

The Government will propose and push for strengthening the status of the Specialised Criminal Court and of the Special Prosecution Office through a constitutional statute.

The Government will strengthen the procedural independence of prosecutors and will change the status of the ministry of justice vis-à-vis the prosecution office in relation to the issuance of generally binding opinions of the minister of justice.

The Government will take account of the needs of the prison system and, in this connection, will ensure appropriate staffing of the Corps of Prison and Court Guards; depending on the budget, it will expand the capacity of prisons and make an effort at strengthening the instruments for the genuine re-education of sentenced persons in the framework of care for sentenced persons during the service of custodial sentences and after their release.

While respecting the human dignity of mentally ill and dangerous sexual crime offenders and repeat offenders, the Government will take steps to expeditiously build a special facility for the provision of care to these offenders who require special conditions for their own protection and for the protection of the public.

4.2 INTERNAL ORDER AND SECURITY

Law and order in the state and security of its citizens are permanent prerequisites for the sound development of each society. The rule of law and respect for the law are the foundations of a free society. Key institutions for public safety, law and order are the police and other law enforcement agencies of the state. The Government will vigorously demand them to fulfil their basic mission, i.e., to be tough on crime and decent towards citizens. However, the function of the protection of internal order and security cannot be solely the responsibility of these institutions. The Government will push for also making other state entities with competences in the area of internal order and security take their share of responsibility much more seriously. Moreover, it also expects local government bodies of municipalities and towns to show greater commitment to the protection of lives, health, property, rights and freedoms of citizens.

It is, in particular, the Police Force that must employ its powers, personnel potential, resources and means more consistently and effectively in order to enhance the feeling of security and safety of the citizens. The Government will demand greater openness of the police towards citizens, improvement of mutual communication, and more effective use of submissions from citizens. The Government will incorporate the Railway Police into the organisational structure of the Police Force, and the Ministry of Interior's Office of Border and Alien Police into the organisational structure of the Police Force Presidium.

The Government is firmly committed to intervening more vigorously against and imposing harsher punishments for organised crime. It will adopt the system for the protection of persons reporting serious crimes and will increase the effectiveness of the institution of cooperating accused. By amending the criminal legislation, it will improve the use of operational and investigative activities and of electronic surveillance.

The Government will also focus attention on petty crime with which citizens come across most frequently. It will, *inter alia*, increase the number of police officers on patrol duty, especially in problem areas. It will strengthen the protection of property of the citizens living near socially marginalised communities. It will take steps to build trust in state institutions within the Roma community (by recruiting Roma police officers for the Police Force and municipal police), including through strengthening protection against usury. The Government will put forward a new draft legislation governing the status and activities of the municipal police. It will provide financial assistance for prevention programmes and projects

of building camera monitoring systems in municipalities with the aim of enhancing the safety of persons and property and pushing vandalism and hooliganism out of public areas and town centres that report increased incidences of crime and public order violations.

In case of minor offences of the petty theft type, the Government will consider the possibility of introducing the obligation of damage compensation representing double the damage that was sustained, having the form of community service or financial compensation. In case of minors, this obligation would fall to their parents or legal guardians.

The Government will adopt a new society-wide strategic plan of the Slovak Republic for crime prevention in the upcoming years. It attaches importance to completing the development and stabilising the already existing structures of the crime prevention system at national and local levels, and to applying a systems approach to financing crime prevention and prevention-related training activities.

One of the Government's key priorities will be the fight against corruption. The Government will take measures to strengthen and improve links between the police, the prosecution service and the courts aimed at speeding up and increasing the effectiveness of proceedings in serious corruption matters during the entire chain of procedural steps, i. e., from the detection, investigation, and indictment to the sentencing of the offender. By making effective use of police capabilities, legislative and technical means and tools, it wants to achieve a higher success rate in detecting cases of corruption. The Government will take steps to increase the quality of setting up specialised police forces, especially by applying stricter selection criteria for service in the police and by attracting top specialists from the private sector for work in the Police Force Presidium's office for the fight against corruption and the office for the fight against organised crime. The Government supports the initiatives to create the European anti-corruption network. It will conclude the drafting of the criminal legislation to punish corruption and will draw up new legislation aimed at increasing the transparency of the financing of political parties and movements and of election campaigns for all types of elections in conformity with the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). The Government pledges to also step up the efforts at enhancing the legal awareness of citizens, and at overcoming entrenched and deep-rooted attitudes and mental models underlying the perception of this negative phenomenon in today's society.

