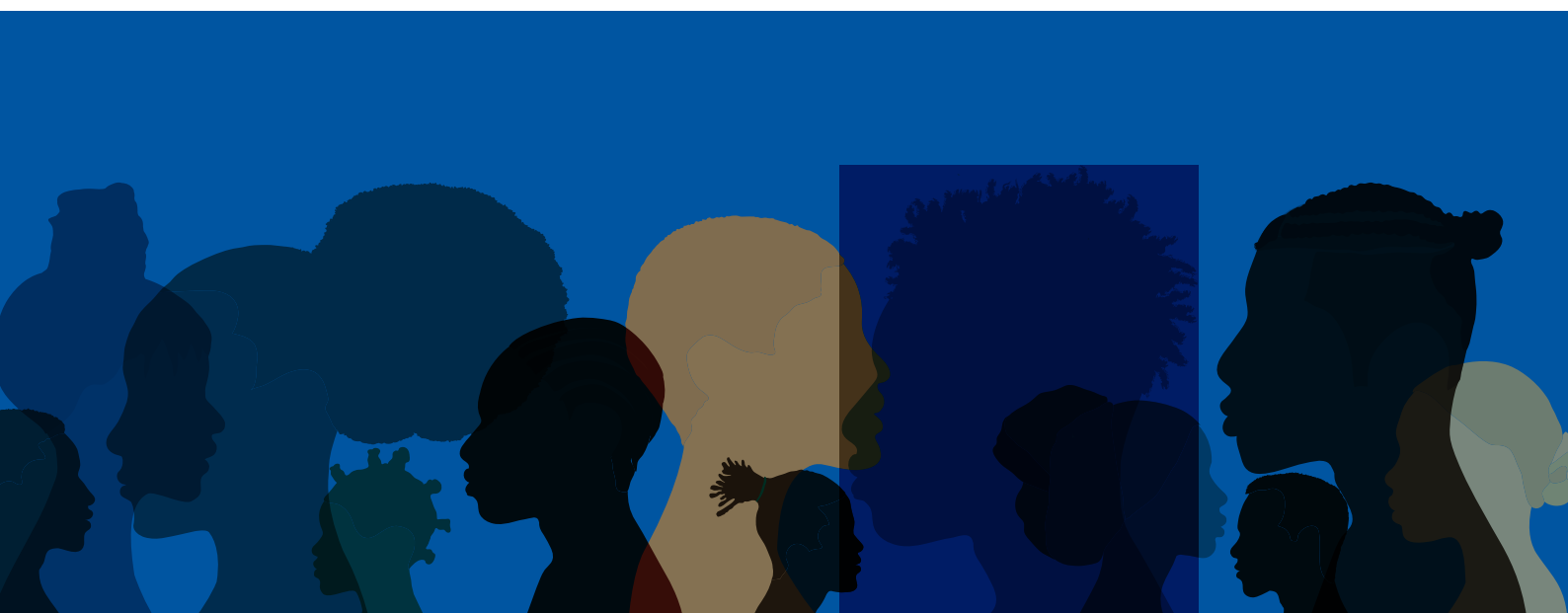
