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2012: A Successful Year with AmCham Members

Jake Slegers

Executive Director of AmCham Slovakia

Dear AmCham Members and Friends,

Many of you will probably echo my disbelief that the year 2012 is actually almost over! And what a busy year it has been! We are all sure looking forward to a well-deserved rest, and I would like to wish you very happy and peaceful Christmas and holiday season, and of course a successful new year!

2012 was certainly marked by the change of the government in Slovakia, which also influenced AmCham's policy and advocacy activities. The new government has almost immediately started with introducing new proposals and changes. Fortunately, AmCham has been able to start an open and productive dialogue with the new government. We are consistently recognized as one of the largest chambers in Slovakia, representing more than 300 American, Slovak and international companies from 25 countries in the world, which create about 20% of Slovak GDP and employ more than 100,000 people. We are pleased with the continued growth in the strength of AmCham, and we would like to thank you, the representatives of all of our member companies, who made our efforts successful by continuously showing your dedication and offering your time and expertise.

This year was special also because it was dedicated to one of the key areas of AmCham's advocacy activities: Education. Thanks to the interest and enthusiasm of our member companies, who have become active members of the "2012: AmCham Year of Education" initiative, we were able to come up with 70 specific solutions that were presented at our "Future of Education Conference" on October 30, 2012. During the year, members of the initiative identified some of the key challenges of the education system, such as the quality of education, bureaucracy, rewarding quality teachers, evaluation and dissemination of quality research, profile of the graduates, the content that is being taught and the methods how it is taught; the efficiency of the school management, the lack of business-academic cooperation and the need to respond to the labor market needs. These are some of the areas that we believe Slovak government could and should address without having to dramatically increase funding for the amount that is already in the system.

We want to continue with our policy and advocacy activities next year as well, and we would like to devote the upcoming year 2013 to regional development. Not only would we like to become more active in the regions of Banská Bystrica or Žilina, but we would also like to acknowledge the importance of our Košice office, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary of establishment and the fact that Košice will be the European Capital of Culture in 2013.

We are indeed looking forward to another year of bringing events, information and advocacy efforts to assist the business community in Slovakia. We are already planning exciting events for next year such as the Conference on Migration Flows Management; the Regional Tax Conference, which we are organizing together with many AmChams in the region; the Conference on Innovation, which we are organizing together with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs; and the EU Conference, which we are organizing once again with the Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia. We also look forward to supporting our SME members as part of these activities.

As ever, we count on your support, and we are looking forward to making the year 2013 even more successful than this one.