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## FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to have the opportunity to address this distinguished audience. I am very delighted to be here today presenting the foreign and security policy of the Slovak Republic. As you can see I have modified a little the title of the lecture, because we are building our security policy as we are sure we do not have any enemies in the Europe any more.

Issues of international relations and foreign policy, including security, is a complicated and multifaceted area involving many factors at various levels of analysis. As far as I know, this is the first lecture of Slovak Ambassador, anyway I am the first Ambassador of the Slovak Republic appointed to the Kingdom of Norway since December 1999. So I am the first diplomat from Slovakia who has the privilege to deliver lecture to distinguished audience of the Oslo Military Society. Therefore, first I would evaluate development, both international and domestic in Slovakia, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, which marked the end of one era and, the beginning of a new, different one. Recalling the changes that happened since that historical turning point is an important backdrop for understanding priorities of Slovak foreign and security policy, a presentation of which will follow that general introduction.

Let me present you the map of Europe and where Slovakia is situated in the region and the basic data about my country.



**AREA:** 49 035 km<sup>2</sup>.  
**CAPITAL:** BRATISLAVA

**POPULATION:** 5,387 mil.

**LANGUAGE:** SLOVAK + MINORITIES

**CURRENCY:** SLOVAK KROWN; MARKET EXCH: 1 \$ = appr. 45,0 SKK

**ECONOMIES:**

ENGINEERING AND CHEMICALS, TEXTILES, ELECTRONICS, LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION, ARABLE CROPS, FRUIT AND VINE, FORESTRY.

The dramatic events that were taking place in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 - 1990 brought about momentous changes in both, domestic and international dimensions. Domestically, nations of Central and Eastern Europe got rid off communism and embarked upon quite an unknown journey, undertaking an unprecedented multiple transition. The end of that journey was only loosely defined as democracy and market economy. There are many models of both democracy as well as market economy in social theory as well as in practice. And the nations of the region engaged in the experiment were also taking with them their own unique historical and cultural luggage. So, the outcome of the endeavor of each of these countries could have been only guessed at that time. On the international plane, the collapse of communist regimes was matched by deep tectonic shifts in the international order: the end of the Cold War, and the end of bipolarity that characterized it. It is true that the Cold War was a remarkably stable era in European and world history. Though it must be pointed out that this stability was at the expense of peoples in Central and Eastern Europe and their freedoms. The dramatic events of 1989-1990 brought this era which some have called also a „long peace“ to a close. What would replace this „long peace“ was not certain.

For comparison, consider previous windows of opportunity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The victory of the Western democratic powers in 1918 and the collapse of the empires that had long dominated Central Europe and the Balkans created a historic opportunity for founding of independent democratic states. The new states in Central and Southern Europe, and Czechoslovakia among them, indeed adopted democratic constitutions and designed their institutions on the Western model. But this experiment in Western-style democracy was short-lived, already in the following decade democracy gave way to authoritarian and corrupt regimes. Czechoslovakia was, in fact, the only exception to the rule of that time, remaining the only „isle of democracy“ in Central and Eastern Europe, and indeed also one of the few in Europe as a whole. Of course, the causes of such a development were manifold, but the overall international environment in Europe was central: it was simply not conducive to efforts at fostering democracy. Another chance appeared few decades later with the end of the Second World War which gave rise to hopes of creating a new post-war order. But the international context was not better: despite promises to allow free and fair elections in liberated countries, the Stalinist Soviet Union had other plans. Carefully staged communist take-overs took place in countries liberated by the Red Army, the Cold War started dividing Europe for long decades into a geopolitical West and East. I would like to add a few words about “Prague spring” during 1968 – 1969. This process was unsuccessful because of no help from Western Europe. The result was occupation by Soviet army and much stronger restrictions afterwards by communist regime.

With the fall of communism over ten years ago, yet another chance occurred in Europe. But this time, the international context has been favourable to the strife of democratising nations.

The Western part of Europe is consolidated, stable, democratic, and prosperous. And moreover, there is a myriad of international institutions, which make their member states closely intertwined and their interests convergent. Most importantly, there are two institutional pillars of European and transatlantic political landscape: the North Atlantic

Treaty Organisation (NATO), and the European Union (EU). Those two organisations play an important role of a „behaviour check“ of new democracies.

