

DIPLOMATSKI ZVEZEK

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Minister Tanja Fajon with participants at the economic diplomacy consultation / Author: MFEA

"Economic diplomacy remains one of the ministry's priorities, as confirmed by a wide range of activities both at home and abroad."

Tanja Fajon
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

The arrival of summer was marked by soaring temperatures and a heat wave, which is an apt metaphor for the current climate in international relations. Multilateralism, international cooperation and rules were all established to foster stability and predictability. In this edition of the Diplomatic Bulletin, Ambassador Melita Župevc reflects on the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Accords, a cornerstone of the European security architecture.

A fiftieth anniversary is also being commemorated in the context of Slovenian-Bavarian cooperation, developed within the established framework of a mixed commission. The commission's 34th session, attended by Minister Fajon, reaffirmed the shared commitment to strengthening partnerships across a range of sectors, with particular emphasis on economic cooperation. Economic diplomacy was also the focus of a panel of our economic advisers, who work daily in Slovenian diplomatic missions to enhance the country's economic visibility and support internationalisation efforts.

Economic themes were further explored at the recent Africa Day Conference, which focused on natural resources and sustainable development, emphasizing environmental security, human rights, engagement with local communities and the importance of international fair trade. This edition also features an innovative project by our colleagues at the Embassy in Copenhagen, who developed a "strategic foresight game" to raise awareness of sustainability. Impressively, the project integrates the bee, a distinctive symbol of Slovenia, into its creative concept.

The Fourth national conference on artificial intelligence was held under the title Artificial intelligence – new trends in development and challenges for Slovenia. The event featured a discussion on the application of AI in the public sector and defence. Special guest Lucilla Sioli, Director of the Artificial Intelligence Office at the European Commission, shared her initial insights into the implementation of EU legislation in this field with the expert audience.

The Bled Strategic Forum team is in the final stages of preparation for the 20th jubilee edition of this international conference, scheduled to take place on 1 and 2 September this year.

As we opened this foreword with anniversaries, it is fitting to close on a similar note. The 70th anniversary of the Austrian State Treaty is also being marked this year, commemorating its enduring significance for the Slovenian national minority in Austria.

I wish you a pleasant summer. Enjoy reading this issue of the Diplomatic Bulletin.

Sabina R. Stadler, Chief Editor

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BLED STRATEGIC FORUM – BEHIND THE SCENES

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF), one of Europe's leading platforms for international dialogue. Standing alongside major events such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Munich Security Conference and the GLOBSEC Forum in Slovakia, for two decades the Bled Strategic Forum has played an increasingly significant role in soft diplomacy and in enhancing Slovenia's visibility on the global stage. The annual gathering is much more than a two-day event – it is the culmination of a complex, yearlong process of political and diplomatic coordination involving a wide range of stakeholders.

This year's Forum, taking place on 1–2 September 2025 under the title *A Runaway World*, will explore the role of Europe and the European Union in a rapidly shifting global order, shaped by ongoing crises and geopolitical uncertainty. The theme reflects the sense of urgency and unpredictability characterising contemporary international relations. This year's panels will address the feasibility of EU enlargement by 2030, the prolonged war in Ukraine and Russia's unwillingness to engage in serious negotiations for a lasting peace, as well as the future of the Middle East and the critical obstacles to peace in the region. Disinformation, now a strategic weapon, will also be discussed, and in the evening sessions, authors and philosophers will engage in a discussion on 'European identity'. Economic debates will focus on the EU's competitiveness across a range of sectors. The key takeaways from all debates will be drawn together to offer a comprehensive perspective on Europe's role in the international arena.