The Government will create the necessary conditions, especially within the financial police of the Police Force, for a consistent application of the law on the proof of origin of property, in order to make the law effectively discourage the acquisition of property from illegal proceeds and become an effective instrument for seizing the property thus acquired.

The Government declares that there is no place for expressions of extremism in our society. It will use all its lawful powers and tools to combat extremism, including through strengthening and increasing the quality of the structures for the fight against extremism in terms of their staffing and professional competence. By using all available means, the Government will prevent extremists from taking the initiative to address the problems of the Roma community. The Government will enforce a zero tolerance policy against perpetrators of individual, group or institutional violence committed in conflict with the principles of human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and international treaties. After it has carried out the analysis of the current situation, it will approve a new concept of the fight against extremism.

The Government will support the completion of the analysis and coordination centre for the fight against organised crime. It will strengthen the measures for the fight against terrorism with an emphasis on the commitments of the Slovak Republic taken at the level of the bodies of the European Union. It will adopt additional legal instruments and means for eliminating the threats of money laundering and the financing of terrorism. It will continue in

the transposition of basic international standards into the legal system of the Slovak Republic in the area of the fight against money laundering, the financing of terrorism and members of terrorist groups, and against other forms of assistance for their unlawful activities.

The basic framework for the anti-drug policy of the Government in the upcoming period will continue to be the European Union Drug Strategy for 2005 – 2012, applied to the conditions of the Slovak Republic in its National Anti-Drug Strategy. The Government will devote special attention to the fight against the distribution and consumption of drugs both as regards drug control and drug prevention. It will strengthen the legal and executive competences of the Police Force for the fight against drugs.

The Government will prepare a new comprehensive national strategy for the fight against trafficking in people and for the protection of victims of such criminal activity. It will strengthen the fight against trafficking in people both as regards the number of staff and professional competence. It will pursue the imposition of stricter penalties for criminal offences of trafficking in people, child pornography, violence against children, sexual abuse and torture.

In 2009, the Slovak Republic got close to meeting the undertaking towards the European Union to reduce the number of road traffic victims by one-half by 2010. The Government will take measures aimed at keeping the number of road fatalities at the lowest possible level. It will take steps to make the exercise of police powers even better-gearred to protecting all law-abiding drivers and to imposing uncompromising punishment for gross conduct, arrogance and dangerous driving behaviour. The Government will adopt clear rules for narrowing down the margin of discretion in deciding on the imposition of fines for road traffic violations. The Police Force will not be motivated to maximise the revenues from fines for traffic violations. The Government will introduce objective responsibility for traffic violations.

In the e-Government framework, the Government will ensure the issuance of electronic identification cards and adjust the issuance of documents in a manner enabling the secure identification of citizens in e-Government information systems and the use of a certified electronic signature, with a view to enabling the use of documents and information systems for the purposes of secure identification for using services also within the private sector.

The quality of work and good results of the Police Force are conditional on the quality of the human factor and on raising the social standing of police officers. Certain corrections that are needed in the system of police education and training include the creation of prerequisites for providing basic police training in the form of setting up permanent public order units. These units will serve to enable police officers to acquire and reinforce requisite practical habits and service discipline before entering active duty.

The risks connected with the work of policemen, the dangerous and demanding character of their tasks, and high degree of their responsibility will have to be balanced out by applying and improving the elements of effective protection of police officers. In addition, the Government will lay emphasis on internal control within the police force by strengthening the capacity of and technical support for control and inspection mechanisms, and by strengthening the system of independence of inspection bodies. In relation to the ministry of the interior, the Government will demand the ministry enact its own measures and/or present proposals for removing the obstacles hindering or preventing the disclosure and effective investigation of corruption, unlawful cooperation of the police with criminal elements, and other criminal activities. The Government will support the implementation of the project of “smart police officers” (cashless collection of fines, use of technical means to control the handling of violations), which is intended to increase the transparency of handling traffic violations and prevent police corruption.

