ORIENTATION OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN 2010

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Introduction – Basic Premises and Key Objectives of the Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic in 2010

Orientation of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic, a basic political planning document on the foreign policy of Slovakia, is based on the Manifesto of the Slovak government. It presents foreign policy objectives pursued by Slovakia within the European Union, the North Atlantic Alliance, the United Nations and in other international organisations, as well as in bilateral relations and in connection with asserting Slovakia's economic interests. Its structure and content correspond to the long-term strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic ("the MFA" hereinafter) outlined in *"A Successful Slovakia in a Safe World.*" Its five priorities represent key chapters of Slovakia's foreign policy orientation in 2010.

The global economic and financial crisis is the main factor that will continue to significantly influence the development of international relations in 2010. The pace of global economic downturn has diminished, but the social consequences of the crisis will continue to be felt throughout 2010. There will be continued pressure to reform the global system of relations and international organisations and to consolidate and restructure the global economic and financial system. To ensure effective mitigation of the negative impact of the crisis on its economy and population, Slovakia will closely cooperate in coordinating anti-crisis activities within the EU and other international organisations and forums. An exceptionally important role in the implementation of Slovakia's foreign policy objectives will be played by the coordinated and synergic activities of its top constitutional officers – the President, the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the Prime Minister, and other cabinet ministers. The adoption of the Lisbon Treaty will increase the importance of parliamentary diplomacy.

International relations will be influenced in 2010 by the activities of the Administration of US President Obama, which will face important challenges at home and on the global political scene. In the spirit of the principles of effective multilateralism, the United States will expect its European allies to take a more pro-active stance, and show unity and commitment in addressing global policy issues. At the bilateral level, Slovakia will continue its intensive dialogue with the United States and with all its EU and NATO allies and partners.

In 2010, Slovakia will pay priority attention to neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and activities within the Visegrad Group with the objective of strengthening stability, security and sustainable development of the central European space. The development of privileged relations with the Czech Republic and traditionally good relations with Poland remain among Slovakia's priority interests. In the year marking the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty with the Republic of Hungary, Slovakia remains open to a bilateral dialogue free of historical burdens at all levels and in all the areas, based on its alliance, shared values, and common future with Hungary. Deepening its cooperation with Austria will be of special interest to Slovakia. Slovakia will place emphasis on intensifying its relations with Ukraine.

The Russian Federation (RF) is the key European partner of the EU and, at the same time, a strategic supplier of energy commodities to a large part of Europe. The RF and NATO are facing similar security challenges of a global character. The Slovak Republic does not see any alternative to an open political dialogue between the EU, NATO and Russia. Slovakia also wants to contribute to such a dialogue bilaterally through productive Slovak-Russian cooperation, and will continue taking part in a broader discussion about the possibilities of improving the security architecture in Europe.

The year 2010 will be particularly important for the European Union and its members in connection with the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, which introduces significant changes to the legal basis and actual functioning of the EU. Slovakia will devote increased attention to drawing up the post-Lisbon strategy up to the year 2020 and to drafting the EU budget for the next programming period of 2014–2020. Slovakia will take active part in the creation of the European External Service. It will continue supporting the process of the Union's enlargement, subject to the fulfilment of accession criteria, and the convergence of the countries of the Western Balkans with the EU, while actively sharing its experience with the process of accession. Slovakia will make an effort to take practical steps toward preserving the momentum of the Eastern Partnership project's implementation.

The North Atlantic Alliance represents the basic pillar of our security. Slovakia will focus on supporting the Alliance's transformation, including the formulation of its new Strategic Concept. The Concept should make the Alliance better prepared to effectively fulfil its tasks through internal consolidation and effective partnerships. Slovakia will continue giving its full support to NATO's "open-door policy." It will remain committed to strengthening the transatlantic link within the Alliance and to enhancing cooperation between NATO and other relevant international organisations (in particular the EU, the UN and the OSCE). Slovakia will give concrete expression to its allied obligations through adequate participation of members of its armed forces in crisis management operations and missions outside Slovak territory, in particular within the NATO framework.

The global economic crisis, shifting wealth distribution in the world, and the growing ambitions and assertiveness of certain emerging countries in various regions of the world make it necessary to step up efforts at effective global and regional multilateralism and to consistently apply the principles of international law. Slovakia will focus on promoting the internal and external strengthening of the UN, including the reform of its system.

Slovakia will continue to engage in efforts to strengthen democracy and the rule of law and uphold human rights and freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. It will denounce expressions of extremism, racism, intolerance, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism and anti-Semitism.

Through its EU and NATO membership and activities within the UN, the Slovak Republic will actively participate in international activities aimed at combating terrorism. Slovakia will be an integral part of the international community's struggle against other global security threats, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and stockpiling of conventional weapons.

Climate change and accumulation of adverse economic and political factors in "third world" countries increase the probability of a rise in illegal migration, which has already started to have a negative impact on certain EU member states. Slovakia will take part in the development and implementation of EU policies in the area of migration management.

In keeping with the most pressing socio-economic tasks of the Slovak government, the Slovak foreign service will emphasise strengthening the economic dimension of diplomacy in 2010. In cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, other sectors and business entities, the MFA will step up the deployment of its capabilities to mitigate the consequences of the economic crisis, promote employment and help restore the growth dynamics of the Slovak economy.

Development assistance, as a component of foreign policy, responds to international commitments and to the entire range of global challenges facing Slovakia as part of the donor community.

In 2010, energy security will remain an important political, security and economic theme of global and European policy. Through its activities within the EU, in specialised international organisations and under bilateral formats, Slovakia will create the pre-conditions for meeting the diversification and innovation objectives set out in the Energy Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic. It will do this in order to significantly boost its preparedness to face crisis situations in energy supplies.

The permanently growing number of Slovak citizens travelling abroad places increased demands on the performance of the Slovak consular service. Consular assistance to citizens will be one of the priorities of the MFA.

Slovakia attaches importance to active presentation of its foreign policy, values, objectives and interests. The foreign affairs sector will develop tools and methods of public diplomacy that draw the attention of important segments of the world and the domestic public. It will also devote attention to cooperation with the third sector. Continuous modernisation of the MFA will improve the effectiveness of the foreign service.

A. Slovakia in a Safe and Democratic World

A.1. Enhancing Bilateral Cooperation with Slovakia's Key Partners

Bilateral relations and bilateral cooperation will continue to be among the core elements of Slovak foreign policy in 2010. Besides strengthening its integration links, Slovakia will develop bilateral cooperation with its key partners – NATO and EU allies, neighbouring countries, Russia, other countries of eastern Europe, countries of the Western Balkans, Japan, the People's Republic of China, South Korea, India, and other countries of the world.

Slovakia will place emphasis on intensifying its economic relations with the aim of fostering domestic employment and export, strengthening the existing basis for long-term economic, investment, security, cultural, scientific and educational cooperation.

Relations with the United States

The United States of America is a key partner and ally of the Slovak Republic. In 2010, Slovakia's bilateral relations with the U.S. will reflect the impact of the on-going transatlantic dialogue and, within this framework, of further development of EU-US relations, transformation of the Alliance, and development of relations within the EU-RF-US triangle. Slovakia has given its long-term support to the idea of the transatlantic alliance and will take an active part in the dialogue conducted in the EU-US format also within the framework of the Alliance.

Slovakia will focus attention on deepening a comprehensive dialogue with President Obama's Administration. In this context and in conformity with its ally's obligations, it will endeavour to exert a positive influence on the developments in crisis areas of the world. It will make an adequate and genuine contribution, both directly and as a member of the EU and NATO, to stabilising and ensuring positive developments in problem regions, especially in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan and in the countries targeted by the European project of Eastern Partnership.

It is in Slovakia's interest that the world economy's recovery from recession and the preparation for the post-crisis period in the world provide a positive stimulus for expanding economic cooperation between Slovakia and the United States. This would contribute to

revitalising investment initiatives of US companies in Slovakia. Slovakia will endeavour to attract investment in those areas that would help its economy to be closer to and keep up with new trends in modern technologies and the knowledge economy in general.

A good foundation has been created for the continuation of such bilateral cooperation with the inclusion of Slovakia in the US visa waiver programme. Slovakia, along with its EU partners, will strive to maintain the current standard of registration in the ESTA system in order to preserve the positive political capital of the existing regime.

Relations with Germany

Relations with the Federal Republic of Germany will continue to be determined by the fact that Germany is Slovakia's biggest trade partner, the largest investor in Slovakia in terms of the origin of foreign direct investment, and an important member of the international community.

The continuity of the new coalition government CDU/CSU and FDP as regards fundamental foreign policy, economic and security issues creates a good basis for maintaining and intensifying mutual dialogue at a high political level.

Slovakia will steer its economic cooperation with the FRG mainly toward modern technologies, innovation and renewable energies, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Economic, cultural, scientific and educational cooperation will predominate in relations between the Slovak Republic and the key federal states of Bavaria, North Rhine - Westphalia, Saxony and Lower Saxony.

Relations with the French Republic

The level and significance of French-Slovak cooperation will be in line with the important position of France in the EU and in the wider international arena. In the European context, Slovakia will draw on the potential of France, shared with Germany, for deepening European integration. Slovakia's priorities in its strategic partnership with France will include the development of economic cooperation with emphasis on nuclear engineering, military and political cooperation, cultural and educational relations, and construction of international transport infrastructure.

The key tasks in this area will continue to include the search for investment partners, expansion of existing French investments in Slovakia and their orientation toward scientific and research activities. This mainly applies to future activities of PSA Peugeot Citroën, which will step up its investment in the development of electric and hybrid automobiles with the help of the Slovak government's investment promotion programmes.

