

10 YEARS OF



Dear Distinguished Guests of the International Conference “10 Years of SlovakAid: a Vision of Development Cooperation for a Changing World.”

Welcome to Slovakia. This conference provides a unique opportunity for all SlovakAid stakeholders to meet in

one place. We have representatives of all sectors here, coming from 17 countries.

When the Pontis Foundation was established almost twenty years ago in Slovakia, we were fortunate to learn most of our key grant-making strategies through managing the USAID Democracy Network Program. In the early 1990s, we saw the importance of bringing foreign know-how to bear on the transformation of Slovak institutions and the development of new ones, and so we facilitated the work in Slovakia of various expert advisors on projects financed by private western foundations. Furthermore we gained the first important skills on how to build a strong infra-

structure for Slovak NGOs, strengthen their capacities and provide corporate responsibility support to our businesses, thanks to information coming from other countries. And today, we are all proudly celebrating 10 years of sharing what we all have learned from and with other countries.

We are looking forward to this conference as an excellent opportunity to focus primarily on the future of our mutual relationships as donors, recipients and partners. There are several questions that we continue to pose to ourselves: Where do we find the key lessons we need to learn for shaping our next SlovakAid decade? What can we draw from the best results to date? Which of the donor comparative advantages might be still most appropriate? What can we do to change the public perception of development cooperation for the better? How can we improve our efficiency and effectiveness? How can we strengthen our own performance monitoring and evaluation, looking at other DAC member experiences as a resource? How can we improve the capacities of Slovak NGOs to be competitive for EU funding? And most importantly – what is our mutual vision and SlovakAid identity? And many, many more...

We wish you a pleasant and productive time in Slovakia and thank you for walking this exciting journey together with us.

Lenka Surotchak,
Director of the Pontis Foundation

MIROSLAV LAJČÁK: WHEN WE HELP OTHERS, WE IN FACT CHANGE OURSELVES FOR BETTER



Miroslav Lajčák, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

How would you evaluate the 10 years and the establishment of the official development assistance SlovakAid?

In 2003, the first 10 years of independence were behind Slovakia. We went through a difficult process of economic as well as societal transformation, and building of state institutions. The dynamic of reforms escalated. We have joined the club of the most advanced countries of the world, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and stood at the doors to the European Union and NATO. The successful progress of Slovakia has raised interest and respect of the world. Also in Slovakia we began to feel strongly that we possess the unique experience which we should share. At the same time we were fully aware that what we have achieved was to a large extent thanks to the assistance of the developed countries. That is why it is natural to start to “repay the debt”. The establishment of the Official Development Assistance

of the Slovak Republic was quick and natural. Already after one year, our development assistance had a mid-term strategy, a national programme, and, importantly, a budget. Slovak entities began to implement the first development projects under the SlovakAid logo.

What has persuaded you that the Slovak ODA in various countries is important?

In 2003, I acted as a Slovak ambassador in Belgrade, in a country which at that point stood almost at the beginning of its European path, and the Slovak example was a strong motivation as well as inspiration for them. It was not a surprise that Serbia has become the first programme country of SlovakAid, and that in a short time, we prepared the first strategic framework of our development assistance to Serbia. Slovak experts, consultants, but also technologies such as bridge constructions began to flow to the country almost immediately. A few weeks ago Serbia was invited to begin the acces-

sion negotiations with the European Union. I am glad that Slovakia and our development assistance has contributed to this success.

How would you summarize and review the 10 years of SlovakAid?

The family of SlovakAid partners has significantly grown in 10 years. Under the logo of the development assistance of the Slovak Republic, we were present in almost 20 countries and implemented more than 400 projects. Many of them have left a considerable trace in the development of partner countries. Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, has nearly as many inhabitants as Slovakia. When you, however, visit Kenya, it is highly likely that you will find a social centre, healthcare centre or a school, which were established thanks to the Slovak ODA. In Mombasa, Eldoret, or Nakuru, you may meet tens of Slovak doctors, volunteers, or our NGOs. In Kenya as well as in Serbia and other partner countries, I feel proud and happy that our development assistance is meaningful.

In September 2013, Slovakia was accepted as a full-fledged member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee. This can be perceived as a symbolic accomplishment of our 10-year long integration into the international donor community of which we are now becoming a firm part. I think it is also a challenge for us to build a modern, transparent and effective system of SlovakAid, as the international community is defining a new global development agenda beyond 2015.

