



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA ZUNANJE ZADEVE

ENSURING THE SECURITY, PROSPERITY, AND REPUTATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA AND ITS PEOPLE



SLOVENIA:
SAFE,
SUCCESSFUL,
GLOBALLY RESPECTED
Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia

Ljubljana, October 2021

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- **Peace, security, prosperity, positive bilateral relations, a strong EU, a close transatlantic alliance, a stable and effective multilateral system, visibility of Slovenia and close bonds with Slovenians abroad** are the main objectives of Slovenian foreign policy.
- Slovenia is one of the world's safest countries, which, however, **should not be taken for granted**, as Slovenia's security requires an active foreign policy responsive to the **changing international and security circumstances**. **NATO** constitutes the fundamental framework of Slovenia's national security.
- The EU is undergoing extensive changes. Slovenia will work towards a **more confident, stronger, more resilient, more cohesive, more efficient and more transparent European Union** with a **global reach** necessary to protect its values and interests. Slovenia will contribute to the strengthening of the **EU's strategic autonomy**.
- In terms of development and in the context of EU policies, it is particularly important that Slovenia be included in the **Trans-European Transport Network** as it is closely connected to Slovenia's central geographical location and the **Port of Koper, and linked with the Baltic–Adriatic Corridor**, and consequently with Slovenia's location in the **Alps-Adriatic-Danube region, Central Europe and the Mediterranean, which also involves cooperation between the Northern Adriatic coastal states**. These geopolitical areas representing Slovenia's key markets and a common cultural area will be in the focus of Slovenia's foreign policy, which will maintain support for the private sector as one of its pillars. Special attention will be devoted to improving the **quality of economic diplomacy services, to the widening and strengthening of economic departments abroad** and to providing training for economic advisers. Slovenia's foreign policy will support the interests of the economy, education and science, it will strive to pursue the **national transport and energy strategies**, and encourage the promotion of promising start-up companies in order to establish their presence in foreign markets. Close cooperation between all Slovenian ministries, notably those responsible for the economy, technology and science, is crucial in providing the private sector with coordinated and comprehensive support. Slovenia will employ its diplomatic network to strengthen its **science and cultural diplomacy**, provide support to the cultural and creative sectors, and encourage networking between Slovenian actors in the educational, research and innovation processes and **with technological giants in global development centres**.
- Slovenia will continue to consolidate its presence in the **Western Balkans as part of Europe**. **Ensuring a stable security, political and economic environment and comprehensive resolution of succession issues** remain the main topics in bilateral relations with the countries of the region. Slovenia will continue to provide active political support to the Western Balkan countries in their integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, and will act as their liaison with the European Union.
- It is in Slovenia's vital national interest to ensure that the **autochthonous Slovenian national communities in the four neighbouring countries** continue to exist and prosper. These communities also play an important role in all-round **cross-border cooperation** – important both for Slovenia as a whole and for its border areas, which constitute a major portion of Slovenia's territory.
- It is in Slovenia's interest that the **European Union maintains a strong Common Foreign and Security Policy** ensuring strategic partnerships between the Union and global players, and that the rule of law, respect for human rights and sustainable growth are pursued at the global level. Slovenia will be involved in global players' initiatives in Europe (regional platforms), and will act at the bilateral level whenever it proves necessary, and possible, to promote its interests.
- Slovenia is a promoter of **effective multilateralism** with the UN as its central pillar; however, the UN needs to be **reformed** taking into account the changed international circumstances and contemporary trends. In multilateral forums, Slovenia will focus on the **nexus between security, development, humanitarian cooperation, and migration management**. In human

rights, its **efforts will focus on the rights of the child, challenges brought about by demographic changes, equality of women and men, linguistic minorities, and the freedom of religion and belief.** Other priorities will include **cybersecurity and development of legal standards in artificial intelligence, with a special emphasis on its ethical aspects.** Slovenia will support the ambitions of **ITF Enhancing Human Security** in post-conflict rehabilitation. In the context of the **fight against terrorism**, Slovenia will give priority to **preventing radicalisation** and the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters, particularly in cooperation with the Western Balkan countries. In addition to its continuous support for the **International Criminal Court**, Slovenia will work with its partners to develop a **new mechanism of international legal assistance, actively support the fight against impunity**, and participate in the development of international law in cyberspace. **Slovenian foreign policy has identified interfaith and intercultural dialogue as a niche area.**

- In keeping with its international commitments, Slovenia will have to widen the **scope of development cooperation** in the coming years.
- In its **action against climate change**, Slovenia will focus on green transition, circular economy, and issues related to forest and water management, particularly in the Alpine and Adriatic territories.
- It will continue to devote attention to the traditional and particularly **newly formed emigre communities** and to the repatriation of their members.
- The **central role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and good inter-ministerial coordination are key to ensure a successful foreign policy and the effective management of EU affairs. Slovenia needs to cultivate a foreign policy that puts major emphasis on the **national interest, continuity of priority areas, wide political consensus** in key foreign-policy decisions, plurality of the Slovenian society in formulating its foreign policy and in candidatures to international organisations, and on **professional diplomacy**. It must ensure the necessary **real growth in budget funds for the implementation of foreign policy** and devote special attention to the **human resources** in the Foreign Ministry, particularly to the rejuvenation of diplomacy.
- Slovenia will create an environment that will **encourage foreign residential diplomatic representation in Slovenia** and attract Slovenian and foreign organisations operating in a broader context of international relations. It will also build up the reputation of the **Bled Strategic Forum** as one of the most prominent international conferences in the region.

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Background

1.1 WHEN A PEOPLE OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BECOMES A NATION

Compared to other European nations, the Slovenian people made a late, but swift, entry into the international arena as a sovereign nation. In less than a century, Slovenians succeeded in securing their existence against 19th-century nationalist movements and Nazi fascism. As an independent entity, Slovenia participated in the democratisation of Central and Eastern Europe and in the fall of communist totalitarianism. The Slovenian nation state was established on the foundations of culture. Slovenia's path to full international subjectivity was firmly built on its gaining independence and introducing parliamentary democracy.

Three decades of independence and parliamentary democracy, a decade and a half of EU and NATO membership, memories of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a century after the end of World War One, the centenary of the Carinthian Plebiscite, the 75th anniversary of the end of World War Two, and the changed circumstances and new challenges in the international environment dictate that more than five years since the previous edition, the strategic document of Slovenia's foreign policy be updated. Among these challenges are the COVID-19 pandemic and digitalisation, two defining geostrategic events of this decade, and the dramatic developments in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. These challenges point to the need for an upgrade of strategic culture, which includes regular and consistent revision of this type of documents.

In 1999, the Republic of Slovenia set out its foreign policy priorities in the *Declaration of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia*. Among various subsequent documents, a special mention should be given to the document adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in 2002 entitled *Appropriate Foreign Policy – Basic Elements of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia upon Its Integration into Euro-Atlantic Structures*. Of particular importance for Slovenia's foreign policy strategy is the *2010 Resolution on the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia*, which contains important foreign policy highlights. It describes Slovenia as a continental and maritime country situated at the junction of the Central European, South European and Mediterranean geostrategic regions. The Resolution identifies Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans as the most important regions in terms of Slovenia's security, while in the global context it recognises climate change and financial, economic and social issues as threats and risks to national security. As stated in the Resolution, in the short- and long term, Slovenia is under no direct military threat, which, however, could change in substantially altered international circumstances. Slovenia

is heavily dependent on imported raw materials (and to a lesser extent on imported energy), which is why a stable and adequate supply of these resources is vital to the country's national security.

Slovenia's foreign policy must be harmonised with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, which Slovenia is actively co-shaping. In this light, this document is also Slovenia's contribution to the EU's foreign policy.

In addition to the above-mentioned documents, the following development cooperation documents are of relevance to Slovenia's foreign policy: *Resolution on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Slovenia (2017)* and *Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia until 2030 (2018)*, where the Western Balkans, the European Neighbourhood, and Sub-Saharan Africa, notably the least developed countries, are defined as geographic priorities. Furthermore, Slovenian foreign policy is included in the 2010 *Strategy of the Participation of the Republic of Slovenia in International Operations and Missions*, which identifies Southeast Europe (Western Balkans), Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East as Slovenia's strategic geographical areas of focus.

Slovenia's international relations are also discussed in strategy documents addressing foreign policy only indirectly. Particularly important, especially in the context of Slovenia's maritime strategy and the Mediterranean dimension of Slovenian foreign policy, are the 1991 *Resolution on Maritime Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia* and the 2009 *Resolution on the Strategy for the Adriatic Sea*. Other relevant documents are those referring to Slovenia's relations with Slovenians living outside its borders.

The documents of relevance to international economic relations include the *Slovenian Development Strategy 2030*, *Smart Specialisation Strategy S4*, periodic programmes for the promotion of investments and internationalisation of the Slovenian economy, *Digital Slovenia 2030* (under preparation), *Strategy of Transport Development until 2030*, and strategic documents related to the sustainable development of tourism. In addition, strategic documents in the fields of research and innovation, culture, and language policy support the spread of Slovenia's know-how and raising its profile through foreign policy.

In 2015, after a prolonged break following the publication of the first strategy in 1999, the *Declaration of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia* and the corresponding Slovenian foreign policy strategy document were passed by the National Assembly. This strategy document looks into Slovenian foreign policy, identifying the means and methods to achieve the goals and to implement the priority tasks set out in the *Declaration of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia*. It is therefore a dynamic document and – as was envisaged upon its publication in 2015 – it needed to be updated, taking into account the changed international relations, and particularly the changed security environment. Furthermore, since the adoption of the last foreign policy strategic documents, several relevant national documents have been adopted, including the *Resolution on the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia (2019)* and the *Defence White Paper of the Republic of Slovenia (January 2020)*, which, *inter alia*, cover some complementary national solutions for the identification of and response to hybrid threats, strengthening the resilience of the state and society, cybersecurity and defence, civilian preparedness, and critical infrastructure. These topics are also included in the 2016 *Cybersecurity Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia*.

SOVEREIGN IN CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES AND IN FACING NEW CHALLENGES

Changed international circumstances

In the short period of Europe's widespread support and historic enthusiasm for the EU and NATO enlargement, Slovenia seized the comparative advantages deriving from its history and its readiness for EU and NATO membership, which was the country's foreign policy priority after its gaining independence

and international recognition. In the fifteen years following Slovenia's entry to the European Union, much has changed in both the Union and its member states. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 revealed and accelerated the existing vulnerabilities and trends that had not been visible before. We can see a growing contradiction between globalisation and its principles of openness and co-dependence on the one hand, and the priorities of geopolitics favouring an open strategic autonomy on the other. Even before the pandemic, the developments revealed the need for a critical evaluation of the paradigm stating that economic integration and modernisation in and of themselves lead to the enforcement of the values and principles of liberal order (also in the political sense) and consequently to its spreading, which was supposed to be a key element of defence against external threats. The concept of liberal cooperative co-existence was starting to show its weaknesses when faced with the revisionist element and the cognitive realisation that partners had become rivals and systemic opponents. During the crisis following Russia's annexation of Crimea and separatism in Donbass, it became clear that the fundamental values of the liberal order *per se* were not strong enough to guarantee a stable and permanent implementation of and respect for the principles and values of the European order established after the end of the Cold War, and to ensure the same level of security to all states on the continent. The openness and co-dependence that were supposed to promote cooperation and bring mutual benefits also led to a global division of labour, and growing co-dependence became a source of vulnerability, as the pandemic has revealed. Thus, the outbreak of COVID-19 has finally unmasked the changed global environment, which is no longer marked by a spreading of the liberal order, but rather by the emergence of revisionist forces and consequently of systemic rivalry and competition between large powers, and by democracies facing the systemic opposition of autocracies. Therefore, the EU must accept the fact that its transformational soft power was not strong enough to ensure the domination of its values and principles on the continent. In the geopolitical context, it has found itself in a situation strongly marked by a conflict of interests and values.

At the same time, the pandemic has deepened the uncertainty regarding the prosperity of future generations. The UK's withdrawal from the EU, the tensions between parts of the EU – between the North and the South, and the East and the West – and all the problems surrounding the COVID-19 epidemic are a warning call to the European public to engage in a sustained reflection on the Union's long-term internal and external image. Reservations are being raised about the free movement of persons (in connection with the movement of workers and the internal controls in the Schengen Area), the free movement of services (e.g. in connection with the Mobility Package), and with regard to social issues (cross-border social benefits). There seems to be a growing need to provide a clearer definition and consolidation of our common values and the EU's identity, and a clear articulation of its fundamental interests. Furthermore, we need to strengthen resilience, ensure the recovery of the Union's economy and its competitiveness, innovativeness and creativity, and increase its overall global political weight. Due to the global challenges and more serious security risks, the European Union needs to become more open to enlargement and integration.

In various parts of Europe, in diverse circumstances and in different ideological settings, the European Union is witnessing populist activity, which in the long term could pose a risk to the Union's global standing as well as to the standing of Slovenia and other member states. Similarly, it could be to the detriment of the Union to superficially dismiss these phenomena without considering their deeper causes, which include the growing competitiveness of other and emerging global actors and subsequent pressures on the EU's economy, new security threats, irregular migration and their structural impacts on the culture and society, which are particularly evident in certain areas in some EU member states, demographic changes and population ageing, a lack of social cohesion, disinformation, and the inability of the EU and some of its member states to clearly and persuasively formulate their own values.

All of the above opens room for self-reflection on what the European way of life truly entails, along with the growing awareness that it needs to be protected. Furthermore, it calls for the development of initiatives aimed at strengthening the rule of law in the EU and seeking synergies between them. These initiatives will only be effective if – by taking account of the specific features of individual member states, including the structural obstacles to the rule of law, some of which might have historical causes – we manage to achieve a unified understanding of the rule of law in all member states, carefully differentiating between the political and legal aspects of this concept.