Relations with Italy

Italy remains one of Slovakia's key trade partners and foreign investors. The first investor is ENEL, majority owner of Slovenské elektrárne a.s. Its project to complete the construction of units 3 and 4 of the Mochovce nuclear power plant represents the largest investment by a private investor in the history of Slovakia (EUR 2.7 billion). The importance of Slovak-Italian cooperation in the economic field is underscored by the memorandum of understanding on economic and energy cooperation between economic sectors, expected to be signed at the beginning of 2010. It will bring more advanced forms of cooperation in the fields of: innovation; high technology and infrastructure; support for industrial cooperation and access of entities from both countries to European structural funds allocated to Italy and Slovakia in the period of 2007–2013; coordination of positions on energy security issues at the EU level; support for the

development of renewable sources of energy; and further expansion of cooperation in the nuclear power sector.

Relations with Other EU and NATO Countries

Slovakia will also continue to develop close allied and bilateral relations in all fields with other members of these two most important integration structures – the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Canada, the Scandinavian countries, Greece, Turkey and other countries of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Of particular importance are Slovakia's relations with its neighbours. They are discussed in the chapter on the EU, neighbourly relations and regional cooperation.

Relations with Russia

In its relations with the Russian Federation, Slovakia will place emphasis on the development of positive partnership relations and on a pragmatic dialogue. Its core theme will be the expansion of economic cooperation and the strengthening of natural ties between the EU and Russia.

Russia is a key partner of Slovakia and, at the same time, a strategic partner of the EU in the area of supply of energy commodities. Slovakia will make every effort to achieve the maximum level of guarantees for security of supply and transit of energy commodities. Slovakia will continue to participate in the energy dialogue between Russia and the European Union also in the framework of negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the Russian Federation. Slovakia will participate in efforts to resolve the liberalisation of the visa regime with the RF.

The NATO-Russia partnership constitutes a strategic element in the strengthening of security in the Euro-Atlantic space. Slovakia supports consultations aimed at improving the functioning of the existing structures of European security architecture.

The top-level bilateral meeting will be the official visit of Russian President Dmitri Medvedev to Slovakia in April 2010.

Relations with the Countries of the Western Balkans

Slovakia will support the countries of the Western Balkans in their EU and NATO integration ambitions. In this context, it will focus on providing its experience with the process of integration. Slovakia will continue to support visa liberalisation for the countries that have not been granted a visa waiver since 19 December 2009. Slovakia has highly positive political relations with the countries of the region and will make further efforts for this to be reflected in an increased volume of economic cooperation in the form of trade and investment. The Western Balkans will remain a priority for Slovakia's development assistance, which will be provided with due regard for integration priorities, local needs, and activities of other bilateral and multilateral donors.

Relations with Asian and Latin American Countries

In spite of the global economic crisis, Asia maintains its economic growth and is gaining an ever more important position in international relations. Asian countries are making visible efforts at achieving closer cooperation and convergence in the political and economic spheres through supranational cooperation, following the model of the EU. The foreign policy activities of Slovakia in Asia will be oriented toward strengthening economic and political dialogue with the most important countries of the region – China, Japan, India and the Republic of Korea. To

strengthen bilateral cooperation and advance its economic interests, Slovakia is preparing several high-level visits to Asia and Latin America (the President, the Speaker of Parliament, the Prime Minister).

The Latin American countries that will continue to be Slovakia's key partners for improving the quality of mutual dialogue and for deepening pragmatic, bilateral cooperation are Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Chile, with the latter being a priority partner in the area of trade and economy.

To create favourable conditions for bilateral relations with the countries of these two regions, Slovakia will make use of EU instruments, especially its interregional formats.

Relations with the Countries of the Middle East and Africa

Slovakia's foreign policy objective in this region is to contribute, both bilaterally and through involvement in the development of EU policies, to adopting a balanced and uniform EU policy on: the Israeli-Palestinian and/or Israeli-Arab conflict; Iraq; Yemen; Western Sahara; and on other political conflicts and crises in the Middle East. At the bilateral level, Slovakia will continue expanding its political, economic and trade contacts with Arab countries in the region and with the State of Israel. In relation to Iran, it will focus on political issues, human rights and in particular on Iran's nuclear programme, which calls for priority attention because of its relevance for the security of the transatlantic area.

In its relations with the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, Slovakia will emphasise mainly the development of cooperation with the South African Republic, Nigeria and Kenya, focusing on trade promotion. Other important partners in trade and economic relations will be Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. The priority agenda will continue to include the monitoring of regional conflicts and active participation in the formulation of EU positions. Participation of Slovakia in EU and UN activities aimed at resolving conflicts in Africa is effected through its diplomatic representation in Addis Ababa, seat of the African Union.

Slovaks Abroad

A special segment of Slovakia's bilateral agenda will continue to be related to Slovak compatriots abroad. Slovakia will continue practical implementation of the Policy Concept of Slovakia's Care for Slovaks Living Abroad till 2015, coordinated by the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad. Meetings with Slovak compatriots will continue to be an inseparable part of the programme of official visits of representatives of Slovakia to countries with a large Slovak community. Active work of Slovak diplomatic missions vis-à-vis Slovak compatriots abroad will be an important criterion for evaluating their performance in general. Slovakia will continue to issue certificates of Slovaks living abroad.

A.2. Strengthening the Security of the Euro-Atlantic Area

NATO constitutes the basic pillar of our security. Factors influencing Slovakia's activities in the Alliance in 2010 will be: the process of drawing up a new NATO Strategic Concept; continued engagement of the Alliance in security stabilisation and all-around development of Afghanistan; and implementation of NATO's open-door policy, in particular in the Western Balkans.

By making active use of the opportunities offered by NATO membership, Slovakia will strive to prevent international crises and conflicts and address security challenges and threats that could present a danger for the Euro-Atlantic area. If a crisis or conflict erupts, Slovakia will

actively contribute to its resolution through joint actions based on political consultations between the Allies, and through practical participation in operations and missions of the North Atlantic Alliance. Through NATO as its intermediary, Slovakia will strive to safeguard and further strengthen the transatlantic link as the expression of a strategic partnership between North America and Europe. Furthermore, it will encourage the development of functional cooperation between the EU and NATO at the practical level, especially through joint operations of both organisations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, as well as at the political and strategic level and in the area of capabilities, through complementary capacity building. At the same time, Slovakia's activities within NATO will reflect the fact that Slovakia's foreign policy priorities continue to be Ukraine and the Western Balkans.

In the new Strategic Concept of the Alliance to be drawn up in 2010, Slovakia will maintain its security priorities in line with the latest NATO Summit Declaration on Alliance Security (2009). This is the first time that Slovakia, as a member state, has the opportunity to influence the preparation of such an important document, which will have a bearing on the strategic thinking of the North Atlantic Alliance during the next 10 to 15 years. We will strive for this document to decisively confirm that NATO is an internally consolidated organisation with clearly defined objectives and obligations of its members.

The Slovak Republic will continue to firmly support NATO's open-door policy, including as it regards the integration ambitions of Ukraine and Georgia. Depending on the priorities that will be set out by the political leadership of Ukraine with regard to NATO, Slovakia will support further deepening of relations between NATO and Ukraine, maintaining the prospect of Ukraine's joining the Membership Action Plan at the time when all Allies, including Ukraine itself, give their consensus. Slovakia will make use of the status of its diplomatic mission in Kiev as the NATO-Ukraine Contact Point Embassy to continue raising awareness in Ukrainian society on NATO's activities and share Slovak expertise in reform processes gained in the process of integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

In 2010, Slovakia will also help to strengthen the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area and prevent potential conflicts and crises, while fulfilling its allied obligations through participation in NATO-led operations. In this respect, Slovakia will continuously review and update the extent and the forms of its military and non-military participation. This means that an important role in implementing the NATO-related tasks of Slovak foreign policy will continue to be played by the Ministry of Defence, including engagement of members of the Slovak Armed Forces in crisis management operations outside the territory of Slovakia.

The ISAF Operation in Afghanistan will continue to constitute the operational priority of NATO from a political and the security perspective. In connection with addressing the situation in Afghanistan and the surrounding region, Slovakia will actively participate in NATO actions to foster regional security and stability. It will also focus on providing assistance to build Afghan capacities in the field of security by, *inter alia,* helping to train and build Afghan national security forces. Slovakia supports and actively applies a comprehensive and coordinated approach of civilian and military components and of all international actors to the construction and development of Afghanistan, including the political resolution of the conflict by Afghanis themselves.

In spite of the worsened economic situation, Slovakia will maintain an adequate representation of its armed forces in ISAF. In 2010, Slovakia is expected to further increase its contribution to ISAF operations and to contribute to the EU mission (EUPOL) with the deployment of police experts. At the same time, it will continue taking steps to support the civilian dimension of stabilisation and development of the country. Besides fostering a

comprehensive approach at the international level and in NATO activities, the MFA will strive to create the necessary legislative and organisational framework for the deployment of Slovak civilian experts in international organisations engaged in the stabilisation and development of crises-ridden regions of the world.

Slovakia will continue to participate actively in the formulation of NATO policy on the Western Balkans. As regards security, in particular, it will monitor the development of the situation in Kosovo where the process of cutting down the number of NATO troops deployed in the KFOR operation and transition to the status of "deterrent presence" has already started. With regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, Slovakia will support the overall deepening of cooperation, including in the context of Montenegro's joining the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). Slovakia will continue to support the development of relations between NATO and Serbia under the Partnership for Peace (PF) programme, taking into account the level of the latter's own ambitions.

Slovakia will support the development of cooperation between NATO and Russia by working to: increase the effectiveness of the NATO-Russia Council, foster political dialogue; and activate military contacts. In so doing, it aims to developing overall mutually beneficial practical cooperation between the two actors.

