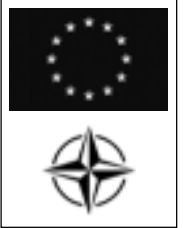


# Slovenia in EU & NATO



Maja Kocijancic / STA

## EU and Slovenia Wrap up Accession Talks after Nearly Five Years

Slovenia wrapped up accession talks with the EU at the Copenhagen summit last week and, after nearly five years, has opened the door for its full-fledged membership in the Union on May 1 2004. In the final phase of tough negotiations, the country managed to agree on fairly favourable financial terms of its membership - it will be a net beneficiary of EU budget funds, receiving EUR 250 million in the first three years of membership - plus some additional concessions.

### Initial Offer for Compensations Rejected

Slovenian negotiators, with outgoing Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek and chief negotiator Janez Potocnik at the head, were satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. "Our chief objective was to make sure that Slovenia should not become a net contributor outright upon EU accession, whereas now we shall begin our membership with substantial revenues," Drnovšek said. Initial calculations indicated that Slovenia, in the worst-case scenario, could be among those countries which contribute more to the common EU budget than they receive from it, but in the final round of negotiations the country secured net revenues of some EUR 83 million a year for the three years following accession. Moreover, the EU also offered Slovenia a cut in its mandatory contribution to the European Investment Bank (EIB). Slovenia would have had to contribute EUR 65 million to the EIB, but it managed to slash that figure by EUR 16.3 million in negotiations.

The deal between Slovenia and the EU was not reached until the second round of negotiations; Slovenia turned down the initial offer. "There was no headway in the first, morning round of negotiations, but in the second round the EU presented an offer that we then accepted," Drnovšek confirmed. He explained that the second offer included an additional EUR 48.7 million of funds for the period between 2004 and 2006 on top of the EUR 201m put forward as part of the first offer. This means that Slovenia would receive a bit over EUR 83 million a year, or about 0.4 percent of Slovenia's GDP, Drnovšek added. The sum represents approximately EUR 124 per capita for the three-year period. Slovenia is expected to receive the additional funds in the form of compensation payments covering the difference between Slovenia's contributions and receipts from the common budget. In line with the deal, Slovenia is to pay EUR 187m into the common EU budget in 2004. Meanwhile, it is to receive EUR 224m in EU budget funds. In 2005 and 2006, Slovenia's contribution to the budget is to be upped to EUR 285m and 294m, while it is to receive EUR 285m and EUR 324m. The Union used the fact that Slovenia was to receive EUR 45m of pre-accession aid in 2003 as its basis for its proposal on compensation payments. The original compensation offer of the EU therefore stood at EUR 135m. During negotiations, Slovenia managed to improve the EU offer by around EUR 115m to almost EUR 250m. Although Slovenian officials were satisfied with this offer, the country had set EUR 360m as the target figure.

### Important Concessions in Agriculture

Slovenia also managed to obtain a number of other concessions in the final phase of accession talks over the past few weeks. In agriculture, it managed to secure a right to supplement direct payments to farmers from the national budget. From 2007, Slovenia will be able to supplement these payments so that they are equal to those of the current members of the European Union. Moreover, the country was guaranteed agriculture quotas that exceed current production levels. It also managed to negotiate a

right to claim a large share of funds for regional development that were yet to be distributed before the final phase of negotiations. "In agriculture, Slovenia won the most of all the candidates," outgoing Agriculture Minister Franci But noted after the negotiations. The country was somewhat less successful in negotiations on regional policy, but managed to secure some EUR 404 million from structural and cohesion funds in the first three years of membership. However, Slovenia was given the right to negotiate its division into more than one region after 2007. This would improve its chances for acquiring funds for regional development.

The negotiating efforts of Slovenia also led to an agreement by which the EU would contribute EUR 107 million for the establishment of the Schengen regime along the future external EU border. The sum is only a third of what the Slovenian negotiators had hoped for, but still 45 percent of the total costs Slovenia will incur with the project.