In this sense, Resolution 1096 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism are of fundamental importance. The guidelines and warnings contained in both resolutions are of key significance for the development of resilient and lively democracies, and are particularly important for achieving the historical goal of a unified and free Europe at peace with itself. Some of these guidelines and warnings have not been heeded in certain younger European democracies, although it has been a while since they acceded to the EU. And this can partly account for the deeper reasons of misunderstandings regarding the rule of law in individual EU member states.

For a quarter of a century after the Cold War the main emphasis was on economic progress, integration and development of international regimes, and this dense web of agreements, conventions, institutions, and close economic ties lay behind the belief that Europe was immune to military and other threats. (The crisis in Ukraine shook Europe's security foundations and revealed the potential political and economic fragility of the post-Soviet space. This crisis, which remains unresolved, has been followed by new challenges, for instance the repression by the autocratic regime in Belarus.

Slovenia remains one of the world's safest countries according to global security standards; nevertheless, it has never before been more conscious of global security challenges. It has also experienced its share of hybrid and cyber threats. The establishment of the Information Security Administration in 2019 (now Government Information Security Office) and the introduction of the EU's toolbox on 5G technology, signing of the Joint Declaration on 5G Security by the US and Slovenia, transatlantic ties revived and strengthened in 2020, and the decision to make a considerable investment in defence reflect the growing awareness that security cannot be taken for granted and that this dictates Slovenia's engagement in an active foreign policy. Considerable changes in the wider international environment have a major impact on the EU and on Slovenia. Before the outbreak of the pandemic, the world was still recovering from the latest economic and financial crisis. After peaking in 2015/2016, illegal migration slowed down, but remains linked to the complex relations between the EU and Turkey, the situation in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, and the status of the pandemic. Radicalisation and terrorism still pose a threat to Europe and beyond, as evidenced by the terrorist attacks in France, Austria, and elsewhere in the last few years. These attacks alerted Europe to the problem of radicalisation and integration of immigrants, and to the need for intercultural and interfaith dialogue and better communication of European values. After the experience with COVID-19, the negative consequences of globalisation and its management pose an even greater challenge in the security, economic, technological and health fields, and also with respect to values as opposition to globalisation as we have known it until now seems to be growing. The global West is still characterised by negative demographic trends, while the global South, the Western Balkans and the eastern wing of the EU experience brain drain. Energy security is becoming an increasingly pressing issue, including for Slovenia, which will have to decide on the most appropriate mix of energy sources to honour its commitments regarding climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the relatively low level of resilience and preparedness to the above-mentioned challenges in the EU and its member states, and the need for closer cooperation on health in the EU. The pandemic has also boosted the trend towards the localisation of supply chains and forced businesses to pay closer attention to resilience, which now comes even before efficiency.

It is important to bear in mind that our security depends on the security of our allies and partners, so it is vital that Slovenia is part of NATO's collective defence system. Furthermore, an important role is also played by other collective security mechanisms in Europe and beyond.

In the Middle East, new political momentum was provided by the Abraham Accords and the beginning of the normalisation of relations between Israel and certain Arab states. However, the political transition following the short Arab Spring remains incomplete and vague. After being defeated in Syria and Iraq, Daesh and related fractions are intensifying their activities in Africa, and so is Al-Qaeda. In addition, returning terrorist fighters accused of terrorist acts, aggressive radicalisation through modern technologies and militant Islamism pose long-term threats that will have to be comprehensively addressed in the security field – along with the worrying tendencies towards political extremism in Europe and beyond. Even more effort will have to be invested in preventing the favourable environment for radicalisation and extremism, and in activities focused on the strengthening of intercultural dialogue, promoting religious tolerance and

integrating immigrants into the environment, guided by European values. A special challenge for the security of the region and beyond and for the respect for and enforcement of human right is posed by the withdrawal of western forces from Afghanistan in 2021 and the Taliban's subsequent assumption of power.

The problem of migration in the Mediterranean region, which is related to the growing global mobility, high unemployment rates of young people in North Africa, and unsettled issues in Sub-Saharan Africa, remains far from resolved. Despite a few thriving economies, Africa and Asia still face poverty and political instability, and witness a growing presence and influence of terrorist groups. Peace and security in the Mediterranean region are also vitally important to Slovenia as a Mediterranean country.

It is in Slovenia's interest to cooperate productively with all permanent members of the Security Council, while giving priority to its allies and partners sharing the same values, with the US being the greatest global power among them. Relations between the Security Council members, particularly between the US and China, and between China and Russia, will have a deep-reaching influence on Eurasia, the Atlantic space, and the whole world. China is strengthening its presence in Europe, but despite providing business opportunities, it is becoming an ever-stronger systemic and strategic rival.

Relating to the values Slovenia holds onto, the penetration of certain third countries poses a special challenge due to their ambivalent attitude towards liberal democracy or their (un)willingness to assume a share of global responsibility commensurate with their power. The changed circumstances have revealed the authoritarian nature of some of these countries, and the international environment has, unfortunately, become more conflicting but we must see the world as it is, and not as we wish it to be. What is important is that Slovenia – bilaterally, in the EU, and in transatlantic relations – endeavours to exert as much influence on the existing circumstances as it can, raising the awareness of its adherence to the values of the global West, of which it has been part since the early Middle Ages, and promoting this adherence in its foreign policy. The existence of authoritarian systems is a given fact, and in this light, the European Union must also take action as a geopolitical entity, and not only as a *soft* power.

A challenge to the entire system of international relations is posed by major non-state stakeholders and their influence of global proportions. It would be impossible to overlook their immense contribution in many areas, particularly in the environmental field. This is why, within international institutions, Slovenia will strive for the development of mechanisms that would enable these stakeholders to share their knowledge and experience. In so doing, it must ensure the legitimacy and responsibility of all stakeholders and democratic supervision in decision-making processes as well as the vitality, responsiveness and credibility of state institutions and intergovernmental international organisations, which are the foundation of the world order. Special attention needs to be devoted to technological giants, taking account of their contribution to economic and technological development, protection of democracy, safeguarding against hybrid threats, ensuring a free web and its management and protection, adequate taxation, cybersecurity, protection of critical infrastructure, protection of privacy, and development of law in cyberspace, particularly international law. Our attitude towards technological giants reflects our values transposed to the virtual space. A special role is entrusted to the National Coordinator for External Aspects of Digitalization, AI & Cyber Security operating within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in close cooperation with the Government Information Security Office.

Globally speaking, the world – in economic terms – will continue to revolve around countries not necessarily members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Greater consideration should also be given to Central Europe, part of the OECD space, which during the last economic and financial crisis demonstrated a high degree of resilience and economic growth. Over the last 30 years, Central Europe – in terms of development – has been closing the gap with the EU average and is also one of Slovenia's important traditional markets. It should be noted that Central Europe is vital for Slovenia as regards transport connections. During the demanding post-pandemic economic recovery in the EU, the question of to what degree and when fiscal policy should be tightened will once again become topical.

It will remain very important for economic diplomacy to follow the progress made by global economic institutions, which should aim at bridging the gap between economic globalisation and the role of countries and international organisations in managing this phenomenon. For Slovenia – as part of the EU and the

transatlantic space – an important factor will be the resolution of outstanding issues in trade relations, including the reduction of trade obstacles between the EU and US and the endorsement of the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Another important factor is the EU's trade relations with Japan, Turkey, and other promising regions in the world as evidenced by the conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Partnership Agreement (RCEP). Just as important will be the trade relations with the United Kingdom after its withdrawal from the EU.

In the new international circumstances, the task of ensuring security and a predictable and stable economic environment through a multilateral approach is more difficult than it was in the bipolar world. Today's world has an ever-growing need for effective international cooperation. International relations will continue to have as their guiding principles the prohibition of the use of force and the conclusion of trade agreements, in which the central role is played by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Meanwhile, the multilateral approach is an attempt to overcome new restrictions, which is evident from the rising influence of new group actors, i.e. various G groups and regional coalitions, particularly in international economic relations. Also, a matter to be addressed urgently is the reform of the United Nations, which should be implemented owing to the changed circumstances in the international community and the need to be able to identify new trends and topics.

Substantial progress has been made in international criminal justice, notably with the establishment of the International Criminal Court and its several important achievements.

Globalisation dictates good management in the economic, social and environmental spheres, and the relevant document in this area is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, climate scenarios demand that by 2050, Slovenian foreign policy, more precisely climate diplomacy, devote special attention to water in international relations. In all these endeavours, Slovenia's positions on climate change in international forums must be supported by a credible and balanced environmental policy at home.

Its membership of the European Union and NATO proves that Slovenia is part of the Western European circle of values. Through its EU and NATO membership, the country has also enhanced its international political weight, security, and responsibility. In both forums, Slovenia must constantly prove itself, establish and fortify its position, and, while promoting community interests, seek to pursue its own. Similar is true of Slovenia's membership of other international organisations. We need a confident foreign policy. After the period marked by Slovenia's efforts for international recognition, inclusion on the political map of the world, accession to international organisations (the EU, NATO, and the OECD), and the successful establishment of its reputation within these structures (UN Security Council membership, OSCE chairmanship, two presidencies of the Council of the EU as one of the first countries in transition, and the chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers), the emphasis falls on raising the profile and building up the reputation of Slovenia as a successful state, especially economically, that is ensuring the all-round prosperity of its people and is responsible and active at the global level.

Diplomacy is a means of foreign policy, and as such it constitutes a key instrument of promoting national interest in international relations. To be successful in this task, diplomacy needs to be supported by the country's robust financial and economic situation, political stability, the rule of law and respect for human rights, social cohesion, the consciousness of a nation and a people, and defence forces that are able and ready to make a contribution to the joint responsibility for global security. In this regard, Slovenia is aware of the limitations of its foreign policy, such as the country's size (in terms of Slovenia's foreign policy capacities and its influence in the international community), but can nevertheless see its characteristics as an opportunity to establish an authentic, pragmatic, and flexible approach and to identify the niche areas of Slovenian foreign policy, which could enhance its global presence, its visibility, and a positive image in the European Union and Central Europe.

Slovenia's national interest

Slovenia's national interest is built on what the state and its citizens value the most and on what makes up the identity of a nation and a people. National interest may be defined as democratically established internal

control over conditions that enable the prosperity of a state and society. In foreign policy, sovereignty means the ability of a state to assert its interests in the international community.

Slovenia's fundamental national interest lies in the country's existence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, respect for the fundamental values and principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, as well as the continued existence of Slovenian people and minorities and Slovenian culture and language.

Slovenia's strategic interests are: to ensure security and stability around the globe, but particularly in Europe; maintain good bilateral relations; to help build a strong EU; establish an effective UN-led multilateral system; ensure that NATO plays a global strategic role; achieve the country's sustainable development, including the protection of water as a resource of an increasing value for the future; achieve the economic and general prosperity of the country and its people; undergo a sustained digital transformation; close the digital gap and achieve digital autonomy; maintain the country's status as a crossroads of the European transport network; ensure the country's energy, infrastructure, resource and food security; diversify its resources; ensure security from extremism, terrorism, organised crime and hybrid and cyber threats; strengthen resilience to crises of various types; build a strong civil society; and ensure the effective rule of law, good governance, and social cohesion.

Values and interests are intrinsically intertwined in one single pillar of modern foreign policy, which seeks to create a safe and stable international environment through multi- and bilateral activities and to further open the country to Europe and the world, thus providing support to the business sector, which is important in resolving developmental and social issues. Foreign policy is an important building block for a nation's future.

FOREIGN POLICY IN SYNERGY WITH DOMESTIC POLICY

In pursuit of ethics in foreign policy

The central role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Foreign policy is among the foundations of the state and its sovereignty, and is integrated into the national security policy. Slovenia takes coordinated actions in the international arena, an approach essential to a country with limited resources. The consistency and coherence of Slovenian foreign policy raise the visibility of Slovenia's comparative advantages in international relations, which lie primarily in the country's geostrategic location and its particular historical and cultural aspects.

As stipulated in the Slovenian Foreign Affairs Act, the work of the Slovenian Foreign Ministry is vital for the country's international relations and EU affairs; the Ministry plays a key coordinating role, and line ministries and public bodies plan their activities in the international arena, including visits, in coordination with the Foreign Ministry. Also vital are good cooperation between the government departments, efficiency in forming positions, and the regular flow of information between the government departments. To this end the Slovenian Government will encourage the secondment of the Foreign Ministry's diplomats to other ministries and other ministries' staff to the Foreign Ministry.

The coordination of foreign policy activities requires a special involvement of the Slovenian National Assembly, primarily its two committees on foreign policy and EU affairs, the Office of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia. Also included in Slovenian foreign policy is the Slovenian National Council. The Slovenian Ministry of Economic Development and Technology plays a special role in establishing international economic relations; issues related to Slovenians abroad are dealt with by the Government Office for Slovenians Abroad and the Commission for Relations with Slovenes in Neighbouring and Other Countries, which is a working body of the National Assembly.

Foreign policy in a pluralistic society

Foreign policy challenges have the potential to significantly strengthen the fundamental national consensus and encourage reconciliation. The ethics of foreign policy calls for principled political leadership, the continuity of principles and values, career diplomacy, the pursuit – formalised if necessary – of a broad consensus on the primary foreign policy objectives and decisions and key candidatures within international institutions, and the demonstration of a unified national interest by Slovenia's representatives abroad.

In raising awareness within society of the importance of foreign policy, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry will call on the media (in particular the public media) to devote appropriate attention to the issues of foreign policy and international relations.