The Government will maintain the system of social security for the armed services, Fire and Rescue Corps, and Mountain Rescue Service. To secure the sustainability and equality of the system, it will propose certain changes that will apply to new officers admitted to these services after the entry into effect of these changes. The Government is well aware of the fact that the worsening of the status and working conditions of police officers increases the risk of crime, thus weakening the security of citizens. Following the already-implemented changes in the remuneration and social security of police officers and members of the Fire and Rescue Corps and Mountain Rescue Service, it will focus on housing policy as an additional employee retention element. In the area of material and technical support for policemen, further necessary replacement and modernisation of police armament and equipment and modernisation of police facilities will be carried out in line with the financial possibilities of the sector, also drawing on funds and financial instruments of the European Union and other international assistance instruments. Priority will be given to specialised police units. The Government will ensure the rearming of police officers, especially those in direct operational positions.

The Government will draw up a new concept of the security system of the Slovak Republic with the objective of ensuring uniform crisis management in the face of military and non-military threats and its more effective functioning at all levels. The implementation of the new concept will also include the drafting of generally binding legal provisions reflecting the need to expediently adopt and implement necessary measures in and outside crisis situations. The Government will simplify the structure of the security system and create the necessary prerequisites for its transformation in line with the approved Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic and with the international commitments of the Slovak Republic. In the Government's opinion, an important task is the achievement of a qualitatively higher degree of guaranteeing the security of citizens and of the state.

In connection with addressing the consequences of emergency situations (such as natural disasters, industrial accidents and catastrophes), the Government will place increasingly higher demands on guaranteeing the constitutional right of citizens to the protection of their lives, health, property and of the environment. The Government will create the necessary prerequisites for the development of a system of civil protection by 2015, and for the fulfilment of Slovakia's commitments arising from the strategic documents of the EU, NATO and the United Nations. It will ensure more rapid and effective assistance to the population during emergencies and in crisis situations by means of joint deployment of personnel and equipment of all rescue services concerned.

The Government will build a better functioning integrated rescue system by integrating and restructuring the system of operational management of crisis management bodies and of basic rescue services, especially by expanding the services provided by means of the single European emergency number, 112. It will prepare a new concept of organisation, functioning and development of the integrated rescue system for the years 2010 – 2015 accompanied by an action plan, and a new law on the integrated rescue system.

The Government recognises that the standard of equipment of the Fire and Rescue Corps and conditions for its deployment are still lagging behind the standard of the developed countries of the EU. Depending on the possibilities of the state budget, EU funds and financial instruments and other international assistance instruments, it will allocate additional resources in order to gradually increase the number of firemen, improve their material and technical standards and replace outdated equipment, and to finance the ongoing upgrading of fire stations. It will support the renewal of material and technical equipment of municipal fire departments with the aim of improving their capability for action and effectiveness in fighting fires, providing assistance, and carrying out rescue and maintenance operations in cases of natural disasters, especially floods. The Government will take comprehensive steps to address

the existing problems in the performance of mountain rescue operations in order to create better conditions for the provision of adequate help by members of the Mountain Rescue Service.

Two and a half years after accession to the Schengen area, the Slovak Republic is a fully valuable member. The upcoming repeat evaluation of the Slovak Republic in 2012 or 2013 creates the commitment for the Government not to relent in its efforts to implement the Schengen acquis. Finalisation of relevant measures concerning internal borders, including the update of projects on a temporary re-introduction of checks at internal borders, quality improvement of physical and technical equipment for securing the external state border with Ukraine and of Schengen-type international airports, completion of the 2nd generation Schengen information system and of the visa information system – these are the Slovak Republic's priorities for increasing the level of security and protection of the Schengen area, to be co-financed from EU funds.

The Government will take steps to improve the quality of mechanisms for managing the migration and integration of aliens, placing emphasis on the alignment and harmonisation of relevant procedures and policies with the developments and trends in other EU Member States. In connection with sharing the migration burden, the Slovak Republic will participate in the resettlement process and accept migrants from those EU countries that experience large inflows of migrants, and/or from the countries covered by the EU decision on the provision of humanitarian assistance based on the solidarity principle. In the field of asylum, the Government will focus on completing stage two of the establishment of the common European asylum system. It will support the harmonisation of asylum policies and cooperation with other EU Member States, especially as regards the quality of decision-making procedures, and will foster a high level of protection against the misuse of the asylum institution. The system of readmission agreements with Russia and Ukraine will be completed. The Government will prepare policy concepts for the migration policy of the Slovak Republic in the period of 2011 – 2015.