In Czechoslovakia, the big tasks of transition, which lay ahead in 1989 –1990, and which had to be dealt with almost simultaneously were many, but they fall basically into three broad groups, which is why some observers have come to call it a „triple transition“: first, creating new political institutions; second, building a market economy; third, forging a new cultural identity with new ties and bonds, and new ethnic and national definitions. If I take just the first point, transforming, or creating political institutions anew, meant not only „rewriting“ the constitution - which in itself is not an easy task - but also implementing this new constitution into an everyday life. In case of Czecho-Slovakia, it meant moreover transforming a „federalized totality“ (to use Václav Havel’s term) into a genuine federation, to define anew the powers of, and relationship between the Czech and Slovak Republics and the federation.

In this connection, the Czechoslovakia split has to be mentioned. When President Havel came up in early 1990 with the proposal to change the name of our republic from Czechoslovak Socialist to simply Czechoslovak, he certainly didn’t want to unleash a long constitutional crisis. But one thing is sure: the period at the beginning of a transformation from a totalitarian to democratic regime characterized by a fragile political scene was not the right backdrop for a thorough re-negotiation of the Czecho-Slovak federation. To create „a more perfect union“ is never an easy task, and the Czecho-Slovak split still waits for a thorough assessment. However, one fact remains clear, as someone has written, „Czecho-Slovakia came apart under the tremendous strain of [a triple transition] ”.

So, in January 1993, there it was: Slovakia in its „year zero“. The start was accompanied by many difficulties. Soon, misgivings about Slovak democracy, political and economic stability, and future development started to be voiced, at home and abroad. Indeed, since 1993 Slovakia has had its ups and downs. Fareed Zakaria pointed out the rise of which it has had an experience with a kind of “illiberal democracy” in his famous article (*“The rise of Illiberal Democracies” in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 76, No.6; November/December 1997*). This kind of internal Slovak development was inevitably reflected in relations of the country with „the rest of the world“. It influences their perception of the country as stable and reliable, or as the opposite. Slovakia learned its painful lessons about this connection between internal and international levels, between domestic and foreign policies. It meant that despite formulating foreign policy priorities such as the OECD, EU and NATO memberships, these priorities were simply neither reasonable, nor attainable due to domestic policies. Slovakia was excluded, or better to say, it had gradually excluded itself from the European and the transatlantic integration processes: in 1997 at the NATO Madrid summit Slovakia, unlike its partners from Visegrad group - Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia – V4, was not invited to begin talks on NATO membership; then in December 1997 at the EU summit in Luxembourg, Slovakia was not invited to begin accession negotiations with the union, again unlike the V4 partners. The reason in both cases was the same: Slovakia did not fulfil political criteria of these institutions.

The general elections held in autumn 1998 meant a key turning point for Slovakia which since then corrected the previous „democratic deficit“. As a result, its position on the international stage has changed as well. We started accession negotiations with the EU, became a member of the OECD (autumn 2000), and are considered a hot candidate for the next round of the NATO enlargement. Slovakia has

also revitalised co-operation in the Central European region. In short, it is a country that can be counted on. Therefore, although Slovakia is indeed only a small country with many ethnic groups, it does not regard itself as a completely powerless object of world and European developments. On the contrary, Slovakia is aware that it has its share of responsibility for what is happening beyond its frontiers.



**Railroads:** 3,662 km (Double-tracked: 1,011 km, Electric: 1,373 km).  
**Roads:** 17,889 km (Motorways 295 km).  
**River ports and danube:** Bratislava and Komarno.  
**Airports:** 25 (International 8).

### Ethnic structure of the Slovak Republic:

Slovak:	85,6 %	Hungarian:	10,5 %
Romani:	1,7 %	Czech:	1,0 %
Ruthenian:	0,3 %	Ukrainian:	0,3 %
Moravian/Silesian:	0,1 %	German:	0,1 %
Jewish	0,01 %	Polish:	0,06 %
Bulgarian:	0,03 %	Others:	0,3 %

For Slovakia, its national interest as broadly defined earlier (ensuring security and prosperity) means above all attaining the membership in NATO and the EU. These two central institutional pillars of the Euro-Atlantic landscape, our membership in them, represent the only realistic way of ensuring our security and prosperity. These priorities are defined in various governmental documents with differing degrees of detail, from the *Program Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic* adopted in 1998, which outlines priorities in general terms, to a very specific yearly *Foreign Policy Assessment and Plan* which every year in a great detail evaluates how we have proceeded on our way towards fulfilling our priorities, and what shall we do next year in order to fulfill them.

