontrollable armament, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, climate change, poverty, migration, failing states and cyber attacks will be embraced by Slovak foreign policy to the extent adequate to Slovakia's capacities and international commitments.

The individual national contributions to operations under the **EU's Common Security and Defence Policy** will be channelled to areas of Slovakia's political interests, i.e. the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Afghanistan.

Multilateralism

The Slovak Republic will strive to contribute to the building of a system of international relations with the **UN playing the central role**, with focus on consistent compliance with the principles of international law and democratic values. Slovakia will also continue to participate in the efforts of the international community aimed at strengthening democratisation processes in various regions, easing of tension and prevention of crisis situations, as well as support for peaceful solutions to conflicts around the world. Involvement in bicommunal dialogue in Cyprus will continue.

Slovakia will promote the agenda of Security Sector Reform in the UN and, in this context, encourage the prevention of conflicts and the building of institutions in Central Asia.

As regards membership in the **UN Human Rights Council** in Geneva, Slovakia will continue its active involvement through its representative in the position of the Vice President and member of the Council Bureau in 2011. No later than June 2011, the Open-ended Working Group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, chaired by a Slovak representative, is expected to submit a report on its sessions to the Council. At this forum, Slovakia will team up with other EU Member States to press forward the concept of a moratorium on the death penalty. Slovakia will be actively involved in promoting gender equality, prevention of violence against women, and elimination and prevention of all forms of intolerance and discrimination.

Peter Tomka, the Slovak candidate for re-election as a judge of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, will be actively supported in the run-up to autumn elections.

Despite limited outcomes of the Astana Summit of the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (OSCE), Slovakia will encourage the launch of negotiations on the specific proposals and initiatives submitted within the Corfu Process. Slovakia's position will be based on the belief that it is only practical steps that can contribute to actual rebuilding of confidence and bring the OSCE closer towards the vision of creating a security community among the countries of the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian areas.

In the **Council of Europe** (CE), the Slovak Republic will unequivocally promote democratic values, such as free and fair elections, media freedom and freedom of speech. Slovakia will be preparing the third report on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages for the next round of monitoring the country's compliance with the commitments under the Charter.

Special attention will be paid to international cooperation aimed at improving the situation of members of **Roma minority** in Europe. Slovakia will continue to fully support the concerted effort by states and international organisations, such as the EU, CE, V4, and the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015, aimed at tackling interrelated problems faced not only by the Roma, but practically the entire European Union. In this context, Slovakia will participate in the preparation of the European Strategy on the Roma to be submitted for the EU summit in June.

Considering the growing importance of the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development** (OECD) and high relevance of its recommendations, the Slovak Republic will continue to be actively involved in OECD activities, while applying its standards and best practices of its member countries in laying the groundwork for sustainable economic growth.

Through its membership in the **International Monetary Fund** and the **World Bank**, the Slovak Republic will participate in maintaining international financial stability and will support development assistance and the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Bilateral relations

Bilateral relations remain one of the primary Slovak foreign policy instruments. Building relations with key partners and intensifying economic relations is of special importance.

In political and security dialogue with its key ally – the **United States of America** – Slovakia will actively support the alliance between Europe and the U.S. It will take part in joint efforts of U.S. and European allies in reinforcing and expanding the zone of stability and democracy around the world. In the EU and NATO, Slovakia will support cooperation between both groupings, as well as mechanisms between the EU and the U.S. aimed at reinforcing the transatlantic link and expanding cooperation to address essential global challenges. In economic area, priority will be given to an active presentation in the USA of Slovakia's investment and innovation potential and identification of opportunities for an inflow of new American investments, in particular those characterised by high added value. Special attention will be paid to cooperation in innovation and the transfer of advanced technologies. In 2011, Slovakia will organise a series of events in the U.S. to promote scientific and technical cooperation between Slovak entities and their American partners.

Germany is a key European partner for Slovakia. In addition to maintaining the intensity and quality of mutual dialogue and contacts at all levels, Slovakia is also keen to promote shared interests at the EU level, predominantly in reinforcing the Stability and Growth Pact. Germany's capacities as one of the world's leaders in innovation, new advanced technologies and renewable energy sources will be helpful, *inter alia*, in organising the Slovak-German Investment & Innovation Forum in Berlin in 2011.

In bilateral relations with **Great Britain,** Slovakia will build on a common value base embodied in the membership of both countries in NATO and the EU, as well as common interests within European policies. Slovakia will focus on intensifying economic cooperation and cooperation in the field of education, research and development with an emphasis on high value-added projects.

In bilateral relations with **France,** Slovakia will strengthen economic cooperation with a focus on nuclear energy. Intensification of mutual relations will require political dialogue at the highest level.

Slovakia will also develop close partnerships and allied relations with other countries of the Euro-Atlantic community.

The **Russian Federation** is a strategic partner of both EU and NATO. As a result, ensuring the security of supply of strategic raw materials from the Russian Federation and their transit to European customers represents one of Slovakia's foreign policy permanent priorities. Slovakia will be supportive of more significant penetration of Slovak products to the Russian market. To this end, the Slovak Republic will initiate and support an open and structured dialogue with Russia at the bilateral and multilateral forums, placing an emphasis on all the relevant aspects of national and European energy security. The Slovak Republic welcomes the EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation and is keen to contribute its share through its own bilateral projects. Slovakia's permanent interest is to intensify business and economic cooperation, including support for high value-added investments in both directions. It will continue to promote Russia's membership in the World Trade Organization as outlined in the outcomes of the EU-Russia summit in Brussels in December.