Public administration

Modern and advanced society is epitomised by a stable and rationally organised public administration that provides quality service to citizens. The criteria for this kind of public administration are transparency, economy, accessibility, performance financing, decentralisation and application of market elements. The Government aspires to step up the dynamics of the processes of modernisation, economisation and computerisation of public administration.

The modernisation of public administration is a long-term and complex process. It must be accompanied by the de-bureaucratisation of its structures and apparatus. The Government will take steps to streamline and increase the effectiveness of public administration. It will ensure the screening of all public authorities with the aim of revealing potential redundancies and the implementation of audits and restructuring of ministries and other central state administration authorities. The Government will foster the streamlining of the procedures and the de-bureaucratisation of the handling of information by public authorities. It will make the necessary efforts to avoid the need to request information from citizens where the relevant authority already possesses such information, or where it can obtain such information otherwise. The Government will introduce the principle according to which the failure of a public authority to respect the time limit will mean that the citizen will be entitled to be reimbursed the administration fee.

The Government will re-assess the results of the decentralisation of competences at all levels of public administration. It will re-assess the exercise of competences at the level of

territorial self-governments with the objective of setting out clear rules governing the respective roles of regional and local self-governing authorities.

The Government will carry out a local government reform that will motivate the municipalities to voluntary cooperation, pooling of administrative capacities and municipality mergers. It will support the creation of joint municipal offices that should improve the possibilities for citizens' contacts with public authorities, and streamline and improve the work of local self-governing authorities. The Government will take steps to strengthen the independent control of territorial self-governing authorities.

In the framework of economisation of public administration, the Government will consider the possibilities of further financial decentralisation. It will adjust the system of re-allocation of public finance between individual levels of state administration and self-governing authorities to ensure its more equitable use and to make the amount of allocated financial means correspond to the scope of performed activities and to the financial demands on various types of administration.

Computerisation plays a decisive role in addressing all public administration problems. It is based on the modernisation of all existing systems, introduction of new systems, their harmonisation and integration, achievement of compatibility and interoperability in all areas of public administration. This is the basic prerequisite for providing good-quality, timely and accessible services to citizens. By the same token, the Government will support the implementation of strategic tasks in the field of information security.

To increase the transparency of the decision-making processes in the allocation of budgetary funds for the areas of internal order and security and of public administration, the Government will develop and utilise the possibilities offered by the integrated information system in the budget chapter of the ministry of the interior, especially as regards project management and analyses of the effectiveness of budgetary performance of individual entities.

The Government will make wider use of and develop the potential for cooperation between public administration authorities and the non-profit sector. It will create the necessary legislative framework to enable non-profit organisations to play a more effective role in satisfying the needs of citizens and in improving the quality of people's lives and quality of the governance of society and democracy by strengthening people's participation in the decision-making processes. The Government will create the preconditions for the development of volunteering, including the definition of the concept of a volunteer. The Government will support the activities of charitable organisations, non-governmental organisations and Christian communities that reach the best results, especially from EU funds.

In the area of entrepreneurial activities performed under a trade licence, the Government will assess the scope of competence of trade licence authorities providing "one-stop-shop" services connected with authorising the entry of foreign and Slovak natural and legal persons to doing business in the territory of the Slovak Republic. It will examine the possibility of simplifying the process of granting trade licences for those trades that only require notification, and the particulars needed for business registration of natural and legal persons.

The Government will draw up the election code with the aim of bringing clarity, unification of terminology, and uniform wording of certain provisions of the electoral legislation in force. The Government will propose the rule that will provide for a single mandate for members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and members of the European Parliament. It will introduce the possibility of citizens using the Internet to vote, along with the introduction of single electronic identifiers.

In line with the National Concept of Computerisation of Public Administration, the Government will continue linking up all registry offices with the central information system and building a central database of registry events for the country as a whole, which will provide services to the registry offices and to the public.