Among these program documents, one has a special place. It is called *Foreign Policy Priorities of the Slovak Republic for the Period of 2000 - 2003: Medium-term Concept*. It is specific because it is the first medium term concept of Slovak foreign policy, and also because its time-span goes beyond the present government's term of office.

The document was adopted by our Parliament with the support of all main political parties. In this connection I would like to concentrate only on those priorities that are either of the highest importance to us, or that are in some way specific to Slovak Republic: the EU and NATO, Central Europe, and South-Eastern Europe. Relations with our neighbours have nevertheless had a special place in this Central European

dimension of our foreign policy. Each has had a special significance to us, but I would mention especially the Czech Republic and Hungary.

With the Czechs, we had shared for over 70 years a common state that disintegrated only recently. Czechs are for us Slovaks like brothers. Now being here for more than one year, I can tell, that our relations are similar to those of Norway and Sweden. And we, as well, have invented a lot of jokes about our bigger brother...As a result, our now independent republics are tight together by a myriad of close links, from the trade to family ones. These facts give to Czecho-Slovak relations undisputedly a very peculiar taste, though at times it was a bitter one. Between 1993-98 the official relations could be characterised as tepid. It was partly due to some problems stemming from the past. The change came in 1998, after the general elections held in both republics which opened a space for more intensive co-operation. Today, the Czecho-Slovak relations are the best and most intensive at all levels and in all dimensions since the „velvet divorce“. In May 2000, we finally closed the complicated chapter called „division of the property and assets of the Czecho-Slovak Federation“. Czech political representatives and diplomats voice their strong support for our effort to catch up with the V4 partners in the EU and NATO integration processes. Both sides have an interest in keeping the customs union as long as it would be possible, and both sides would prefer avoiding the erection of the Schengen border on the Czecho-Slovak frontier. People from both banks of the border-river Morava still have a vivid interest in what is happening on the other side, they travel hence and forth - still without needing a passport - to do business or visit family and friends.

With the Hungarians to the south, we once used to share a common state as well.

### AUSTRO – HUNGARIAN EMPIRE (19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)



Before Czecho-Slovakia was created in 1918, the Slovaks and Hungarians had been living together alongside other nations for over a thousand years in the Hungarian Kingdom, Habsburg Empire, and dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. After the break-up of the latter in the aftermath of the World War I., and establishing of new states with their borders, millions of ethnic Slovaks and Hungarians found themselves in a new Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia respectively. Today, ethnic Hungarians comprise about

10 % of the population of the Slovak Republic, which makes them one of the largest ethnic minorities, if not the largest one, in the whole of Europe.

This fact, together with centuries of a common history gives also to the Hungarian-Slovak relations a special flavour. Since 1993, these relations have followed a very similar pattern to the Czecho-Slovak ones, going from tepid to very good, warm, and friendly at present. At their worst, due to lack of political will and mutual trust, disputes over the most controversial issues such as policies towards ethnic minorities or the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Dam on the Danube river gathered strongly nationalistic tinge. Nevertheless, like in the case of Czecho-Slovak relations, also Hungarian-Slovak relations started to normalise after the 1998 Slovak general elections, and today they are better than ever. Today, our ethnic Hungarians have their representatives not only in the parliament but also in the government, including a deputy prime minister for human rights and minorities. Let me be a little bit poetical, too. We human beings need bridges, from symbolic moral-ethic bridges, which help us to overcome our problems as well as concrete ones.

The bridge from Sturovo-town in Slovakia to Ostrihom-town in Hungary, which are separated only by the Danube River, destroyed by bombs during the WW II, was badly needed by both countries and now finally is under construction with the help of EU.