Summary of key points

- **Peace, security, and prosperity are the three pillars of Slovenia's foreign policy.**
 - **The international arena, including the EU, is going through considerable changes, which have important consequences, and Slovenia must be prepared for them.**
 - **Globally speaking, Slovenia remains one of the safest countries, which, however, should not be taken for granted and calls for an active foreign policy paying close attention to new security risks, such as cyber and hybrid threats.**
 - **By defining its vital and strategic national interests, Slovenia ensures its participation in international processes and relations of particular importance to the country.**
 - **The Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a central role in establishing Slovenia's international relations, while closely cooperating with other government departments.**
 - **The ethics of foreign policy calls for principled political leadership, continuity, professionalism, pluralism, unity, and policy coordination regarding key decisions and candidatures to international institutions.**
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2

The concentric circles of foreign policy – priority areas

2.1 IN EUROPE AND THE EURO-ATLANTIC REGION

Europe

A strong, resilient, developed, deepened and enlarged European Union

The European Union is our most important environment in terms of values, policies, law, and business. A strong EU is in Slovenia's strategic interest. EU affairs are comprehensively dealt with by all government departments and other public bodies. Guidelines for Slovenia's activities in EU institutions are detailed in a special declaration, which is prepared on a regular basis by the Slovenian Government and adopted by the Slovenian National Assembly.

The benefits of Slovenia's membership of the European Union, the Eurozone, and the Schengen Area go beyond economic and security aspects. Slovenia envisions the European Union as a "family of nations" respecting the sovereignty of every member state; this is the vision of a strong and resilient legal, economic, political and security union of member states – of a supranational structure complementing and upgrading member states in terms of all the competences that they alone could not implement effectively enough. This union is based on the values of constitutional democracy making it possible for individuals to realise their potential to the highest extent at the national, European and civic levels. The values underpinning the Union – human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, including minority members' rights and the preservation of cultural diversity and language equality – are common to the member states and their citizens. The European way of life is characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, subsidiarity, social-market economy, and the equality of women and men.

It is of crucial importance that the application of the EU mechanisms for monitoring the respect for the rule of law is transparent and that unified criteria and comparable resources are used on the basis of legal considerations taking account of the specific features of member states and structural obstacles to the rule of law, some of which might have historical origins, e.g. as the legacy of totalitarian systems. The EU requires greater synergy and unified understanding of its fundamental values.

The dynamics of changes in the member states themselves, the Union, and farther afield requires that strong political will be demonstrated to ensure respect for the common values and fundamental freedoms, including the free movement of goods, capital, workforce, and services.

Slovenia is an advocate for a stronger, more resilient, more cohesive, efficient and transparent Union. The principle of subsidiarity laid down in the Treaty on European Union and the principle of proportionality should remain guiding principles in areas where the European Union does not have exclusive competence, e.g. in criminal justice, and the national parliaments and the Court of Justice of the European Union should continue to have a key role in monitoring respect for the principle of subsidiarity, which is an important tool for countering Euroscepticism. Full respect for the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and democratic legitimacy should be guaranteed as the deepening of the Union continues on the basis of the existing treaties. In keeping with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the legal acts and decisions of the EU onto which Slovenia has transferred the exercise of part of its sovereign rights are applied in accordance with the EU legal order.

Slovenia will continue to form flexible alliances, while enhancing its cooperation with individual member states or groups of member states that are guided by similar interests in establishing European policies. In so doing, Slovenia will pursue its fundamental strategic interests and priority fields arising from its developmental, economic, infrastructural, historical, cultural, environmental, social and other characteristics.

An effective response to global economic, financial and health challenges dictates that member states' economic and other policies are better harmonised, that greater responsibility is taken in implementing them, following jointly agreed guidelines, and that a commitment is made to practice mutual solidarity. In this context, Slovenia will devote special attention to sustainability-oriented investments, including those

linked with EU funds, and to improving the investment climate. It is also vital to the European Union and Slovenia to ensure financial stability and the long-term sustainability of the public finances; to this end, Slovenia will continue to support the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union, in which the euro would maintain price and currency stability.

To achieve prosperity for all, Europe needs to ensure sustainable economic development, improve the EU's competitiveness, reduce unemployment, and consolidate the internal market and international trade. Slovenia's goal is to achieve the EU average in terms of development through a green transition, digital transformation, and strengthened social prosperity in the medium term, but its short-term objective is to ensure a comprehensive post-pandemic recovery. Furthermore, it is important to plan economic policies related to social policies – and in this context Slovenia will strive to improve the quality of life, also with support from the European Union – and environmental policies – in this respect, Slovenia will call for an environmental footprint reduction, the sustainable preservation of natural resources, and respect for labour standards. In addition, it will strive to protect cultural heritage and support the cultural and creative sectors. The European Union's internal market enables Slovenian enterprises unrestricted access to the world's largest economic area, which is vitally important for the Slovenian economy given its export orientation. Slovenia will continue to provide active support for the completion of the single internal market.

The common trade policy of the European Union facilitates the access of Slovenian enterprises to third-country markets, which is vital in today's globalised world; Slovenia supports the efforts to achieve the EU's greater (open) strategic autonomy, but will continue to advocate for an open, fair, ambitious and balanced trade policy based on international rules with the WTO at its centre, which fully respects the valid European and international standards. In these endeavours, Slovenia will protect its cultural identity against the impacts of globalisation.

The EU member states create high added value through their joint fight against cross-border crime and terrorism, cross-border judicial cooperation in civil, corporate and criminal justice matters, border protection, and the management of migration flows. In the context of justice and home affairs, an important contribution to security and the free movement of people within the European Union has been the Schengen Agreement. Slovenia's goal is the full application of the Schengen Agreement; any future shifting of the Schengen border must ensure that Slovenia maintains the current level of protection, particularly against irregular migration and organised crime. With regard to migration, Slovenia will continue to uphold the position that lasting solutions to irregular migration can only be found at the European level, by taking into account the European principles and standards and eliminating the root causes of irregular migration, while closely cooperating with the countries of origin and other partners at the regional and multilateral levels. In these efforts, more active partner cooperation with the EU's southern neighbourhood is imperative. Slovenia will advocate the need for achieving an appropriate balance between the solidarity and responsibility of member states, the importance of reducing the push factors of irregular migration, a more effective return policy at the EU level, and the efficient protection of the EU's external borders, devoting due attention to the humanitarian dimension of migration.

It will provide its support for strengthening the Union's civil protection mechanism and other tools aimed at improving the EU's preparedness for and resilience to crises, taking into account the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Considering Slovenia's geographical position and transport capacities, it is the country's goal to be included in the modern and effective Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), as envisaged by the Strategy of Transport Development in the Republic of Slovenia and the European Green Deal guidelines. Also, Slovenia will promote measures taken as part of the Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Union that support Slovenia's holistic maritime strategy.

In the process of establishing the Energy Union, Slovenia will work towards a more efficient operation of the internal energy market, the goal of EU's climate neutrality by 2050, and energy security. Furthermore, Slovenia believes it is vital that a comprehensive approach be adopted in all aspects of energy policy and that the European Union establish a unified approach to global energy and climate issues; for this reason,

Slovenia promotes enhanced coordination between EU foreign and energy policies to ensure that the Union speaks with one voice at the global level.

Also in the context of EU policies, Slovenia will strongly advocate a Common Agricultural Policy that enables the sustainable and balanced development of all Europe's rural areas, while taking into account the characteristics and challenges of Slovenia's agriculture and rural areas.

Slovenia will promote the networking of all Slovenian stakeholders in research, innovation and creativity with other countries' leading stakeholders, especially in the framework of EU programmes for research and development, education, training and culture, and with the help of science diplomacy.

Drawing on lessons learned in the past, Slovenia is aware of the importance of establishing in the European Union a strong Common Foreign and Security Policy and a strong Common Security and Defence Policy. Slovenia's history and geopolitical situation set the tone for the added value that Slovenia can contribute to the shaping of the EU's common foreign and security policy; the EU makes our voice stronger in the world. At the same time, due to less predictable global relations, the EU is strengthening its autonomy in the military, defence, economic, technological, health and other fields. In co-shaping these EU policies, Slovenia will devote particular attention to horizontal and regional issues of strategic interest to Slovenia. Taking account of the needs of the Union and its own interests and capacities, Slovenia will participate in civilian missions and military operations in crisis areas. It will continue to take particular interest in the Western Balkans, the situation in the region, and cooperation with Western Balkan countries, and will devote closer attention to Sub-Saharan Africa.

To facilitate Slovenia's successful participation in EU institutions, it is necessary to ensure the effective interministerial coordination of EU affairs. It is important to take a proactive approach already in the course of preparing legislative initiatives and to provide timely and well-reasoned national positions, coordinated between government departments, on legislative proposals and other EU initiatives, and, later on in the Council, to participate in the policy-making process and to promote national interests. Ministries should ensure their regular and active participation in Council sessions at all levels, including the highest. To strengthen the European Union's democratic legitimacy, it is essential that the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, the organisations concerned, and civil society be included in preparing Slovenia's positions at an early stage. In this context, primarily to facilitate the process of endorsing positions by the Slovenian National Assembly, timely and good background information needs to be provided, particularly when Slovenia's priority issues are being considered. Equally, in considering EU matters, it is important to draw on expert knowledge.

The Slovenian Foreign Ministry holds consultations with Slovenian members of the European Parliament and maintains contact with the Slovenian staff in EU institutions, while fully respecting their commitment to working for the interests of the European Union.

Bilateral cooperation in Europe

Respecting the 2011 joint declaration by the Slovenian and German heads of government on the intensification of bilateral relations, Slovenia will maintain close dialogue with the Federal Republic of Germany on priority EU issues with the aim of enhancing political and economic unity in Slovenia and the stability of the euro. Slovenia and Germany are connected by their belonging to the common wider Central European cultural space and their well-developed economic relations. This cooperation is also important for Germany's ambition to assume a more active role in international relations, also in the field of security.

Based on the 2011 political partnership declaration, the cooperation between Slovenia and France mainly focuses on political dialogue, partnership in the business, scientific, educational and cultural spheres, in the field of the environment, and within La Francophonie. Cooperation with France is of special significance as it is a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

In pursuing its strategic interests, Slovenia – in the European Union – cooperates with all interested partners and, in particular, forms alliances with like-minded countries, giving priority to its neighbours and other Central European countries, notably the Visegrad Group countries, and smaller EU member states. Slovenia will also devote attention to its political and economic cooperation with Poland, and, given its maritime strategy and the Mediterranean dimension of its foreign-policy identity, will enhance its cooperation with the Mediterranean EU member states, devoting special attention to those with a high digitalisation index.

After the UK's withdrawal from the EU, bilateral relations will focus on ensuring the rights and equal treatment of Slovenian nationals, foreign- and security policy dialogue, particularly in the framework of cooperation within NATO and in cybersecurity, economic cooperation, and exchanges in education, science, and culture. It is vital to take a step forward from the decision for the withdrawal, which has affected both the United Kingdom and the European Union, and establish mutual trust needed for a strategic relationship between the two entities.

An important interlocutor in Europe, and farther afield, is also the Holy See, particularly on the issues of peace, development, freedom of religion, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, cultural identity, and humanitarian and other global issues that are important to the current pontiff. Dialogue with the Holy See is held as part of bilateral relations as well as based on the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.

EU enlargement

Slovenia will continue to promote EU enlargement as the EU's strong geopolitical transformation instrument and a powerful lever for strengthening political and economic stability and security, particularly to the Western Balkans. We need a comprehensive enlargement policy and the EU's credible response; the EU enlargement process can run in parallel with the discussion on the future of Europe. Admitting new members should imply the true enlargement of the area that builds on common values, notably the rule of law and minority rights, and must contribute to the region's and Europe's political stability and security, including with the candidates acceding to the EU's common foreign and security policy. Candidate countries' readiness for EU membership should be proven by the adoption and implementation of the EU acquis, as well as by societal changes and a constructive contribution to resolving the outstanding issues of the past, including the succession issues. Of special importance is regional cooperation, particularly in the economy and connectivity. The Slovenian Government will prepare a thorough analysis of the impacts of the EU's enlargement to the Western Balkan region. Slovenia will also provide support to the Western Balkan countries acceding to the European Union through the Brdo-Brijuni Process and other initiative, e.g. the Berlin Process. It will continue to implement the Slovenian initiatives *Positive Agenda for Youth in the Western Balkans* and *Integrative Internal Security Governance*.

It will continue to provide active political support to the countries of the region on their path towards the EU, both within the Council of the EU and in bilateral contacts, and in the framework of development cooperation and projects funded by the EU through the IPA instrument.

Both Slovenia and Europe attach high importance to Turkey's opening towards the European Union and its standards. Slovenia strives to deepen its cooperation with Turkey in areas of common interest. In addition, Slovenia is an advocate of upgrading and modernising the EU-Turkey Customs Union when the conditions for it are met.

European Neighbourhood

Slovenia will also pursue its foreign policy goals in the eastern and southern European neighbourhood and beyond through the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, which it is actively co-shaping. To this aim and also due to the migration pressures, it will intensify its activities in the southern neighbourhood.

It is a priority for Slovenia that security, stability, and democracy be maintained in the wider neighbourhood, and therefore Slovenia strives to nurture good relations with Eastern Partnership countries and to encourage these countries to undertake reforms to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, and respect for

human rights. To this aim, it provides bilateral support, particularly to the signatories of accession and free trade agreements. Slovenia will provide support to those countries in the Eastern neighbourhood aspiring to become EU member states that have shown to be the most ambitious in this process, notably Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, and will closely follow the developments and support democratic processes in Belarus. In addition, Slovenia has identified opportunities for cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries in the economy and energy.