What is SlovakAid to you?

SlovakAid is definitely a success story of help, solidarity, cooperation and experience-sharing. It is at the same time a story of a country and people who understand that when we help others, we in fact change ourselves for better. Because in today's globalized world, it is true more than ever that no man is an island.

SLOVAKIA IS OF GREAT INSPIRATION FOR OUR COUNTRY

“It would have been much harder to launch and sustain reform processes without the support and expertise of our European partners,” thinks Natalia Gherman.

Slovakia has recently opened an Embassy in Kishinev, and will include Moldova into the SlovakAid program priorities and will also sign an agreement on ODA with Moldova. It might be argued that Slovakia considers Moldova a strategic partner. What are the Moldovan expectations from the Slovak-Moldovan relations?

Let me begin by expressing my sincere admiration for the Slovak Republic and the Slovak people for their deep spirituality, rich culture and creative minds. It is because of these that Slovakia gained a unique place among the European nations, one that is constantly reconfirmed by the country's actions and its assistance programs offered to countries worldwide, including the Republic of Moldova.

reforms and the complex process of modernizing the country. Moreover, the Republic of Slovakia represents a genuine and distinct strategic partner for the Republic of Moldova, and we count on its further strong support for Moldova's European perspective. In fact, the Slovak partners frequently reiterate their support for systemic changes implemented in Moldova, as well as their availability to share their experience on matters of EU integration.

Slovakia has passed through similar reform processes that we are going through. Transparencies in the public sector, public-private economic projects, freedom of media, strengthening of the civil society, are all values that gained real shapes in Moldova. It would have been much harder to launch and sustain such processes without the sup-

port that can benefit both our economies. In this context, we are working with our Slovak partners to organize in Bratislava the first bilateral meeting of the Joint Economic Commission, which is scheduled to take place soon.

We are confident that our Slovak partners will further support us, together with other member states of the Visegrad group (V4), with more initiatives addressing the structural needs of my country. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Slovakia on the taking over of the presidency of the Visegrad group, starting with 1st of January 2014. We can greatly benefit from learning from the Slovak experience on developing stable and pragmatic relations with important partners in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, we are open to deepen our relations with Slovakia in all fields that are of common interest. Moreover, my previous experience of collaboration with my esteemed counterpart, Mr Miroslav Lajcak inspires optimism and certitude in our future success.

What is your experience with Slovak government authorities and NGOs providing development assistance in Moldova?

My country attaches a great value to the consistent support received so far from Slovak development partners on projects of great impact on the Moldovan society. Let me just mention some of them: DWD – Drinking Water for Dezghinja; Slovakia and European future of Moldova; National Convention for European Integration in Moldova; Implementation of the appropriate environmental system for disposal of electric and electronic devices, etc.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration is also listed among the beneficiaries of the co-financed small grants scheme project with the participation of Slovak, Polish and Hungarian support. It involved the procurement and installation of much needed IP equipment in order to facilitate, streamline and also minimize the



Natalia Gherman, Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova

We highly appreciate the fact that Moldova remains a priority country for the assistance currently offered by the Slovak Government. In the period 2010–2013, Slovakia has allocated over one million Euro to my country. Undoubtedly, this represents a real support for continuing domestic

port and expertise of our European partners.

Furthermore, we are looking forward to developing various forms of mutually beneficial economic cooperation. I believe that together we can identify complementary areas of common inter-

costs of the communication among the diplomatic Missions of Moldova with the headquarter in Chisinau.

I would like also to highlight another important project implemented with Moldovan NGO's, namely the National Convention for European Integration which helped building the partnership and dialogue between the Government and civil society in discussing the most vibrant and actual subjects of the EU-Moldova integration agenda, such as visa liberalisation, deep and comprehensive free trade, agriculture and regional development.

The Slovak Official Development Assistance often has the form of micro grants (48 out of 103 ODA projects in 2012). Do you consider such approach suitable for dealing with Moldovan development issues? May micro grants be in some way more effective than the large development projects?

We consider this is an effective instrument and fully appropriate for dealing

with development issues and capacity enhancement of Moldovan institutions, providing immediate and tangible results. The micro grants are very much appreciated due to their speedy disbursement and relatively simple proceedings, targeting very specific needs, usually of a technical order. Nevertheless, we are aware that micro-grants are not intended to replace, but rather to complement larger-scale models of investment in development projects. They remain an effective tool in the implementation of the long term objectives and comprehensive reforms.