I have already mentioned the Visegrad group, which is an informal grouping, the aim of which is to increase mutual understanding and facilitate a close *people – to people co-operation*. I have to admit that the co-operation of the Nordic countries is for us an excellent example for closer ties among countries of the region. The work of the group is not based on institutional structures, the only permanent V4 structure is the Visegrad Fund established only recently in order to administer and manage finances for common activities in various areas. Besides this, the work of the group is based on regular contacts, meetings, information exchange, and consultations between representatives of member states at various levels. Simultaneously, the V4 is an important vehicle on our journey to the EU (for Slovakia to NATO as well), because it facilitates our co-operation in substantial EU (NATO) matters. It also shows to the outside world that candidates are capable of mutual support and co-operation instead of competing among themselves.

Another important vector of our foreign and security policies besides the Central European one is directed towards South Eastern Europe, particularly the Western Balkans where the situation represented the major security concern in Europe in the 90s. Maybe you do not know, but states of former Yugoslavia were destination of nearly each Slovak family during summers because it is the shortest access to the sea from Slovakia. So we were for years very familiar with development of problems there that turned into open conflict. Activities and involvement of Slovakia in this region has had three distinct dimensions: military, diplomatic, and civic. In military dimension, Slovakia alongside many other NATO and PfP (Partnership-for-Peace) countries has taken part in operations led by the alliance.

During the Kosovo air campaign, Slovakia allowed air and ground transports of NATO forces through its territory, which considerably simplified the logistic aspect of the operation. Our forces have participated in the AFOR, SFOR, and KFOR operations under the NATO leadership, and today are still deployed in Kosovo. A diplomatic dimension has been represented above all by activities of the Slovak foreign minister Eduard Kukan, a special envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Balkans who has done a valuable „behind-the-scenes“ diplomatic work in the region, highly appreciated by the Secretary General and other world political leaders. The third, civic dimension

was of no lesser importance. Many Slovak NGOs and civic associations became very active in the Balkans, and especially in Serbia. People from the Slovak NGOs not only took part in monitoring of elections in various Balkan countries, or in training their own monitors, but most importantly taught their colleagues from the local NGOs the techniques, so to say, of activating civil society in their respective countries. As it turned out in Serbia, this activated civil society was crucial in change of the Belgrade regime last year. The Slovak NGOs still remain involved in Serbia and other countries of the Western Balkans, and spread the field of their activities to other countries that have problems with democratisation and transition, such as Belarus, but recently also Ukraine.

A good example of a synergy of efforts of the Slovak governmental and non-governmental institutions to promote change in Serbia was the so called Bratislava Process. It was a series of five international conferences initiated and co-organised by our ministry of foreign affairs that took place between July 1999 and July 2000. These conferences provided a unique forum for a discussion between representatives of Serbian opposition, political as well as civic, of trade unions, opposition media, and municipalities on one side, and representatives of the international community on the other. The aim of the „Bratislava Process“ was to promote partnership, communication, co-operation between the two sides, to prevent on the side of Serbian opposition and pro-democratic forces the strengthening of feelings of isolation and exclusion (since it was the Belgrade regime that was to be isolated), and to explore concrete ways of assistance to them. Many of those Serbs who participated in the „Bratislava Process“ today sit in the new Serb or Yugoslav government or parliament.

Slovakia is similarly active and engaged in Cyprus where a conflict has been simmering with a greater or lesser intensity for a long time. Our activities in Cyprus have been led by our conviction that a considerable part of that problem is represented by the deep distrust and bias between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and that these biases could be overcome only through mutual contacts and dialogue. We have, through our embassy in Nicosia, mediated meetings and talks of the main political parties leaders from the two sides, as well as meetings and co-operation of Cypriot NGO representatives working in the field of human rights. A landmark happening that was organised by seven political parties from both parts of Cyprus and co-ordinated by the Embassy of the Slovak Republic took place in September last year when over eight thousand ordinary Greek and Turkish Cypriots visited a cultural festival in Nicosia. This was the greatest common public gathering of the two sides since the beginning of a Turkish occupation of the northern part of the island in 1974. Slovak Republic will continue in such activities on all three levels, political, non-governmental, and people-to-people contacts. I would like to point out that even Norwegian authorities involved in the conflict appreciate the role of Slovakia in the situation in Cyprus.