In connection with its participation in operations and missions carried out under the common security and defence policy (CSDP), the Slovak Republic will pay primary attention to its foreign policy priorities. The specific contributions of Slovakia on a national level will be directed mainly to the Western Balkans (the ALTHEA and EUPM missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EULEX mission in Kosovo), the Eastern dimension (the EUMM mission in Georgia and the EUBAM mission on the Moldova-Ukraine border) and Afghanistan (not only the security but also the development aspect). Slovakia will devote the necessary attention to transforming the ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina to a training and support mission so as to ensure its adequate national representation also within the new mission. Slovakia will support the new mandate of the EUPM mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been refocused, effective from January 2010, on the fight against organised crime. Slovakia will continue to actively participate in EU discussions on improving EU-NATO cooperation at all levels, and will support the conceptual development of EU civilian and military crisis management capabilities in the context of the completion of Civilian Headline Goal 2010 and of Headline (Military) Goal 2010.

Slovakia will actively participate in the discussion concerning the future of European security within the framework of the Corfu Process launched by the OSCE. The aim of this participation is to strengthen European security architecture, support the development of a pragmatic, structured dialogue within the OSCE and identify areas of common interest between the West and the RF in all three OSCE dimensions. Within the Corfu Process, Slovakia will pursue its priorities, including energy security.

In the context of the suspension by Russia of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), Slovakia will support the NATO/USA-RF dialogue and participate in the effort to resolve key differences of opinions so that the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE may enter into force.

Slovakia will support initiatives aimed at improving the implementation of the existing confidence and security building measures (such as the 1999 Vienna Document, the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Code of Conduct) and the discussions concerning their modernisation. It will support OSCE initiatives and activities in Kosovo and the

effort at resolving frozen conflicts in line with basic principles of the UN Charter and international law.

Slovakia will support coordinated positions of the Alliance and the EU in UN bodies during discussions on crisis management operations outside the territory of Slovakia. Members of Slovak Armed Forces and Slovak military observers will continue to actively participate in UN peacekeeping missions. The largest military contingent of the Slovak Republic - in Cyprus - coupled with Slovak diplomatic mediation activities, play an important military-political role in the region. Using its diplomatic mission in Nicosia as an intermediary, Slovakia is ready to continue providing "good offices" in 2010. These will consist of bi-community meetings that enable closer relations between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities and thus help to resolve the Cyprus issue.

As regards crisis management activities outside Slovak territory, Slovakia will emphasise the achievement of adequate representation in UN missions. In interactive discussions between NATO, the EU, the UN and the OSCE, it will highlight the role of regional organisations for securing peace and comprehensive security.

A.3. Facing Global Threats

The key factor in tackling global security issues is the effort at strengthening effective multilateralism, which Slovakia supports in all respects.

The fight against terrorism continues to be a key priority for the government of Slovakia and for all segments of the country's security system. Through its EU and NATO membership and activities within the UN system, Slovakia will continue to actively participate in international activities in this area. Slovakia will co-sponsor international events organised along the lines of the Global UN Strategy to Combat International Terrorism, thus helping to create conditions for coordinated actions by the states and for improving the development of internal capacities for fighting this phenomenon.

The MFA will also foster a more active approach and closer coordination of activities of individual sectors in the fight against terrorism at the international level in 2010. Slovakia will actively strive to meet the objectives of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. It will also work for the adoption of the Comprehensive UN Convention on International Terrorism in its current wording. Slovakia will also focus on the summer 2010 session of the special ad hoc committee for the elaboration of the convention in New York.

The effort at enhancing effective multilateralism has led to a renaissance of the agenda of arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This agenda, following a long stagnation of the disarmament machinery, re-establishes realistic prerequisites for creating an environment based on international norms and institutions capable of effectively coping with the continued threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Slovakia will actively participate in building the international institutional and treaty infrastructure, including the strengthening of resources and authority of the existing international organisations and independent multilateral forums in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, which represents fundamental elements for enhancing global security.

The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will continue to play a special role in this process. It is the cornerstone of the global regime of nuclear non-proliferation. Slovakia will continue to engage in all three NPT pillars (disarmament, non-proliferation, peaceful use of nuclear energy) and to strive for their balanced implementation with a view to

ensuring the effective function of this regime through fulfilment of commitments under the NPT. Slovakia stands ready to contribute to a successful outcome of the 2010 NPT review conference.

Efforts to develop new tools capable of ensuring an effective response to today's security challenges will play an important role in strengthening the international security architecture.

Slovakia is an integral part of these initiatives and processes by virtue of its EU and NATO membership and/or as a member of international organisations or a participating state of international groupings engaged in the struggle against proliferation of WMD. Slovakia wants to take part in the consolidation of the existing system of global standards, strive to make them universal and work for a consistent implementation of the provisions of the existing standards in this area. Slovakia will endeavour to uphold the current positive trend in relation to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which it considers to be an important part of the non-proliferation regime. Slovakia will focus on facilitating the early entry into force of the CTBT and preparedness of CTBTO for meeting objectives arising from the Treaty. Slovakia is ready to take full part in the process of developing a new institutional framework, in particular through the Disarmament Conference, the United Nations, and through other relevant international initiatives. Slovakia will pay special attention to the opening of negotiations on the draft fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) and of substantive talks on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, nuclear disarmament, and on effective international measures for the prevention of use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states.

In the conventional arms area, Slovakia will continue its efforts to combat illicit transfers with an emphasis on small arms and light weapons and continue to prevent the acquisition of arms by organised crime entities. Slovakia will uphold the consistent implementation of measures arising from relevant international treaties and support the development of new mechanisms in the relevant part of the security and humanitarian agenda.

Slovakia will continue to draw the attention of the United Nations to Security Sector Reform (SSR) – a prerequisite for successful completion of UN peacekeeping operations and for subsequent peace-building endeavours. For this reason as well, the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations in New York will continue to coordinate the activities of an informal grouping of Member States – the "Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform."

In order to promote the UN regional approaches to SSR, the Slovak Republic plans to co-organise an expert-level workshop with Indonesia for the countries of Southeast Asia in the first semester of 2010. In addition to a discussion about UN peacekeeping operations seen from the perspective of ASEAN countries, the workshop will also provide a forum for discussing SSR-related issues, based on the principle of respect for the national ownership of these processes by UN Member States concerned.

A.4. Enlarging the Zone of Freedom, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Rule of Law and Good Governance

The primary objective pursued by Slovakia at all relevant international organisations (the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE), as well as in the context of bilateral relations, will be to strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the protection of human rights, democracy and the principles of the rule of law as key dimensions of foreign policy and international relations. Through its efforts as a member state and a member of important bodies of the above organisations (mainly the UN), it will also emphasise a consistent implementation of its existing human rights commitments.

Activities connected with its membership in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva will be a priority for the Slovak Republic at the United Nations in 2010. Particular attention will have to be paid to the activities of the working group set up to explore the possibility of elaborating another optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that will be chaired by Slovakia. Furthermore, Slovakia as a full member of the Council will take part in the drafting of and action on all thematic and country resolutions to be adopted by the Council and in the activities of the Council in all formats. The main session of the Council, including the high-level segment (participation of foreign ministers), will take place in March 2010. For Slovakia, membership in the Council also means active work in the "troikas" of rapporteurs in the system of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the human rights records of individual countries of the world. At this stage, it is known that in 2010 Slovakia will be a member of the reporting troika for Italy and Armenia. Slovakia will also be actively engaged in the activities of the newly created Council body – the Forum on Minority Issues – and in the activities of other mechanisms for the protection of national minorities.

As regards the allocation of tasks to EU members at the UN Human Rights Council, Slovakia will take up new activities in line with current developments and needs of the EU Presidency.

A special part of Slovak foreign policy in the field of human rights lies in fulfilling the obligation of Slovakia to regularly submit reports on compliance with the UN human rights treaties, to which Slovakia is a party. This is a continuous process. The Slovak Republic will not submit any implementation report in 2010, but, since it submitted two such reports in 2009 (on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civic and Political Rights), relevant UN bodies will initiate the procedure of their evaluation, followed by the preparation of a dialogue between Slovakia and experts from these bodies.

Slovakia also provided a financial contribution for the 2010 programmes of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, thus following on the practice of the previous years.

At the UN bodies in New York, Slovakia will focus on issues reflecting its national interests and the EU priorities, namely: effective protection of human rights of the most vulnerable groups; abolition of the death penalty; freedom of expression; freedom of religion and free media; and the rights of the child. Similarly to previous years, Slovakia will emphasise universal ratification of human rights conventions, promote further development of international mechanisms for human rights protection and foster gender mainstreaming in all aspects of the UN's work. Slovakia will uphold the efforts of the international community to combat impunity, especially through international criminal tribunals and, in particular, the International Criminal Court. In the UN framework, Slovakia will actively work towards the implementation of UNSC Resolution No. 1325 (2000) emphasising protection of women and children in armed conflicts. The Slovak Republic will also participate in the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The Council of Europe has initiated the process of evaluating the Slovak Republic's commitments arising from the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (third monitoring round). The decision of the Committee of Ministers regarding the level of their implementation can be expected in 2010. Another procedure in progress is the assessment initiated by the Slovak Republic by the Venice Commission of the conformity of the amended

State Language Act with the Slovakia's commitments concerning the protection of minority languages.

A substantive discussion is also expected in 2010 among the Council of Europe Member States on increasing the effectiveness of the European Court of Human Rights. Slovakia will take part in the search for ways to speed up and improve the quality of the Court's work, which is currently unable to cope with the backlog of applications.

Slovakia will continue drawing on and conveying its experience from the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. It will, in particular, strive to assist Belarus in fulfilling the criteria of membership in the organisation. Moreover, it will promote expansion of bilateral contacts with civil society in Belarus.

Slovakia will foster a balanced approach by the OSCE to all three dimensions of the organisation, in particular in relation to the Corfu Process. Regarding the human rights dimension, it will concentrate on maintaining a strong and autonomous status of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and on strengthening the activities of OSCE missions. Slovakia will endeavour to increase the participation of civil society representatives in the OSCE implementation meeting on the human dimension and in election monitoring missions organised by the European Union. It will also make an effort to increase the number of short-term and long-term observers in the OSCE election monitoring missions and achieve a wider representation of Slovakia in secondment and contract positions within OSCE structures.

