

Press Release

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Chairmanship of Committee of Ministers: Slovakia presents its priorities

Strasbourg, 12.11.2007 – Jan Kubiš, Slovakia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, presented the priorities fixed by his country today as it took up the chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers for the next six months. He emphasised an important role that the Council of Europe played in building democratic Slovakia and reiterated his country's support to the implementation of the Council of Europe values, standards and principles.

Slovakia's priorities will be based around three broad themes:

1. Promoting a citizens' Europe:

- a. the Slovak Chairmanship will emphasise the Council of Europe's need for openness, engagement, responsibility and efficiency as well as its need for solidarity with non-governmental organisations and civil society, in relation to its activities and further development;
- b. it will seek to implement the recommendations concerning the functioning of the Forum for the Future of Democracy and support the work of the Ad hoc Committee on e-democracy to develop a set of generic e-democracy tools and guidelines on the scope and implementation of e-democracy;
- c. the Slovak Chairmanship will support the early adoption of a draft convention on access to official documents.

2. A transparent and efficient Council of Europe;

- a. in order to guarantee complementarity and synergy between the main European organisations, Slovakia will aim to further promote dialogue, exchange of experiences and good practices and to improve the co-ordination of activities;
- b. the Slovak chairmanship will support the ongoing work aimed at strengthening the system of human rights protection of the Council of Europe, in particular the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the European Commission against racism and Intolerance.

3. Respect for and promotion of core values: human rights, rule of law and democracy.

- a. the Slovak Chairmanship will strive to ensure the fulfillment of commitments relating to shared values and standards, which Council of Europe member states have signed up for;
- b. it will lead efforts in the fight against discrimination, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, extreme nationalism and chauvinism, and will promote the truth about the Holocaust;**
- c. Slovakia will pursue the objective of a peaceful, secure and socially responsible Europe and the development of a mutually beneficial co-operation, at the European and the international level;
- d. it will support both the strengthening of security and stability in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, and the further deepening of the European integration process;**
- e. the Slovak Chairmanship will support the full use of all assistance and co-operation programmes of the Council of Europe that would change Belarus' attitude with respect to

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.

meeting the criteria for membership;

f. it will take advantage of the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities to support the continuation and development of the activities in the areas of the protection of minorities, fight against racism and intolerance as well as against social exclusion.

The Slovak chairmanship will end in May 2008. During the six next months, Slovakia will organise a number of conferences and seminars, in Bratislava and elsewhere. Some of the major events to be noted:

- 8th Conference of European Health Ministers "People on the move: Human rights and challenges to health systems" (22 – 23 November, Bratislava)
- Conference on crimes committed by children and against children: "Children and antisocial action" (29 November, Bratislava)
- International educational seminar: "From Sport to Knowledge" (2 - 3 April, Piešťany)
- Conference "Education and Training of Roma children and youth" (8 - 9 April, Bratislava)
- Conference "Citizens in the centre of the local democracy" (April, Piešťany)

For more information, see <http://www.coe.int/CM-Chairmanship/>