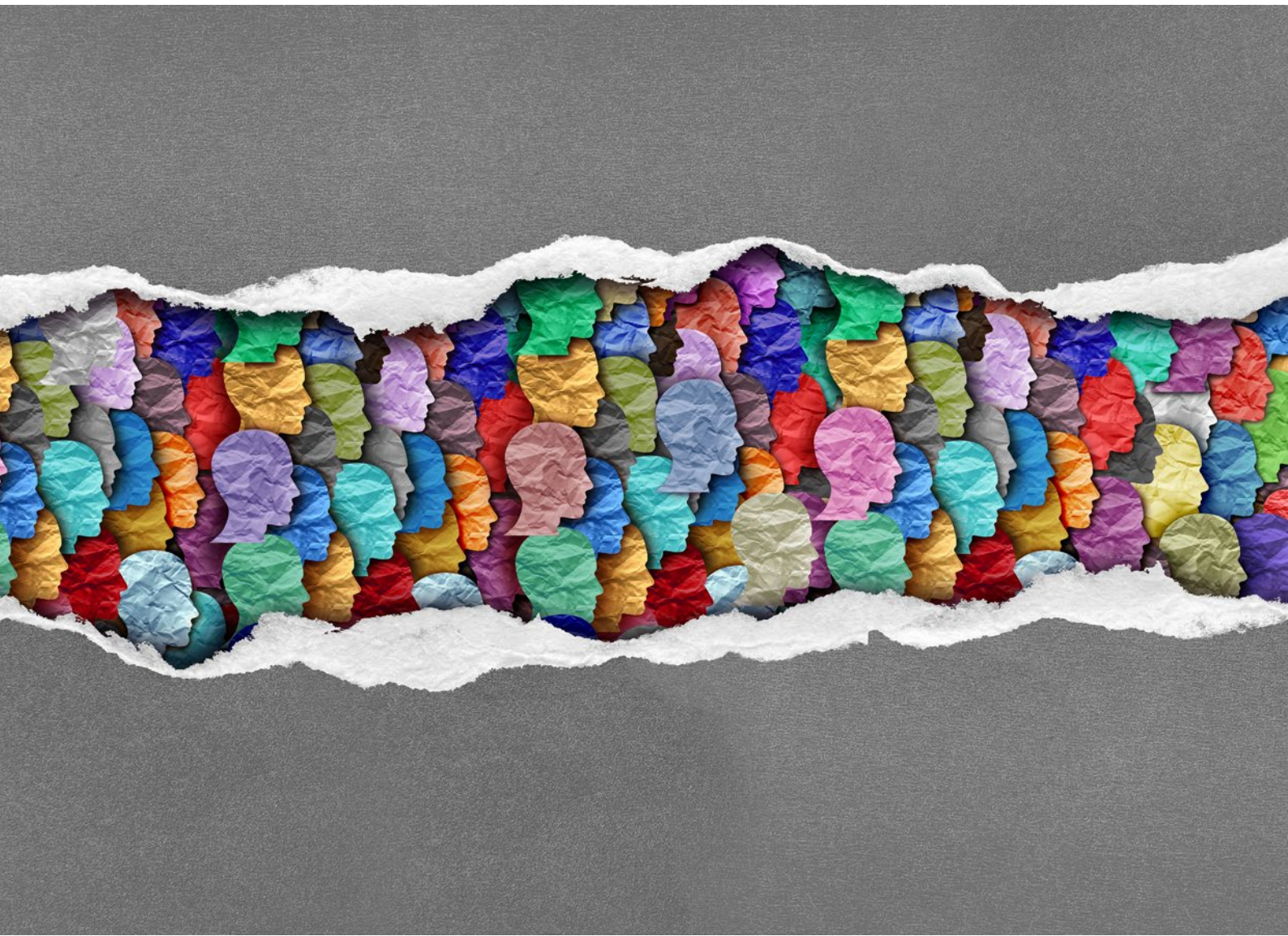