The unexpected offer by the Danish EU presidency was meanwhile quite well accepted. Slovenia was offered a seven-year transitional period in the liberalisation of its property market despite the proviso in the Europe Agreement which said that the market should open in February 2003. The solution adopted says that Slovenia will have the right to protect its property market in case of significant market imbalances caused by the opening of the market to foreign buyers during the first seven years of its membership. It will therefore be able to take measures that would protect the market in regards to the sale of forest, land and holiday homes.

### Tough and Lengthy, But Successful Negotiations

In concluding the accession negotiations - begun in March 1998 following an invitation to enter talks exactly five years ago - Slovenia has practically attained one of its main objectives. It was not easy as the negotiations were tough and required several difficult decisions from Slovenia, often provoking controversy at home. "Yet Slovenia is now setting off on a completely new path," outgoing Prime Minister Drnovšek pointed out at the historic moment. "We are now where we had wanted to get," outgoing Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel added. Potocnik, who has been the chief negotiator with the EU since the very beginning, stressed that Slovenia is not joining the EU with a bad aftertaste. "We can be very happy with what we have achieved," he noted. At home, PM-designate Anton Rop said that regarding the actual financial deal, Slovenia got as much as the government had anticipated when drafting the 2004 budget.

As for the parliamentary parties, all but one voiced satisfaction with the outcome of accession talks. Representatives of the coalition and opposition parties agreed that Slovenia is facing some crucial tasks since results of the accession talks have to be implemented and a referendum on EU membership called. The opposition Social Democrats and New Slovenia also congratulated the entire negotiating team for having conducted talks successfully. The opposition National Party, by contrast, forecast that the outcome would prompt a slowdown of the Slovenian economy and social development.

What was agreed in the final phase of negotiations will now be incorporated into Accession Treaties which will be signed by Slovenia, and the nine other acceding countries, in Athens on April 16 2003. This will be followed by the ratification process in the present, as well as future member states. The latter will first hold referendums where their citizens will decide whether they want to join or not. It is still unclear when Slovenia will call its referendum, but it will certainly happen in the first half of next year. New members are due to join the 15-nation bloc on May 1 2004.

## New Names for the New Year

Calendars are made for every day to bring something new. When days collect into one whole year, we feel as though the day after should be even newer. Since it is the first in a series of new days, our expectations of the days to follow are based on it. This year it looks like Slovenians had been preparing for them with particular care: if everything goes as planned, we will enter the new year as usual, but with a new Slovenian president, a new prime minister, a new government, and a new budget waiting for us.



Dr. Alja Brglez

How many new things, the new names we already know, will in reality bring, is of course as much a matter of assumption - as if we were hearing about them for the first time. Brand new names mean expectations that everyone handles on a personal level; expectations from names and people who are at least slightly known however, tend to be related to the very name or person in question. So there is no difference: in both cases it is a matter of subjective judgement, and human fallibility should be considered on both sides. It is therefore more reasonable to dedicate our pre-festive thoughts to guessing what will be hidden under the Christmas tree, even though it is sometimes impossible to avoid reflecting on what we can expect from the changes at the political top. Apparently, what we wonder about the least are the surprises that the new president, Janez Drnovšek, might spring upon us, as in all the years he spent as prime minister, we came to know him as a deliberate, thoughtful and unsurprising statesman. Outgoing Finance Minister Anton Rop, who has just been appointed as prime minister and will probably get the leadership of the government in the days when you are reading this text, has also spent such a long time in high profile government roles that his work has definitely shown what his future at the most responsible position will be like. The new government will be new by its number even more than its names. It will be the seventh Slovenian government in twelve years, and apparently three new ministers will become a part of it. The new budget will give them the chance of a two-year view, which means that one of the novelties might even be the possibility to work "with an extended plan", focused on development and long-term achievements.