Russian Federation

Fundamental guidelines for cooperation with the Russian Federation arise from the unequivocal interest in maintaining and protecting the legal and normative foundations of modern Europe, which have led to the end of the Cold War and paved the way for security, stability, cooperation and prosperity on the continent – the Paris Charter for a New Europe (OSCE, 1990), the Budapest Memorandum (1994), the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation (1997) – and from the principle of respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and equal security of all European countries, their free selection of their own security arrangements and the later adopted five leading principles of the EU's relations with the Russian Federation.

In addition to the economy, Slovenia is interested in cooperation in the fight against climate change, tourism, agriculture, culture, education, particularly in the linguistic and technical fields, interpersonal contacts, and support for civil society. Russian culture is part of the European cultural heritage. Slovenia will therefore make long-term endeavours within the European Union to encourage Russia to join the common efforts for cooperation in Europe with a view to establishing a long-term EU-Russia partnership that will enhance Europe's global standing. Furthermore, Slovenia will call on the players in the post-Soviet region to establish cooperation, while showing respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the countries of the region.

Slovenia as part of Central Europe

Slovenia is a Central European country and enjoys historical, political and cultural ties woven through many centuries with the region's other countries. Central Europe is the cradle of our cultural heritage and collective memory. Furthermore, Slovenia is closely connected to this region in economic and transport terms. Central Europe is the natural hinterland of the Port of Koper, representing the core port of the TEN-T. Central European countries are marked by their political stability, security, ambitious economic policy, and a relatively high level of purchasing power and shared cultural characteristics, which affirms the importance of their political and economic roles to Slovenia. Its status as a Central European country provides Slovenia with many opportunities, which it is actively seizing.

Slovenia will strengthen its political cooperation with all Central European countries, notably Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland. Its geopolitical situation makes it only natural for the country to cooperate with the Visegrad Group with a view to strengthening cooperation on the economy, transport (in particular, to establish a rail connection between the Port of Koper and Central Europe) and energy between the Baltic and the Adriatic, including in the framework of the Three Seas Initiative and the C5 informal group.

Potential for cooperation with Central European countries and within Central European regional organisations also exists in the coordination of activities in the European Union, the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership, within other multilateral organisations, in cooperation during various crises, protection against natural and other disasters, and tourism. The fact that Central European countries share common cultural characteristics dictates that Slovenia enhance its cultural promotion in these countries.

Euro-Atlantic region

Slovenia as a NATO ally; NATO – a pillar of national and transatlantic security

Its commitment to collective defence has led Slovenia to become, by its sovereign will, a NATO ally. Despite the fast-changing security environment and limited national resources, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization remains the most effective and efficient system of ensuring Slovenia's national security. NATO membership ensures security for Slovenia to a degree that cannot be attained by Slovenia even if it were to multiply its defence funds several times, since countries are unable to address the myriad of new challenges on their own. The changed security environment in Europe, the Middle East and beyond demonstrates the long-term need for democratic states to form a defensive alliance and for Slovenia as a NATO member country to participate in ensuring global and regional security by fulfilling its commitments and burden-sharing within the Alliance. Slovenia makes an important contribution in the Western Balkans, the Mediterranean and NATO's eastern wing, as well as to post-conflict reconstruction and civil protection.

Foreign policy is aimed at raising awareness of NATO's role and importance, demonstrated by the Alliance's participation in protecting common values, and reinforcing public trust in the Alliance and collective defence, which forms part of joint efforts to safeguard international peace and security, which should be achieved to the greatest possible extent within the United Nations. To this end, Slovenia will build on its successful cooperation in missions.

Slovenia must preserve its reputation of a trustworthy ally and reliable NATO member fulfilling its share of membership commitments. This is in its national interest. It will actively support NATO's capacity-building efforts aimed at protecting NATO member countries, including Slovenia, against new threats, and it will participate in the strengthening of traditional collective defence capacities. It will encourage unity within the Alliance and solidarity between the allies, especially with those that believe to be in particular danger. Slovenia will call for NATO's enhanced cooperation with other international organisations, particularly with the EU, and will continue to actively engage in pursuing NATO's open-door policy with countries that express such wishes, meet the conditions, and whose membership would be beneficial to the Alliance. Finally, Slovenia will continue to advocate the importance of political dialogue and practical cooperation with partner countries.

Transatlantic relations

Transatlantic relations with the United States and Canada are the key aspects of the Alliance and have become increasingly important in the changed security environment, also owing to the need for preserving the rules-based international order. The upgrade of a single transatlantic economic region has great strategic importance in relation to the world's other growing powers as well as in terms of maintaining the standing of the Euro-Atlantic region in the world. Therefore, acting as an EU member state, Slovenia will seize the opportunity to participate in the project that has the ambition to set the development guidelines and standards for the 21st century's global economic and political relations.

The United States

Europe, with Slovenia as part of it, and the United States are bound together by common core values, roots of civilisation, and political, security and economic interests. Again, due to the changing security environment, Europe's security issues require the attention of the United States. In the light of this, Slovenia believes that relations with the US are of crucial strategic importance. In addition, a common response of the US and the EU to the challenges, such as climate change and cybersecurity, provides an important foundation for cooperation at the global level.

Slovenia and the United States enjoy close relations, established through NATO, diversified bilateral cooperation in many areas of common interest, cyber- and energy security, and Slovenian emigrants. They are engaged in strategic dialogue on these topics. An active and close dialogue demands more determined tapping into the potential in the business and scientific-technical areas. Slovenia supports the efforts for regulating trade relations between the EU and the US and reducing trade obstacles by taking into account the interests and specificities of the European Union and its member states. In this light, Slovenia applauds the establishment and activities of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council. Furthermore, economic diplomacy will provide support to Slovenian enterprises wishing to seize the opportunities in the American market.

Summary of key points

- **For a stronger, more cohesive and efficient EU, and a confident Slovenia in it.**
 - **Enlargement of the Schengen Area must ensure at least the same level of security that Slovenia currently enjoys.**
 - **Inclusion of Slovenia in the Trans-European Transport Network; strengthening Slovenia's role as a maritime country.**
 - **Place emphasis on bilateral cooperation within the European Union, especially cooperation with key partners, member states with similar interests in European policies, neighbours, Central European countries, and Mediterranean countries.**
 - **EU enlargement must broaden the area of common values; provide support to the Western Balkans and promote the European perspective of the Eastern Partnership, particularly Ukraine.**
 - **Encourage the Russian Federation to make a long-term commitment to cooperation in Europe and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the countries of the post-Soviet space.**
 - **Strengthen cooperation with Central European countries, particularly in the economy, transport, and culture.**
 - **Slovenia in NATO: a trustworthy ally, an active and reliable member.**
 - **Strengthen political and economic ties with the United States, including through closer strategic dialogue.**
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2.2 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Cooperation at the junction of the Alpine, Adriatic and Danube regions

Slovenia is a Central European and Mediterranean country, situated at the junction of the Alpine, Adriatic and Danube regions and at the junction of Western and Southeast Europe. Slovenia and the Czech Republic are the westernmost Slavic countries. Slovenia's position at the intersection of three geographical and five language areas (Germanic, Romance, Rhaeto-Romance, notably Friulian, Finno-Ugric, and Slavic) offers Slovenia excellent opportunities for economic, political, environmental, scientific and cultural cooperation. This space is also of concern to the autochthonous Slovenian national communities living in Slovenia's four neighbouring countries, which together with Slovenia form a single national, cultural and language area, whose preservation is of immense national importance. The autochthonous Italian and Hungarian national communities and the Roma community also play important roles in this region.

Slovenia is the natural centre of this area, which is of greatest importance to the Slovenian economy and is closely connected with the Port of Koper; Slovenia's sea is Slovenia's and Central Europe's gateway to the world. Slovenia can seize the opportunities provided by its geographical position to the fullest by its integration into European transport and energy networks and by constructing or modernising the missing connections. The upgrading of transport infrastructure, particularly the rail network, is vital for the future development of the Port of Koper as it needs to be connected with other Central European countries.

To maintain this favourable position and take advantage of the opportunities offered, Slovenia devotes special attention to cooperation in the framework of the three EU macroregional strategies – Alpine, Adriatic-Ionian and Danube – and cross-border cooperation programmes (Interreg). In addition to the interstate dialogue, Slovenia is developing cooperation with countries and federal states in its neighbourhood. In addition to the existing institutional forms of cooperation with Austrian Carinthia and Styria, the Free State of Bavaria, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, there are possibilities and reasons for cooperation with other neighbouring regions, also on the basis of the experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cooperation with the border regions will gain even greater value once regions as political

units are established in Slovenia, which could have specific foreign policy potential and might become interesting and credible partners for cross-border dialogue; however, they will first have to develop the gravitational potential to establish successful cross-border cooperation. Due to the fact that border areas constitute a large portion of Slovenia, cross-border cooperation is of particular importance to Slovenia.

Neighbouring countries

Relations with Austria are rooted in the centuries of common history and the presence of the autochthonous Slovenian national communities in Austrian Carinthia and Styria. The focus of foreign policy efforts remains on the position of the Slovenian national communities, cooperation within the EU and Central Europe, economic cooperation, and construction and modernisation of road and rail connections, particularly the construction of the second tube of the Karavanke Tunnel and the Third Development Axis, and the modernisation of the railway towards Šentilj and Villach/Beljak. On the centenary of the Carinthian Plebiscite in October 2020, an important symbolic step was made towards recognising the integral role of the autochthonous Slovenian national community in Carinthia and in the whole of Austria. Slovenia will strive for the full implementation of Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty and for improving the normative and material position of the Slovenian national community in Austria. It will strengthen the ties in culture, science, and technology.

In Slovenia's relations with Italy, which is another of its most important economic partners, the joint commemoration in July 2020 to mark the centenary of the arson attack on the National Hall and joint paying of respects by the presidents of both countries at the monument in Basovizza/Bazovica in the same month were important symbolic steps towards overcoming historical burdens. Slovenia will strive for the continuation of this process on the basis of the Report of the Slovenian-Italian Historical and Cultural Commission, and will encourage its publication in Italy. It will continue to support the endeavours of the autochthonous Slovenian national community in Italy for the full implementation of the Act Protecting the Slovenian Minority in Italy of 2011, including the issue of Slovenian representation in the Italian parliament. The main institutional framework of intergovernmental cooperation with Italy is the Coordination Committee of Ministers chaired by the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries. Of major importance is also cooperation in preventing irregular migration and cooperation in North Adriatic, where both coastal states share an interest in ecological protection, sustainable management of natural resources, strengthened connectivity, and coordinated resolution of other outstanding issues.

The most important factor determining quality relations between Slovenia and Croatia is the ability to identify the actual common strategic common interests and to seek synergies, such as economic cooperation, the already mentioned protection of the Adriatic Sea, cooperation within the European Union, further development of transport links between the countries and further with Southeast Europe, and energy. An important role in relations between Slovenia and Croatia will be played by public and cultural diplomacy. In addition, Slovenia will advocate that the standards applying to other national minorities in Croatia should also apply to the Slovenian community. One of the main points of interest remains the final comprehensive solution of the border issue in keeping with the Award of the Arbitration Tribunal of 2017, and the resolution of the issue of Ljubljanska banka, Zagreb Main Branch, in the context of succession.

In relations with Hungary, the main focus will be cooperation in the construction of the missing infrastructure connections between the two countries. In what concerns the issues related to the autochthonous Slovenian national community in the Raba region, priority will be given to the preservation of the Slovene language and strengthening of the economic basis of Slovenians in the region. In the economy, in addition to strengthening trade in goods, special attention will be devoted to the promotion of investments, particularly in the high-tech sectors. Hungary remains an important cooperation partner in Central Europe and is Slovenia's only neighbour belonging to the Visegrad Group.

The Mediterranean

In the Mediterranean region, Slovenia has been an active member of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. It strives to contribute to the Initiative by establishing a close connection between the Initiative and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. Also, Slovenia has developed

good relations with the Adriatic states, and will continue to strengthen them as well as its bilateral relations with other countries of the European and Southern Mediterranean. It will remain a participant in various informal networks of cooperation between Mediterranean states. As a matter of priority, it will strive to have an active role in the EUMED 9 group of Mediterranean EU member states, which it joined in 2021.

Slovenia is an Adriatic maritime country; its Mediterranean dimension is strongly linked to the Port of Koper, a Mediterranean logistics centre of Central Europe. It is a connecting point between Central Europe and the Mediterranean and a gateway into the world, particularly Asia. Furthermore, major road and rail connections leading from the Western Balkans and Croatia to the west of Europe run across Slovenia. Hence, it is vital that an appropriate transport link be established between the Port of Koper and its Central European hinterland in order to strengthen Slovenia's position in this region and ensure long-term reliance of these countries on the Port of Koper. The movement of goods through the Port of Koper is an important indicator of the economic situation in the region.

In the light of the declaration of exclusive economic zones in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic Sea, Slovenia will protect its rights and interests as arising from international law, particularly from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the EU Common Fisheries Policy.

It is in Slovenia's interest to ensure comprehensive and sustainable management of the Adriatic Sea and coastal areas. The Adriatic region is of high value for Slovenia also due to its energy dimension. In addition, it has been dealing with the migration issue, which carries risks and responsibilities for the state.

An important demonstration of the Mediterranean dimension of Slovenian foreign policy is the hosting of the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) in Portorož, with the University being among the priority projects of the Union for the Mediterranean. Slovenia's contribution to the Mediterranean region may also be through intercultural dialogue.

The Western Balkans

Close ties with the Western Balkan countries remain a firm foundation for intensive all-round relations. Slovenia's activities in the Western Balkans also involve other EU partners; in addition, Slovenia participates in forums looking into the region's future. Slovenia devotes special attention to a comprehensive resolution of succession issues and encourages all stakeholders to seek constructive solutions that will promote stability and peace in the region.