In the area of acquisition of citizenship of the Slovak Republic, the Government will introduce strict rules and control over the granting of citizenship. It will amend the legislation adopted by the Slovak Republic in response to the dual citizenship law of the Republic of Hungary in order to eliminate the undesirable negative effects of the law for the citizens of the Slovak Republic. The Government will improve the services provided to Slovak citizens who are staying abroad for longer periods to work or study, primarily by accelerating and simplifying registry and other administrative procedures.

4.3 SECURITY POLICY AND DEFENCE

The security of the Slovak Republic forms an integral part of the North Atlantic Community security. NATO's collective defence system and the EU Common Security and Defence Policy provide the Slovak Republic with crucial security guarantees. They represent primary instruments for defending and advancing the security interests of the Slovak Republic, along with other international organisations in which Slovakia is a member. For that reason, the Government will contribute to enhancing their action readiness and credibility.

The Government will implement its security and defence policy in such a way that the Slovak Republic can adequately and in time respond to situations threatening the security of its citizens, the State and allies. It will make an active contribution towards ensuring security and protecting the values which Slovakia shares with its allies and partners.

Considering the need to ensure security for our citizens and the defence of the State, while taking into consideration the strategic documents of NATO and the EU, including the Alliance's new Strategic Concept, the Government will carry out a strategic review of the defence of the Slovak Republic with a view to defining a political-and-strategic framework for long-term defence capability of the Slovak Republic and its Armed Forces, including a stable resource perspective. During that process, the principal security policy and defence documents will be reviewed in order to reflect the current international arrangements and global security environment as well as the objectives identified in the latest NATO and EU strategic documents.

Within the defence-related strategic review process the Government will provide for a broader dialogue with the expert community as well as the public in order to achieve a nation-wide consensus on security policy and defence of the State, priorities, objectives, responsibilities and needs of the Armed Forces. The findings and recommendations of the defence strategic review will be subject to a public consultation that will be launched before the end of 2012 and incorporated into principal strategic and concept document and related legislation.

The Government will adopt systemic measures aimed at streamlining and increasing effectiveness of resource management, enhancing transparency and effective use of funds budgeted for defence.

The Government will continue addressing the property restitution issues concerning the Javorina military district in order to restore legitimate property rights.

The Government will put through changes in the system of classified information protection in order to simplify handling with such documents and reduce their number, while ensuring the minimum security standard of NATO and the EU.

The Government will put through a system of regular, unbiased and transparent performance assessment of the defence sector by means of public reporting.

The Government will maintain a high engagement of our Armed Forces in international crisis management operations of international organisations and High Readiness Forces of NATO and the EU. In line with the priorities of Slovakia's foreign and defence policy, our efforts will focus on deploying in few operations compact contingents built on the basis of organic troops. The Government will review the engagement of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in international crisis management operations with a view to further strengthening their contribution in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan in line with the international community's strategy for gradual handing over responsibility for the country to Afghan authorities.

The Government will use the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group, as well as the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies of the EU, to intensify Central-European cooperation in the field of security policy and to actively pursue and advance Slovakia's interests in NATO and the EU.

The Government will introduce a system of comprehensive approach of public authorities to creating and deploying military and civil capabilities in international crisis management operations.

The Government will support international cooperation in the field of capability sharing in order to use the existing resources in an effective manner.

To ensure that the transformation of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic can proceed in accordance with the conclusions of the defence strategic review, the Government will put in place conditions providing for long-run, stable and appropriate resources. Human resource development and Armed Forces modernisation are considered to be the fundamental pillars of the transformation.

Experiences gained from operations and international military formations will be intensively and consistently used in the training and education of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.

The Government will maintain the social security system of the Armed Forces. With a view to ensuring the sustainability and fairness of that system, the Government will prepare modifications to that system that will apply to those who join the Armed Forces after coming of those modifications into force.

The Government will focus on the targeted modernisation of the Armed Forces, concentrating limited resources on the gradual, comprehensive modernisation of organic troops in order to achieve the required capabilities. Consideration will be given to the introduction of an active reserve system.