Organising a large international event of this scale is a highly complex undertaking. It begins with the intellectual task of identifying the red thread – the overarching global and regional themes that will be at the core of the panel discussions. At this stage, the organisers consult extensively with key stakeholders, including academics, civil society representatives and various ministries. These discussions help shape the panels to reflect Slovenian foreign policy priorities, regional themes and the broader challenges facing the international community. In parallel, preparations are also underway for the Young Bled Strategic Forum (YBSF), which echoes and complements the topics discussed. The conceptual preparation is followed by the selection of speakers, which is both a strategic and a political endeavour. At this stage, cooperation between the respective offices of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic of Slovenia is vital, with their outreach and networks often enabling the participation of decision-makers.

Our close partners at the Centre for European Perspective (CEP) are in charge of the logistical and technical aspects of the event, while the Diplomatic Protocol also plays a major role in this effort. Given that last year's event was attended by some 2500 guests from almost 100 countries, its delivery requires close cooperation between government offices, diplomatic services and external partners. This work includes everything from logistics, security, and media coordination, to technical support, cooperation with the hotels in Bled and ensuring the smooth integration of parallel events on the sidelines of the Bled Strategic Forum.

TOPICAL / BLED STRATEGIC FORUM

The Bled Strategic Forum is a symbol of Slovenia's broader ambition to assume a more prominent role in international affairs. It reflects the country's ability to organise meaningful dialogue that transcends differences, fosters strategic thinking and serves as a bridge between regions and worldviews. Its success lies not in the prominence of its participants or the topics of discussions, but in the way it is thoughtfully conceived – with reflection, inclusivity and active engagement. As the world continues to navigate uncertain waters, this Slovenian 'window on the world' is more important than ever.

<https://www.bledstrategicforum.org/>



BSF Team with Minister Tanja Fajon / Author: Marko Arandjelović

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY CONSULTATION

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia organised another Economic Diplomacy Consultation, this year starting on 12 June at the Ministry. The event brought together economic advisers from Slovenian diplomatic missions and consular posts worldwide, who work to strengthen economic cooperation between Slovenia and the countries of accreditation. The regular consultation aims to address issues related to the daily work of economic advisers and outline plans for future activities.

In her introductory address, Minister Tanja Fajon emphasised that economic diplomacy remains one of the Ministry's priorities, which is also reflected in a wide range of activities in this field, both at home and abroad. She outlined the key areas and objectives that guide the orientation and planning of future activities in economic diplomacy. Among these, she highlighted Slovenia's membership of the UN Security Council, which has strengthened business opportunities on other continents. She also insisted on the importance of involving the private sector in development cooperation, at both the national and European levels, as well as on the need to continue raising awareness on responsible business conduct and the integrity of public servants. Minister Fajon also touched on the impact of geopolitical changes on the shaping of a new programme for the internationalisation of the Slovenian economy and stressed the need for a comprehensive and coordinated promotion of Slovenian achievements and excellence in the economy, science, culture and other sectors.

Numerous topics closely related to the work of economic advisers were addressed in cooperation with experts and representatives of relevant ministries. The participants were informed of the draft Programme for the Promotion of Investment and Internationalisation 2026–2031, which addresses current challenges, including the persistent negative foreign trade balance. The discussions also focused on the role of the business sector in development cooperation and the EU Global Gateway strategy, which links the interests of the state and the private sector through sustainable projects in developing countries. Regarding the EU trade policy, the presentation emphasised the active role of Member States in shaping it. The EU concludes numerous trade and investment agreements with third countries, which increases opportunities for Slovenian companies.



Minister Fajon in her opening address at the consultation / Author: MFEA

Special attention was devoted to China-US relations, in which some protectionist tendencies are evident. Prof Jože P. Damijan warned of the global power shift towards the East, mainly due to the rise of China and BRICS+ and the technological lag in the West. In his view, the only solution for the EU is to increase its economic, technological and military sovereignty, including by investing more in science and the industries of the future. He believes that Slovenia would need a new industrial strategy to strengthen its competitiveness and development, which he dubbed "*Made in Slovenia 2035*".