By supporting the Western Balkans, Slovenia contributes to bridging the gap between the EU and the countries of the region. To ensure the success of Slovenia's activities in the region, it is vital to establish cooperation between all Slovenia's government departments.

The successes achieved thus far and Slovenia's presence in the region need to be upgraded by taking advantage of Slovenia's favourable geographical location and the benefits of being a eurozone economy, taking into account that capital flow in the region is no longer a one-way process. The presence of the *Made in Slovenia* label in the region in the long term depends on Slovenia's development strategy, the robustness of the Slovenian economy, export diversification, and the pace and intensity of political stabilisation and progress in the region. Another important contribution is the successful participation of the Slovenian Armed Forces and Police in international operations in the region.

Slovenia as a Central European EU and NATO member and a truly friendly country of the region openly pursues its strategic interests by promoting mutual trust in the region, closer regional cooperation, and economic relations in a stable and safe neighbourhood. In this regard, Slovenia devotes its attention to reviving and furthering contacts with individuals and institutions that have already established personal or institutional connections with Slovenia and now have important positions in politics, the economy, science, or culture; in particular, Slovenia focuses on cooperation with younger generations without such personal experience of Slovenia, including by granting scholarships in the framework of development cooperation.

The future of bilateral relations with the Western Balkan countries and successfully concluded EU enlargement process to the Western Balkans greatly depend on the dynamics and quality of resolving succession issues and the aim of truly and fully implementing the Agreement on Succession Issues, as these pave the way to settling important legal relations and substantial financial obligations arising from the dissolution of the common state, as well as demonstrating political responsibility. The resolution of these issues is an important factor in ensuring stability in the region and improving neighbourly relations. Slovenia will look into all material and legal aspects of succession and associated issues, in particular those concerning Slovenia's vital interests.

It will focus on the business environment in the countries of the region, institutional capacity-building, good governance, the fight against organised crime, the rule of law, and migration management on the Western Balkan migration route. It will closely follow new security challenges caused by migration and radical movements. In this regard, a vital means of ensuring stability in the region is the continued strengthening of regional cooperation, and Slovenia will take part in this endeavour. Finally, Slovenia will continue to participate in international operations in the Western Balkans until the situation in the region is sufficiently stabilised.

The Alps

Alpine countries share cultural characteristics, living conditions, and challenges associated with development efforts aimed at preserving biodiversity and the richness of natural resources. The wider Europe is supplied with water from Alpine rivers. Also, the intersection between transport connections between the south and the north of Europe, as well as between continental Europe and the Adriatic and the Mediterranean lies in the Alps.

In the Alpine neighbourhood, Slovenia has used the framework of the Alpine Quadrilaterale to establish close cooperation with Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Austria, while the cooperation platform for the wider Alpine region is the Alpine Convention, whose priorities include spatial planning and sustainable development, the conservation of nature and landscape protection, alpine farming, alpine forests, tourism, energy, soil conservation, transport and mobility, water management, and climate change.

With Slovene as one of its official languages, the Alpine Convention is an important framework for Slovenia to maintain its presence in the region as a political, economic and development partner, and to ensure this region's sustainable development. Slovenia will therefore keep striving to maintain and strengthen the role of the Alpine Convention, also with a view to establishing connections between the European Union and the Alpine region within the new EU Strategy for the Alpine Region. In this context, it is of particular importance that Slovenia establish cooperation on the sustainable management of natural resources, especially water and biodiversity, transport, natural disasters, and green economic development.

Slovenians in neighbouring countries – a shared national, cultural and linguistic space

The formation of an independent and democratic Slovenia and its accession to the European Union and the Schengen Area have consolidated the unity of this shared national, cultural and linguistic space. The border areas have achieved considerable progress; nevertheless, Slovenia must strive harder to ensure that the Slovenian national communities are recognised by society and that Slovene is used in public in the relevant areas.

The priorities of Slovenia's foreign policy concerning the Slovenian national minority include ensuring the adequate legal protection of Slovenian national communities in all four neighbouring countries in compliance with domestic and international law, and pursuing administrative, educational, cultural and other policies to prevent assimilation. To this end, Slovenia makes an effort to enhance minority protection norms through the mechanisms of multilateral organisations, primarily the Council of Europe, managing its approach to autochthonous national minorities and other communities in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia.

Slovenian foreign policy – also in cooperation with the Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenians Abroad – will raise the awareness of the importance of the shared national, cultural and linguistic space, also with a view to enhancing Slovenia's reputation in the immediate neighbourhood and promoting the all-round progress of the Alps-Adriatic-Danube region. In the light of this, special opportunities are created by the business entities of the Slovenian national community members. Slovenia will be an active promoter of cross-border and all-Slovenian economic, cultural and other projects.

Based on its specific characteristics, Slovenia developed measures to regulate the rights of the autochthonous minority population decades ago, by introducing exemplary practice, establishing a solid legal basis, developing expertise, and setting up research institutions, which are powerful mechanisms and constitute a niche area of Slovenian foreign policy in regulating the status of both the minorities in Slovenia and the Slovenian national communities in neighbouring countries and farther afield.

Summary of key points

- **Slovenia – at the heart of the Alpine, Adriatic and Danube regions.**
- **Good neighbourly relations; close cooperation with the neighbouring countries' border areas.**
- **Promote the strengthening of transport connections with the neighbouring countries.**
- **Cooperation with neighbouring countries on natural and other disasters, climate change, and environmental protection, including the cooperation between the Northern Adriatic coastal states.**
- **The return of cultural property to the countries of origin.**
- **The final and comprehensive resolution of the border issue with Croatia by the implementation of the Arbitration Award, and the settlement of the issues of Ljubljanska banka and Krško Nuclear Power Plant; the identification of shared interests within the European Union, in the Adriatic region, and in the field of energy.**
- **Koper – a Mediterranean logistics centre of Central Europe.**
- **Strengthening bilateral relations in the Mediterranean.**
- **The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative in close association with the macroregion.**
- **Slovenia's enhanced presence in the Western Balkans.**
- **Slovenia – the Western Balkans' true friend openly pursuing its strategic interests.**
- **A comprehensive settlement of the succession issues has great importance for bilateral relations and the successful finalisation of the EU's enlargement to the Western Balkans.**
- **The Brdo-Brijuni process as a link between the EU and the Western Balkans.**
- **The Quadrilaterale, the Alpine Convention and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region.**
- **Adequate legal protection for Slovenian national communities in all four neighbouring countries; closer attention to the issues related to autochthonous linguistic minorities through multilateral mechanisms.**
- **A shared national, cultural and linguistic area as a vital national interest and the driving force of development in border areas.**
- **Slovenia's knowledge and experience in the protection of autochthonous minorities – a niche area of Slovenian foreign policy.**

2.3 FURTHER AFIELD

In cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of Economic Development and Technology and other stakeholders, Slovenian foreign policy will identify and promote the economy's actual interests and capacities for entering distant markets. It will take innovative approaches in economic diplomacy to establish business contacts, including by means of digital diplomacy and widening the network of economic departments tasked with supporting business entities in foreign markets, and make use of the trademarks

kept by some Slovenian enterprises in those markets. Moreover, Slovenian foreign policy will nurture ties with the Slovenian national communities abroad, as they may act as an important lever for Slovenia in distant countries, particularly in those where Slovenia has no residential representation. Also, it will support the Slovenian emigré communities, including those newly formed, and their development, while simultaneously promoting their members' return to Slovenia, and it will work to preserve the heritage of Slovenian emigrants. Importantly, Slovenian foreign policy will ensure the protection of Slovenian citizens. In performing economic diplomacy activities and ensuring consular assistance in distant countries, it will draw on the assistance of honorary consuls. It will also provide political and diplomatic support to Slovenians participating in international operations and missions. Two important instruments of cooperation with third countries are development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Slovenia will pursue its foreign policy goals and assume its responsibility at the global level through the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, in the formulation of which it actively participates. A solid Common Foreign and Security Policy and an efficient European External Action Service (EEAS) are important for ensuring that Slovenia is well-informed of, keeps pace with, and participates in current global developments. Slovenia wishes to see the European Union become a determined and visible player in the international arena. It is Slovenia's goal that the Union build solid and reliable strategic partnerships with global players which are also the leading regional powers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and it believes that such partnerships should primarily aim to create an international environment conducive to security, universal sustainable growth, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. To this end, Slovenia will cooperate with the European External Action Service and EU delegations to third countries.

Furthermore, the membership of other international organisations offers possibilities for consolidating cooperation and establishing dialogue with countries where Slovenia has no residential representation.

Finally, it will be important for cooperation at the global level to include reviving and furthering contacts with institutions and individuals who in the past had an established connection with Slovenia and now hold positions in politics, the economy, science, or culture in the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Asia and Oceania/Indo-Pacific

In this part of the world, Slovenia's most important partners are India as the largest world democracy, Japan, China, Korea, and Australia. Slovenia will devote special attention to the Indo-Pacific and to deepening cooperation with the democratic countries in this region as part of the global free world. Slovenia's economic interests in Asian countries are closely associated with the Port of Koper, Slovenian railways, the Slovenian automotive industry, digitalisation, and high-tech cooperation. The highly important segments of Slovenia's cooperation with Asia involve science, development, and innovation.

In fostering contacts with its Asian partners, Slovenia will secure a strong position in various initiatives through which the Asian partners establish cooperation with Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe, as well as in initiatives promoting strategic cooperation between the European Union and Asian partners. An important regional platform for cooperation with India is the International Center for Promotion of Enterprises (ICPE), and the Foreign Ministry will promote a reflection on the new role of this intergovernmental organisation in the changed world.

Vitally important for Slovenia's standing in Asia is the country's participation in Asian-European forums (ASEAN, ASEM, ASEF) at both the political and working levels. Slovenia, as a member of the EU and NATO, would like to see in the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific regions the establishment of international order based on democracy, human rights, the rule of law, freedom of navigation, maritime safety, and peaceful resolution of interstate disputes in accordance with the principles and practice of international law. It would benefit the entire EU to establish cooperation with the region in cybersecurity, digitalisation, connectivity, and regional security.

Slovenia will develop closer political and economic links with certain major economies in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia, also focusing on countries with the highest digitalisation index. In the short term, it will be impossible to strengthen the diplomatic and consular network in the region, so the Foreign Ministry will

seek alternative possibilities within the EU. In the medium term, it would be worth considering paying greater attention to promising Central Asian markets. Slovenia's residential representation in several Asian countries will be complemented by non-residential representation through the Slovenian Foreign Ministry and co-representation. Ensuring the protection of Slovenian citizens in Asia is an important issue due to Slovenia's poor residential representation in the region.

The Middle East, the Gulf, and North Africa

The Middle East, Gulf and North African countries, which Slovenia has traditionally good and diverse relations with, offer opportunities for strengthened cooperation, particularly in the business sector. Sustainable peace, stability and freedom in the region are also in Slovenia's strategic interest. Slovenia's policy towards the region is based primarily on the EU's common foreign and security policy and the strategies agreed in the framework of the EU; its contribution is in the form of humanitarian aid, development cooperation projects, and participation in operations and missions in the region.

Slovenian foreign policy will encourage the cooperation of Slovenian businesses and other stakeholders in these countries, particularly in high tech, green economy, renewables, and science, including artificial intelligence.

Political and economic cooperation with the Gulf States is of special significance due to the increasingly lower prices of oil, climate change, diversification of Gulf States' economies, and expansion of their energy sectors into alternative energy sources, all of which provides new opportunities for Slovenia.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Diplomacy, or rather economic diplomacy, supports exploring new markets on the entire African continent. Cooperation with Sub-Saharan African states is being developed in multilateral forums, particularly in the framework of the United Nations, International Organisation of the Francophonie, African Union, and other regional organisations, including in the fields of human rights, security, water supply and demining, and through the EU's participation in mission in the region. In keeping with the development cooperation guidelines and taking account of global demographic trends, migration potential, and the tradition of humanitarian action of Slovenian missions, Slovenia's development cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa will strengthen in the medium and long term.

Special attention will be given to protecting Slovenian citizens (tourists, individual travellers, humanitarian aid workers, missionaries, and larger Slovenian communities) on the African continent, primarily by securing a more favourable status for them concerning the visa requirement. In African countries, too, Slovenia's residential representation will be complemented by non-residential representation.

The annual Africa Day international conference provides additional impetus to the deepening of political, economic and cultural relations with African states, as does the cooperation between the European Union and African Union. Great potential for future contacts may be found in the active cooperation established in the fields of the economy and education at the time of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. To this end, Slovenia will strive to build its contacts on the African continent with the help of the African diaspora in Slovenia.

Latin America

Slovenia's strong ties with Latin America are built on the region's cultural connectedness to Europe, its constantly consolidating political standing at the global level, particularly that of Brazil, economic potential, and the presence of a large Slovenian community in some countries of the region, notably Argentina. To enhance its visibility in the region and, in particular, to increase the effectiveness of its work there, Slovenia will more readily seize the available mechanisms of the European Union, other multilateral organisations, and the regional financial institutions.

It will further develop its own initiatives, such as the Latin American and Caribbean Days, and strengthen cooperation in regional structures, such as the Pacific Alliance. In addition, Slovenia will seek opportunities for bilateral cooperation in science, research and environmental fields.

Great emphasis will be placed on providing Slovenian citizens with consular assistance and relocation management, and repatriation of Slovenians living in those countries. Importantly, the Slovenian communities in Latin America also provide opportunities for Slovenia to intensify its economic cooperation with the region.