Slovakia will continue to actively participate in the work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF), which will be chaired by Israel in 2010.

Slovakia will pay special attention to international cooperation with regard to improving the situation of the Roma minority in Europe. Slovakia fully supports concerted efforts by states and international organisations at addressing the problems faced by the Roma and will support every effort aimed at improving their situation. Slovakia will hold the presidency of the international programme of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 until June 2010. After assuming the presidency of the Visegrad Group in July 2010, Slovakia will follow up on the initiative of Hungary to develop a Central European Roma Strategy aimed at strengthening cooperation among Visegrad Group countries in the area of integration of the Roma in society and using experience obtained during the Decade.

A.5. Strengthening effective multilateralism in the United Nations

Today's international relations are characterised by a shift towards multilateralism that calls for the commitment of a growing number of states to address the global problems of mankind. In light of the global economic crisis and the growing ambitions of leading countries in the various regions, Slovakia also considers it necessary to step up efforts at effective global and regional multilateralism and consistent respect for international law.

The Slovak Republic's membership in the United Nations (UN), in the specialized agencies of the UN system, and in other international organisations must be used to address global threats and problems that jeopardise socio-economic stability, sustainable development and ultimately also peace and security.

At the UN, Slovakia will continue striving to strengthen its positions (following up on its initiatives in previous years) and pursue new activities. Its priorities will include:

- using Slovakia's membership in international organisations to promote peace and security in the world, including in the area of crisis management operations and missions outside the territory of Slovakia, and in the field of Security System Reform with emphasis on further strengthening the EU-UN cooperation in this area
- using Slovakia's membership in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2010-2012 to contribute to the development and elimination of poverty, in particular against the backdrop of the current global economic and financial crisis
- using Slovakia's membership in the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2009-2013 to revitalise reform processes at UNESCO
- using Slovakia's membership in the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 2009-2012 to promote agriculture as the fundamental instrument for combating hunger and malnutrition.

In conformity with its long-term priority, Slovakia will concentrate its efforts on fostering the internal and external strengthening of the United Nations, including UN system reform. Slovakia will make sustained efforts to help advance the reform of key UN bodies and improve their interaction with each other, in particular between the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Security Council (UNSC). On the basis of its experience as a non-permanent member of the Security Council (2006-2007), Slovakia will support the reform of the Council to make it more legitimate, effective, representative and transparent. If the Council's membership is to be increased, Slovakia will demand that at least one non-permanent seat is allocated to the Eastern European Group (EEG).

The ECOSOC oversees the activities of 14 specialized agencies of the UN system and five regional commissions, and also controls the use of a significant portion of UN funds in the areas of economic and social development and environmental protection. These are the areas where it will be necessary to use the existing potential to promote the economic and social interests of Slovakia.

Slovakia's membership in the Executive Board of the UN Development Programme (UNDP)/UN Population Fund (UNFPA) gives Slovakia the opportunity to participate directly in decision-making on the activities of these important UN development funds.

In the UNESCO Executive Board, Slovakia will support the programmes of cooperation between nations through education, training, science, culture and communication with the objective of strengthening justice, fundamental human rights and freedoms in the world.

Slovakia, alongside its EU partners, will help reform the scale of assessments of the Member States' contributions to the UN budget in order to eliminate existing imbalances. There will be a need to pay attention to effective and transparent use of the budget so as to prevent excessive increases. Regarding the budget for UN peacekeeping operations, Slovakia will mainly concentrate on those operations where it participates – UNFICYP (Cyprus), UNMIK (Kosovo) and UNTSO (Middle East).

One of the main objectives in the coming period will be to maintain close cooperation with like-minded partners, especially EU and NATO members. However, it will also be important to communicate with other partners, pursuing the aim of strengthening effective multilateralism with the United Nations playing a central role (strategic partnership between the UN and the EU, the African Union and NATO). Slovakia will continue to support cooperation of

the United Nations with other international and regional organisations and entities, especially on peace and security issues.

Slovakia will take steps to promote, in a general manner, justice and the rule of international law in international relations. In particular, it will promote the enforcement of the decisions of the International Court of Justice, and will follow the Court's decision-making and advisory activities. Slovakia, as a contracting party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, will emphasise its application and full implementation, and will support the Court's work to combat impunity in war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. It will continue to pay attention to the implementation of the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the United Nations on the Execution of Sentences Imposed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which entered into force on 3 November 2008.

Slovakia will continue to pay increased attention to international cooperation in the area of the fight against drugs, trafficking in persons and organised forms of crime (including terrorism). In the coming period, Slovakia intends to participate in the projects of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) designed under the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, and in other related projects. At the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Slovakia intends, on the one hand, to support steps towards minimising the negative impact of the global migration phenomenon and, on the other hand, to make maximum use of the positive contribution of migration. As regards the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Slovakia will support its activities aimed at the protection of refugees. Slovakia will create the necessary pre-conditions enabling the continuation, in cooperation with international organisations, of humanitarian transfer on Slovak territory of persons under international protection. Slovakia will endeavour to obtain membership in the UNHCR Executive Committee in 2011.

In 2010, attention needs to be given to the adoption of measures addressing the food, energy, economic and financial crisis and mitigating its impact on Slovakia.

At the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Slovakia will monitor the implementation of ILO conventions in the fields of labour law and human rights, and support initiatives and activities aimed at ensuring decent work, job creation and poverty alleviation.

Slovakia will pay the necessary attention to agriculture, which has the potential to mitigate both the consequences of the food crisis and the global economic crisis. In this context, it will meet its obligations under the declaration of the November 2009 World Food Safety Summit held in Rome. According to the summit's conclusions, supporting measures should be adopted at the national, regional and global level, and increased investment should be made in agriculture, rural development and food safety.

At the World Health Organisation (WHO), Slovakia will support initiatives to address global health issues, the influenza pandemic, HIV/AIDS, the health of women and of African population.

Priority in the environmental field will be given to mitigating the impact of climate change in line with the conclusions of the Copenhagen Conference of parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (December 2009). Considerable further efforts will be required for adaptation to and reduction of climate change, for cutting the high consumption of energy in transport, and for reversing the current loss of diversity and natural resources. More attention will have to be paid in the future to the transition to a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy with low energy inputs. In relation to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), special attention will be given to addressing current environmental problems at a global scale in

connection with international environmental management and sustainable development, green economy, and biodiversity.

At the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), Slovakia will participate in the upgrade of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) and in technology transfers.

Slovakia will endeavour to use the possibilities of cooperation offered by the International Organisation of Francophonie (IOF) to countries with observer status.

A.6. Contributing to the Elimination of Migration Risks in Line with Slovakia's Interests

The MFA will take part, in cooperation with other government ministries, in the development and implementation of EU policies in the area of migration, in particular the Stockholm Programme (a multiannual programme of cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs in 2010-2014) and the EU's Global Approach to Migration (geographically focused on Africa, the Mediterranean and South-eastern and Eastern Europe). The EU's global approach reflects a fundamental change in the perception of migration, i. e. a shift from the approach narrowly oriented toward security and reduction of migration flows to an approach that attempts to strike a good balance between all migration aspects and perceives migration as a phenomenon with a positive potential. Slovakia's contribution will take the form of its continued participation in EU activities directed eastward and south-eastward of the EU.

Although migration from Africa does not present an immediate security risk for Slovakia, the failure to address the issue of migrants from Africa at the EU level could have negative consequences for all EU Member States in the future. The issue that has recently resonated among EU Member States is the sharing of the burden imposed by migration pressures that are faced especially by Mediterranean members. One possible solution, which is expected to contribute to enhancing solidarity between Member States, is "resettlement" within the limits of the EU, or through the internal relocation mechanism within the EU on a voluntary basis for persons under international protection. Slovakia is ready to share the burden of migration, but only if migrants show willingness to stay on its territory and if the receiving country has the right to select these persons. The MFA is of the opinion that the crucial issue is to maintain the voluntary participation of Member States in internal relocations and to secure a balanced approach to migration. The EU pilot project covers the relocation of persons from Malta. Slovakia has already signalled its preliminary interest to join the project, and is planning to relocate 10 refugees from Malta in 2010.

At the national level, the MFA will participate in drawing up the Slovak government's policy documents on migration. This covers mainly the update of the Migration Policy Concept of the Slovak Republic (2010-2015). The 2005 Migration Policy Concept of the Slovak Republic needs to be modified so as to reflect the rise of interest in Slovakia following its EU accession, not only as a transit country for migrants but also as a country of destination. Primary responsibility for the development and implementation of migration policy is currently shared by three state administration authorities – the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, the MFA has the obligation to actively participate in the work of the Steering Committee on Migration and Integration of Foreigners set up in 2009. The Committee is the main coordination and initiative-taking body of the Slovak Republic with the task of ensuring policy coherence among the sectors concerned. The MFA is responsible for linking migration policies with development policies. In 2010, the MFA aims to systematically incorporate these interlinked policies in policy documents, such as the National Programme of Official Development Assistance (ODA). More specifically,

it aims to do this within the development of strategies for ODA programme countries in line with the Medium-Term ODA Strategy for 2009-2013, and with the list of identified project countries.

B. A Prosperous Slovakia and Sustainable Development

The urgency for Slovakia's economy and population of mitigating the consequences of the global economic crisis and the predominance of economic discourse in today's international relations necessitate a special place for the economic dimension of diplomacy in Slovakia's foreign policy. Economic diplomacy will be an integral part of processes aimed at ensuring the prosperity and sustainable development of Slovakia. During close cooperation between all actors – the Ministry of Economy, the MFA and other specialised sectors and institutions – it will be more effective to: reflect structural changes in the Slovak economy; account for the activities of strong foreign investors in Slovakia; consider the limited ability of small and medium-sized businesses to gain access to export promotion policies; promote the development of a knowledge economy and innovation environment; and better use the potential of official development assistance for private sector involvement and job creation.