CONCEPT PAPER ON THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD



MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



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I. BACKGROUND, PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD



Respect for human rights, their protection and proactive support for their promotion are an integral part of the value vector of the Slovak Republic, which is equally applied internally and externally in the context of our membership in the EU, UN, Council of Europe, OSCE, NATO and many other sectoral, specialized political and security organisations. Regardless of the primary focus of an organisation, it is always possible to identify directly (or implicitly) its human rights dimension.

The ambition of modern Slovak foreign policy is to proactively use a whole range of foreign policy instruments to support human rights and democracy in the world. The range of these activities includes the involvement of the Slovak Republic in initiatives to support human rights in multilateral forums, media outlets on current human rights issues, public declaration of support for inclusive dialogue and civil society in countries that do not respect human rights principles.

ONE OF THE MOST DIRECTED INSTRUMENTS THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BRING THE DESIRED RESULTS - IN THE FORM OF IMPROVING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN A PREDETERMINED AREA - IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC PROJECTS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW IN THIRD COUNTRIES.

The basis for these activities is given by the Programme Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2021 - 2024 and the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic¹.

According to the Programme Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the period 2021 - 2024: *"Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the promotion of the rule of law, will be a key criterion in the promotion of the foreign policy interests of the Slovak Republic."*

After the completion of the second membership of the Slovak Republic in the UN Human Rights Council (2008 - 2011 and 2018 - 2020), the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the Report on the Slovak Republic's membership in the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2018 - 2020 by Resolution No. 178 of 7 April 2021. The priorities of the Slovak Republic during its three-year membership in the Council were in particular the fight against all forms of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance, the rights of the child and the promotion of freedom of religion or belief and religious tolerance. The material assigns tasks to the relevant ministries in the field of the promotion of human rights at the international level, particularly in the framework of freedom of religion or belief, media freedom and the safety of journalists, the fight against racism and other forms of intolerance, as well as human rights and business.

Under the sectoral priority of Good Governance and Civil Society Building, human rights promotion projects have so far been partially, but not adequately, implemented through development cooperation instruments. There have been mainly grant projects used for their implementation, but also financial contributions provided by the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as the "Agency"), based on an application submitted to the diplomatic mission of the Slovak Republic, or financial contributions to local organisations in partner countries. In line with the Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2019 - 2023 (hereinafter referred to as the "Medium-Term Strategy"), the Slovak Republic applies a cross-cutting theme across all development activities, which has a clear human rights character - equality of opportunities.

Selected Slovak development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have been implementing projects containing human rights themes with the support of SlovakAid or other donors (e.g. the EU, USA, International Visegrad Fund - IVF) focus mainly on equal opportunities, women's empowerment, right to decent work, and environmental law. In countries where human rights are a sensitive area,

NGOs concentrate on "soft" activities, such as capacity support for local organisations, training, mentoring, active participation in social events, campaigns, etc. Territorially, Slovak NGOs have been active in selected countries of the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, Middle East and Asia (e.g. Myanmar, Philippines), Central Asia, Cuba, in the case of development education projects also in Slovakia.

The first targeted step in the promotion of human rights within the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the "Ministry") was the series of activities and projects to support Belarusian civil society in the aftermath of the events following the rigged presidential elections on the basis of Government Resolution of the Slovak Republic No. 538 of 2 September 2020.

On February 17th 2020, the Ministry concluded the Memorandum of Cooperation with the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), an independent organisation created by the EU and its Member States also with the strong support of the Slovak Republic in 2013. The Slovak Republic contributed to EED in 2012 with the amount of EUR 60 thousand; in 2015/2016 with the amount of EUR 100 thousand; in 2017 with the amount of EUR 30 thousand, in 2020 with the amount of EUR 50 thousand and EUR 20 thousand for the project in Belarus. Slovakia's annual financial contributions to EED from the Agency are earmarked for democracy support in the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans countries.

Membership in the UN, the EU, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe - organisations for which human rights protection is part of their core business - creates a basic prerequisite for the Slovak Republic to act as a value-credible donor whose activities should be in synergy with global efforts to protect human rights and promote democracy in the world. The Slovak Republic has a long-standing profile in number of human rights areas - which are, inter alia, the result of the experience gained during the Slovak Republic's two memberships of the UN Human Rights Council (2008 - 2011 and 2018 - 2020), from the Slovak Republic's OSCE Chairmanship in 2019, as well as the result of the Slovak Republic's responses to events in geographically close or more distant regions.

