

Medium-Term Foreign Policy Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2015

Determinants of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic

Interactions between the Slovak Republic's internal environment and interests on the one hand and its external environment on the other hand determine the foreign policy of the country. With its internal potential the Slovak Republic has traditionally belonged among the countries pursuing active international co-operation. Spiritual background of the citizens of Slovakia had been formed in the historical constitutional, legal and social conditions of Central Europe. Educational and cultural environment in Slovakia is comparable with that of other European countries. The existing democratic political situation, respect for human rights and the rule of law guarantee political stability and equal opportunities for all. The socio-economic development of the society has been significantly affected by the preceding transition period. The functioning market economy and successful completion of necessary reforms suggest, sustainable improvements in the standard of living in Slovakia. Similarly to other European countries, in a long-time perspective demographic development continues to be an open issue.

External environment of the Slovak Republic is characterised by various parameters and their interrelationships. The geographic location of Slovakia, the size and location of its neighbouring countries are the factors that permanently influence its foreign policy. The dynamically changing external environment is constituted, besides states and international organisations, by various non-state players of economic, political or social nature. Membership in the European Union and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has substantially altered the relations between Slovakia and its external environment. The fact that the country is institutionally anchored in a common political and economic space of the European Union, and firm security guarantees of NATO, have created an optimum and higher-quality framework for securing vital interests of the Slovak Republic and of its citizens. Sharing identical values of the wider Euroatlantic community of democratic states, credibility in the assertion of one's interests, and consistency in performing specific actions have proven to be the right principles of foreign policy.

As a result of its integration into the European and transatlantic structures Slovakia has gained not only new opportunities, but also new tasks in fulfillment of which Slovakia participates. The Slovak Republic has a realistic opportunity to effectively assert its interests and to strengthen common values. However, it has to make permanent effort at maintaining the attained degree of security and stability. Unresolved conflicts beyond the boundaries of the enlarged European Union continue to be accompanied by organised crime, illegal migration, terrorism, and the ever-present risk of proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction. These phenomena represent long-term threats to the stability and prosperity of Slovakia. These threats result from social and economic underdevelopment of certain states, from the deficits of human rights and democratic principles, and from persistent ethnic and religious intolerance. Comprehensive resolutions must therefore be focused also on preventive elimination of their causes, not only towards fighting individual negative phenomena. Direct threats are represented primarily by non-state illegal entities organised in networks. Countering the manifestations of current threats exclusively by force is not sufficient, as it is necessary to address the causes – mainly through engaged foreign and development policies. In taking practical steps the Slovak Republic will, together with its allies and like-minded states, make use of all available instruments of diplomacy and instruments of international law.

Values and Interests of Foreign Policy

In the implementation of its foreign policy the Slovak Republic will continue pursuing international relations based on democratic principles. *The axioms of Slovakia's foreign policy are: respect for international law, expanding the space of democracy, freedom, peace, stability and prosperity, respect for fundamental human rights and solidarity among nations.*

It is the citizens who will ultimately benefit from the outcomes of foreign policy of the Slovak Republic. *Basic and durable foreign policy interests of the Slovak Republic are: safeguarding the territorial integrity of the state, security of its citizens, and creation of optimum conditions for sustainable economic, social, environmental and cultural development of Slovakia.*

Consistent implementation of the fundamental values through concrete steps and creation of the opportunities for further development of co-operation on a bilateral and multilateral level, these are basic prerequisites for meeting foreign policy interests of the Slovak Republic.