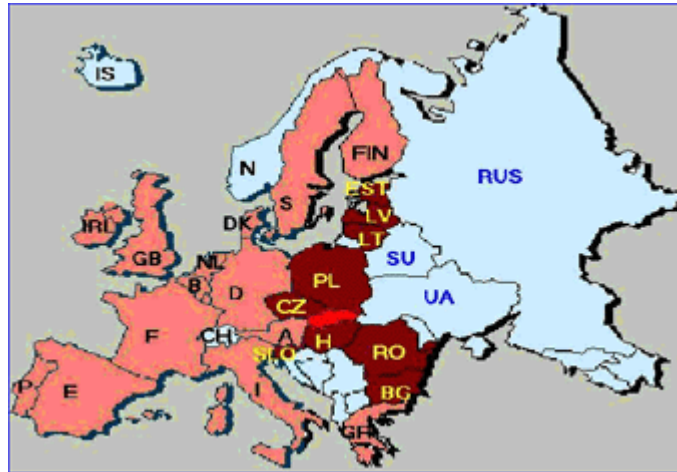
Whether in the Balkans, or in Cyprus, the Slovak Republic has proved that it is an active and responsible actor on the European stage. Of course, we have not been involved in these troubled areas in order to show off. We genuinely feel our share of responsibility for promoting positive developments beyond our borders and our Central European region, positive developments that correspond with, and are conducive to a gradual integration and unification of Europe.

Thus I have proceeded to another level, direction, or dimension of our foreign and security policy: all-European and Euro-Atlantic. It is Slovakia's highest priority to join the NATO and EU, the two central institutional pillars of this area, as I have already

pointed out. It is my pleasure to inform this distinguished audience that our Parliament approved one week ago, after long and enormous discussion, basic changes in our Constitution. The changes prepared, from our side, all the constitutional provisions for future membership of Slovakia in NATO and EU.

Slovakia started accession negotiations with the EU following the decision of the Helsinki summit in December 1999, so today we are in the second year of negotiations.

### EU + CANDIDATES COUNTRIES



Over that time, we have proceeded considerably in both, negotiations as well as in substantial preparation of our economy and legislation for the EU membership. The last Regular Report of the European Commission evaluates Slovakia for the first time as a functioning market economy. Our strategic aim vis-a-vis the EU is to join it together with our three partners from the Visegrad group. It would make sense considering the close ties among our countries. To attain this goal requires an effort on both sides, on the side of Slovakia as well as the union.

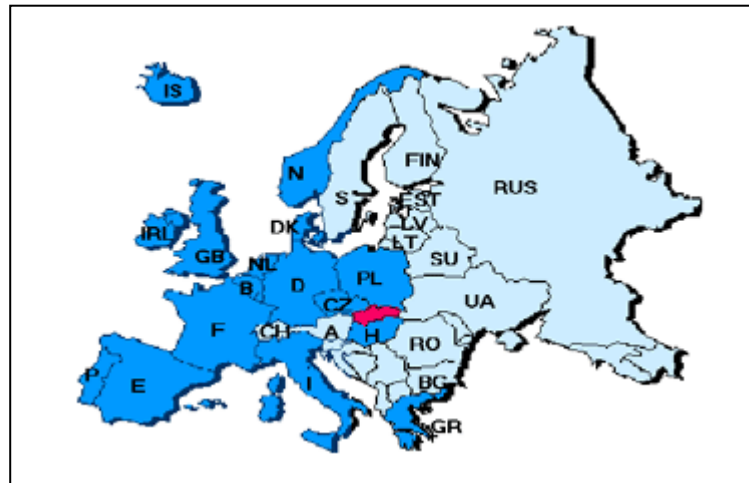
To be able to enlarge, the union has to reform itself, its structures and procedures. From this point of view, we consider the last EU summit in Nice a right step in the right direction. On our side, the membership in the EU requires further efforts at fulfilling membership criteria and conditions. This year, we would like to open all remaining negotiating chapters. Our goal is to enter the union on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2004.

Besides these challenges connected with the enlargement, there is one additional challenge regarding the EU as well as Europe more generally, and that is its European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

Although in a sense the EU has always been to a great extent also a security system for Western Europe, it recently stepped up its efforts at playing the security role in Europe more explicitly and directly. Therefore, a clear division of labour and a definition of consultations and co-operation mechanisms between the EU and NATO is very important. In European security architecture, they should complement each other, avoid duplication and achieve synergy. Slovakia, as a candidate for a membership in both, watches the EU-NATO dialogue over these issues with a certain apprehension. We feel that it has bearing also on the enlargement of both institutions. And after all, what is at stake, is European security, security for all.