Summary of key points

- **A strong Common Foreign and Security Policy; solid strategic partnerships between the European Union and global players; security, sustainable growth, the rule of law, and respect for human rights at the global level.**
 - **Slovenia's involvement in global players' initiatives in Europe (regional platforms).**
 - **Enhance development cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa, due consideration given to migration issues; establish economic contacts in Central and Southeast Asia and the Gulf.**
 - **In focus: the Port of Koper, Slovenian railways, the Slovenian automotive industry, science and development**
 - **Revive "Slovenian contacts" in third countries; cooperation with the African diaspora in Slovenia.**
 - **The Slovenian community abroad – an important lever for diplomacy and the economy.**
 - **Strengthening of residential and non-residential accreditations in African and Asian countries.**
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3

Foreign policy in close-up – priorities

3.1 EFFECTIVE MULTILATERAL COOPERATION AND MANAGING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Engagement at the multilateral level is a pillar of Slovenian foreign policy, demonstrating Slovenia's solidarity and consciousness of its global responsibility. A multilateral approach opens a window of opportunity for countries like Slovenia, and the ability to quickly adapt to a changing world enables Slovenia to enhance its visibility and reputation and promote its values and interests. In this regard, it is important to be consistent in fulfilling international obligations, including financial obligations, and to adapt the national legal order.

Slovenia is a promoter of effective multilateralism, with the United Nations as its central pillar. To ensure a successful response to new security and other challenges in the global environment, the multilateral system must be reformed and reinforced with new mechanisms; to be truly effective, it must be transparent, responsive, responsible, and able to identify new topics and trends. Slovenia supports reform of the Security Council.

The international community's experience with the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the need to strengthen international cooperation in public health, both in the framework of the UN and the EU, where establishing the European Union will be among the main efforts.

Slovenia is actively involved in the work of the UN and its specialised agencies, complementing this engagement with its activities within other international organisations that ensure a stable international environment and human security, including regional multilateral organisations, notably the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe.

In the OSCE, Slovenia is active across all three OSCE dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human. It is actively involved in all areas in which it has the potential to make a responsible contribution to overall security, and in matters central to Slovenia's foreign policy interests.

In the Council of Europe, Slovenia is actively involved in the protection of the rights of national minorities and the protection of vulnerable groups.

The Slovenian Foreign Ministry and other bodies of the Republic of Slovenia coordinate their activities within the Council of Europe, including the planned presentation of Slovenia's best practices. Slovenia fulfils its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, which is a fundamental instrument of international law providing a basis for human rights protection in Europe after the Second World War, and other conventions to which Slovenia is a party; furthermore, it makes effective use of the Council of Europe monitoring mechanism. Slovenia advocates the full and timely implementation of the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights in all Council of Europe member states, and the effective supervision of their implementation. It also supports the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights, where some legal issues need yet to be addressed.

Slovenia demonstrates that it shares global responsibility and international solidarity through its active involvement in focus areas, as well as those in which it offers comparative advantages. It also participates in international operations and missions in accordance with the national strategy and foreign policy interests, thus making its contribution to conflict prevention, stabilisation, and post-conflict reconstruction. It pursues its interests by nominating candidates to various decision-making bodies and organs of international organisations. Slovenia's activities are based on an awareness that security, sustainable development, human rights, and the rule of law are all interrelated.

In international forums, Slovenia also deals with intercultural dialogue, particularly in the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region. Moreover, Slovenia would be pleased to share with the international community its experience of undergoing the transition process and building a state, as well as protecting language, culture and cultural heritage as the foundations of national identity.

Among the systemic multilateral organisations of which Slovenia is a member, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has particular importance as it provides analyses of Slovenia's policies, makes recommendations for economic and social development, and is active in seeking

answers to new global challenges. Through the OECD, Slovenia has established contacts with the most developed countries and the world's leading economic players.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has a special place in the multilateral trade system and is of key importance for Slovenia as an export-oriented country. Slovenia closely follows its regular activities and takes part in ongoing negotiations aimed at ensuring further liberalisation and improving regulations; alone and with like-minded partners, it co-shapes international rules and strives to promote and protect the interests of the Slovenian economy. Another important actor in the international economic system is the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which helps countries achieve beneficial integration into the international trading system and use trade, investment, finance, technologies, and entrepreneurship as vehicles for sustainable development.

In UNESCO, Slovenia will nominate candidates and submit nomination proposals for its tangible and intangible heritage, and cooperate in the inclusion of transboundary regional heritage on UNESCO's World Heritage List, with a view to adding visibility to Slovenian heritage (e.g. the work of Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik). In addition, Slovenia will strive to promote the application of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

All issues of global significance are discussed by the Slovenian Government on a regular basis, with the participation of Slovenian and foreign non-governmental organisations and the interested expert public. A special role in this regard is played by organisations based in Slovenia that deal with a wide scope of human security.

Peace and security

Slovenia aims to ensure and consolidate international peace, national security, and security and stability in the wider European region, the European neighbourhood, and the world. To this end, Slovenian foreign policy seeks to maintain good bilateral relations, ensure Slovenia's active participation in multilateral organisations, and engage in development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Slovenia will continue to support efforts for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and conflict prevention, including mediation and capacity-building at the national, regional and international levels. Furthermore, Slovenia's contribution to ensuring international security also rests in the country's participation in international operations and missions of the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and the OSCE. The increasingly complex security environment requires a responsive and comprehensive approach, a wide range of military and civilian capacities, development assistance and other forms of assistance, and the cooperation of various ministries and other stakeholders outside the state administration. In this framework, international operations and missions in particular crisis areas perform various tasks and pursue goals reaching from the establishment of safe environment to support for political processes and the rule of law in order to achieve peace and the economic and social development in the host country. Such a comprehensive approach dictates the active and full participation and strengthened coordination of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant ministries.

In addition to the application of national measures, Slovenia responds to new security challenges by being active in international organisations and forums, where it advocates for consistent respect for and the implementation of the existing treaties and conventions. Its activities primarily cover arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The main focus is on efforts to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the prohibition of chemical weapons, the prevention of illegal trade in arms and dual-use goods, a total ban on anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, and regulation of small arms and light weapons.

Due to the changed security environment, Slovenia will give priority to addressing current security challenges, cyber and hybrid threats, and the security aspects of migration. It will follow developments in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, prevention of radicalisation, and participation of foreign fighters in crisis areas. The most important documents binding on Slovenia and defining its anti-terrorism measures include UN Security Council resolutions, the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of

Terrorism, and the EU Counter-Terrorism Agenda. Within these global efforts, Slovenia attaches particular importance to regional cooperation with Western Balkan countries, with an emphasis on the transfer of best practices and increased adherence to EU standards. In this regard, Slovenia will devote particular attention to eliminating the circumstances conducive to the rise of radicalisation.

Slovenia actively supports the work of *ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF)*, which proves that states like Slovenia can make a significant contribution to international humanitarian action. In this context, Slovenia's areas of focus include efficient and transparent management, expertise, integrity, capacity-building, greater national ownership, and enhanced regional cooperation. Slovenia supports ITF's ambition to become a leading international actor in post-conflict rehabilitation and related fields.

Human rights

Having severed its ties with a state that lacked respect for human rights, the Republic of Slovenia is committed to respecting such rights and ensuring progress and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this respect, Slovenia bears in mind not only its own experience, but also past and future challenges in the human rights protection, and the fact that any state advocating human rights in its foreign policy must first set a good example at home. This includes the proper and timely implementation of judgements passed by the European Court of Human Rights and Constitutional Court decisions, implementation of the EU law, and respect for the right to trial without undue delay. Slovenia upholds the principles of the universality, interdependence, indivisibility and inalienability of human rights, while also respecting the principle of the inherent dignity of every human being.

Furthermore, Slovenia is an advocate of the principle of non-discrimination and equality regardless of gender, race, national origin, language, religion, age, or any other personal circumstance.

The core efforts of foreign policy focus on the equality of women and men, the rights of the child, demographic changes, and the rights of linguistic minorities; in the future, it will also devote more attention to the freedom of religion and belief, which is gaining in importance in international relations. It also promotes human rights education at home and abroad. It advocates the right to a safe and healthy living environment, the right to safe drinking water and sanitation, and the right to a decent standard of living. Slovenia calls for the abolishment of the death penalty worldwide, and seeks to integrate the issue of human rights into an interdisciplinary approach to combating trafficking in human beings.

It devotes special attention to the prevention of gross human rights violations and mass atrocities, and appropriately addresses historical mass atrocities. It promotes a more efficient implementation of the Responsibility to Protect concept and the early detection and warning of and responding to mass human rights violations, with a view to preventing future humanitarian disasters and armed conflicts.

Slovenia is obliged to fully meet all its international commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and engages in dialogue with its partners in the international community to encourage them to also fully respect theirs. In addition, it promotes greater respect for human rights through the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, regional and multilateral cooperation, the exchange of experience and best practice, and development and humanitarian aid projects.

Importantly, Slovenia is a strong advocate of human rights protection and promotion in multilateral forums, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and it actively participates in the UN Human Rights Council as the central human rights body of the UN system. Slovenia stands for the independence and the work of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office.

International law

It is an obligation, value and interest of Slovenian foreign policy to promote respect for international law and the rule of law, as a safe and stable international environment can only be safeguarded through respect for international law. To this end, Slovenia strives for the reinforcement of the rule of law at both the national

and international levels, as the rule of law is one of the pillars of Slovenian foreign policy. In this endeavour, it is important that Slovenian public bodies coordinate their activities, and for educational and scientific institutions and civil society organisations to be included in the process.

In the field of international law, foreign policy will focus on the development of legal standards in artificial intelligence, primarily on the ethical aspects and management of artificial intelligence that guarantees control over its use and certification, and on the application of international law in cyberspace, taking into account the protection of interests and values in that domain. In these endeavours, Slovenia will advocate a global, open, stable, and safe environment for information and communication technologies, and full respect for the existing international law, including humanitarian law. With regard to the interpretation of international law in cyberspace, Slovenia will cooperate with other like-minded countries.

Slovenia devotes special attention to the codification and progressive development of international law, including the work of the UN International Law Commission, while also raising awareness of the importance of international law through the publication of the International Law Series.

In the public administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly its Chief Legal Adviser for International Law, have the central role in the field of international law. The establishment of this position strengthens the role and importance of international law in Slovenian foreign policy. The Chief Legal Adviser is tasked with adopting legally founded positions, ensuring Slovenia's consistent respect for the rules of international law, adopting international legal acts, appropriate representation of Slovenia's interests in international disputes, and Slovenia's enhanced participation in the progressive development of international law.

The Ministry will strive to broaden the knowledge of international law among its employees and provide assistance to the Chief Legal Adviser in terms of personnel and funds in performing the tasks not involving only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the entire public administration.

The Ministry will update the existing framework for concluding international acts, taking account of their contemporary form, increased volume, and the speed of their conclusion. It will continue to keep a register of and store international acts, and make them more easily accessible to the interested public.

In addition, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry seeks to maintain and advance the level of expertise and experience in international law, and to encourage its experts in international law to provide valuable and valued contributions to international law at both the national and international levels. In cooperation with other ministries and the judiciary branch of power, it will update and upgrade the existing legal framework to facilitate and encourage Slovenian representatives to become candidates for, and to participate in, international organisations and international judicial and arbitration bodies; this process will include the amendment of the Act on the Nomination of Candidates from the Republic of Slovenia for Judges at International Courts.

Slovenia calls for strengthening the mechanisms of peaceful conflict resolution. It will also maintain and broaden the knowledge and experience gained in the process of resolving international legal disputes before international arbitration tribunals and other international judicial bodies. In this context, the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in international procedures is systemically defined in the State Attorney's Office Act, and made more concrete by the establishment of appropriate structures within the Ministry and through operative cooperation with the State Attorney's Office. Slovenia is awaiting an important decision concerning the optional clause on compulsory jurisdiction under Article 36 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

In the sphere of international criminal justice, Slovenia underlines the importance of the fight against impunity and has an active role in the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute. It addresses the issue of institutional capacity-building of the International Criminal Court and the entire system of the Rome Statute. In the long term, it will participate in the debate on defining the criminal liability of legal persons in international law and responsibility for environmental actions. Simultaneously, Slovenia will continue to be

among those states encouraging the establishment of a new mechanism of mutual international legal assistance in prosecuting war crimes, the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity.

It will continue to actively pursue its endeavours to achieve respect for international humanitarian law. In various formats, it will follow the contemporary concerns of international humanitarian law (e.g. cyberattacks, protection of the environment in armed conflict, new weapons in contemporary armed conflicts).

With respect to the law of the sea, Slovenia will actively contribute to promoting respect for the law of the sea based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and to the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. It will protect its interests at sea, ensuring consistent respect for the rules enshrined in UNCLOS, particularly the freedoms of the high sea and fishing rights outside the internal waters and the territorial sea. It will advocate cooperation between the North Adriatic coastal states. In addition, it will actively support the progressive development of the law of the sea, particularly with regard to strengthened cooperation and coordination in the fair use of maritime resources and the preservation and sustainable use of maritime biodiversity in the areas outside national jurisdiction.

Development cooperation and humanitarian aid

Development cooperation and humanitarian aid are integral to Slovenia's foreign policy, contributing to the consolidation of Slovenia's bilateral relations and standing in the world. And if they also make use of the capacities of the public, private and non-governmental sectors, science, innovation and technology, they provide Slovenian business and other entities with an opportunity to establish themselves abroad.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the national coordinator of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. In accordance with the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Slovenia, it plans, coordinates and implements development cooperation.

Taking account of Slovenia's values, developmental guidelines and capacities, the international community goals, particularly those of the UN and the EU, and the priority issues and areas of Slovenian foreign policy, Slovenia's development cooperation is being implemented in the priority fields and geographical areas of focus identified in the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia until 2030. These priority fields include a mixture of development, humanitarian aid, security, and migration management issues. Importantly, activities aimed at promoting development are planned and performed with the active involvement of the Slovenian diplomatic missions.