In the field of science and innovation, economic advisers were briefed on the key stakeholders and strategic objectives, which include increased investment in research, enhanced international cooperation, support for innovation and establishing links between science and the business sector. The topics discussed included the need for a platform connecting companies and institutions, the role of science diplomacy and the need to support companies in their innovation endeavours and engagement with projects such as CERN.

The main part of the consultation was dedicated to a discussion on the work plans for economic advisers. Peter Japelj, acting Director-General of the Directorate for Economic, Cultural and Science Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, outlined the guidelines for future work in the field of economic diplomacy. In the ensuing debate, participants shared their experiences and best practice examples and made constructive proposals for future targeted activities.



Acting Director General Peter Japelj / Author: MFEA



Meetings of economic advisers with business representatives in Maribor / Author: MFEA

On 13 June, the consultation continued in Maribor with the Slovenian Global Forum, hosted by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon and Minister of the Economy, Tourism and Sport Matjaž Han. The afternoon part of the conference focused on the internationalisation of the Slovenian economy with B2B meetings, where economic advisers from Slovenian diplomatic missions and consular posts covering over 60 countries of the world held previously scheduled individual talks with representatives of companies.

AFRICA DAY 2025

The 14th Africa Day International Conference, which took place on 30 May 2025 at the CD Club in Ljubljana, reaffirmed Slovenia's commitment to deepening political, economic and cultural ties between Africa and Slovenia, and more broadly between Africa and Europe. The event was held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Ms Nataša Pirc Musar, and hosted by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The focus of this year's conference was natural resources and development.

Speakers and participants included Mr Johan Borgstam, EU Special Representative for the Great Lakes region, Ms Bestine Kazadi Ditabala, Minister Delegate for International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ms Marjeta Jager, Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission, Ms Tanja Fajon, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, representatives of international organisations such as Chatham House, representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector. It was attended by 160 participants from 29 countries, including 5 political leaders and 22 speakers (14 women and 8 men).



Discussion at the 14th International Conference Africa Day / Author: MFEA

The Leaders' Panel emphasised the importance of environmental security and processing raw materials in source countries. The speakers discussed the need for states to control their natural resources for the benefit of their societies. Access to clean water, equal participation of women in water resource management, engagement of young people in the green transition and ethical sourcing of raw materials were also identified as important issues. Finally, the participants called for trust in European institutions to be strengthened and Europe's commitment to peace made more binding, particularly in conflict areas rich in natural resources.

The second panel focused on the holistic and human rights-based development. If governed responsibly, mining has substantial potential to contribute to development. It is vital to formalise small-scale and artisanal mining activities (ASM), and this should be done inclusively and in a context-specific way. Women working in the mining industry face systemic inequalities. They need to be granted access to education, provided security and given recognition for their work. In order to avoid ecological and social damage, development must respect traditional livelihoods.



Conference participants, CD Club / Author: MFEA

The third panel discussed the importance of obtaining informed consent from local communities before implementing mining projects. Although earnings are often low, mining still provides livelihoods for many people. However, environmental and labour standards remain poor and child labour continues to be a significant issue. The Southern African region is facing problems stemming from corruption, weak governance and poor law enforcement. More exchange of expertise and the empowerment of civil society are required, and digital mechanisms monitoring the situation in real time could facilitate this process. The message of the conference was clear: 'We borrow the Earth from our children.'

Participants in the fourth panel pointed out that Africa is home to over 30 per cent of the world's mineral reserves, and emphasised that good governance and fair international trade are essential for sustainable development. The OECD's Responsible Business Conduct standards could also promote peace. Without fair reforms, African economies risk remaining dependent on the exploitation of natural resources, which often results in instability and conflict, with frequent clashes between agricultural and industrial interests. The only way to resolve such issues is through transparent governance and inclusive policies.

