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AmCham designates 2012 as "Year of Education"

Igor Kottman,
President of AmCham Slovakia

Dear AmCham members,

Firstly, I would like to wish you all the best in 2012 – both in your personal as well as professional lives, and I certainly hope it will be again a very productive and effective year reaffirming AmCham as a very solid partner for all its stakeholders.

Clearly 2012, will be a dynamic year with many important events in Slovakia and around the world. At AmCham, we shall remain focused on business opportunities to stay an effective and impactful partner for key public sector players. All our committees shall serve as a vehicle to achieve our primary goals: business development and advocacy of our operations throughout the year. With this ambition we will continue to seek for valuable partnerships and events to reach a positive difference in the business environment aiming at improving overall conditions for all entrepreneurs operating on the local market.

This year, the Board of Directors together with staff will present a new Strategic Plan for the upcoming period, reflecting on changes and new challenges that the country and business community will face. I believe we managed to fill the strategic goal set the Strategic Plan for 2007-2012 that was '....to be recognized as the leading and most effective business advocacy organization in the country' – and I would like to take this opportunity and thank AmCham members and staff for their commitment, a lot of good work and efforts that enabled us to achieve our strategic goals.

As you have certainly noticed, last year we focused on an area which was for many years one of the main drivers of economy – foreign direct investments. In 2011 AmCham successfully organized several interesting events focusing on this important topic, including the Job Fair, Košice/Prešov Invest as well as the main Conference on FDI: Strategies and Future Prospects. During the conference AmCham presented several important recommendations that should enable the country to be an attractive destination for new foreign direct investments. I would like to thank our members who contributed their time and effort into this important initiative.

We also organized several business breakfasts and executive business clubs with key government officials, including the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Finance and the Speaker of the Slovak Parliament.

This year, we will continue organizing numerous regularly scheduled events, of which I would like to list some key initiatives we are preparing for our members: Pre-Election Discussion with the Political Parties followed by a Business Cocktail in February, Seminar on Economic Migration in April and AmCham Education Conference in October.

Recognizing the importance of an appropriate education system for the society and economy, this year AmCham is dedicated to "Year of Education" initiative. Many of you pointed to the lack of appropriate education among students (low connectivity between the education and market needs), as well as many other issues in the Slovak education system. Going forward you will learn more about this initiative designed to promote the exchange of ideas in the area of educational policy and workforce competitiveness and we hope, that we will generate a lot of good ideas and recommendations to the Slovak Government.

We will continue covering interesting topics in our *Connection* magazine that proved to be an effective communication channel. This issue focuses on an important area of business – Banking and Finance, a dynamic area where we have seen a lot of changes and we believe that you will find interesting for your business activities.

Dear Members, the AmCham Board and staff looks forward to supporting you in building your businesses and bringing new opportunities for local communities, citizens and society throughout this year. We will be also looking forward to your active participation, ideas and support in various programs and events we will prepare for 2012.

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