The MFA aims for all economic diplomacy actors, in synergy with key constitutional officers of the country and business associations, to use their human and material resources and capabilities in a coordinated way in order to meet the challenging objectives of the economic and social development of Slovakia. Ongoing priorities of economic diplomacy will be: attracting foreign direct investment that is specifically targeted to promoting structural changes; strengthening the knowledge economy (Slovakia 21); presenting Slovakia's innovation environment abroad to increase investment in science and technology and promote transfer of technologies; and to introduce sophisticated production processes that enhance labour productivity and exports in conformity with the objectives of the document "Export Promotion Policy of the Slovak Republic in 2007-2013." The added value of economic diplomacy in this process will mainly consist in its ability to obtain and analyse information, establish and maintain relevant contacts, identify the projects corresponding to the foreign policy, trade and economic interests of Slovakia, gain access to structures and projects relevant for the economic interests of Slovakia, analyse global political and economic trends and risks based on the knowledge of the local environment and ensure the presentation of selected topics and entities abroad.

B.1. Contributing to the Mitigation of the Impact of the Economic Crisis on Slovakia

The effort to overcome the consequences of the economic crisis, using specifically diplomatic means, will represent a priority agenda for all government sectors of the Slovak Republic. To this end, they will use new procedures in the work of the head office and of Slovak diplomatic missions abroad.

In 2010, the most intensive consequences of the crisis will be felt in the social area. The MFA will, in close cooperation with other economic diplomacy actors, focus attention mainly on practical procedures for contributing to a reduction in Slovakia's unemployment rate. These include stimulating aggregate job demand, identifying and applying measures under active labour market policy, and closely cooperating with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris to analyse the instruments for overcoming the impact of the financial crisis in the context of the Slovak Republic (a small open economy).

The MFA and the Ministry of Economy will ensure the participation of their experts in financial training offered by a special financial training institution in Slovakia – the outcome of a key OECD project in the financial field. In close coordination with the Ministry of Economy and SARIO, the MFA will enter into active communication with the already established and potential investors aimed at preserving and/or increasing employment in their Slovak operations. Systemic pre-requisites will be created to enable Slovak companies to use the existing possibilities of participation in tenders for the supply of goods and services to international organisations. All relevant and well-tested procedures of working with foreign investors and the experience of the countries with Slovak diplomatic representations will be used in the home environment as well.

Slovak government ministries will take steps and measures based on a thorough knowledge of the causes and manifestations of the crisis and of global economy development trends and their influence not only on the world's geopolitical and strategic situation, but also on the Slovak economy and its development prospects. They will closely monitor and evaluate the situation in the global economy and in the economies of Slovakia's key partners. They will supply the top constitutional officers with up-to-date information about measures taken to overcome the consequences of the crisis and about the current thinking on ways of coping with serious imbalances in the world economy. They will present their positions at major international events held with the participation of the Slovak Republic. Slovakia will take an active approach to assessing the activities carried out in response to the economic crisis by EU bodies, the G-20 group of countries, and by specialised international organisations.

Through its membership in the International Monetary Fund and in the World Bank Group, Slovakia will take an active part in the international financial policy aimed at ensuring stable economic development and will foster the fulfilment of the millennium development goals.

At the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the emphasis will be placed on: continuing the world trade liberalisation negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA); on pursuing their conclusion in 2010; and on monitoring the trade consequences of the global economic crisis with the continued objective of preventing protectionism and trade protection measures. Moreover, attention will be devoted to improving the functioning of WTO bodies.

B.2 Promoting Economic Development and Prosperity and Enforcing Slovakia's Economic Interests

The basic constituents of economic diplomacy that will be effectively pursued by the MFA in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and other actors are: eliminating the negative economic and social impacts of the financial and economic crisis; attracting foreign investors, thus creating an inflow of foreign direct investment with an added scientific value; research, innovation and transfer of modern technologies; promoting the implementation of public-private projects in the country's infrastructure; promoting small and medium-sized businesses and their expansion to international markets; and promoting and diversifying exports to non-European territories. Special emphasis will be placed on investment promotion. The inflow of investment to Slovakia would contribute to diversifying the sectoral structure of the Slovak economy, especially in sectors with high value added, and would help introduce advanced technologies. Emphasis needs to be placed on investment in information and communication technologies, biotechnologies, renewable energy and investment inputs in applied research, and on specialised and high quality services for the private sector. Applying the economic dimension of diplomacy,

the MFA pursues these objectives also through the project of technology transfers and innovation cooperation with the United States.

Regarding EU's innovation policies, increased attention will be devoted to up-to-date financial and economic themes that influence the situation and the development of the Slovak economy and to pursuing Slovakia's interests in the decision-making process of the Union. Detailed knowledge of the positions of Slovakia's partners will be put to use in building partnerships aimed at attaining the objectives and priorities of Slovakia's foreign policy in bilateral and multilateral economic relations. The key task of economic diplomacy is to constantly monitor relevant economic movements and trends and to trigger adequate responses.

Effective cooperation with Slovak industry representatives in trade activities and in investment abroad is significantly fostered by the conclusion of investment promotion and protection treaties and double taxation treaties, drawn up in close cooperation between Slovak diplomatic missions, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy. These treaties help expand investment activities by Slovak entrepreneurs, especially in developing countries. Based on the initiative of the Ministry of Economy, a Memorandum on Promoting Investment Activities of Slovak Business Entities was signed on 22 June 2009 between the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy. The primary focus of investment promotion in 2010 will be on developing the system of treaties and on mapping business opportunities in the developing countries.

Economic Diplomacy from the Regional Perspective

Foreign Trade

Slovakia's key trading partners are the Member States of the EU. Slovakia, as a part of the single European Economic Area and a member of the European Monetary Union (EMU), will continue expanding its relations and cooperation with individual Member States of the Union. This will be done with the aim of fostering its economic growth and economic stability, notwithstanding certain drawbacks related to the Slovak economy's dependency on economic developments in the Union. Slovakia will, therefore, continue supporting trade expansion and investment flows from EU countries. Traditionally, the strongest EU partners for Slovakia are Germany, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Austria, France, Poland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Romania and Hungary.

An essential requirement in relation to new markets is to improve the knowledge of these markets; and this is where economic diplomacy plays an irreplaceable role. In spite of the size of and opportunities presented by non-EU markets, the volume of Slovak exports that can potentially flow to these markets is less than 17%. Exports to countries outside Europe are disproportionately low also in comparison with similar countries, even in spite of the growing absorption potential of most non-European markets.

A prominent place among the countries outside the single market of the EU will be held by the U.S. Special attention will be devoted to Russia, especially because of Slovakia's continued energy dependency. The greatest challenge for redressing Slovakia's negative trade balance is presented, besides Russia, by South Korea, China, Taiwan and Japan. Slovakia's priority partners on African territory are South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Angola, Uganda, and Tanzania. Priority countries in Latin America are Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. Other markets that hold potential for the diversification of Slovak exports are those of Southeast Asia and the region of Central Asia.

Foreign Direct Investment

The key source for economic growth and for improving Slovakia's innovation performance is foreign direct investment (FDI). In recent years, Slovakia has seen a significant increase in FDI inflows and still belongs among the attractive countries for foreign investors, in spite of the global financial and economic crisis. Slovakia displays a high potential for return on and security of investment and its economic environment is steadily improving. The importance attached to attracting FDI is demonstrated also by the government's incentives for foreign investment inflows. In this context, Slovakia will promote FDI inflows from any region/country of the world without any restriction, especially as regards high value-added investment in modern, innovative and environmentally friendly technologies and science and research, provided they are not subject to a political embargo.

Acquiring Sources of Funding

To date, Slovakia has made only limited use of the economic cooperation possibilities offered through the financial facilities of sovereign funds, which are based mostly outside the Euro-Atlantic space, especially in energy-exporting countries and countries with high trade surpluses. The countries of priority interest in this regard will include the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, China, Hong Kong, Australia, Qatar, Russia and Libya. The MFA will continue to play its part in gaining access to these financial resources with the objective of funding PPP projects for the construction of the country's infrastructure.

Double taxation treaties (DTTs) and investment promotion and protection treaties (BITs) are expected to be signed and/or prepared for signature by the end of 2010 with most Arab states, including the Persian Gulf countries that are considered a priority for Slovakia's economic policy in the region. Treaties with Algeria, Bahrain, Qatar (BITs) and Kuwait (DTT) are prepared for signature. An advanced stage has been reached in the drawing up of treaties with Oman (BIT and DTT), Qatar (DTT) and the United Arab Emirates (BIT).

Development of Science, Research and Innovation

Any country that wants to succeed in the increasingly competitive global environment must invest in the future – education, scientific and technological development, green and progressive technologies, and high value-added products. Slovakia has yet to make progress in creating a favourable pro-innovation business environment. The country lacks the technology-oriented business segment that could become the basis for a dynamic innovation environment. Although the objective of attracting as many foreign investors as possible to address the problem of high unemployment and growing imbalances in the economic strength of individual regions remains a priority for the Slovak government, support for new technologies in Slovakia is still insufficient. In the coming period, attention in this area will be given to fostering mutually beneficial economic relations, especially with the United States. Economic diplomacy endeavours will be channelled to providing incentives for investment in higher value-added production, growth branches such as high-tech, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies, electronic commerce and the building of technology centres. The countries that are considered innovation leaders and are of priority interest in this area are the U.S., Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Canada, Germany, Taiwan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden and Spain.