A varied cultural programme was held in April and May, which complemented the core parts of the conference. The accompanying programme included a variety of exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, lectures and literary evenings, which were organised in cooperation with Slovenian-African organisations and associations. These events introduced Slovenian audiences to the rich cultural diversity of African countries. In cooperation with the Association of Africans in Maribor, a culinary event focusing on African cuisine was organised alongside an exhibition in Maribor. The Global Society held educational workshops in Ljubljana and Maribor, reaching over 180 children. An exhibition of Zimbabwean sculptures was opened at the Diwan Gallery. The Humanitas – Centre for Global Learning and Cooperation invited a guest from Burkina Faso to lead workshops on traditional fabric dyeing techniques at the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum. The APIS Institute held a workshop exploring mixed identities for girls of African descent at Hostel Celica in Ljubljana. The Plesna Izba Maribor Cultural Association held a concert of African music, while the Divja Misel Institute staged a performance titled 'Temporality of Others', which addressed themes of colonialism and African literature.

The Africa Day reception, held on 29 May, began with a panel discussion about art, nature and sustainability within the context of Aida Muluneh's exhibition at the Jakopič Gallery. Prior to this, an economic forum was organised in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and the Directorate for Economic and Public Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

The cultural programme focused on the importance of intercultural dialogue and aimed to strengthen the ties between African artists and the Slovenian public. Art was employed as a powerful tool for fostering bonds, empathy and joint reflection on the future.



Reception at the Jakopič Gallery/ Author: MFEA

FOURTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – NEW TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES FOR SLOVENIA

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer merely a technological trend or a subject of academic debate. It has become a pivotal factor in the transformation of society, the economy and public administration and, ultimately, in global, geopolitical and international economic relations.

This is why members of professional and political publics gathered at Jable Castle on 10 June 2025 for the fourth national conference on artificial intelligence, held under the title Artificial intelligence – new trends in development and challenges for Slovenia. The conference was organised by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Digital Transformation and the Ministry of Defence, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and several other technology and economic associations, as well as leading Slovenian academic and research institutions. Such a broad range of contributors and more than 420 registered participants (attending in person at Jable Castle or via video link) clearly demonstrates that AI is a topic transcending individual sectors and requiring comprehensive societal dialogue, practical implementation and a visionary approach to development.

Opening remarks were delivered by the Minister of Digital Transformation, Ksenija Klampfer, and Dr Melita Gabrič, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. Both emphasised that AI is no longer a technical challenge or a distant prospect, but an integral part of everyday life, demanding a responsible and considered approach. Minister Klampfer highlighted the importance of the Artificial Intelligence Act, which lays the foundation for a European Union legal framework based on security, transparency and respect for human rights. As she noted, Slovenia not only supports this vision but is also actively advancing it through strategic projects and legislative initiatives. State Secretary Gabrič added that AI has become a global reality transcending geographical and political boundaries. Consequently, international cooperation, knowledge sharing and the joint shaping of a future based on trust and responsibility are essential.



Panel discussion/ Author: MFEA

Lucilla Sioli, Director of the European Commission's Artificial Intelligence Office, underscored the significance of the event. In her keynote speech, she presented the AI Continent Action Plan and outlined the key elements of European legislation, especially trust and security as cornerstones of the European approach to AI development, which should be oriented towards the common good and human-centred solutions.

The conference programme was designed to combine strategic and professional reflection, considering the current state of play and global relations. In the morning session, participants attended introductory lectures on the legislative and strategic aspects of AI development within the EU and Slovenia.

This was followed by thematic panels focusing on the use of AI in the public sector and defence. Three of Slovenia's largest AI projects, both organisationally and financially, were presented: the new supercomputer Vega 2, which will enable the processing of the most complex data sets; the Slovenian AI Factory, serving as a platform for developing solutions and supporting businesses; and the construction project of a Slovenian large language model, which will be key to digital sovereignty and the strengthening of the Slovene language in the digital environment.

The day concluded with a roundtable discussion on the AI Continent Action Plan and the Artificial Intelligence Act – shaping the future of AI. In addition to Director Sioli, representatives of Slovenian companies and research institutions participated in the discussion, which highlighted the impact of European legislation on Slovenian innovation and underlined the importance of coherence between European and national objectives for Slovenia to fully benefit from the digital transformation.