Foreign Policy Objectives and Procedures

The strategic objective of foreign policy of the Slovak Republic is the development of the country within a stable and predictable international environment. The Slovak Republic will promote the expansion of the area of freedom, stability, peace and prosperity in Europe and elsewhere in the world. In the today's interdependent world, sustainable development of Slovakia, high degree of integration of its economy into the international division of labour, and elimination of global threats call for active foreign policy in close cooperation with our allies and partners. Steps taken to achieve the strategic objective within the system of international relations are, as a rule, comprehensive and multilevel. Their optimum implementation requires the Slovak Republic to take an integrated approach, which takes into account a wide range of domestic consequences and external interrelations. Partial issues at the regional, European, Atlantic or global level, must be dealt with at the relevant level using the means available to Slovakia. In order to effectively define foreign policy objectives, these must be consistently prioritised at each level – the higher the level, the lower the number of the objectives should be. The prioritisation of foreign policy steps is based on Programme of the Government of the Slovak Republic and on the annual foreign policy guidelines. Correct identification of priorities is a key instrument for effective use of the existing potential of the state. To multiply the benefits of foreign policy for its citizens, Slovakia will continuously stress its economic dimension and will, through transparent policy, create an optimum framework for private entrepreneurial initiatives directed both inward and outward.

Foreign Policy Actors and Instruments

A number of actors take part in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy in the Slovak Republic. Of key importance in the identification and actual implementation of individual steps will be the constitutional bodies - the President of the Slovak Republic, the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Slovak Republic and their highest representatives. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the network of

diplomatic missions abroad, constitutes the coordinative and executive backbone of foreign policy of the Slovak Republic. Government ministries take part in the implementation of foreign policy in accordance with their respective agendas and competencies, primarily within the framework of integration structures. They play a particularly important role in the European Union agenda which – considering its specific character – is more a domestic than a foreign policy agenda. Decentralisation of state administration has increased the scope for regional and local self-governing authorities to directly engage in foreign relations. Membership of the European Union has enhanced the significance of political parties. Thorough liberalisation of the economic co-operation framework has opened up the space for international activities of business and commercial entities. The Slovak Republic attaches special importance to the phenomenon of civil diplomacy. In partnership with state institutions, NGOs are invited to take part in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy of the Slovak Republic. This represents practical implementation of the principle of representative and participatory democracy involving citizens in the running of public affairs. With the improving position and status of our citizens abroad, the community of Slovak expatriates acquires a new quality and the Slovak Republic is intent on promoting and supporting its potential.

A broad range of national and supranational instruments are available to the Slovak Republic for attaining its foreign policy objectives. Besides the traditional instruments of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, the EU and NATO are becoming, through active work of Slovakia's representatives at all levels, important for reaching her foreign policy objectives. This includes also international missions carried out by Slovak armed forces within the frame of international alliances. To increase the human resource potential, attention should be focused on experience gained by Slovak citizens working in international organisations. In the context of civil society, which strives to build an open society, and of the ongoing globalisation, information technologies and media are becoming useful instruments for spreading the good name of the Slovak Republic. Activities in the sphere of culture, science and technology are effective components of foreign policy. They create propitious conditions for bringing people and nations closer to one another and for eliminating social and political barriers. The development assistance programme – SlovakAid – promotes the development of relations with the recipient states in which Slovakia can provide material assistance and share her experience with the process of democratic transition. These are mainly the states that will demonstrate their ability to successfully and effectively absorb the development aid.

Participation in the worldwide development co-operation efforts demonstrates the advanced level of development of the Slovak Republic, and has a positive impact also on the development of relations with developed countries, members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. An important factor for the development of international relations is an appropriate presentation of the Slovak Republic in other countries and at international forums.

The regional dimension

Central Europe constitutes a natural geopolitical space – space in which the Slovak Republic was created and shaped in interactions with neighbouring nations and states. Central line of foreign policy at this basic level will be represented by the policy of *good neighbourly relations*. Slovakia actively promotes the development of contacts between her citizens, private and public institutions with their partners in the neighbouring states. In the perception of Slovakia, neighbouring states in the regional meaning of the term include – besides immediate neighbours – also other Central European countries with which it has common interests and close cultural and historical ties. The existence of national minorities in Slovakia and ethnic Slovaks living abroad continue to be an important factor for the development of relations within the region . A full-fledged development of their culture and language is in the interest of all the citizens of the Slovak Republic. To enhance co-operation with our compatriots it is necessary, in particular, to strengthen their ties to modern Slovakia through education. As regards Euroregions, we perceive them as an invaluable instrument for supporting cross-border co-operation not only within the framework of the European Union, but also with neighbouring regions.