As far as I am aware, in the last three years about 15 micro-grants projects have been implemented in Moldova with the support of Slovak assistance in fields of social development and civil society. Thus, this type of support is very much valued and welcomed, having its own specific contribution among other donor instruments.

This type of assistance is very much relevant in sectors like SMEs as well as for local public authorities that implement

infrastructure projects of comparably smaller costs.

In 2003 Slovakia was still an ODA recipient. In ten years we became a full-fledged member of the international donor community. Could it be an inspiration for your country and people?

The experience of Slovakia is of great inspiration for our country and we look forward to the moment when Moldova could also contribute to the development of other countries in need. We share a similar European past, and we want to have a common European future.

I am confident that in the near future we will witness stronger processes of economic integration of Moldova into the European single market. Let me conclude by reiterating our appreciation for all the support received from Slovakia and other development partners in assisting Moldova on its European path.

POOLING OF RESOURCES IN MONTENEGRO

According to Vujica Lazović, NGOs, politicians and academia form a winning formula for change.

The Slovak ODA in Montenegro has primarily addressed the capacity of the Montenegro civil society organizations, and implemented a number of water-management projects. Can you elaborate on the exchange of transition experience between Slovakia and Montenegro on a higher political level?

Montenegro has a high quality interstate cooperation with Slovakia, especially considering the area of political cooperation. The continuity and quality of these relations were confirmed during this year's visit of our Prime Minister to highest state officials of the Slovak Republic. Special dimension to our interstate cooperation and relations is given by the significant role of Slovak diplomacy during the period of Montenegro independence renewal in 2006. The Slovak Republic is one of the EU countries which is strongly committed to the European perspective of Montenegro and other countries from the region. We extremely appreciate Slovakia's continued support in our reform efforts and activities toward inte-



Vujica Lazović, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policy and Financial System and Minister for Information Society and Telecommunications of Montenegro

gration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, along with concrete contribu-

tion to capacity building of our society and implementation of projects.

There is a prejudice that academics do not know how to talk to politicians and civil society. Vice versa, politicians and NGOs do not know how to transfer what the analytical community has to say into real policy making terms. Based on your background of both these aspects, what can be done to create a more effective dialogue between both parties? And secondly, can you comment on the current state of both sectors in Montenegro and where there might be a place for a potential partnership with Slovak ODA?

Taking into consideration my academic and political experience for almost two decades, I am able to quite objectively assess the relations between nongovernmental sector, academics and politicians as having improved significantly. Today the representatives of NGOs and academia are a part of Government's

negotiating structures, its advisory and other various working groups. We are aware that the quality of mentioned relations is one of the most valuable indicators of our democratic maturity, as in this very challenging phase of creating and implementing European and

Euro – Atlantic values in Montenegro, we need a synergy of all available intellectual resources. Transmitting valuable experience of Slovak Republic gained during integration processes would be highly significant to Montenegro, especially when it comes to concept and

cooperation quality of mentioned parties in the negotiation process.

SERBIA'S EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY

“The future of a democratic country is never solely in the hands of politicians,” claims Sonja Licht.

What role does civil society play in Eurointegration of Serbia? Is the future of Serbia solely in the hands of politicians?

At a conference recently held in the Parliament of Serbia about the role of the parliaments in the process of European integration it was, once again, underlined that the first resolution of the Serbian Parliament, from 2004, on European integration as the most important strategic priority of the country. This was initiated and prepared in cooperation with one of the oldest civil society organizations – the European Movement in Serbia. This is just to illustrate that the civil society has been playing a crucial role in Eurointegration – before and after the democratic changes in 2000. Before – holding the idea of our European future as a beacon of light in the “dark ages” of the nineties, after – as those who helped with campaigns, ideas, facilitation, and also as genuine partners of all those who proves to be genuinely committed to European integration of Serbia.

I don't think that the future of any democratic country is solely in the hands of politicians, especially in times of serious crisis of leadership and trust of citizens – not only when the political elite is concerned, but the institutions as such. Both the future of democracy and the future of Serbia depend in a crucial way on the participation of citizens in the political and social life of their countries/country.

Can the Slovak experience be transferred to other countries in the region other than Serbia?