Alongside the formal programme, the conference offered an opportunity to share best practice examples and forge new partnerships, which is one of the key success factors in a dynamic and rapidly evolving field of technology such as AI. The event at Jable demonstrated once again Slovenia's strategic, bold and collaborative approach to one of the most significant technological trends of our time. Speakers and participants alike pointed out that AI is merely a tool; how we use it depends entirely on our responsibility and attitude towards the future we wish to create.



At the end of the conference / Author: MFEA

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT

Written by: Melita Župevc, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the UN, OSCE, and other international organizations in Vienna

Using humour and satire, as well as AI, the movie *The Helsinki Effect* reveals interesting details about a years-long diplomatic process that, at first glance, seemed extraordinarily boring, but which ultimately led to radical, unexpected and irreversible change. "I want a document!" Leonid Brezhnev repeats persistently, and his wish is ultimately granted. This document is the Helsinki Final Act, which, despite being legally non-binding, defines not only the principle of peaceful coexistence between countries, but also within them. It describes the relationship between a state and its citizens. The third part of the Final Act, which the Soviet Union was most reluctant to accept, literally tore down walls in the years following its signing, as it promoted human rights and fundamental freedoms. Commentators accompanying the 35 leaders at the signing ceremony in the iconic Finlandia Hall described the document as a declaration of peaceful coexistence.

The question of the purpose of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe has been lingering for years. Based on gross violations of the principles set out in the Helsinki Decalogue, this question is fundamentally misplaced. The fact that the principles of peaceful conflict resolution, national sovereignty and the inviolability of borders are being violated does not mean that these principles and obligations are unnecessary. The problem lies not with the principles themselves, but with those who persistently violate them in most extreme ways. Similarly, the idea that multilateralism is meaningless due to the current crisis is unacceptable. We must return to multilateralism, strengthen it, and strive to uphold it more vigorously. There is no better solution to our common challenges, including geopolitical, economic, environmental and technological ones. The value of the OSCE should not be judged based on its activity over the past three years, since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Over the past few decades, the organisation has made key contributions to discussions and negotiations on security issues in Europe.

Each week, representatives from countries with a combined population of over 1.3 billion still meet at the Hofburg in Vienna. In a deeply divided world, which was in a similar state when the Helsinki Final Act was first drawn up, this fact should not be ignored. Since the start of Russian aggression, the organisation has been dealing with states of emergency and its inability to make consensual decisions is seriously impairing its activities. The key institutional issue is agreeing on a unified budget, which was last agreed upon in 2021. Extra-budgetary funding is also being reduced.

The OSCE Secretary General often emphasises that, compared to other international organisations, the OSCE is cost-effective and efficient, and is achieving significant results in the field despite modest financial investment. With a yearly budget of some €140 million, the OSCE spends only a fraction of what much larger UN agencies do. It is important to remember that the OSCE possesses exceptional knowledge and expertise. OSCE institutions, specialised bodies and, in particular, its field missions are highly valued and useful, contributing to progress in various areas by addressing challenges in an integrated way. No other organisation has as much experience with confidence- and safety-building measures as the OSCE and its autonomous agencies and field missions.

However, like any international organisation, the OSCE also needs to reflect on how it can contribute more effectively. For example, could field missions be transformed to become more aligned with modern-day challenges? The most evident threats are those related to climate change and cyber security, which do not end at countries' borders. How can we further enhance cooperation between missions (e.g. within the region) and actors in the field and in Vienna? Do the OSCE's field activities overlap with those of other organisations or with stakeholders? How can multilateral efforts be merged in order to become more efficient? These questions, relating to institutional action, should be addressed in the discussions at the Helsinki+50 Conference. However, the focus should primarily be on issues directly linked to the political will of the participating states (PS), as this represents the organisation's primary mission.