¹ *"In its foreign and security policy, the Slovak Republic will actively consolidate and promote the values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, equality, human dignity and the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion, belief and religious tolerance."* (Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, from paragraph 66)

II. THEMATIC PRIORITIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD



Thematically, the Ministry's democratisation and human rights policy in international fora, in the EU and in third countries will pay particular attention to:

- **the promotion of international human rights mechanisms and the systematic mainstreaming of human rights into the policies of the Ministry and the EU,**
- **supporting the building of rule of law institutions,**
- **supporting civil society, including human rights defenders,**
- **media freedom and the safety of journalists,**
- **freedom of religion or belief,**
- **combating racism and other forms of discrimination and intolerance,**
- **the promotion of equality between women and men and equal opportunities,**
- **the rights of the child.**

The promotion of human rights and democracy around the world will be systematically integrated into the policies that the Ministry promotes, including the issues of countering disinformation and responding to hybrid threats. Slovakia will promote these priorities in international organisations, in bilateral relations and in development cooperation, economic, cultural and public diplomacy activities. Slovakia will support initiatives to make the functioning, particularly, of the UN Human Rights Council more effective. The mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review of UN countries will be particularly used in identifying project topics at multilateral and bilateral levels.

The promotion of shared values as a cross-cutting foreign policy priority implies the involvement of all relevant departments of the Ministry. A direct part of the implementation of human rights priorities should be diplomatic missions of the Slovak Republic, which evaluate relevant information on the local situation and propose Slovak Republic's responses to cases of human rights violations, cooperate with EU delegations, EU Member States

to increase the effect of human rights consultations with state authorities. In addition to identifying human rights issues and working with civil society, they may propose/facilitate joint human rights projects of EU Member States in third countries. If financial support is to help the situation in third countries, the logical choice is to invest in civil society working on the spot. Civil society (1) raises awareness of human rights violations and is thus the (first) 'natural' target of state power restrictions, (2) has expertise and knowledge of the spot, and (3) is well placed to come up with concrete proposals for improving the state of democracy.

Slovakia supports the EU's active foreign policy in promoting human rights and democracy. Within the EU, it will support the promotion of human rights and democracy in the EU's external relations, particularly in the Eastern Partnership, including security, trade and development policy. It will promote the inclusion of human rights clauses in the EU's international treaties with third countries and better link human rights and democracy promotion policies to the effective use of relevant EU financial instruments.

In addition to political activities, the SR will also promote human rights and democracy in the world through projects. Project support will use instruments at both multilateral and bilateral levels. In 2021, the SR will focus on human rights activities in multilateral organisations (UN, Council of Europe) with an emphasis on the promotion of freedom of expression (also in cooperation with the Media Freedom Coalition, the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists and the UNESCO Global Fund for Media Protection), rights of the child and religious freedom, as well as the use of relevant development cooperation instruments to promote democracy and human rights on the spot.

Territorially, the project support will focus, as a priority, on the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership regions, in synergy with other foreign policy instruments of the Slovak Republic, such as development cooperation, economic diplomacy, public and cultural diplomacy of the Slovak Republic. The above does not exclude the orientation of activities also towards the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in developed countries, given the current trend of weakening of democratic institutions and the rise of authoritarian tendencies on a global scale noted in several studies and annual reports of human rights organisations.

All activities will be carried out in close cooperation with the relevant departments of the Ministry and the diplomatic missions of the Slovak Republic. Human Rights Department of the Ministry will be primarily responsible for the content and coordination of activities, whether bilateral or multilateral,

and ensuring their synergy and complementarity. The Ambassador at large for human rights will also assist in the preparation and implementation of projects to promote human rights.

The above-mentioned proposals confirm the need to strengthen the expertise of Human Rights Department, including in the area of strategic communication, or support for the setting up of a scheme to provide financial contributions to the Agency, on the basis of an application submitted to the diplomatic mission of the Slovak Republic, for the promotion of human rights and democracy, as well as more comprehensive professional capacity building across the Ministry, including the implementation of specific training for diplomatic staff with a focus on human rights issues.