The Slovak experience is very precious to all the countries in the region of the Western Balkans. Slovakia was lagging behind for quite a time and then,

due to serious mobilization of the civil society and the political elite at the end of nineties managed to accelerate its Eurointegration process. Since all the countries of the Western Balkans, including Serbia, are latecomers I strongly believe that the Slovak experience is still very valuable. The truth is that we are, after the breakout of the economic crisis, living in a dramatically changed Europe and the entire world, thus, the question how to accelerate major reform processes and achieve real and not only cosmetic changes is even more serious than before.

Is the region open to foreign NGOs? How is Slovakia perceived in the Western Balkans? How do Slovak democratization partners differ from other foreign NGOs?

It seems to me that the region is still very open for foreign NGOs. However, even more than before there is a high level of sensibility whether the relationship is based on a genuinely partner-

ship ground. Slovakia has been perceived as a close partner and friend, someone who really cares for the European future of the whole region. The third question whether and how the Slovak democratization partners differ from other foreign NGOs I can answer especially from Serbian perspective, since I most familiar with this one. First, Slovakia was involved with us even before the democratic changes occurred, and this was one of the very important determining factors why Slovakia's assistance was and still is understood as somewhat unique. Second, the Slovak civil society partners and the Slovak Aid supported some of the most important initiatives directed toward European integration, such as the European Convent and the Belgrade Security Forum. Third, the Slovak civil society assistance was almost always paralleled with a major support by the Slovak political elite and the government, and this is again quite exceptional.



Sonja Licht, President of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence

The EU drowns in a financial crisis, debts, stagnation, and possibly social unrest. Do you still consider the integration of Serbia and the whole region into the EU as the most important long-term goal?

Absolutely – since apart of all the problems the European Union still remains the best political and peace project ever invented, and there is nothing better on the menu.

What can other European countries, including Slovakia, do for Serbia and its neighbours?

Very much – by supporting its European integration through permanent encouragement, sharing best and worst practices, being when needed their ambassadors at the EU “tables”. Slovakia is a small county, as are all the Western Balkan countries and can be an important example that proves that when in the EU, even as a small country you can

be a respected player if you are ready to be serious and responsible in your behaviour both internally and in international relations.

I must add, at the end of this interview that for me personally and for the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence our Slovak friends and partners are a permanent source of inspiration and encouragement.

A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE PARTNERSHIP

“Slovakia and Kenya work together to achieve sustainability through local ownership,” says Amina C. Mohamed.



Amina C. Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Kenya

Slovakia has engaged in the official development assistance for Kenya since the 1990s. Which concrete projects do you consider most fruitful?

We highly appreciate and value all the development assistance received from our Slovak friends. We do not make any distinctions between the various projects. They are all meaningful and useful. It would not be fair to single out one or two. We, of course, jointly try to make sure that all the projects are sustainable and that there is maximum local ownership. We have been very suc-

cessful in our joint efforts in that regard. Personally, I especially value capacity-building projects aimed at strengthening our own Kenyan capacities in areas such as education, health, agriculture and rural development. I am also glad to see that numerous Kenyan districts have been benefitting from Slovak Aid projects: from Nairobi to the coast, from Lodwar to Rusinga Island, from Eldoret to Garissa. I have been impressed to realize that Slovak organizations have been assisting Kenya already for about 18 years and that Slovak Aid has supported Kenya ever since its set-up. That is remarkable and commendable.

What advantages do smaller, local development projects have compared to, for example, large-scale UN programmes such as the UN Population Fund?

Again, we equally appreciate all and any development assistance received, especially when it comes to socially or economically disadvantaged communities; be it from bilateral donors or through multilateral channels. What I like about smaller interventions, though, is that they are usually better and faster able to address the particular needs of the local communities, their targeting of the particular gaps and their making of a difference at the real time and in the real place. Local testimonies from the ground confirm these facts.

The Slovak Ambassador to Kenya Mr. Mlynár seems to be quite interested in Kenyan development issues – he has recently visited, for example, the Kwale District Hospital, as well as secondary schools in the Voi District. What impact can diplomacy have on development assistance?

As a member of the Cabinet but also as a diplomat I am always happy to hear that foreign ambassadors and diplomats go out of Nairobi to better assess and address the development needs in various parts of our country. Modern diplomacy has to be dynamic and interactive. Ambassador Mlynár has efficiently proven the same for the bilateral relations between Kenya and Slovakia; he has earned our respect and has contributed greatly to moving our long-

term partnership and our close friendship to the next level. Ambassadors do not implement development cooperation projects but they can assist as facilitators, enablers and door-openers. And I would also add their key role for increasing the visibility of projects, or if you will in the public relations. We can be more successful if we get to know one another better. And this is exactly what I have witnessed your Ambassador doing in Kenya.