The Government will support the involvement of Slovakia's defence industry in the international arena, in particular in the framework of the modernisation and security projects of NATO and the European Defence Agency. The Government will create conducive conditions for defence research and development with a view to providing for the needs of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and developing capabilities in the areas where the Slovak Republic can provide value added within the international community.

The Government will ensure the readiness of the Armed Forces to adequately, quickly and effectively support the components of the integrated rescue system in preventing and addressing the consequences of natural disasters, industrial, traffic or other operational accidents threatening the lives, health and security of citizens and causing major material damage.

The Government will enhance the civilian aspects of the security policy and defence of the State by means of a regular and open dialogue with the professional community and civil associations with professional links with the Armed Forces.

The Government will support an efficient and effective public diplomacy aimed at providing citizens with objective information on the objectives, responsibilities and needs of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. It will make efforts to maintain the high confidence level of citizens in the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.

The Government will cultivate national and military traditions that strengthen patriotism, and give adequate support to war veterans.

4.4 FOREIGN POLICY

The foreign policy of the Slovak Republic will be intelligible and trustworthy, and will reflect the values adhered to by Slovakia and shared by the Euro-Atlantic community. It will honour and respect our allied commitments. As a member of the EU and NATO, Slovakia will take an active part in the creation of the system of international relations with the central role of the UN, based on fundamental democratic values, rights and freedoms, international law and effective multilateralism. The foreign policy will serve the citizens of the Slovak Republic and will protect their interests. It will be creative, actively looking for new opportunities, coordinated and capable of achieving its objectives in cooperation with the various actors at home and abroad. It will be characterised by communication, openness and mutual dialogue, and by cooperation with civil society in the formulation and evaluation of foreign policy.

Value-based foreign policy

The Government will consistently defend the interests of the Slovak Republic and of its citizens. The Government will assert the foreign policy interests of Slovakia based on such values as the right to life, personal freedom, respect for human dignity and other values that make up the democratic system of fundamental human rights and freedoms of Slovakia. It will promote sober patriotism and awareness of European affiliation. It will condemn nationalism, totalitarian ideologies and ethical relativism, which weakens respect for values. At multilateral and bilateral forums, it will promote the principles of plural democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights and freedoms, and combat expressions of extremism, racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. It will restrict official contacts with countries committing gross and flagrant violations of human rights and freedoms on their own citizens and, on the other hand, will step up support for and intensify relations with their civil societies and human rights activists. In interstate relations, it will honour and respect the principles and norms of international law and commitments of the Slovak Republic under international law. It will strongly denounce any interference with the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, including in the form of creating institutional links between a foreign state and the citizens of the Slovak Republic without prior agreement with the Slovak Republic, and will reject the practice of adopting extraterritorial legal standards. It will assert the idea that the activity and decisions of the Council of Europe and of the European Court of Human Rights should respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and, at the same time, should steer clear of judicial activism.

Good neighbourly relations, regional security and cooperation

Through its domestic and foreign policy geared towards good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, the Government will actively contribute to the stability and development of the central European region. It will maintain traditional, historically-formed

privileged relations with the Czech Republic, expand relations with Poland, which are of particular significance for Slovakia and transcend the regional dimension, and relations with Austria, especially as regards the use of our common potential for growth and regional development.

The Government wants, in particular, to improve relations with the Republic of Hungary. In the Government's opinion, the basis for the development of bilateral relations with the Republic of Hungary is represented by the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation of 1995, and by the EU and NATO membership of the two countries. It is in this framework that the Government will identify the points of convergence of common interests and promote a positive and forward-looking agenda in mutual relations for the benefit of the citizens of both countries.

It will build greater confidence in and improve the effectiveness of the V4 Group, and use its potential to build stability in the region and to increase the prestige and weight of its member states in the EU. Within the expanded V4 plus format, it will focus mainly on promoting cooperation in priority sectors (infrastructure, energy, funds) and supporting the EU enlargement process.

A secure, economically advancing, democratic and free Ukraine represents an important component of pan-European stability. The Government will continue to actively support the integration and modernisation prospects of Ukraine, which bring the country closer to the area of security and prosperity, in which Slovakia is firmly established. To this end, the Government will conduct an intensive dialogue with the representatives of the government and of civil society in Ukraine. Modernisation of Ukraine, improvement in the functioning of its internal market, and promotion of its economic growth can also create more opportunities for the east of Slovakia.