Twenty years ago, when Slovenia held the OSCE chair, discussions about whether the OSCE should undergo reforms and about how to increase its efficiency and prevent new divisions were also relevant. However, while the Russian aggression in Ukraine continues, it is quite unrealistic to expect any significant reforms. Nevertheless, what can be done at present, is to raise awareness of the organisation and promote it. Many citizens are aware of the OSCE, but the question is how well they know it. The work of independent organisations and field missions is often overlooked. One way to improve the visibility of the organisation's contribution and significance would be to encourage parliamentarians to participate in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, where they could raise awareness of the organisation's work. Another possibility could be to open the first case before the OSCE Court of Conciliation and Arbitration.

Presently, it is crucial to preserve the valuable work that the OSCE can perform in the current circumstances and prepare the organisation for a time when trust can be restored among the participating states. During the Finnish chair and in light of the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, there has been a debate about reforming the OSCE, based on the following guiding principles: Respect, Respond, Prepare. The key element of all scenarios and possible future activities is the mentioned political will, based on efforts to maintain and strengthen the organisation as an efficient multilateral platform. Through its knowledge, expertise and fieldwork the OSCE can offer significant assistance if the participating states are willing to utilise it effectively.

It is also important to mention the OSCE's role in Ukraine here. It is difficult to predict what this role will entail when the war finally comes to an end. While there are currently more questions than answers, there is a consensus that the OSCE has considerable experience in Ukraine and can make a significant contribution. Potential activities include monitoring a ceasefire or comprehensive settlement, verifying the withdrawal of forces from the demilitarised zone and overseeing prisoner exchanges. The contact line is set to be much longer this time around – in fact, it will be several times longer than in 2014. Such a mission would require a clear mandate, which would necessitate the broadest possible (political) support and the involvement of other international organisations or multinational initiatives. Then there is the question of financing such a mission. In 2015, for example, the annual budget of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) was €100 million. Other issues include what other means are available (e.g. vehicles, equipment, personnel), the area of responsibility (AOR) of a possible new mission and how the security of the troops would be ensured. After three years of war, the extreme contamination by anti-personnel mines and other ordnances must also be taken into account. It would be essential to involve independent OSCE institutions, such as ODIHR, RFoM and HCNM, in the post-peacebuilding phase. As is well known, the SMM has already faced constraints on the ground. It should not be forgotten that the OSCE still has no legal status, which could directly impact the safety and protection of mission members, their freedom of movement, the implementation of the mandate and their ability to use necessary technologies.

After the war in Ukraine ends, the OSCE should play a role in shaping Europe's security architecture. Its involvement in post-conflict Ukraine would be highly valued. Russia's aggression in Ukraine is the primary item on the Permanent Council's agenda, with violations of international law, international humanitarian law and OSCE principles being regularly discussed and documented. Since the beginning of the conflict, the Moscow Mechanism on Human Rights Violations in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus has been activated several times, with expert groups confirming violations of OSCE commitments, international law, human rights and international humanitarian law in Ukraine. Dr Vasilka Sancin participated in one of these missions, and Slovenia has supported the launch of the mechanism each time.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning the Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU): a donor-driven, extra-budgetary programme for Ukraine that began in 2022. With only several tens of millions of euros at its disposal, the SPU is a smaller partner than other stakeholders in Ukraine are. Nevertheless, it sends an important message of support and solidarity from the OSCE and its participating states, including Slovenia. The SPU does not pursue specific national interests; it is primarily demand-based cooperation created to meet Ukraine's needs (e.g. demining projects and psychosocial assistance). At the end of 2024, the second phase of the SPU project was approved until the end of 2028. This phase will focus even more on building social and democratic resilience to mitigate the effects of war.