Slovenian development cooperation is based on the legal orders of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union, the standards and criteria of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, the principles of sustainable development policy coordination and development cooperation efficiency, and Slovenia's experience and comparative advantages.

Slovenian humanitarian aid is a demonstration of Slovenia's solidarity with countries and individuals that face extraordinary circumstances (natural and other large-scale disasters and armed conflicts). Slovenia's response is coordinated and directed by the Slovenian Foreign Ministry in accordance with the humanitarian principles of philanthropy, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, while taking account of the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis, the needs of the affected population, guidelines from international organisations, and the priorities of Slovenian humanitarian aid.

As the national coordinator of Slovenian development cooperation, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry ensures that all these issues are addressed with the involvement of other government departments, professionals, and civil society. It also pays special attention to raising awareness among the public of the importance of development cooperation and global learning, with a view to promoting the understanding of global developments, the driving forces behind them and their implications, and raising awareness of the relation between local and global dimensions.

Environmental diplomacy of a country with abundant natural resources

An abundance of natural resources provides Slovenia with an excellent starting point for the so-called green recovery. To this end, Slovenia is actively involved in intensified foreign policy dialogue on climate change and the associated challenges. In the light of this, environmental diplomacy takes into account the interconnectedness of security, environmental, economic, development and other policies, and the importance of coordinating these policies to ensure that sustainable development goals are achieved at the global level.

The priority areas of Slovenian climate diplomacy include support for the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, seeking synergies between climate and water diplomacy, circular economy as a key instrument to achieve climate goals, protection of biodiversity to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, climate change as a threat to peace and security, and promotion of green technologies.

In water management, Slovenia has outstanding comparative advantages as extending over its territory are parts of two international basins – the Danube basin (the Mura, Drava and Sava basins) and the basin of the Adriatic rivers (the Soča River), including the sea. Slovenia makes its contribution to resolving global environmental issues by actively addressing the issues of the sustainable management of water resources, the issues of droughts and floods, water and peace, and cross-border water management.

Slovenia is very rich in forests, and with over half a century's experience in sustainable forest management, it cooperates with other countries on raising the awareness of the importance of forests for the global environment, climate change, the conservation of biodiversity, and the economy.

Furthermore, as a maritime country, it deals comprehensively with environmental issues in the North Adriatic, with a view to ensuring synergies between biodiversity, the sectors of tourism and energy, other business sectors, and maritime infrastructure. Slovenia is also involved in the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, and prioritises issues concerning the Alpine environment. Moreover, Slovenian foreign policy supports the development of green and sustainable tourism.

Summary of key points

- **Effective and reformed multilateral framework – a foundation and window of opportunity for Slovenian foreign policy.**
- **Intercultural dialogue.**
- **Seize the potential that the OECD, WTO, and UNCTAD have to offer.**
- **Add visibility to Slovenian cultural heritage through UNESCO.**
- **Fight against terrorism and violent extremism, and prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters.**
- **Support ITF's ambition to become a leading international actor in the field of post-conflict rehabilitation.**
- **Preventive diplomacy: early detection of human rights violations, mediation.**
- **Human rights: rights of the child, demographic changes, equality of women and men, linguistic minorities, greater focus on the freedom of religion and belief, healthy living environment.**
- **Abolition of the death penalty; fight against trafficking in human beings.**
- **Active involvement in the development of international law.**
- **A valued contribution of Slovenian diplomacy to international law at both the national and international levels; encourage Slovenian representatives and other individuals from Slovenia to apply for posts with international organisations and judicial bodies.**
- **Intensify Slovenia's activities in the field of the law of the sea.**

- **Support the work of the International Criminal Court, active in the fight against impunity.**
 - **A new international legal assistance mechanism to prosecute crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of genocide.**
 - **Green management of global challenges.**
 - **Development cooperation: a demonstration of solidarity, a means of sustainable development and consolidating Slovenia's standing in the world.**
 - **Environmental diplomacy: water diplomacy, green recovery, circular economy, forests.**
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3.2 SUCCESSFUL, OPEN, INNOVATIVE, CONFIDENT

Diplomatic support for the economy, development, education, science, and culture

Economic diplomacy

With its primary concern being to contribute to a stable and safe international environment, foreign policy and diplomacy create conditions for Slovenia's successful international economic cooperation as well as for cooperation on science, development, research, and education. Successful political diplomacy is closely connected with successful economic diplomacy, which is supported by the consular activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Economic diplomacy actively follows the close links between foreign policy and Slovenia's economic interests and the interests of its business entities. It devotes attention to Slovenia's existing and potential economic partners, and monitors the political, economic, scientific and research development in target countries. It follows the state of human rights and possible restrictive measures in its partner countries, and takes these aspects into account when making decisions about penetrating new markets or establishing and maintaining bilateral relations. With its activities, it makes an important contribution to Slovenia's favourable international assessments, thus promoting the country's good standing in international financial markets. Economic diplomacy can be successful in performing these tasks if guided by clear national policies on development, trade, investment, and industry, which are focused on key and promising markets and on increasing business competitiveness.

In consideration of Slovenia's obligations arising from international economic cooperation, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry is allocated adequate funds for economic diplomacy activities; in the coming years, however, funding should be increased. The widening and strengthening of the external network to support the economy is of vital importance. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, will explore additional possibilities of providing greater support to Slovenian businesses in foreign markets. The two ministries are also promoting the secondment to economic posts abroad of public employees from other ministries and public agencies, who possess know-how and experience in internationalisation, and working towards preparing adequate legal bases for regulating the status of those employees.

Economic diplomacy cooperates with the government department responsible for the economy to coordinate with international economic cooperation actors and provide support to businesses and the competent institutions in diversifying Slovenian exports and foreign investment, and identifying new concrete and potential business opportunities. It determines the geographical areas of focus in close cooperation with other institutions and the business sector, taking account of the priority markets and the political and security considerations. Economic diplomacy seeks to attract foreign direct investment and Slovenian investments abroad in keeping with the relevant national strategies. Furthermore, it engages in networking and collects information on the economic, business, scientific, and development and research environments of the source country to provide support for Slovenian enterprises and the Slovenian science sector. In particular, economic diplomacy plays a key role in weaker environments and those with a strong government role in the economy and centres of technology, industry, trade, and finance.

In the changed international circumstances, economic diplomacy – when identifying new opportunities for Slovenian businesses – devotes particular attention to new technologies, especially digital and green technologies, developments in e-mobility and industries related to health, cybersecurity and transformation of supply chains. Digital transformation and green transition are two key elements of the EU's and Slovenia's economic recovery; digitalisation is expected to play a major role in the post-pandemic crisis, provided it can develop in a secure cyberspace. Another priority in this field will be artificial intelligence, especially given Slovenia's membership of the Global Partnership for AI (GPAI) and the activities of the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI) in Ljubljana. A special role is entrusted to the National Coordinator for External Aspects of Digitalization, AI & Cyber Security operating within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Economic diplomacy works in cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, other government departments, chambers and other economic associations, Slovenian and foreign business clusters, and national and foreign specialised institutions. It is important to define the roles and obligations of particular institutions in concrete terms, ensure understanding for the business sector, and install economic advisers who can provide support to businesses at all operational levels of diplomatic missions and consular posts.

In line with Slovenia's national energy and transport strategies and its digitalisation strategy, Slovenian foreign policy forms partnerships and enhances political contacts along geopolitical axes, which in the long term ensure a secure energy supply and good transport connections.

Economic advisers are public employees, and their work is complemented by that of locally recruited staff. Connections in the economic, scientific, research and development, and educational sectors can be further enhanced by Slovenians working abroad (migrant workers and emigrants). In addition, the focus areas of the work of honorary consuls also concern economic diplomacy. Slovenia's reputation arising from the successful business performance of Slovenian nationals abroad can be further built through the activities of Slovenian members of international operations and missions.

Slovenia's economic standing in the international arena can be consolidated through OECD membership, primarily through active participation in the OECD committees and working groups.

Economic diplomacy is committed to promoting Slovenia's national interests and high standard of integrity in the public service.

Science diplomacy

Slovenian diplomacy closely cooperates with the relevant government departments to enhance the standing of Slovenia's scientific, innovation and higher education sectors, and to promote their internationalisation. It encourages the exchange of knowledge, and promotes the interests of the Slovenian scientific, academic, and educational communities in the European Union and the wider international context. The added value of Slovenian *science diplomacy* lies primarily in exploiting Slovenia's innovation potential, scientific and technological and educational achievements, and start-up potential, attracting foreign investment to Slovenia, encouraging excellence in science, facilitating the mobility of students, lecturers and researchers, and the exchange of knowledge and ideas in Slovenia and farther afield, and promoting Slovenia's scientific and educational excellence. Slovenia ensures that its diplomatic representatives are adequately trained to work as ambassadors of Slovenian science and to engage in science diplomacy and cooperation in education, and will explore the possibilities of establishing contacts between diplomats and the technological giants in major global development centres to support the domestic ICT industry.

International cooperation in culture

Culture as an indirect means of foreign policy helps Slovenia achieve its international goals and raise its profile abroad. The diplomatic network supports the international activities of Slovenian artists and the visibility of the Slovenian cultural and creative sectors, cultural heritage and creative excellence abroad. It

provides opportunities for various artists to present their works abroad, taking into account their artistic autonomy and social diversity.

Slovenia devotes special attention to European cooperation, particularly within the EU National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) network and as part of Central European cooperation in culture. Together with other member states, it ensures that activities in culture support the EU's foreign policy goals, SDGs, green transition and digital transformation, and promote European values and raise the profile of a unified Europe in third countries, along with raising the awareness of the common characteristics of the Central European cultural space. Among its main concerns are cultural and linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue.

At the wider global level (UN, UNESCO, UNCTAD, OIF, Union for the Mediterranean, etc.), Slovenia promotes the importance of the creative economy in international settings and support for cultural and creative industries; in the Western Balkans and elsewhere in the European neighbourhood, it does so through the Creativeforum.si platform.

Among the key tasks are the consolidation of the position of the Slovene language in the world, especially as an official EU language, and the promotion of the use and learning of Slovene. Slovenia offers support to Slovene language courses at foreign universities, the activities of the Centre for Slovene as a Second and Foreign Language, and scientific cooperation in Slovene language studies.

It appoints cultural attaches, establishes cultural centres, and provides adequate training for diplomats appointed as Slovenian cultural ambassadors. To ensure synergy, visibility, and cost-efficiency, cultural ambassadors are part of the network of diplomatic missions and consular posts. In these endeavours, Slovenia cooperates with subjects operating in culture in the widest sense, Slovenian minorities and Slovenians living abroad.

Assistance to Slovenian nationals abroad and support to ensure safe migration

Consular services form an integral part of diplomatic activities and are vital to Slovenian diplomacy's reputation at home and abroad. The focus will remain on providing the widest possible range of consular services to Slovenian nationals requiring protection and assistance abroad.

In this context, special attention is devoted to members of the traditional Slovenian communities of migrant workers and emigrants; Slovenia will also closely follow the particularities in consular services concerning today's migrant workers and emigrants. They are all part of the global Slovenian community, which may act as an important lever for Slovenia in the world. In this context, Slovenian foreign policy supports organisations that maintain links with the Slovenian diaspora, and programmes promoting the circulation of experts and repatriation of Slovenians living abroad.

Owing to the increasing mobility in the Schengen Area, to help Slovenian nationals, Slovenia will promote cooperation across the full spectrum of civil law with an emphasis on family law.

In providing consular services in countries where it has no residential representation, Slovenia will cooperate with other EU member states. Where possible, Slovenia will adapt the legal framework to allow for the assistance of honorary consuls in certain consular activities. It is also possible to establish new forms of cooperation by making better use of outsourcing, notably external service providers, other countries' diplomatic missions and consular posts, and honorary consuls. In addition, the use of digital technology opens up further possibilities in providing consular services.

In the long term, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry will examine if it is sensible to support potential EU proposals to allow for certain forms of urgent consular assistance provided to all EU citizens by EU delegations in third countries (where Slovenia has no residential representation), while respecting Slovenia's sovereignty and legal order and ensuring the protection of personal data.

At the EU level, Slovenia will advocate a visa regime that facilitates foreign tourist visits, international cooperation in the economic, scientific, educational and cultural sectors, as well as contacts with the

Slovenian diaspora, and supports the European Union's and Slovenia's employment policies, while preventing abuses. If no additional funds are allocated to the consular infrastructure, it will be impossible to establish a denser network of consular posts which, as expected by the business sector, issue visas to foreign businesspeople at new and more distant locations worldwide.

Slovenian foreign policy will ensure that Slovenian diplomatic missions and consular posts work towards effectively implementing Slovenia's migration policy. In this process, in addition to security, it will place great emphasis on the prevention of irregular migration, respect for human rights and the law, Slovenia's international obligations, and international burden- and responsibility-sharing, taking into account the appropriate ratio between responsibility and solidarity. It will respect its international obligations regarding the protection of and assistance to refugees, prevent the abuses of relevant mechanisms, strengthen the fight against trafficking in human beings and irregular migration, particularly where women, children and other vulnerable groups are concerned, and prevent the exploitation of foreign workers. To ensure the efficient management of migration, Slovenian foreign policy will enhance cooperation on migration and mobility at the EU level and in dialogue with third countries.