Active European policy

The Government wants to conduct an active European policy corresponding to the fact that Slovakia not only belongs to but also contributes to shaping the EU. As a member of the EU, the Slovak Republic will assert its interests using the instruments that are available under the Lisbon Treaty. It will consistently apply the principle of subsidiarity, especially in such areas as civil rights, social policy, education and culture. It will advocate a substantial strengthening of EU-level mechanisms, especially the Stability and Growth Pact (including its sanctions), in order to achieve sustainable stabilisation of public finance in eurozone countries. As regards the areas falling under qualified majority voting, Slovakia will seek suitable solutions in cooperation with other countries with similar interests. It will apply the principle of unanimity – the main pillar of cooperation based on trust and equality between countries – in the adoption of decisions at the EU level in the area of direct taxation, criminal law, family policy, foreign policy, and defence. It will monitor all legislative and non-legislative proposals of the European Commission with a view to enabling the National Council of the Slovak Republic to exercise its rights emanating from the Lisbon Treaty.

The Government perceives the Europe 2020 Strategy and the resulting initiatives as a common instrument for implementing EU reforms which are needed, in the short term, for the recovery from the crisis and, in the medium term, for achieving sustainable and sound economic growth in the EU and strengthening the Union in the process of globalisation.

In the debate concerning the post-2013 budget (the multiannual financial framework), the Government will strive to achieve an optimum budget position. In particular, it will emphasise the preservation of the largest possible share of the cohesion policy in EU budget expenditures, and the shifting of EU budget expenditures to higher value-added areas (increase of EU competitiveness, education, research and innovation).

The Government will support steps aimed at increasing the energy security of the EU – a key issue for internal prosperity and the security of Slovakia.

The Government will take part in the implementation of the EU's objectives of cutting emissions, expanding renewable resources, and improving energy efficiency. It will foster policies and instruments that will ensure cost efficiency in implementing these goals and minimise the negative impact on the competitiveness of the Slovak economy.

The Government will support the continued enlargement of the European Union. It expects accelerated accession negotiations between Iceland and the EU, and an early conclusion of accession negotiations with Croatia. It will provide active assistance within the integration process of the Western Balkans countries by sharing its experience of European integration and implementation of internal reforms.

It will support the development of cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the concrete offer of integration prospects to Ukraine. Slovak foreign policy will actively contribute to shaping the Eastern Partnership and the policies of the European Union vis-à-vis the post-Soviet area.

Guarantees of security, transatlantic relations, relations with the United States

NATO is the main guarantor of security for the Slovak Republic. The Government will make efforts at strengthening the links between the Allies within the organisation and at its successful transformation aimed at enabling it to respond to new challenges and threats. It will take a proactive stance in the areas of combating terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, both within the UN and in the framework of institutions and bodies of the EU, NATO and the OSCE. It will stress the prevention and strengthening of global, European and regional security. It will encourage closer mutual cooperation between NATO and the EU so as to make the best possible use of the strengths of the two organisations in the interest of peace, security and prosperity in Europe and the world.

The Government will strengthen all aspects of the transatlantic link. In bilateral relations with the United States, the Government will focus, besides security issues, on the development of economic cooperation and on cooperation in the area of research and development with the aim of creating better conditions for economic growth in Slovakia and for the development of a knowledge-based society.

Russia, countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Southern Caucasus

The Government has a vested interest in good political, economic and cultural relations with Russia. The depth of these relations will be determined by the values to which it adheres and by the clearly defined interests of Slovakia. In the bilateral field, it will pursue the pragmatic objective of developing mutually beneficial economic relations, the deepening of cultural relations and learning about one another. Slovakia has a natural interest in a modern, plural and democratic Russia respecting the freedom of individuals, and will support Russia on this road both bilaterally and within the EU, NATO and in other international organisations. It will support strong and transparent relations between the EU and Russia (including in the energy field), and will endorse the membership of Russia in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In relation to other countries, it will lay emphasis on economic cooperation, democratic development, support for their independence, building of their state capacities and on regional cooperation, drawing on the transformation experience of Slovakia.