In which specific areas would you appreciate closer Slovak-Kenyan cooperation?

We have really achieved a lot so far. That cannot be overemphasized.

Development cooperation has brought us a lot closer together and has taught us that we may be geographically far apart, but mentally we have been really close. As a rule, Kenyans are friendly, open-minded, hardworking and hospitable. And so are Slovaks, aren't they? It is amazing to realize that and it is very important to develop our partnerships and friendships along these very lines. We highly appreciate that Kenya remains a priority country of Slovak Aid also for the next five-year period and that Kenyans will be receiving even more Slovak Government university scholarships. What we need to do is promote closer synergies between development cooperation on one hand and trade

and business on the other hand. That way our cooperation will be even more meaningful, more fruitful, and more beneficial for both sides. Kenya is certainly open for Slovak investments, for Slovak business operations, for increasing the trade volume with Slovakia, as well as for Slovak tourists. In this context, I invite you to Kenya and assure you of a warm welcome and continued mutually beneficial partnership with Slovakia.

ANDRIS PIEBALGS: DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IS NOT ONLY ABOUT SOLIDARITY

It is a mutual interest – it benefits EU citizens, too.

Continuing with the economic dimension of the EU's development support; the EU's external policy has three general goals – the sustainable economic and social development of developing countries; the smooth and gradual integration of the developing countries into the world economy; and the campaign against poverty in the developing countries – all of which focus more or less on the macro-economics. On the contrary, many NGOs working in the field highlight the community, even family-based approach towards the African development assistance. Thus, what do you consider the most effective mode of assistance delivery? How can a developing country BE shaped best – through a change from above, perhaps through a pressure from an international organization, or through a local transformation from below?

Ownership of the national development strategy by partner countries governments, and more globally by the whole society, is a key principle of our development cooperation. Where appropriate, we align EU aid to a country's own national development strategy. Our support is based on close political dialogue and a commitment to mutual accountability. In many countries gov-



Andris Piebalgs, the European Commissioner for Development

ernments are therefore our first interlocutors and we channel a substantial part of our aid in the form of budget support.

Of course, if we want to achieve sustainable development and inclusive growth we need to work with partners at many different levels and with different forms of support. We support governance programmes to ensure that local government is strengthened to improve the delivery of basic services, such as schools or sanitation. The EU equally gives grants to NGOs or UN agencies

on the ground, for example to support the fight against diseases like malaria or improve irrigation in a dry region. Involvement of civil society organisations is also a key element in our work, such as strengthening the role of women in decision making procedures at local level.

Do you think that Central Europe can offer special value-added development assistance to African countries, as compared to Western Europe and the U.S.?

Yes, Central and Eastern European Countries offer a wealth of experience and expertise that can add value in development and cooperation in what concerns managing political, social and economic transitions. As part of the former Communist bloc which was dominated by a one party rule and centrally-planned economies, today these same countries are the living proof of successful change. Some concrete examples of transformation include public service reform, border management, the setting-up of an independent judiciary, or building an enabling environment in which small and medium-sized enterprises can develop, to mention but a few.

Central and Eastern European Countries are therefore in a unique position to share this type of knowledge and lessons learnt with other partner countries who

are seeking to undertake democratic and economic reforms to transform societies into more inclusive democracies and open-market economies.

Some African countries are recipient countries of the Slovak Official Development Assistance. Slovak NGOs, academic institutions but also private companies are active in Sub-Saharan countries. Why is cooperation with partners in Africa important for both sides?

I am glad to see that the reciprocal importance of development cooperation is recognized by this question. Indeed, development cooperation is not only about solidarity, it is a mutual interest – it benefits EU citizens, too. Extreme poverty is not only morally unacceptable; it is also a source of conflict, pandemics, illegal migration and

extremism, amongst others. By working in cooperation with partner countries, our objective is to ensure a high impact of our funding and to provide solid ground for a long-term, stable and sustainable development of partner countries. Further down the line, it will be more effective to address the root causes than the symptoms.

Also, it is important to consider the change in the concept of development cooperation. We no longer speak of a donor-recipient relation but a true political and economic partnership.