Apart from the loss of human life, one of the biggest casualties of the war in Ukraine is the environment. The consequences will be far-reaching and will require substantial international assistance and cooperation. The OSCE plays an important role factor in this area thanks to its comprehensive approach to security. At the request of the OSCE Chair, Finland, in 2025, Slovenia assumed leadership of the Economic and Environmental Committee for the first time since it became a participating state. This is one of its priorities as it involves addressing the challenges of the second OSCE dimension. Topics related to building climate resilience, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, the role of innovation in water management and connectivity continue to provide opportunities for active debate among participating states within the context of the second dimension.

At a time when the concept of cooperative security is under severe strain, there is often talk of the need for the OSCE to return to its basics, particularly with regard to the politico-military dimension (arms control and confidence- and security-building measures – CSBMs). At the ceremony in Helsinki 50 years ago, Pravda correspondents wrote: "This is a victory for all who cherish peace and security on our planet." The common denominator that brought the signatories together in Finlandia Hall half a century ago was peace, and representatives of participating states will gather on the eve of the anniversary to pay tribute to the OSCE's common principles and remind us that they must guide us even in these challenging times. This week's visit to Kyiv coincides with the same anniversary. For the first time since 2018, a group of 14 ambassadors and permanent representatives to the OSCE have travelled to Ukraine. They have come with a key message of solidarity and support for Ukraine and its people. The power of the Helsinki Final Act can only be restored by achieving a lasting and just peace in Ukraine.

The road to peace is never easy, but it must be travelled. So must be the path to rebuilding trust, this fragile currency of diplomacy.

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY

The diplomatic history of Yugoslavia and, by extension, that of modern-day Slovenia, reached a significant milestone in international law and politics with the conclusion of the State Treaty for the Re-establishment of an Independent and Democratic Austria (Austrian State Treaty) in 1955. The Treaty was signed in Vienna on 15 May 1955, precisely ten years after the end of the Second World War in Europe, near the village of Polana, close to the town of Ravne na Koroškem, and entered into force on 27 July of the same year.

In this context, it is important to acknowledge the significant diplomatic contribution of Slovenia to the Treaty. The Soviet Union had initially resisted endorsing the Treaty, largely due to its interests in East Germany. A turning point came with the visit of a Yugoslav delegation to Moscow in January 1955, which was an effort aimed at normalising interstate relations following the death of Stalin.

The Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev appeared unexpectedly at an official dinner hosted by Ambassador Dobrivoje Vidić, with Slovenian diplomat Bogdan Osolnik serving as his deputy, and the atmosphere was reportedly quite tense. Ambassador Vidić took the opportunity to raise the issue of the Austrian State Treaty, prompting a strong response from Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. Amidst the strained exchange, Mr Osolnik, who had recently arrived in Moscow from Munich, where he had served as Consul-General, intervened. Drawing upon his in-depth knowledge of the situation in West Germany, he emphasised the broader importance of concluding the Austrian State Treaty, particularly as a safeguard against a potential division of Austria similar to that of Germany. Just a few weeks later, at the end of February 1955, Khrushchev approached Vidić and Osolnik at a diplomatic reception and declared in front of everyone: "We will conclude an agreement on Austria! It is settled!"

The Austrian State Treaty was signed by the Allied occupying powers in Austria – the United States, the Soviet Union, France and the United Kingdom – alongside Austria. Several other countries later formally acceded to the Treaty, including Yugoslavia, which joined on 28 November 1955. The aim of the Treaty was to re-establish Austria as an independent, sovereign and democratic state, with an obligation to uphold the principles of international law. The Treaty also has broader significance in that it grants special rights to the Slovenian minority in Austrian Carinthia and Styria, as set out in Article 7.

Two aspects regarding the implementation of these provisions stand out. First, several obligations assumed by the Republic of Austria under the Treaty remain unfulfilled. Although the situation of the Slovenian minority in Carinthia has improved in recent years, delays in fully implementing the Treaty's commitments persist. Implementation is practically non-existent in Styria. Second, despite the absence of formal notification, Slovenia is a legitimate successor to the former Yugoslavia in respect of the Austrian State Treaty.