B.3. Increasing the Volume and Effectiveness of Slovakia's Development Aid and Humanitarian Assistance

Key priorities of Slovakia in the development cooperation field in 2010 continue to be the strengthening of stability and good governance, sustainable development and alleviation of poverty and hunger in the world through a more effective and targeted provision of development aid and humanitarian assistance. Slovakia will provide official development assistance in accordance with basic rules and principles that are in line with the foreign policy and economic priorities of the country and comply with the principles of international development policy and of the EU.

According to the Medium-Term Strategy of Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic, the programme countries of Slovak Aid in 2009-2013 will continue to be Afghanistan, Kenya and Serbia. It appears to be necessary to continuously review sectoral priorities in light of the development of integration efforts in the Western Balkans so as to effectively support this effort. The foreign policy priority that stands out in the foreground in Eastern Europe is the support for the European project of Eastern Partnership. The MFA will continue to work in synergy and maintain a partnership dialogue with Slovak non-governmental entities.

To achieve wider involvement of Slovak Aid in the development cooperation with donor countries through trilateral projects, the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS) will implement a joint project in Serbia and Ethiopia in cooperation with the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). In the area of multilateral and bilateral cooperation, an important partner for the Slovak government is the Bratislava Regional Centre of the UN Development Programme (UNDP BRC). Cooperation activities planned for 2010 will be aimed at involving Slovak experts in regional and national programme activities of UNDP offices, sharing Slovakia's experience from the transition period, involving Slovak volunteers in Slovak development assistance projects and drawing up the national programme for the deployment of volunteers.

Slovakia will also continue providing multilateral official development assistance by means of contributions through the Ministry of Finance to the common EU budget, the World Bank Group and the Western Balkans Fund administered by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

In the area of humanitarian assistance, the MFA will continue cooperating with the Ministry of the Interior – chief national coordinator of humanitarian assistance in Slovakia. Within the limits of its budgetary possibilities, it will respond to emergency humanitarian challenges and the needs that may arise over the course of 2010.

In 2010, the MFA will continue to further strengthen the systemic character, transparency, quality and effectiveness of development assistance provided by the Slovak Republic. At the same time, it will be important to continue strengthening personnel and technical capabilities for the provision of development assistance and for building the system of monitoring and evaluating Slovak Aid projects and programmes, and to improve reporting on Slovakia's development assistance.

Cooperation on the part of the MFA in the area of development aid and humanitarian assistance in 2010 will be aimed at building stronger partnership links with relevant actors and entities participating in the development assistance of Slovakia at the state level and non-governmental level, and with the business sector.

B.4. Increasing the Energy Security of Slovakia

While fully respecting the competencies of the Ministry of Economy, the MFA is intent on continuing and contributing its share by means of real diplomacy, (such as analytical and information activities, contact platforms, knowledge of the environment and activities in international organisations), to the creation of prerequisites and the implementation of the objectives set out in the *Energy Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic* approved by the Slovak government in 2008. Cooperation between the foreign affairs and economic sectors within the context of external energy security in a specific time horizon will be dealt with at the meetings of the *Inter-Ministerial Analytical and Coordination Commission for Energy Security of the Slovak Republic*.

The MFA will contribute to the attainment of the Slovak Republic's national energy priorities. With respect to the traditional strategic energy partnerships, the MFA will contribute to achieving their balance and expansion, and enable the establishment and expansion of new long-term partnerships.

In international organisations, the MFA will focus particularly on activities carried out within the third platform of Eastern Partnership of the EU and by the OSCE. In the bilateral context, it will give priority attention to the above issues in contacts with non-EU countries. As regards the building of contacts, it will focus mainly on the activities of partner foreign affairs ministries and non-governmental organisations in the energy security field.

The MFA will use all the relevant forums to continue placing an emphasis on priority issues for Slovakia in the area of energy security. The latter include: security of energy supplies (mainly of natural gas) as part of national and international security; energy effectiveness; low-carbon energy resources (nuclear energy); and use of renewable energies while supporting energy-related initiatives aimed at sustainable development on a European and worldwide scale.

C. Slovakia's Interests in an Effective EU, Strengthening Neighbourly Relations and Intensifying Regional Cooperation

C.1. Supporting the Attainment of Slovakia's Interests in the EU and Strengthening Slovakia's Influence on the Development of Common EU Policies

The global financial and economic crisis has revealed the vulnerability not only of the world economy, but also of the European Union and its Member States. Joint actions and the search for appropriate solutions within the EU framework appear to be a good basis for mitigating the impact of the crisis on the population of Slovakia/EU. In this regard, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) is the key forum that has adopted fundamental legal acts of the EU aimed at addressing the crisis. The new system of financial supervision at macro- and micro-level that is to be implemented over the course of 2010 should prevent similar financial and economic crises in the future. Next year, Slovakia will also participate in the development of a new financial perspective for 2014-2020. Clear formulation of priority areas will constitute the basis for creating a suitable environment for the prevention of crises and for the creation/maintenance of a sound economic environment in Slovakia and in the EU as a whole.

In the field of energy, Slovakia will take steps to allocate sufficient funding for building connections between energy infrastructures of the Member States and for diversifying natural gas sources and transport routes. It will also pursue the implementation of the initiative on connections between North and South.. Slovakia will also work towards ensuring the security of oil supplies by incorporating inter-connection projects into the TEN-E mechanism.

In the area of common trade policy, Slovakia will continue to actively influence the development of common EU positions vis-à-vis the WTO (DDA negotiations, accession processes, compliance with rules, etc.), to carry out regional and bilateral cooperation, to use all trade instruments in the EU framework, and to improve access to non-EU markets.

Should a global agreement be reached in Copenhagen in December 2009, climate protection and the fight against climate change will progress to the implementation phase. For the EU and its Member States, this will mainly mean working toward objectives set out in the climate/energy package. Europe will concentrate on the transposition of the agreement, on the implementation of the various ambitious measures, and on a gradual transition to a low-carbon economy with implications for all areas of life – from energy, industry and transport to other areas affecting the environment and the climate. Complementary steps will be gradually taken with a view to building a global carbon market. In addition, EU commitments under the climate/energy package will comprise several unilateral commitments, including some in the energy sector. The latter will be aimed at reducing emissions, expanding energy generation from renewable sources, and improving energy effectiveness, thus strengthening the three characteristic features of European energy policy – security, sustainability and competitiveness. The EU will focus on the implementation of new legal acts on renewable energies and on a single market for electricity and gas.

With the second phase of the Lisbon Strategy drawing to an end, the EU will have to take a decision on how to further develop this strategy after 2010. Its objective should be to strengthen the EU's competitiveness with emphasis on environmentally, socially and economically sustainable growth and employment. Consultations should lead to simplifying the process of administration of the Lisbon Agenda or, possibly, to setting out a smaller number of more concrete, measurable objectives. In light of the economic crisis, it will be necessary to evaluate the fulfilment of the Growth and Employment Recovery Plan adopted, *inter alia*, in order to strengthen and accelerate reforms introduced on the basis of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment.

As regards small and medium-sized enterprises, Slovakia will endorse the implementation of reforms initiated on the basis of the single market review. Its objective is to improve opportunities in the business environment and increase consumer confidence and demand. In connection with the economic recovery, Slovakia aims to fully implement the "Small Business Act" initiative.

Mitigating the impact of the crisis on employment and the social sphere is a key priority for Member States and the EU as a whole. Mobilisation of funding resources, e. g. through the European Social Fund or the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, will contribute to the development and adaptation of strategies for the fight against unemployment, especially in the area of active labour market policy (labour market re-entry of the unemployed). The year 2010 will reflect the spirit of the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion.

In the common agricultural policy, 2010 will see full implementation of the health check. The EU will also focus on adjustments to the current political framework for information and communication technologies (i2010) and will strive to reduce the fragmentation of research in Europe.

C.2. Supporting EU Enlargement and Contributing to a Successful European Neighbourhood Policy

Slovakia will continue to be an advocate of the process of EU enlargement, subject to the fulfilment of principles of the Treaty, the Copenhagen criteria of 1993, and renewed consensus based on the 2006 Council conclusions that set out strict and fair conditions based on the merit principle. Slovakia will strive to meet the vision of visa liberalisation for the countries of the Western Balkans and of Eastern Europe that did not achieve this objective in 2009, based on their individual evaluation. Slovakia supports the European Commission's "enlargement package" and will promote the implementation of proposed conclusions and recommendations including those on enlargement and the Western Balkans adopted by the EU's General Affairs Council at its December meeting. In the longer-term, Slovakia will continue expressing support for the process of EU integration of the countries of the Western Balkans, which it considers to be the main instrument for strengthening stability, security and overall development of the region.

The key objective in connection with Slovakia's foreign policy interests in 2010 will be to preserve the dynamics of Eastern Partnership implementation. It will thus be necessary to continue being pragmatic, to develop those themes of the Eastern Partnership project that have constructive potential, and to continue the discussion. Priority partner countries for Slovakia under the project are Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Slovakia will also support the projects that bring all six partner countries closer to the Union, as well as the projects supporting regional cooperation between countries at the bilateral and multilateral level in selected sectors such as energy, economy, justice and home affairs. The year 2010 is also expected to bring the final stage in the negotiations on the Association Agreement with Ukraine that will contain key provisions on free trade. Slovakia will endeavour to meet the above objectives also through its upcoming presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4).

C.3. Contribution to Strengthening the Effective Functioning of EU Institutions

In terms of promoting the effective functioning of EU institutions, the key factor that will influence Slovak foreign policy in 2010 will be the process of implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, which has introduced several important changes to the treaty basis and to the way the European Union functions. One positive aspect is that the tendencies towards creating a multi-speed Europe were not supported in the process of institutional reform, and that a unified approach eventually prevailed.

Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty will mean the creation and designation of new political positions in the EU: President of the European Council and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; gradual building of the European External Service; reform of the rules of procedure of the European Council and of the Council of the EU; clarification of chairmanship of the Council's preparatory bodies in the area of external relations; and possibly also other issues that were not definitively resolved in 2009. The entire process of applying new procedures will be carried out in the context of a newly created European Commission.