Slovakia's foreign policy activities in **Asia**, Slovakia will focus on improving economic and political dialogue in particular with the most important countries – **China, Japan, India, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia**. From among **Latin American** countries, Slovakia's key partners in the political and economic dialogue include **Brazil, Mexico and Argentina**. Slovakia will supplement the EU's common policy for the **Middle East** region with its own bilateral activities, hoping to capitalise on previous political dialogue with Israel. In **Sub-Saharan Africa**, Slovakia will place special emphasis on the development of trade cooperation.

Performance of economic and commercial policy abroad

In international relations, the importance and, in many cases, the dominance of economic issues is sharply rising. With commercial and economic diplomats integrated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) structure, the Ministry will promote, with an increased efficiency, the economic interests of the country with a view to integrating the political and economic activities of Slovakia's foreign service, as well as managing and utilising financial and human resources more effectively. This intention is facilitated, for instance, by the Business Information Centre established to ramp up support for SMEs abroad (in operation as of January 2011) and raise awareness of foreign entities about the business environment in the Slovak Republic. As a new endeavour to improve services for citizens, the Ministry's portal *"Doing Business Abroad"* aims to provide a comprehensive pro-export service to Slovak businesspeople with a focus on activities designed to promote Slovak exports and the development of economic cooperation.

Energy security

In addition to bilateral discussions, the issue of energy security will also dominate the discussions within integration groupings of which Slovakia is a member. Slovakia will continue its effort to strengthen the energy security of the Slovak Republic and the EU, which includes continued support for the Nabucco gas pipeline project. Slovakia will take an active approach to the finalisation of the new Energy Strategy for Europe 2011-2020. As regards NATO, Slovakia is prepared to discuss its role in situations where energy security of the allies is put at risk. In the OSCE, Slovakia will build on the outcomes achieved in the previous year, when the issue of energy security was listed among the priorities of the OECD's economic dimension agenda. In 2011, the International Energy Agency will perform an in-depth review of Slovakia's energy policies, which will include conclusions and recommendations for the Slovak Government.

In order to prevent the occurrence of energy crises and strengthen energy security, Slovak diplomacy will prepare a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of the state of affairs, including the estimated development in the global energy sectors. The MFA will also draw up a strategy for promoting Slovakia's energy security interests within international organisations, support regular energy dialogue at the regional level and co-author, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, an updated or new Energy Security Strategy.

Development assistance

The MFA's ambition is to make **official development assistance** (ODA) more effective. To that end, it will draw inspiration from the specific recommendations by the OECD Development Assistance Committee concerning the Slovak ODA system (the so-called Special Peer Review). The national ODA programme for 2011 contains a proposal to reduce the number of target countries and cut down sectoral priorities, as well as to focus on key areas which, in the past, were not paid the attention they deserved. The MFA will finalise the institutional platform for support to transformation in the countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership (Centre for the Transfer of Experience from Integration and Reforms). The MFA will coordinate its activities with other ministries actively involved in the provision of development assistance. It will also continue its intensive dialogue with Slovak non-governmental development organisations and the private sector, while tapping their expertise and experience for a further systematic development of Slovak ODA capacities.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, the MFA will submit to the Slovak Government the National Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Global Development Education for 2011 – 2015 containing specific measures at all levels of formal education. Due attention will be paid to raising public awareness about the Slovak ODA. The MFA will continue to expand its treaty basis with priority countries (Kenya in 2011). Slovakia will seek opportunities for effective cooperation with other donors in those areas where Slovakia can offer its comparative advantages (transition experience, water management, metrology).

In relation to international financial institutions, Slovakia will focus on promoting a clear and transparent policy of such institutions vis-à-vis new donors.

Consular service

The quality of consular service and provision of professional **assistance to Slovak citizens** abroad may be increased by improving the database containing travel information and advice within the MFA's information web portal and streamlining the activities of the respective MFA offices. In 2011, the Ministry will continue its effort to sign agreements with EU Member Countries on mutual representation in visa application procedures.

Slovakia's presentation abroad

For the purpose of presenting Slovakia abroad, the Ministry will prepare a new model of coordinated global presentation of the Slovak Republic that will contribute to an effective and positive promotion of Slovakia as a modern and successful country. It is imperative to define the "Brand Slovakia", including relevant messages and a visual identity. In promoting the country, the Ministry will avail itself of opportunities offered by events of extraordinary importance, such as the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Four and the Ice Hockey World Championship.

Openness and public control over foreign policy

In 2011, the MFA will make sure that foreign policy is responsible, effective and legible, emanating from values to which the Slovak Republic is committed as a member of the Euro-Atlantic community.

By mutual dialogue and cooperation with the civil society and the non-governmental sector in the formulation of the foreign policy, the Ministry hopes to contribute to enhancing the legitimacy of the foreign policy performance and formulation. MFA's more effective subsidising programme will represent a significant instrument. In order to support the preparation of national capacities, the cooperation with universities will be continued. The Ministry will prepare a new system of internships.