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**Evaluation of the year 2011**

**Jake Slegers,**  
*Executive Director of AmCham Slovakia*

Dear Readers and AmCham Members,

Happy Holidays! And a blessed, healthful and prosperous 2012!

It certainly has been a busy and productive year at AmCham Slovakia!

Throughout the past year, AmCham Slovakia has concentrated on advancing its role of providing a platform for communication among its member companies and various government and state bodies, as well as advocating its members' interests. Reflecting on our main goals for 2011, we have substantially increased our focus on policy and advocacy activities and strengthened our relations with the Slovak government and public institutions through a great variety of approaches.

Since AmCham strives to pursue a membership-driven approach, we were actively involved with issues of interest to our member companies. During our discussions at various meetings and events we managed to cover a broad variety of topics, such as, Public Procurement, Tax Reform, Judicial Reform, Education Reform, the MINERVA Program, Foreign Direct Investments, Regional Development, US-Slovak Relations, EU issues, Healthcare issues, Corporate Social Responsibility, Intellectual Property Rights, Drug Pricing Policies, and a whole host of other issues.

The past year found AmCham Slovakia focusing quite strongly on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Our FDI Committee was officially established at the beginning of the year, and it immediately set to work to formulate a comprehensive strategy for attracting FDI to Slovakia throughout the remainder of this decade. Developing such a strategy was a tall task. Several companies stepped forward and have contributed a considerable amount of time and effort to this project. On December 12, we were proud to present at to the business community, at a major conference and in the presence of Slovakia's largest political parties, our 10 recommendations for Slovakia's efforts to attract value-added FDI. This year's FDI efforts were also evident in the third annual "Invest in Košice" conference, this year with the addition of Prešov to the presentations.

While all items listed in AmCham's FDI Strategy are of critical importance, "Investing in Education" is the one that I see as absolutely necessary for Slovakia's competitiveness. We at AmCham Slovakia feel so strongly about that, that we had designated 2012 as the "Year of Education". We already have plans for several education-related events for the next year. Our Business-Academic Cooperation Committee is set to produce several recommendations for the improvement of the Slovak education system to make sure that the needs of business and industry are being met far into the future. We hope that by the end of 2012, we will be able to present our recommendations to the Slovak government.

In the past year, our interactions with government officials and policy-related events included an impressive line-up of speakers that we have featured throughout our monthly editions of "Connection". AmCham has begun a practice of regularly inviting officials from various ministries to its committee and working group meetings and would like to continue in this practice in the future.

Importantly, the AmCham office continues to spearhead the activities of AmCham's standing committees, task forces and ad hoc working groups. We have instituted some new committees this past year. Our EU Affairs Committee began its activities just recently. This committee is set to deal with a host of legislative and systematic changes that come as a result of Slovakia's EU membership. We also have established a Tourism Committee and a CSR Committee each to deal with relevant issues for our members. We certainly encourage all of our members to get involved with our committees.

And so, you can see that AmCham Slovakia has, indeed, had a very busy and productive year. We look forward to many more such activities for your benefit in the future. Returning to the holiday spirit, the Board of Directors and all the staff certainly want to wish all of you a peaceful and blessed Christmas and a very happy and prosperous New Year!

We look forward to your continued participation and development of exciting, effective, and new programs and events in 2012!