From the MFA perspective, the most important element of the implementation of the Treaty is the creation of the European External Service. During the process of gradual establishment of the Service, it will be necessary to ensure the adequate representation and influence of Slovakia while adhering to other priorities of Slovakia in this area, such as equal

status of all staff members and links between and cooperation of the European External Service with national foreign services. The objective pursued in this regard will be to deploy members of the Slovak diplomatic service at the European level, preferentially in positions where they can use their experience and expertise.

Slovakia will take an active part in the process of building and implementing a new institutional framework of the EU in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty. New positions of the President of the European Council and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy are expected to make EU institutions more effective by improving the coherence and continuity of EU policies, especially in the area of foreign relations. The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty will increase the effectiveness of institutions' work through a clearer delimitation of competencies between the EU and the Member States. The change in the voting procedure of the EU Council to a double-majority system will become effective only in 2014.

Slovakia supports the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Its practical implementation should lead to achieving a proper balance of interests of large and small Member States and contribute to strengthening the EU in terms of its internal cohesion. It should also help increase the EU's influence in the international arena.

Representatives of Slovakia will actively participate in the work of Council formations in accordance with Slovakia's priorities and in the interest of common objectives of the European Union.

At a time when the EU's function is undergoing reforms, intensive cooperation will be required with members of the European Parliament whose status will be further strengthened under the Lisbon Treaty.

The objective will be to create an effective and balanced EU system that takes into account the interests of all Member States and, at the same time, strengthens the European Union as a whole.

C.4. Reinforcing Neighbourly Relations and Intensifying Regional Cooperation

Stability, security and continuous development of the region of Central Europe will depend on the level of good neighbourly relations and cooperation between the countries concerned. Close ties, mutually beneficial and active cooperation and dialogue conducted in a positive spirit represent permanent priorities for Slovakia's relations with its neighbours.

In 2010, developments in the Central European space will be influenced, *inter alia*, by parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia. Presidential elections will be held in 2010 in Hungary, Poland and Ukraine.

An important common denominator of cooperation between Slovakia and its neighbours is the effort to continuously draw on financial resources of the European Regional Development Fund through cross-border cooperation programmes. These are used for projects involving Slovakia's borders with its various neighbours, and in the creation of new partnerships between self-governing bodies in accordance with the principles of the European Territorial Self-Government Association, a new element of European regionalism.

Visegrad Cooperation

Deepening the cohesion and affiliation of the countries of the Visegrad Group – V4, will continue to be a priority in the area of regional and cross-border cooperation of Central European countries. Slovakia will focus on the coordination of inter-sectoral cooperation and the

development and implementation of a comprehensive work programme for the Visegrad Group during Slovakia's V4 presidency between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2011. It will follow up on the positive experience of the previous presidencies, and will continue to carry out key sectoral and foreign policy activities that are beneficial for our countries and their inhabitants.

In the diplomatic activities involving Visegrad Group countries, including the planned summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group, Slovakia will focus on the following: strengthening of the consultation mechanism; concerted action and formulation of common positions of Visegrad Group countries concerning important issues of the EU agenda, such as budget, regional development, external energy security and allocation of posts in EU bodies to candidates and representatives from V4 countries; concerted action aimed at reducing the impact of the global economic and financial crisis; and in the planning and implementation of, for example, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

Slovakia will support the strengthening of internal Visegrad cooperation and a new vector of V4 operation – the V4 + format – with a view to sharing the integration experience of Visegrad Group countries with the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. An extraordinary extended meeting of foreign ministers with their partners from the above countries will be held in Bratislava. This will reaffirm the continuity of the Visegrad Group and represent Slovakia's contribution to the strengthening of relations between the V4 and the EU on the one hand, and the immediate neighbours and partners of Slovakia on the other hand. Slovakia will make active use of an important V4 instrument – the International Visegrad Fund – and will draw more intensively on the capacities and expertise of non-governmental organisations and civil society in the academic and scientific spheres.

The Czech Republic

The strengthening of bilateral cooperation and the overall development of outstanding relations with the Czech Republic continue to represent a priority interest for Slovakia. The core activity in this area will be the continuation of dialogue at the level of top constitutional officers, ministers and experts from the various sectors. Intensive cooperation between the Slovak and Czech Parliaments will also play an essential role.

In the expectation of gradual economic recovery, special attention will have to be given to the economic dimension of bilateral relations with the goal of restoring the growth trajectory of mutual trade and investment of the previous years. In view of the similarity of structural problems in the two countries' energy sectors, close cooperation in the field of energy with an emphasis on inter-connection of energy networks will remain an important part of the bilateral dialogue (common Nuclear Forum).

Slovakia will continue to carry out activities aimed at safeguarding cultural and linguistic proximity between the Slovak and the Czech nations. In the modern history of Europe, this is a unique and very inspiring phenomenon. An important vehicle to preserve this proximity will be cultural activities and media, as well as highly developed cooperation between schools at all levels.

In addition to the strengthening of bilateral relations, attention will have to be given to deepening cooperation on a regional and European scale. The main focus will be the expansion of activities under the Eastern Partnership project and the coordination of actions by both countries vis-à-vis the countries of the Western Balkans. In the security field, Slovakia will continue to concentrate on cooperation related to the strengthening of security in the Euro-Atlantic space, and on joint operation of armed forces of the two countries in crisis management missions.

The Republic of Hungary

The symbolism of cooperation based on the framework provided by the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Hungary will be further reinforced by the 15th anniversary of the Treaty's signing. Slovakia's focus in the development of Slovak-Hungarian relations will be on shedding the burden of the past and creating conditions for a regular and standard dialogue on present and future relations between the two countries as partners in the EU and Allies in NATO. Slovakia wants to address all divergent opinions and potential disputes in a substantive and cultivated manner, to avoid their internalisation and to prevent the rise of nervousness among foreign partners and allies. Slovakia will continue to be open to a dialogue with the newly elected representation of the Republic of Hungary at all levels and in all areas of common interest. It will be important to continue implementing the 11-point joint declaration of the Slovak and Hungarian Prime Ministers signed during their meeting at Sečany (Szécsény) in the summer of 2009. This includes the resumption of activities by all inter-governmental commissions as a mechanism supporting the implementation of the basic Treaty. An important task in 2010 will be to give a balanced presentation of the real picture of the entire spectrum of Slovak-Hungarian relations.

Slovakia will continue in its efforts to depoliticise minority and historical issues, and address them in a substantive and professional discussion. Slovakia will approach the conceptual divergence of opinions concerning the legislation on persons belonging to the Hungarian national minority mainly by means of an internal dialogue with the representatives of the Hungarian national minority. Attention will be given to communication with representatives of the Slovak minority living in Hungary and to effective assistance by Slovakia for the safeguarding and revitalising of the minority's linguistic and cultural identity.

Slovakia attaches special significance to a regular dialogue with Hungarian partners on issues related to the EU agenda – Hungary holds the presidency of the Visegrad Group, will be a member of the next presidency trio in the EU, and will assume EU presidency in the first half of 2011.

The Republic of Poland

Slovakia is intent on maintaining the excellent momentum of overall development of bilateral relations, including the frequency of meetings of chief constitutional officers of the two countries. The second meeting of parliamentary presidiums will also represent an effective instrument.

The economic cooperation between the two countries has suffered under the impact of the crisis and the relatively favourable forecasts for economic development in Poland, as well as the still untapped possibilities of expanding trade and mutual investment will have to be utilised to restore it. Key priorities continue to include improvements in the quality of road and railway infrastructure in border areas.

Preparations for Poland's EU presidency in 2011 open up new possibilities for cooperation and achievement of mutual interests in priority areas. Slovakia will carry on regular consultations concerning the positions of Slovakia and Poland within the EU context, and define the areas of possible closer cooperation (the Eastern Partnership).

Following the creation of independent consultant forums consisting of leading personalities of the two countries, a joint meeting of the forum is to be convened. Its aim will be to identify new priorities and possibilities for deepening Slovak-Polish cooperation.

Austria

The Slovak Republic will continue its pragmatic partnership dialogue with Austria. Slovakia will use its membership in the Euro-zone and in the Schengen area to advance cooperation in all fields, especially economic.

There is still space for coordinating positions at the European level. In its cooperation with Austria, Slovakia will pay special attention to the future EU Strategy for the Danube Region developed with the assistance of Austria.

Slovakia would like to avoid the politicisation of the nuclear energy issue in its relations with Austria. With regard to the construction of units 3 and 4 of the Mochovce nuclear power plant, Slovakia will continue to take a pro-active, transparent and forthcoming attitude vis-à-vis the Austrian partners and Austrian media.

Ukraine

Relations with Ukraine is one of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities, not only because of its neighbourhood location, but also because of the importance of stability and positive development in Ukraine for regional and European security and stability. The core interest of Slovakia lies in a democratic, politically stable and economically prosperous and predictable Ukraine.

Slovakia has a natural interest in the success of Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration ambitions. It is in this spirit that the Slovak embassy in Kiev will continue to function as a NATO Contact Point Embassy for Ukraine in 2010. Slovakia will continue to support the convergence of Ukraine, the EU and NATO to the extent and at the pace chosen by Ukraine itself, in correspondence with its transformation possibilities and results. Slovakia will take part in the implementation of the European programme of Eastern Partnership. After presidential elections, Ukraine is expected to fully concentrate on addressing its domestic problems, thus helping to calm down its situation at home and ensure progression towards increased compatibility with the European economic and social environment.

Ukraine remains the key country for the transit of energy commodities to Slovakia, and is an important factor in external energy security not only for Slovakia, but for the entire EU. By ensuring problem-free and uninterrupted supplies of energy commodities to the EU, Ukraine will best demonstrate its ability to cope with its obligations and to speed up pro-European integration processes.