Slovakia will have an ambition to play a constructive role in various international groupings operating within the Central European framework. Well-tested Visegrad co-operation will be directed at those areas where it will be possible to make use of the added value generated by closer cooperation among V4 states. The Central European Initiative is a multilateral forum facilitating regular co-operation among the countries of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe, and erasing possible dividing lines. As regards integration processes, the process of accession to the Schengen Agreement and its implementation will call for coordination at the regional level.

The European dimension

The accession to the European Union has changed the character of relations between the Slovak Republic and other European states. Relationships between Slovakia and the EU Member States have acquired a different quality, especially in the areas of shared competencies. These relationships will develop in harmony with the dynamics of the process of European integration. Relationships with non-member states have become more complex. Besides bilateral aspects, they also reflect external policy of the European Union. Slovak foreign policy with respect to the European Union can be characterised as an open door policy for all interested countries that fulfil relevant criteria. In this context, Slovakia attaches crucial significance to the stabilisation of the Balkans region and to general advancement of associated countries. Slovakia will strive to develop multifaceted relations with the new neighbours of the European Union. In our relations with the Russian Federation, we shall intensively contribute to the efforts at creating four common spaces in the framework of the European Union. With respect to other countries of Europe, the Slovak Republic will develop bilateral relations based on mutual respect and aimed at achieving mutually beneficial results in conformity with the values of her foreign policy.

Due to the EU accession the Slovak Republic has gained an opportunity to actively influence the internal processes of the Union. Slovakia will promote its further development as a union of nation states, strictly adhering to the subsidiarity principle. In the opinion of Slovakia, the key element for removing disparities among the Member States is the principle of solidarity, which it will stress in the development and application of European financial instruments. The Slovak Republic will actively contribute to accomplishment of the strategic goal of European integration, namely *creation of civilisation, civil, legal and economic area capable of its own dynamic sustainable development, and effective co-operation and competition at global level*. After it has fulfilled the necessary criteria, Slovakia will become part of the Schengen area and the member of the Economic and Monetary Union. The Slovak Republic will focus on searching optimum conditions for active work within EU structures. Her long-term objective will be to maximise the use of EU potential with the aim of securing sustainable development of the country and of asserting Slovak foreign policy priorities within the EU and in the broader context. The Slovak Republic wants to become a Member State achieving a higher-than-average level of parameters of economic and social

development, and to make her contribution to further development of the European Union based on her own positive experience with building a knowledge-based economy. With a view to preserving the European diversity, we shall promote the use and development of the Slovak language and culture of the citizens of Slovakia. Regarding current developments in the EU, Slovakia will support the building of capabilities of the European Security and Defence Policy of the European Union. These capabilities should be developed as complementary to those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which we perceive as a key guarantee of national security and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic. Slovak diplomacy will strengthen the position of the European Union primarily in such areas as crisis management, conflict prevention, energy security, fight against international organised crime and illegal migration, and in other security fields. Within the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe, the Slovak Republic will take part in pan-European discussions concerning observance of human rights and freedoms in the spirit of democracy and freedom. Slovakia will support the strengthening of international organisations' capacity to act through preventive diplomacy and post-conflict reconstruction of regions affected by armed conflicts.

The transatlantic dimension

At the level of transatlantic relations, Slovakia will consistently support the *policy of developing and strengthening the alliance between the countries of Europe and of North America*. Our mutual relations are based on shared values of democracy and respect for human rights, bearing witness to our belonging to the same civilisation heritage. The Slovak Republic perceives the United States as a strategic partner, and views the alliance with that country as one of the pillars of security at a global scale.