THE CONCEPT OF PROJECT-BASED PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD AT BOTH BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL LEVELS, TOGETHER WITH THE AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, REPRESENT TWO MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE ELEMENTS OF AN ACTIVE APPROACH TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA AS A FOREIGN POLICY INSTRUMENT. IT SHOULD BE A PRACTICAL AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM OF THE MINISTRY.

III. INSTRUMENTS



The following will be used to implement the above objectives:

1. development cooperation instruments defined in Act No. 392/2015 Coll. on Development Cooperation and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts
2. financial contributions to international organisations and in support of international initiatives
3. existing project schemes of the Ministry
4. other instruments and activities of the Ministry

Ad 1)

On the basis of Act No.392/2015 Coll. on Development Cooperation and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts, the following development cooperation instruments can currently be used to promote human rights in third countries:

- provision of subsidies (implementation of longer-term / max 3 years/ and more financially demanding projects)
- provision of financial contribution (only to foreign non-business entities either directly or on the basis of an application submitted to the diplomatic mission of the Slovak Republic)
- providing knowledge and experience (*Sharing Slovak Expertise*)

As mentioned above, one of the six sectoral priorities under the Medium-Term Strategy is Good Governance and Civil Society Building (under which “public sector reform, public financial management, promotion of the rule of law and civil society participation in democratic processes, capacity building of local government and active participation of citizens in community development, security sector reform, activities of civilian experts in international crisis management, conflict prevention and support for reconciliation activities”). A continuous evaluation of the

medium-term strategy will be carried out in 2021, in which the above sectoral priority may be revised/strengthened to include a human rights dimension.

A development cooperation grant may be granted to a legal entity established under the laws of the Slovak Republic for various types of activities, such as

- e. development project,
- f. humanitarian project,
- g. development education project,
- h. public information project,
- i. capacity building project,
- j. sending a volunteer to a partner country,
- k. development programme.

The range of third countries for development cooperation instruments is defined by the medium-term strategy (all Western Balkans countries, Eastern Partnership countries except for Armenia and Azerbaijan, Kenya, Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East /Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria/, Afghanistan).

Ad 2)

The Slovak Republic will develop multilateral cooperation – it will provide financial contributions to international organisations and to multilateral, international activities and initiatives of the Slovak Republic for the promotion of human rights and democracy, in particular at the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE (with the active involvement of the Slovak diplomatic missions – the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, the Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, the Permanent Delegation to UNESCO in Paris, the Permanent Mission in Vienna, the Permanent Mission to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and the Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels), especially with regard to freedom of the media, freedom of religion or belief, and the struggle against racism and other forms of intolerance.

Ad 3)

In order to systematically integrate the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in third countries into all policies pursued by the Ministry and to strengthen synergies between the various foreign policy instruments, the existing project schemes of the Ministry (under the responsibility outside of the International Organisations and Human Rights Section) will also be used. If there is a political interest to implement activities also in developed countries, including EU Member States, a new project scheme will have to be created within the Ministry, given that development

cooperation instruments can only be used in developing countries as defined by the Medium-Term Strategy.

Ad 4)

In line with the first thematic priority – the systematic integration of human rights into the policies of the Ministry – other instruments, such as economic, cultural and public diplomacy or strategic communication will also be used. The Ministry staff will be more intensively trained in the promotion of human rights and democracy around the world.

The concept of strategic communication and public diplomacy as well as the framework priorities of the cultural diplomacy of the Slovak Republic should work more widely and effectively with the theme of promoting human rights beyond the current commemoration of important personalities and anniversaries, primarily related to the establishment of the United Nations, etc. The aim should be to elaborate these framework strategies focusing on key thematic and regional areas of human rights promotion in the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic and to propose initiatives popularising the issue in relation to the domestic public, especially the younger generation (e.g. organising concerts, photography exhibitions or presentations of films on human rights issues).

3.1. NEW AWARD OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

The Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic will present awards for significant contributions to the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy on 10 December, when the international community commemorates International Human Rights Day each year following the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly (10 December 1948 in Paris).





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