For Slovakia, NATO remains the cornerstone of European security.

### NATO COUNTRIES AND SLOVAKIA



As we have seen, Europe after the Cold War has turned out to be less stabilized and its development less predictable than all of us would have wished. Therefore, the idea of ensuring security through a system of collective defence, through an alliance, is still an attractive and sensible one. Slovakia views *North Atlantic Alliance as the only functioning and reliable security institution in Euro-Atlantic area and wants to become its full-fledged member*. Taking into consideration the nature of risks and challenges in Europe today, Slovakia wants to participate in all alliance's new roles and missions. As I have demonstrated earlier, our active policy in troubled regions of Europe stands as the evidence that Slovakia can contribute and not solely consume security. It shows that it will be a reliable ally.

Our present efforts are aimed at ensuring our preparedness for accession at a moment when the alliance is ready to extend invitations to new candidates. In this context, Slovakia attaches great significance to the conclusions of the Washington summit at which the alliance reaffirmed its open doors policy. No less significant for us was the adoption of the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which is a practical manifestation of the will to accept new members in the future. Based on the MAP, on our experience from PfP, and on consultations with the NATO and member states, we have launched a comprehensive process of preparing the country for membership. At this point I would like to stress very good cooperation between Norwegian and our Departments of Defence in many areas of common interest which our government highly appreciate.

The co-operation was strengthened during very successful visit of Slovak Ministry of Defence to Norway in September 2000. First, an institutional structure was set up to facilitate close and flexible co-operation of various governmental agencies and departments involved in the process of preparation. A governmental committee was created and led jointly by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, which oversees fourteen key areas of preparation for membership. A working group composed of representatives of the relevant government departments was formed for each of these areas. As a follow-up to the adoption of the MAP, a document of principle was drafted - the *National Programme of Preparation of the Slovak Republic for NATO Membership* (NP PRENAME), which is updated annually. The general part presents the target parameters of preparedness for membership in NATO which should be attained

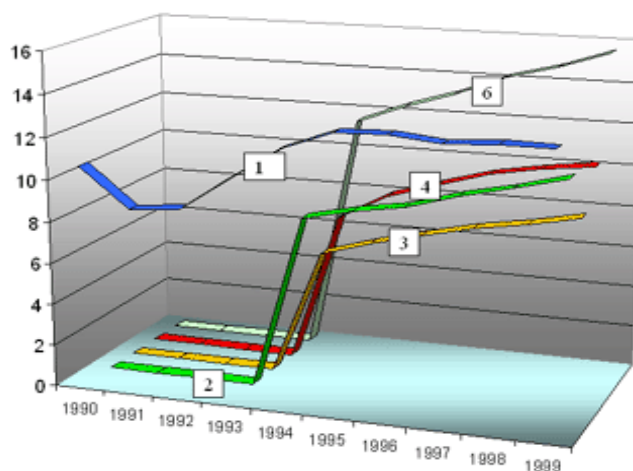
by 2002, i.e. at the time when we hope to receive the invitation to begin talks on the membership during NATO summit in Prague, our previous capital town. The second part translates the target parameters into specific tasks, measures, dates, responsibility for their fulfilment and funding.

The priorities of our preparation as they are expressed in the NP PRENAME for the year 2001 include: creating the necessary legislative framework with an emphasis on strategic documents and legislation arising from the NATO *acquis*; implementing the defense sector reform; creating a national crisis management system; implementing measures in the area of a protection of classified information, and providing sufficient financial resources. Although a lot remains to be done, we have already fulfilled some important tasks. For instance, in the area of legislation and strategic documents, we have formulated a *Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic* which defines threats, risks, and challenges of the international security environment in line with the new Strategic Concept of the alliance.

A further reform is closely connected with the question of resources. We have pledged to increase defence spending by 0.1 per cent annually. However, it would be of no use for Slovakia to pledge that it will allocate two per cent of its annual budget to defence if its economy stagnates. So the issue of resources is closely connected with further economic reform and performance.

Let me show you few graphs and charts that could describe our economical development and situation.