Economic policy abroad

Foreign policy will contribute to promoting economic growth, inflow of foreign investment, and job creation. To this end, the Government will create a functioning model of single foreign-service management with the objective of making the best possible use of the capacities of the network of Slovak diplomatic missions, including full integration of trade and economic departments abroad into the structure of the ministry of foreign affairs. The

geographical distribution of representative offices will reflect the key economic interests of Slovakia.

Development assistance

As a member of the EU and OECD, the Slovak Republic respects the principle of international solidarity with the poor and less-developed countries of the world. Development assistance is the expression of the character and of the ability of Slovakia and its citizens to help others. In line with European principles and with the interests of our country, the Government will strive to make official development assistance (ODA) more transparent and effective. It will make certain that the ODA be consistently based on the knowledge of the needs of the target countries and of the international donor environment, and be capable of providing a flexible response to current global challenges while, at the same time, preserving its pragmatic dimension (the use of the transformation experience of Slovakia). In the bilateral programme, it will reduce the number of target countries, improve management by programmes, and introduce a system of independent monitoring and project success rating. It will better communicate the results achieved to the domestic and international audience. It will conduct a dialogue with non-governmental organisations and seek a synergy with relevant international actors. It will promote development education at schools and education of the young generation in the spirit of solidarity and togetherness.

Assistance and services to Slovak citizens abroad, Slovak compatriots

The citizens of the Slovak Republic experiencing emergency situations abroad have the right to ask their homeland for assistance. The Government will make sure that assistance provided to the citizens of the Slovak Republic in the protection of their interests and rights is of high quality, expedient, effective and accessible. In those countries where the Slovak Republic does not have a representative office, the Government will conclude agreements with our closest partners concerning the representation of our citizens. It will improve services for Slovak citizens who are staying abroad for longer periods to work or study, especially by accelerating and simplifying registry procedures and other administrative procedures.

The Government wishes that the citizens can be proud of their country abroad. It will create a functioning mechanism of coordinated global presentation of Slovakia. It will invite a broader expert community to participate in the process of developing the presentation identity of Slovakia, and will also cooperate with the academic and business sector.

It will strengthen the development of compatriot communities abroad, and foster the preservation and development of their cultural identity and links with Slovakia.

New challenges

Given the high dynamics of changes in the security environment, the Government will devote increased attention to global challenges that may have a direct impact on the Slovak Republic (climate change, poverty, drinking water resources, migration, failing states, cyber attacks). In these areas, it will take an active part in the formulation of EU and NATO policies with a view to making their positions on the global scene also reflect the long-term interests of the Slovak Republic and its citizens. It will formulate an intelligible and balanced position of the Slovak Republic on the issue of climate change. It supports the creation of crisis management and preventive diplomacy structures within the European External Service. In light of the recent surge of cyber attacks in the neighbouring region, the Government will assert the consolidation of cyber protection capabilities in the framework of NATO strategic planning.

Openness and public control of foreign policy

To better serve the citizens, foreign policy must be effective, financially viable and legitimate. The Government will place an emphasis on strategic planning of foreign policy. In view of changes in the broader foreign policy environment, Slovak diplomats must be capable of cooperating, in a flexible manner, with local and foreign partners in asserting the interests of the Slovak Republic, and to be deployed to the European diplomatic service. A high qualification level and professional competence of the staff of the ministry of foreign affairs will create a more effective foreign service. The Government will review the network of diplomatic missions with the objective of ensuring the protection of the interests and rights of the Slovak Republic and of its citizens, while making better use of public finance. It will further develop the basis of programme budgeting and project management. It will review the effectiveness and the legal form of the Diplomatic Corps Service Management.

It will increase the legitimacy of the formulation of foreign policy and of its implementation. It will conduct an active discussion on foreign policy with civil society. Interactions with civil society will be based on communication, coordination and cooperation.

The Government will improve the foreign ministry's training system with a view to reaching the objective of increasing the quality of staff members of the ministry of foreign affairs and of increasing their involvement in the training of local officials on foreign policy. In line with foreign policy objectives, it will support project-based links between Slovak and foreign universities, research centres, academic institutions and other non-state organisations.