Although great challenges remain, Africa is the continent with the fastest growth rate and the youngest population. We need to nurture this huge potential, because this is also part of Europe's future growth and jobs.

POTENTIAL IN CULTURAL COOPERATION BETWEEN BELARUS AND SLOVAKIA IS UNDERESTIMATED

“Cultural diplomacy could and should be used as a tool for intensification of people-to-people contacts and the promotion of European values,” maintains Olga Stuzhinskaya.



Olga Stuzhinskaya, the Founder and Director of the Brussels-based Office for a Democratic

The Office for a Democratic Belarus essentially provides information and expertise exchange between Belarus and the EU. How has the Slovak ODA been relevant for its work?

In 2006, the Slovak support was essential for the very establishment of the Office for a Democratic Belarus (ODB) in Brussels. Through the Bratislava-based Pontis Foundation, ODB received solid expert assistance and strategic

guidance, support in building the network of contacts among various stakeholders within the EU, especially the Visegrad 4 (V4) countries.

Over the past five years, with support of the Swedish and Danish governments and the European Commission (EC) ODB leads a number of projects ensuring exchange of knowledge and best practices in the field of higher education, energy and environment, as well as transport. The experience of Slovakia and other V4 countries provides an excellent set of tools that can be used in Belarusian transformation. The Slovak ODA via Visegrad Fund supported the efforts of the Office for a Democratic Belarus in bringing the experience of Slovakia and the Czech Republic to Belarus in the implementation of the Bologna process as part of the reform in the higher education domain.

Similarly, ODA extended its assistance in bringing to Belarus Slovak expertise in the use of renewable energy sources and innovations in the energy sector.

One of the subjects of the Slovak ODA to Belarus is to support the market economy in Belarus. How would you evaluate the impact of the analytical community work supported by the Slovak ODA?

A great example of such support is the establishment of the Belarusian Public Policy Fund (BPPF) that is aimed at increasing direct awards for Belarusian analysts, networks, think tanks, professional groups, pressure groups or analytical centers who address issues of strategic importance and work in-country. Research materials produced as a result initiate and facilitate the debate on key public policy issues. Increasing the awareness of Belarusian society and people's active participation in Belarus crafting policies at local and national level is at the heart of the reform and transformation efforts.

Your office is rather active in mediating contacts for experts in very concrete sectors such as energy, transport and education. Do you see space for a more intensive exchange of expertise and experience in these and other areas with Slovak specialists?

We look forward to continuing and expanding the sectoral cooperation with Slovakia, not only in the areas

named above but in other key fields where Belarus can use Slovakian experience. The latter is often easier to understand by Belarusian experts than the knowledge and practices brought from the "old" EU Member States due to the similarities in problems Slovakia and other states of Central Europe faced in the past with the current challenges in Belarus.

Among key sectors I would name the higher education reform. Young Belarusians increasingly seek better education and employment abroad and leave the country en masse, mostly to Russia. More advanced study modules in Belarus, also in business education, would contribute enormously to the creation of new SMEs and the incentives to stay in the country. New business approaches would contribute to establishment of a more stable and attractive business climate. Here, the efforts of Slovak CSOs to invest into projects related to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) should be continued and strengthened by contributions of other international actors.

Myth busters are usually not very popular as they destroy people's long standing beliefs. Your website brings a concise picture on facts and myths about Belarus.

Contributing with your share to 'cultural diplomacy', can you identify any areas Slovakia and Belarus would contribute from a strengthened cooperation?

Potential in cultural cooperation between Belarus and Slovakia are underestimated and not used fully. Cultural diplomacy could and should be used as a tool for intensification of people-to-people contacts and the promotion of European (universal) values in Belarus – respect to other culture among them.

Due to the self-isolationist policies of today's Belarusian government, the society remains cut off from the all-European processes, also in terms of cultural exchanges.

The recent survey on European Values in Belarus commissioned by ODB showed the increasing interest of the Belarusian population to become more acquainted with the EU and its Members, the European values and the diverse cultures of the European continent. This trend is growing thanks to increased opportunities to travel, especially for young Belarusians who become inspired to build their own European and democratic Belarus.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' ASSETS IN OECD DAC

"The post-communist countries have a unique perspective and valuable experience of successful transformation towards democracy," envisages Serge Tomasi.

As of September 2013, Slovakia is a member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee. What influence will the OECD have on the delivery of the Slovak ODA?

