

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

**EBRD ANNUAL MEETING OF GOVERNORS, 18 - 19 MAY 2008,
KIEV**

**Statement delivered by
Mr. Ivan Šramko, EBRD Alternate Governor and
Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. President, Governors, Distinguished Guests,

It is an honour and a pleasure to address you in Kiev on the occasion of the 17th Annual Meeting of the Board Governors. I wish to express my appreciation also to the Government of Ukraine and to the City of Kiev for their warm welcome and hospitality.

We congratulate the Bank on its achievements in 2007 and welcome the proposal on the net income allocation. A decision to establish the EBRD Shareholder Special Fund and further support activities related to nuclear safety is a good sign of the shareholders' willingness to address the most urging needs of the region whereas allocation of the part of the Bank's 2007 profit to strategic reserve demonstrates the Bank's adherence to prudent and sound financial policies.

We also appreciate that the Management and the Board of Directors engaged in an open and through discussion and reached a consensus which can satisfy all shareholders. We strongly believe that the decision-process on all relevant issues should be guided by the search for a consensus rather than by a simple counting of votes. No one is disputing that this Bank is European by its name, its funding fathers were European, its headquarters is in one of the EU capitals and many of the Bank's employees come from Europe as well. However, one of the Bank's most honoured principles of governance should be the dignity of difference. Shareholders' views can often diverge. From time to time differences may emerge which cannot be bridged by a decision which would leave all of us happy.

However, respect for the views of others should, indeed, remain *the modus operandi* of this Bank.

The application of Turkey to become a country of operation brought about a number of issues related to the Bank's transition mandate, geographical boundaries of the Bank's operations, validity of the proposed Strategic Operational Framework and, in more general terms, matters concerning the future of the Bank including its institutional set-up. The Slovak Government acknowledges the uniqueness of the Bank's mandate and is ready to participate in discussions on the Bank's future. We do not rule out any idea which would presume the Bank leaving even more traceable footprints in the countries of operation and improving the peoples' lives there but we strongly oppose any propositions to dissolve the Bank or merge it with any other IFI.

This year will give Slovakia a new country strategy – the last one before Slovakia's graduation from the Bank's operations. We urge the Bank to thoroughly examine the remaining transition challenges and focus on them to achieve tangible results. The Slovak Government has been supportive of the Bank's participation in the large-scale infrastructure projects through PPPs, in the financing of SMEs and in the Bank's activities in the energy sector and expects the Bank to play a more proactive role in these areas. We also encourage the Bank to capitalize on experience with the transition process of Slovakia and other EU-8 countries. Please, do not forget that these countries have learnt many lessons in the past and are now ready to share them with countries which are on the road to market economy.

The Bank, together with other international institutions, has been playing a crucial role in enhancing a broader regional co-operation in the Western Balkans. We agree with those

who view the Western Balkans as “the countries with special needs”. We urge the Bank to focus more on those areas of the Stabilization and Association Process in which a limited progress has been achieved and which are at the core of the Bank’s transition mandate. Slovakia will look forward to voting in favour of more cross-border and intra-regional projects in this part of Europe.

We would be pleased to see more innovative approaches in the early transition countries. Some of these economies do not aspire for membership in the EU and thus require different strategies from those being applied in the EU potential candidate countries.

In closing, I would like to pass on to you, President Lemierre, the Slovak Government's sincere and highest appreciation for your commitment and tireless effort to push this Bank and its Staff to new horizons, and wish you all the best in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.

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