Therefore, a clearly articulated and unified policy regarding the Treaty's provisions on minority rights is essential. This policy should facilitate the implementation of these obligations within a defined timeframe, as they are well established and consistent with the core values upheld by the European Union. Encouragingly, cooperation between the scientific communities and civil societies of both Austria and Slovenia has fostered an atmosphere of mutual understanding and friendship, creating fertile ground for further (political) progress.

This spirit of collaboration is exemplified by a recent comprehensive historical monograph, published in both German and Slovene, and presented to the academies of sciences and arts in both countries after several years of intensified cooperation. Entitled *On Both Sides of the Alps*, this magnum opus explores the relationship between the two peoples and nations across various historical periods. It was formally presented at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts on 23 June.

Diplomatic Missions – In Focus

BUZZING FUTURES: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN SLOVENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

When Slovenia proposed World Bee Day, the intention behind this idea was not only to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators, but also to encourage reflection on sustainability, cooperation and our connection with nature.

The bee has become a symbol of responsible behaviour towards the world around us. In this spirit, Slovenian embassies around the world are working on projects involving 'bee diplomacy'.



Graphics of the game *Buzzing Futures* / Author: David Fartek

The Embassy in Copenhagen, which covers Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, wanted to move beyond traditional forms of outreach and create a space where people could explore the future together. This is how the game *Buzzing Futures* came to be – a design tool for strategic foresight.

In collaboration with UN Global Pulse, the Secretary-General's Innovation Lab, and a wide range of partners, including scientists, policymakers, creatives, beekeepers, academics and businesses, we spent two years developing it. The game challenges players to think creatively about global challenges – climate change, biodiversity loss, disruption of supply chains and land-use change.

Players take on the role of creators of the future and are encouraged to reflect on the long-term consequences of their decisions. They also discover how nature, food, the economy and quality of life are interlinked. The game focuses on bees as symbols of vulnerability, while also highlighting their role as ecosystem connectors.

Buzzing Futures encourages collaboration, imagination and dialogue. Players explore possible future scenarios and look for concrete steps that can be taken immediately.

The game was launched on World Bee Day 2025 and has since been tested in various environments with different groups, including young people, researchers, public servants and policymakers. It was developed in partnership with the Beekeeping Academy of Slovenia and the universities of Oxford, Houston and Utrecht. It has also been recognised by several international organisations, including the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI), the WHO One Health programme, the Dubai Futures Forum and the World Energy Council.

Buzzing Futures will be the centrepiece of Slovenia's day at the Apimondia World Beekeeping Congress in Copenhagen in September 2025.

Diplomatic Missions – In Focus

The game fosters collaborative planning based on transformative approaches, cooperation and co-creation, and is a fine example of Slovenia's foreign policy strategy in action. These approaches improve our understanding of contemporary challenges and promote sustainable solutions for food security, biodiversity and community resilience.

Buzzing Futures invites you to step into a world of strategic thinking and collaboration. It serves as a starting point for brainstorming, discussing various topics and finding ways forward. The project shows how our diplomatic missions can co-create global solutions by combining courage, expertise and team spirit. In this way, Slovenia is underscoring the role of a sustainable approach and inclusive diplomacy.

www.gov.si/buzzingfutures

✉ For more information or to get involved, please contact: timotej.sooš@gov.si



Game *Buzzing Futures* at a multi-stakeholder workshop at UN City, Copenhagen
Author: Timotej Šooš

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

- 29–30 May: Africa Day 2025
- 10 June: Fourth national conference on artificial intelligence
- 12 June: Consultations of economic advisers

IN THE PIPELINE

- 27–29 August: Consultations of Slovenian diplomats
- 29–31 August: Young Bled Strategic Forum
- 1–2 September: 20th Bled Strategic Forum

Inspirational Quote

“Measure yourself or you will be measured by others.”

Slovenian saying

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