

**Talking Points of Mr. Ján Kubiš, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic
at the conference**

“Working Together – Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy”

Brussels, 3 September 2007

I would like to thank Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner for convening this conference under an appropriate motto: „*Working together – Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy*“. Let us listen to our ENP partners and work together now and most importantly afterwards when working on the follow-up to this conference.

I would like to commend the European Commission, the Council Presidencies and the Secretariat for their incessant attention to developing the EU cooperation with countries in our close neighbourhood, so visible notably in the several past years and so well manifested in the ENP recent achievements, and the results accomplished in this area by the recent German EU Presidency.

The existing ENP innovative and flexible approach is in our opinion fully in line with the EU Security Strategy and should be further continued and strengthened.

Slovakia is a strong supporter of the enhanced ENP. Naturally, as a country in *Central Europe*, we see our priority in developing EU relations with our Eastern European neighbours – that is in line also with their aspirations. But to avoid any misunderstanding, Slovakia also strongly supports the Mediterranean dimension. Enhanced and intensified cooperation with our Mediterranean partners is a clear necessity of strategic importance for the EU.

Slovakia perceives the ENP as a policy – not a mere technical process – that should go, as appropriate, beyond the desirable objective of enhanced economic and trade integration with the EU. It should be a process driven by a strong political vision that would keep the EU's door open for the most advanced partners, notably from Eastern Europe that desire so.

We highly value the variety and flexibility of ENP instruments under the ENPI like the Neighbourhood Investment Facility or the Governance Facility, and the fact that ENP covers all possible areas including climate change, energy, conflict resolution and prevention, as well as operation like EU BAM. Lets work with our partners – to use all of these tools to the fullest extent possible.

We value also regional, sub-regional as well as trans-border components of the ENP.

Now some specific policy remarks:

- 1) Differentiation was mentioned as a key approach of the ENP. Stemming from this, we should be also ready for even more advanced forms of cooperation with individual partners, for agreeing with them even more advanced status of an enhanced partnership. The preceding speakers have already mentioned some applicable cases both in the Mediterranean and in the East like *Morocco* or *Ukraine*. And we today also heard appeals of *Georgia* and *Moldova*.

- 2) Differentiation does not mean preserving the existing differences – in many ways historically based – when dealing with the Mediterranean and Eastern dimensions of the ENP. Both of them are equally important and should be treated equally as complementary elements of one whole ENP.
- 3) The importance of the *Intergovernmental Conference* for the future of the ENP and our ENP partners was already mentioned. We should be careful to take comments and concerns of our partners fully into consideration.
- 4) The ENP and its instruments should be flexible enough to make them in the future available also to those countries that are not currently fully engaged, like *Belarus* – of course, based on the pace and the quality of their democratic reforms and modernisation.
- 5) Finally, the ENP is not an *entre-chambre* to the EU membership, nor is it a substitute for it. Yet, it does not exclude eligible ENP partners from pursuing and fulfilling their EU aspirations whenever both the EU and the respective ENP partners are ready and prepared. On the contrary, it helps them and the EU get and stay accustomed to each other, work together. The EU should maintain the open door policy based on values and norms that are at heart of the European project.

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