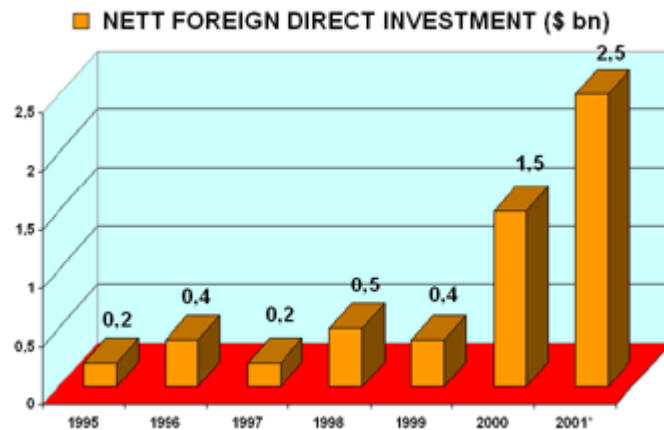
**GDP PER CAPITA (\$ Thousands)**



1: Czech Republic 2: Hungary 3: Poland 4: Slovakia 5: Slovenia

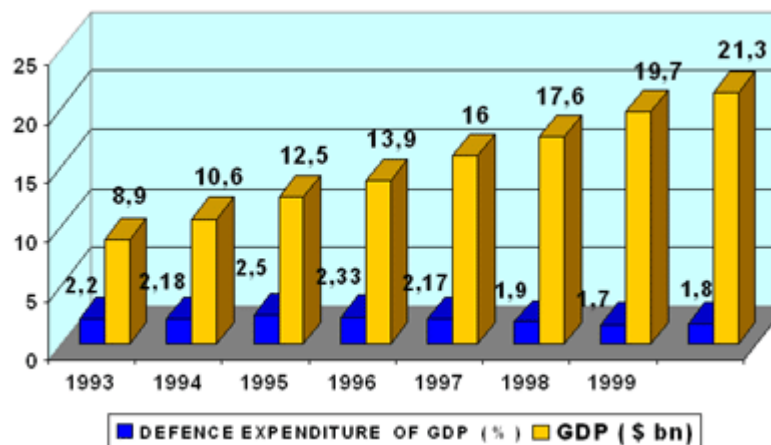
Ten year each the parameters of economic life which we have had before 1990. The reasons are very clear – the market of previous socialistic countries has collapsed. We dramatically decreased production and trade of armament industry which played in our economy a big role. We have opened our borders for goods from abroad, mostly from west. Our previous government did not start the process of transformation of the industry and did not allow foreign companies to invest to our industry. You can see from this chart (Att. 8) that our GDP per capita is raising steadily but is still below level before 1990. For our economy which is not so rich like yours is very important to bring foreign investors and investment to our country. The situation has dramatically changed after election 1998 as you can see from this chart. I would like to admit that part of this investment is coming

even from Norway thanks to good co-operation with Norsk Hydro, Telenor, Hadeland Glassverk and others.



Moreover, it is not only the question of how much we spend on defence but above all on what the money is spent. So we need not only to increase the defence spending, but above all allocate resources more efficiently in order to ensure compatibility and interoperability of our armed forces with those of the member states.

### GDP AND DEFENCE EXPENDITURES



We are well aware that MAP and NP PRENAME, though very important, is primarily a technical matter. But the enlargement process will be a political decision after all. The decision to enlarge will have to command a strong political support based on a consensus among allies, and within each member and candidate country the support based on a consensus of all major political parties as well as the public at large. Our public understands that as well: opinion polls show that the membership of Slovakia in NATO, despite a previous fall, is today supported by half of Slovak population with a potential for further increase. This is important, since NATO is an organisation of free democratic states which have the will to unite in defence of their values. Therefore, the allies must be convinced that our perspective of the world rests on the same values of democracy, freedom and protection of human rights. Slovakia wishes to be a member of this community of democracies, it wants to take part in its

building and defence. Please, let me express our hope that Norway will support our aim to be member of NATO during the summit in Prague next year.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I think that I covered my time and satisfied your curiosity. At this point I would like to thank to Mr. O. Grinden, Chairman of the Oslo Military Society and to the committee for invitation to present foreign and security policy of Slovak Republic on the floor of this very important society which I really appreciate. I hope that my lecture will help to deepen friendly and fruitfull co-operation between our countries and people. In case that any of you would like to get more information about our country from any field, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks you very much for being such an attentive audience.