D. Assistance to the Citizens and a Slovakia Open to the World

D.1. Defending the Interests of Slovak Citizens

The trend of increasing numbers of Slovak citizens travelling abroad for employment, study or tourism is expected to continue in the coming period. In this respect, a continued priority and imperative for the Slovak foreign service is the provision of quality services and assistance to Slovak nationals abroad. This includes helping those who are in an emergency abroad, protecting nationals' interests and rights, and performing standard consular duties in matters of registry, citizenship, travel documents or legalisation. The key task will continue to be the comprehensive provision of consular assistance to Slovak citizens and EU citizens in countries where their home country has no diplomatic or consular representation.

The practical implementation of the Visa Code adopted by the European Parliament and the EU Council on 13 July 2009 with effect from 5 April 2010 constitutes an important task for

Slovakia in the visa area for 2010 and 2011. According to the Visa Code's provisions, Schengen Member States that do not have their own consular office in a third country will endeavour to enter into representation agreements with Member States that do have consular offices in that country. In compliance with these rules, Slovakia will endeavour to sign representation agreements with the appropriate Member States. Its first and historical representation agreement was signed on 23 October 2009 with Austria. In 2010, Slovakia wants to sign an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany concerning representation in Azerbaijan and Cambodia. The MFA is also holding talks with Lithuania concerning representation in Georgia. Slovakia will conclude the talks with the Republic of Hungary concerning representation for the issuance of visas in Saudi Arabia, Albania and Moldova so that both sides can initiate their internal legislative procedures. Since representation for the issuance of visas is a reciprocal process, the MFA is ready to offer other Schengen Member States a reciprocal representation at selected consular offices of Slovakia's diplomatic missions. Slovak diplomatic missions offered for this purpose will be those in Ankara, New Delhi, Beijing, Tehran, Nairobi, Astan, Abuja, Tashkent, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

In connection with the entry into force of the new Visa Code, the MFA will prepare for the performance of new tasks related to applicants' rights to lodge an appeal in case of rejection of their visa applications. Because of increased demand, it will be necessary to improve the skill level of consular officers being trained for the performance of consular service abroad, and to improve citizens' access to the foreign consular service.

D.2. Improving the Communication of Foreign Policy Objectives and Outcomes Inside and Outside Slovakia

Public opinion plays an important role in the successful implementation of foreign policy. Dialogue between the MFA, the public at large and other stakeholders helps shape public opinion and build the basic pillars of public diplomacy. It is necessary to communicate with the general public and with the professional community in order to present the priorities and justify the geopolitical, trade and economic interests of Slovakia**.** The MFA will use this premise for formulating the basic ideas underlying the concept of sectoral public diplomacy.

The MFA website will continue to represent one of the most adequate tools for informing the public about activities in the diplomatic sector. At the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010, the website underwent a complete transformation. As a result, it is more attractive, interactive and, above all, more user-friendly for the general public. The MFA will continue identifying appropriate opportunities for its staff to present the objectives of Slovak foreign policy with a view to enhancing public awareness and obtaining support for them.

D.3. Coordinating a Uniform Presentation of Slovakia Abroad

The MFA, acting as the government's coordinator for a uniform presentation of Slovakia abroad, has initiated the development of a mechanism for carrying out a uniform presentation of Slovakia abroad. The proposal to be submitted for approval by the government's council on a uniform presentation of Slovakia abroad focuses on three dimensions: Slovakia's competitive identity and the "Slovakia brand" based on real value platforms representing Slovakia; creation of a functional mechanism for coordination of joint presentation projects or activities; and a territorial strategy including specific programmes for priority interest countries. In preparing the proposal, the MFA will draw inspiration from countries that have successfully implemented

country-branding projects, and will present several versions of their successful implementation in the home environment.

To ensure credibility and continuity, it is important to base the approach to country branding on a wide consensus in the home country and to obtain its acceptance by the largest possible share of society. The MFA will, therefore, continue conducting a society-wide discussion with the general public and the non-governmental, academic and business sectors, with the objective of reaching consensus and acceptance of the process in the home country.

The MFA will urge the members of the government council on a uniform presentation of Slovakia abroad to make adequate use of opportunities for international presentation of Slovakia such as the Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver (February 2010), the World Cup in South Africa (June – July 2010), EXPO Shanghai (May – October 2010), and other opportunities that have the potential to attract the attention of the international community.

D.4. Promoting Cooperation with the Third Sector

Slovak diplomacy will continue to pay special attention to cooperation with the non-governmental sector in 2010. It will concentrate mainly on specific projects and common cross-cutting themes, with special emphasis on Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. In this spirit, it will support NGO activities in general and through the MFA's grant programme. The maintenance of regular contacts with non-governmental organisations, exchange of information about activities and participation in one another's events will not only foster expansion of the MFA's range of activities, but will also generate a high degree of social consensus on Slovakia's foreign policy. The MFA will make an effort at reaching a consensus on the implementation of Slovakia's foreign policy objectives.

In 2010, the MFA will organise specialised conferences with non-governmental organisations both as participants and as co-organisers. The MFA considers the dialogue with the third sector to be an avenue for increasing the degree of understanding and legitimacy of foreign policy decisions and initiatives.

The MFA will continue its active communication with universities and its professional and educational cooperation, based on agreements and arrangements on mutually advantageous partnership cooperation. The MFA will continue providing opportunities for short-term internships and study stays for students in selected specialised units of the sector to enable them to become acquainted with current and practical foreign policy.

E. Modern Slovak Diplomacy

E.1. Optimising the Internal Functioning of the MFA

In 2010, the MFA will continue enhancing the effectiveness of its internal functioning. It will draw on its experience in the area of strategic planning in order to simplify it as an instrument and make it more suited to the needs of the sector.

The MFA will continue to carry out project management, which will be used as an instrument for implementing those tasks which, due to their character, require the coordination of several units of the MFA and/or cooperation with external entities. The project management system will be adapted, based on lessons learned from the pilot phase of this type of management in 2009.

The sector will continue to practically apply process management at all levels of the MFA. As regards the optimisation of internal management acts, it is scheduled for completion, after which full use of the software instrument will be made for their development, update and administration.

E.2. Ensuring Technologically Advanced Communication

In keeping with the approved Policy Document on the Development of Public Administration Information Systems and with applicable legislation, the MFA will place emphasis on activities connected with building public administration information systems.

It will continue to upgrade information systems and increase "customer comfort." To this end, the sector will try to obtain funds from the EU Operational Programme OPIS.

E.3. Optimising Financial Management and Structure of the Budget

The MFA is working on a new concept of financial management at the level of diplomatic representations, according to which accounting records of small diplomatic missions are to be transferred to the head office. In locations where there are several diplomatic missions of the Slovak Republic, accounting records will be centralised and placed under the responsibility of a single head of administration. The setup of new processes is conditional on the amendment of relevant laws. The envisaged implementation date is the year 2011.

E.4. Strengthening the Expertise of Foreign Service Staff

In the area of human resources, the MFA will continue in 2010 to carry out activities aimed at improving the quality of human potential of the Slovak foreign service. This includes human resource stabilisation, higher motivation and development, and the introduction of innovative elements in personnel and career planning tailored to the conditions of the sector.

Its activities will be centred mainly on: a consistent, practical application of Career Rules; the introduction of new elements in the training process; and building personnel capacities needed to expand the network of diplomatic missions of the Slovak Republic while also increasing the motivation of staff members and the transparency of employment relations.

The need to ensure a high professional level of the Slovak foreign service on a permanent basis will necessarily entail a continuous and systematic upgrading of specialised knowledge and language skills of MFA staff, using the services of the internal diplomatic academy. Attention will also be given to attestation training, pre-assignment orientation and post-assignment adjustment, to the process of adaptation of new staff members, and to other forms of specialised training, taking into account new requirements for training certain categories of staff, and of the prospect of building the European external service.

To support successful development of the country's diplomatic corps, it is also necessary to continue developing the legislative, labour law, financial and social foundation for its work, comparable to the European standard of EU Member States. In this respect, the sector will continue to work towards the adoption of the foreign service act.

The MFA will continue implementing its contractual cooperation arrangements with selected higher education institutions and universities, whose graduates are potential candidates for foreign service positions. The foreign affairs sector will provide these students the

opportunity for short-term internships at individual units of the ministry and at selected diplomatic missions abroad.

E.5. Enhancing the Representation of the Slovak Republic in the EU and in International Organisations

Enforcing the representation of Slovak citizens at all levels of the European Commission and in other EU institutions and bodies is one of the objectives set out in the Slovak Government's Manifesto and represents a long-term priority of the government. The MFA will continue creating conditions for achieving adequate personnel representation of the Slovak Republic in EU structures in terms of quantity (the preferential quota on positions in the European Commission for the Slovak Republic during the transitional period 2004-2010 has already been met) and quality (assignment to vacant higher and middle management positions).

Slovakia will endeavour to make the best possible use of available opportunities and to strengthen to the maximum extent its representation in the European External Service (EES). In the area of personnel policy related to EU institutions, this is a new field for the deployment of Slovakia's representatives in EU structures. The Service will consist of officials from relevant units of the General Secretariat of the Council, from the Commission services, and personnel seconded by diplomatic services of the Member States. The latter should represent at least one-third of the total number of diplomatic staff of the Service. The participation of Slovakia in the work of the EES is expected to expand the possibilities for external actions by the Slovak Republic through EU instruments, and will help the country to gain knowledge of and experience with the formulation and implementation of foreign policy on a European-wide scale.

Slovakia will continue striving for a wider personnel representation in the United Nations and specialised agencies of the UN system, in particular at a higher and middle expert level. To this end, it will endeavour to make appropriate use of its previous membership in the UN Security Council and, in particular, its active membership in ECOSOC. Slovakia will continue supporting Slovak diplomats working in the UN structures and in other international institutions.