Slovakia considers the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to be the key instrument for preserving peace and security in the world, and a crucial security forum. Its influence and credibility depend on available military potential and on the safeguarding of international legal framework. The Slovak Republic will take steps against weakening the Alliance's capacity to act. We consider further expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to be an instrument for expanding the space of stability and democracy.

The Slovak Republic supports the development of transatlantic initiatives aimed against global security threats. Slovakia will continue to be a reliable ally in the fight against terrorism and against proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction.

Global Dimension

The ongoing process of globalisation has both positive and negative effects for Slovakia. Because of its location in one of the most highly developed micro-regions of the world, Slovakia must take her share of responsibility also for the developments at the global scale. It will assume the share of responsibility that corresponds to its international position. Globalisation enables Slovakia to actively develop its relations also with remote countries. Through mutually beneficial co-operation with regional powers and with dynamically developing countries, as well as with the protagonists of world cultural heritage, Slovakia can multiply its own potential.

At the institutional level, Slovakia will *support the multilateral system of relations*, rights and responsibilities in the framework of international institutions to which it belongs. Slovak diplomacy supports measures designed to enhance the effectiveness of the multilateral system, the ability to adequately respond to the emerging problems and the building of capabilities for their solution. Being a member of the European Union, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Slovakia is naturally committed to reaching a consensus when seeking answers to global issues within the agenda of these organisations. The Slovak Republic continues to attach special significance to the universal United Nations Organisation, work of its specialised agencies, and supports its reforms aimed at improving the effectiveness of the system. We are fully committed to preserving peaceful coexistence among nations. At the level of specific political agenda, Slovakia will devote special attention to such key issues as *the fight against terrorism, arms control, respect for human rights and freedoms, development co-operation, effective state administration and sustainable development*. The Slovak Republic considers active approach to these issues in both close and remote parts of the world not only as a moral imperative, but also as an investment into the future growth and prosperity of the world community. Slovakia is not isolated in addressing these specific questions, as it adheres to the common values of the Euroatlantic community which are also pursued by a growing number of like-minded countries all over the world. Slovak diplomacy will promote the key issues in a long-term and within a precisely defined space with the objective of reaching adequate

results. The expected social and economic progress of Slovakia will lead to expanding its capacities for a more intensive involvement in global issues.

The Slovak Republic does not consider itself to be directly threatened by another country. Serious security risks can arise from unforeseen technological accidents and natural disasters. The main security risk for the country is terrorism. Slovakia will take decisive actions to counter terrorism in co-operation with her allies everywhere where this will be necessary, using the most effective means to this end. Besides repressive actions and intelligence exchange, it will take part in developing and implementing a strict international framework in the area of controlling proliferation of all kinds of weapons, from small weapons to the weapons of mass destruction. In respect of this, permanent monitoring of the respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms by all governments, in conformity with undertakings given under the Charter of the United Nations, is an important preventive procedure. A high degree of poverty, diseases and illiteracy are the breeding ground for extremism of all types. Slovakia subscribes to the Millennium development objectives and will actively contribute towards their achievement through its national programme of development co-operation and through international organisations. Efforts at securing a healthy environment and improving the well being of people are part of sustainable development strategies that Slovakia will promote as a standard in the international community.

Summary of the Strategy of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic

The Slovak Republic pursues foreign policy which is accountable to its own citizens and transparent and predictable for its allies and partners. The Slovak Republic takes part in the efforts aimed at actively addressing possible threats and at eliminating their causes; the degree of its participation reflects its human, economic and military potential.

The core of foreign policy of the Slovak Republic as a full fledged member of the European Union and of the North Atlantic Alliance will consist in the efforts at maintaining a balance between the values and interests, national potential and its sustainable use, while consistently adhering to the accepted values.

Outside of integration groupings, the Slovak Republic will develop mutually beneficial and transparent bilateral and multilateral relations with other interested countries. In developing these relations, Slovakia will adhere to the accepted values and will pursue her own legitimate interests.

The medium-term strategy is an open document which serves to guide the activities of individual actors in the area of foreign policy of the Slovak Republic in the period until 2015.