Ten years ago, the Slovak Republic began providing development co-operation. Since then, it has significantly increased the volume of its official development assistance (ODA) and put in place legislative, strategic and institutional frameworks for its effective delivery. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) facilitated and supported this process. In 2011 we conducted a Special Review of the Slovak Aid programme and provided



Serge Tomasi, Deputy Director of OECD Development Co-operation Directorate

your Government with some recommendations on how to further increase the quality of Slovakia's development co-operation. The Slovak government used these recommendations when introducing the recent reforms. During the recent review to assess the Slovak Republic's readiness to join the DAC, we noted the plans Slovakia has set out for further improvements of its aid programme. We are sure that, as a member of the Committee, your country will continue to strengthen its development co-operation system so that it can achieve its development objectives even more efficiently, effectively and transparently for the benefit of the poor people in your partner countries. Increased interlinkages with other DAC members and the possibility to share good practices with them should facilitate this process. This Committee is a knowledge sharing platform that enables its members to learn from each other to improve the effectiveness of their development policies.

What are the advantages of the OECD DAC? Why should countries try to become members of the DAC?

Accession to the DAC brings many advantages to the country concerned. It enhances the international credibility and visibility of a new member as a provider of development co-operation. Accession to the DAC broadens the scope of the countries influence on the wider development community as well. The new Committee member may also benefit from advice on managing its development co-operation systems through periodic peer reviews, improve the collection and reporting of its statistics on development co-operation flows as well as fill positions and take seats at the table in international processes traditionally filled by DAC members.

As recent history shows, advanced and emerging economies have considerable experience to share. Many have set DAC membership as an objective and subsequently joined the Committee. Ireland completed the accession process in 1985, Spain in 1991, Luxembourg in 1992, Greece in 1999 and Korea in 2010. 2013 can already be considered an exceptional year for the DAC, as three

countries have completed the accession process this year: Iceland in March, the Czech Republic in May and your country in September. We hope that Poland and Slovenia will also join the DAC before the end of the year. These recent accessions and the fact that many non-OECD countries are intensifying their engagement with the Committee shows that the DAC is relevant and attractive not only for its 27 members but also for many other providers and recipients of development co-operation.

What implications does the recent membership of two post-communist states – Slovakia and the Czech Republic – have on the overall DAC goals?

The post-communist countries from Central Europe have a unique perspective and valuable experience of successful transformation towards democracy and market economy. They have established efficient state institutions, reformed public finances and local government, as well as created a breeding ground for thousands of small and medium size enterprises to flourish. They have also managed to successfully integrate into the European Union and effectively absorbed EU structural funds. As such, they have achieved impressive development results and accumulated substantial development experience. Now, as providers of development co-operation, they are sharing this experience in the regions they know the best, namely the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and with other developing and transition countries.

I am sure that the development experience of countries like Slovakia is interesting not only for recipients but also providers of development co-operation and the DAC is the best place for sharing experiences across the development community. I strongly believe that the new DAC members from this part of the world will have a lot to offer to other members of the Committee and will significantly enrich the debates within the DAC, thus enhancing the Organisation's role in shaping a new development architecture for the post-2015 period.

EVENTS

DEVELOPMENT DAY 2013

Old Market Hall, Bratislava
October 18, 2013

Development Day is an annual event organised by the Slovak NGDO Platform to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Here you can learn all about development issues. You can find out how and through which organisations Slovakia has been helping in the poorer parts of the world for over ten years, and what opportunities are available to work or volunteer in developing countries. Slovak journalists will discuss their visits to developing countries and the day will culminate with a benefit concert.
rozvojovyden.mvro.sk

AFRIKTIVITY

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

Area in front of the Old Market Hall,
Bratislava

October 16 and October 19, 2013

The photography project Afriktivity is one of the most important records of Slovak participation in development aid, documenting activities of seven Slovak development organisations in Africa. Its authors Zuzana Halánová and Daniel Laurinc have created a travelling outdoor exhibition to share images from the project. Since May it has been shown in major town squares around Slovakia, and this is the finale of its successful tour.

www.afriktivity.com

EVERYONE RESCUES AN AFRICAN

Lab Theatre, Theatre Faculty of the
Academy of Music and Performing Arts

October 19, 2013, 19:00

As part of the events on development and cooperation, actors from LAB Theatre will perform the play "Everyone rescues an African". The play by the German author, Ingrid Lausund provocatively asks whether our aid to Africa is sincere or is motivated by a desire to save our own consciences.