Slovenia's global standing

Public diplomacy and branding Slovenia

Strategic communication, and public, economic and cultural diplomacy are important indirect tools of Slovenian foreign policy. In order to consolidate Slovenia's economic standing, it is vital for the country to be recognised as safe, open, responsible, rich in culture, and successful. Public and economic diplomacy thus position Slovenia as a green, creative and smart country. In close cooperation with Slovenian government departments and agencies, Slovenian public diplomacy in the spirit of the slogan *I feel Slovenia* works in all markets, using the traditional means of promotion and digital diplomacy. Among public diplomacy priorities is the promotion of tourism, aimed not only at the target business groups, but also at the widest public.

Important elements of Slovenia's overall image are its cultural and natural heritage, language, specific geographical and transport position, biodiversity, waters, forests, state-of-the-art creativity, entrepreneurship, academic excellence, innovativeness, autochthonous Slovenian national communities abroad, Slovenian migrant workers and emigrants, and its belonging to the Central European cultural environment. Furthermore, Slovenia's image is built by Slovenian nationals and Slovenians by birth who have achieved success abroad in business, culture, science, education or other fields, and thus constitute Slovenian soft power in the world. Slovenia also attaches great importance to international cooperation in sport and the contribution of Slovenian sportsmen and women to the country's reputation. Slovenian public diplomacy considers all these aspects.

Summary of key points

- **Effective political diplomacy goes hand in hand with effective economic diplomacy.**
- **Widening and strengthening of the economic departments network abroad to provide greater support to Slovenian business entities in foreign markets.**
- **Economic diplomacy coordinates international economic cooperation.**
- **Economic diplomacy works in cooperation with chambers, economic associations, and business clusters; it operates in close cooperation with the government department responsible for the economy.**
- **Foreign policy efforts in support of national transport and energy strategies.**
- **Ensure high-quality economic diplomacy services, training and additional education for economic advisers, including their secondment to enterprises; taking care of the necessary legal bases for the position of economic advisers.**
- **Strengthen the engagement of honorary consuls.**
- **Real growth in funds for economic diplomacy.**

- **Science diplomacy; contacts with technological giants in global development centres.**
 - **Cultural diplomacy.**
 - **Consular services: special attention to travellers and to traditional and newly formed Slovenian communities abroad.**
 - **EU visa regime that facilitates economic cooperation and effective migration management.**
 - **Greater attention to migration in the Mediterranean.**
 - **Public diplomacy efforts to ensure that Slovenia is recognised as safe, open, responsible, rich in culture, and successful.**
 - **I FEEL SLOVENIA and Green, Creative, Smart.**
 - **Slovenia's overall image is also reinforced by Slovenian nationals and Slovenians by birth who have achieved success abroad.**
 - **Consolidate the status of Slovene as an official language in the EU and in places where there are Slovenian communities.**
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3.3 DIPLOMATIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Foreign diplomatic representation and soft power

The enhancement of foreign diplomatic representation and the presence of international organisations in Slovenia are of great importance for Slovenia's standing and international economic cooperation, as well as the international character of the City of Ljubljana and Slovenia's ambition to establish itself as a regional multilateral centre. Such representation is further consolidated by other countries' honorary consuls. Slovenian and foreign international organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, agencies and other institutions, universities, and other organisations engaged in international cooperation are important indirect tools (soft power) for pursuing Slovenia's foreign policy and establishing its international relations. These include the *Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators*, *ITF Enhancing Human Security*, the *International Center for Promotion of Enterprises*, the *Center of Excellence in Finance*, the *Euro-Mediterranean University*, the *Centre for European Perspective*, the *Centre for International Cooperation and Development*, the *Centre for Arab, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies*, the *Slovenian Association for International Relations*, the *Club of Former Slovenian Ambassadors*, the *United Nations Association of Slovenia*, the *Strategic Council for Foreign Affairs*, the *Slovenian Pan-European Movement*, the *Slovenian Emigrant Association*, *Slovenia in the World association*, *Slovenian World Congress*, *Rafael's Society*, the *Centre for Slovene as a Second and Foreign Language*, etc. Also, the *Bled Strategic Forum*, a leading international conference in the region, is an integral part of Slovenian foreign policy.

Slovenia will create the conditions to facilitate the smooth operation of these organisations, especially foreign diplomatic missions, and to attract new ones. To this end, the Slovenian Government will identify and strengthen Ljubljana's (and Slovenia's) comparative advantages, promote Slovenia as a springboard for South Eastern and Central European countries, consolidate Slovenia's relations with countries with non-residential representation for Slovenia, pursue a policy of increasing the number of flights from Slovenia, ensure good international primary and secondary schools, and maintain dialogue with the Municipality of Ljubljana about the practical aspects of foreign diplomatic representation and the representation of international organisations. It will also promote the activities in culture and sport, as these two sectors importantly represent Slovenia in the world.

Towards a modern, efficient, professional and well-equipped diplomatic service

Key factors determining Slovenia's capacity and ambition to influence, and participate in, decision-making at the European and global levels, which also concerns Slovenia, include the quality and range of Slovenian diplomacy and the quality of its human resources and equipment. Therefore, sufficient funds need to be allocated for the operation of the network of Slovenia's diplomatic missions and consular posts, the pursuit of foreign policy, and the operation of the Slovenian Foreign Ministry's infrastructure. The Slovenian

Government will ensure adequate real growth in funds for the Foreign Ministry to enable Slovenian diplomacy to ensure a range and quality of activities equal to those of comparable diplomatic services.

The importance of residential representation

Diplomacy plays a major role in a country like Slovenia, which pursues a policy of an open market economy in an exposed, favourable geopolitical and transport location at the heart of Continental Europe. It is therefore vital to ensure representation in countries where decisions are made concerning our shared political and security space and where Slovenian enterprises do business. Just as important is Slovenia's representation in the centres of technology, industry, trade, and finance. The efforts to rationalise Slovenian diplomacy involve engaging in those priority areas and fields which directly concern pursuing Slovenia's strategic foreign policy and economic interests as well as Slovenia's national interest and values. The structure and capacity of, and funds for, Slovenian diplomacy must correspond to Slovenia's foreign policy goals. Slovenia will never have an immense diplomatic and consular network, which requires that quality is put before quantity. Serving the public interest is the primary mission of the Slovenian diplomatic and consular network.

Priority will be given to ensuring the widest possible residential representation – a network of embassies and consulates extending as far afield as possible, with strategic foreign policy, security and business interests as the primary criteria. In finding practical solutions, the basic principles followed will include adaptability to circumstances and needs, innovation, resourcefulness, and efficiency. Such solutions involve appointing non-residential ambassadors based at the Foreign Ministry (the so-called roving ambassadors), co-location with other EU member states and NATO member countries in third countries, co-location with the European External Action Service, etc. Exceptionally, a mission with a single diplomat may be established which performs only a narrow range of diplomatic, consular and business activities.

In the medium term, Slovenia plans to open embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In addition to widening the diplomatic network in the EU, the Slovenian Government will explore the possibility of reopening some of the embassies which were closed in 2012 and 2013.

Establishing and maintaining Slovenia's diplomatic network abroad primarily involves ensuring adequate premises (preference will be given to permanent solutions and ownership, especially in Slovenia's focus countries), a sufficient number of visa sections using modern equipment, and an advanced information and communication system which forms Slovenia's critical infrastructure enabling the country to maintain in any circumstances safe contact with its missions abroad and their local connections, including via video conferences. Attention will also be given to decorating Slovenian missions with representative works of art.

Professional, career and personal development of staff

People are diplomacy's greatest asset; they are a store of knowledge of, and experience in, the diplomacy of a country as a whole. The qualitative and quantitative development of Slovenian diplomacy has to continue for it to achieve the excellency of the diplomacies of comparable countries. Plans should include creating more favourable conditions for foreign and internal service staff, principally to the advantage of the foreign service. It is also necessary to consolidate the foreign service to exert greater influence on the EU's decisions and to enhance economic diplomacy; in these efforts, an important role can be played by people working at other ministries who possess experience in internationalisation. In the medium term, it is necessary to ensure regular annual recruitment of young diplomats on the basis of public calls for applications, and the testing of candidates' knowledge and personal qualities (i.e. the annual employment of at least five young diplomats).

Human resource development is closely connected with the increased professional loyalty of the Foreign Ministry's staff, notably its diplomats. The functioning of diplomacy and the selection of diplomatic service candidates is built on a professional and career system based on knowledge, personal respect for Slovenia's values and national interests and its foreign policy values, and excellence. The ethics and integrity of Slovenian diplomats are the diplomatic service's core values.

Furthermore, a separate definition will be added to the system of public employees for the profession of a diplomat, taking account of the specifics of a diplomat's work, particularly during foreign postings (when diplomats are constantly available, often work outside their normal working hours, meet special conditions for their posting, and face the particularities of working abroad and in very small teams). At the Slovenian Foreign Ministry, a difference will be made between ordinary civil servants and diplomats, taking account of the scope of their work. The Slovenian Foreign Ministry will promote the regular rotation of diplomats between internal organisational units, thus seeking to meet Slovenia's needs for diplomats with the broadest experience possible.

The focus of diplomats' work will be on networking, good diplomatic reporting, analytical skills, ability to credibly and effectively represent Slovenia's political positions, teamwork, personal initiative, taking personal responsibility for their work results, and management skills. In addition, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry will encourage the learning of non-European languages and acquisition of specialist knowledge of non-European environments. It will also promote learning other European languages in addition to English and French.

As regards the field of analysis, it is necessary to concentrate Slovenian knowledge institutionally in order to ensure the coordination of expertise of the Slovenian Foreign Ministry and Slovenia's indirect power in the area of international relations. Analytical work will focus on the study of the standing and role of countries and diplomacies comparable to Slovenia's, and to establishing links with relevant foreign organisations.

Professional training taken into account for promotion, foreign postings and remuneration is provided in the framework of the Diplomatic Academy as a separate internal organisational unit of the Slovenian Foreign Ministry, which will also be responsible for establishing a corpus of the Ministry's theoretical and practical knowledge and for enhancing the Ministry's analytical capacities; in the future, it might also be open to external candidates. Moreover, education and training will also be provided by renowned Slovenian and foreign institutions. Mid-level and senior diplomats will have the possibility of temporary secondment to other government departments and the business sector if the latter are interested in having support (from diplomatic advisers) in international relations or in order to enable diplomats to gain new work experience; furthermore, needs and opportunities will be identified for transfers of public employees from other bodies to gain new experience at the Foreign Ministry or in posts in the diplomatic and consular network, particularly with the aim of strengthening economic departments. In the selection procedures for the recruitment of economic advisers, candidates must demonstrate their international and diplomatic experience, experience with internationalisation, and good knowledge of the economy. In this context, it is worth considering the possibilities of reaching an agreement on harmonising all selection procedures and providing unified legal bases for all employees seconded to the economic department of diplomatic missions and consular posts abroad so as to introduce appropriate standards regarding their titles, remuneration, work obligations, qualifications and other aspects, and to regulate their obligatory training in economic diplomacy. The Slovenian Foreign Ministry will provide specialist training for diplomats in cooperation with other government departments which can offer specialist knowledge. For providing the education and training needed for participation in peace operations and missions, a special centre has been established within the Centre for European Perspective.

Adapted to the needs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are the regulations concerning benefits for diplomats on secondment abroad, which are determined by paying special attention to working in very challenging environments (security risks, climate, geographical distance, lack of interest of staff in a particular secondment), the needs of diplomats' families, adequate health care and health insurance for diplomats on secondment abroad, and pension insurance for diplomats' partners. These aspects are also included in the systematic preparations for secondment to posts abroad. Finally, legal bases regulating secondments of public employees from other ministries will be re-examined.

Slovenians in EU institutions and other international organisations

Taking account of the priorities and the geographical areas of focus of Slovenian foreign policy, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry will use its implementation plans to identify postings of interest to Slovenia at all career levels in international organisations in the field of foreign affairs, primarily in the UN (and its

specialised agencies), the EU (European Commission, EEAS), NATO, the OSCE and the OECD, and, in cooperation with other government departments, in multilateral organisations whose fields of work correspond to those of other ministries and public bodies. In the latter context, priority will be given to EU institutions, NATO, and international law institutions. The Slovenian Foreign Ministry will identify suitable candidates whereby – for candidatures to the most representative positions in international organisations – in addition to professional qualities, it will take into account the principle of plurality, thus ensuring adequate representation of candidates with different world views; subsequently, the Ministry will actively support their candidatures. Furthermore, during the secondment of successful candidates, it will maintain regular contact with them, while fully respecting their commitment to professional independence.

At the EU level, Slovenia will advocate a policy of seconding national diplomats to the European External Action Service, which recognises their value to the EEAS and, based on relevant agreements with EU member states and funds allocated from the EU budget, enables the EEAS to be flexible enough in assigning the diplomats to posts, while ensuring that EU member states constantly participate at all career levels with a proportional share of seconded national diplomats.

Summary of key points

- **Create the conditions for maintaining foreign diplomatic representation and indirect foreign policy power.**
 - **Bled Strategic Forum – a leading international conference in the region.**
 - **Real growth in funds for foreign policy.**
 - **The importance of residential representation: expand the Slovenian diplomatic network to pursue Slovenia's strategic and economic interests.**
 - **Ensure adequate diplomatic infrastructure.**
 - **Rejuvenation of Slovenian diplomacy, permanent training of employees, exchange of experience between ministries.**
 - **Enhance the Slovenian Foreign Ministry's analytical capacity, ensure its strategic consideration, and concentrate diplomatic knowledge institutionally.**
 - **Further strengthen professional loyalty and consolidate the professional competences and integrity of Slovenian diplomacy.**
 - **Provide a regulatory definition of the specifics of the diplomatic profession and work.**
 - **Family policies and the implementation of the principle of equality of women and men in diplomacy, and resolution of issues related to the foreign postings of public employees.**
 - **Provide systematic support to increase the number of Slovenians in international organisations, principally the EEAS, NATO, and international law organisations.**
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