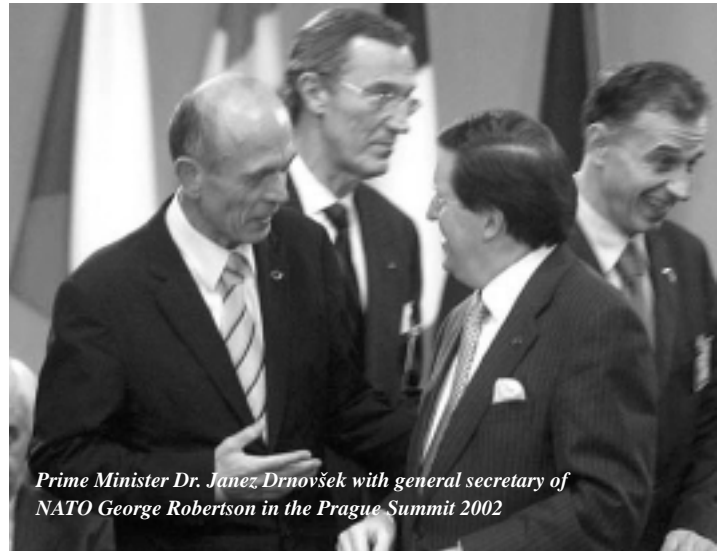
Some of the issues will remain unchanged, and the persons responsible for them will also remain the same. In the history of the first years of our state, the EU and NATO will be remembered as the main accomplishments of 2002 only if they manage to go on and wrap up as successfully in 2003. There are things that reach farther than the calendar, and become true, no sooner than we cease considering them new.

## Government reconstruction New Government Elected

**National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia has appointed the new government that will run the country until parliamentary elections in autumn 2004. The government, Slovenia's seventh cabinet since the independence, was voted in by 54 Members of the 90-seated Parliament, while 25 MPs voted against. Headed by the Prime Minister Mr Anton Rop (Minister of Finance in the government of Mr Janez Drnovsek), it will be composed of 16 ministers.**

In the government are three new names: Mr Dusan Mramor became Minister of Finance, Mr Slavko Gaber is Minister of Education, Science and Sports, while Mrs Zdenka Kovac took the newly established post of Minister without Portfolio, responsible for regional development and coordination of structural policies.

The election of the new government finished the process of the government reshuffle, which has started when Mr Janez Drnovsek resigned from the post of the Prime Minister, after he was elected President of the Republic on 1 December. Mr Drnovsek will swear in on Sunday, 22 December.



Prime Minister Dr. Janez Drnovšek with general secretary of NATO George Robertson in the Prague Summit 2002

## Slovenia Treads a New Path

**"In the last month Slovenia has achieved two important foreign policy goals - it has wrapped up membership negotiations with the EU and received an invitation to join NATO. Now the country's foreign policy efforts will be aimed at finalising membership in both organisations and participating in the debate on the future of the EU." This was a comment from Slovenia's Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel at a press conference held on Monday (16 December) on the results of foreign policy over the last two years and to present the foreign policy priorities until 2004.**



"The final deal reached at the Copenhagen summit between Slovenia and the EU is in line with the country's expectations," Rupel said regarding the outcome of negotiations. However, he warned that the real work had only just begun as Slovenia still had to integrate into the EU where it had to prove its readiness and ability to contribute to the future development of the organisation.

Rupel stated that European Union accession would provide Slovenia with an opportunity to become established and make progress in the economic, academic, scientific, cultural, political and other fields and that, through participation in the common foreign and security policy, Slovenia would be able to intensify its active role on the international stage. "At the same time our experiences, primarily those related to South-Eastern Europe, will make a positive contribution to the European Union's role in the region," added Dr Rupel and reiterated that Slovenia would work hard to offer a bright future to the countries of SE Europe since only the prospect of inclusion in Europe could guarantee stability in the region.

When Slovenia joins the EU in May 2004 it will have a commissioner in the European Commission, and it will also take part in the European Parliament elections in June 2004. Moreover, it will also participate at the inter-governmental conference that is to reach a conclusion on the future structure of the Union. "The future make-up of the EU is such an important project that we want to take part in the decision-making process. The results of the IGC will only be legitimate if the newcomers are able to decide on the common future on an equal footing," said Rupel in an interview for the pre-Copenhagen issue of Slovenia News.

Touching on Slovenia's bid to join NATO, the foreign minister claimed that a NATO invitation had not been as inevitable as some may have thought, since it required considerable effort to convince the member states that Slovenia could make a meaningful contribution to the alliance.

"Apart from the efforts to realise membership in both - the EU and NATO, Slovenia will also strive to nurture good relations with its neighbours, continue to participate in SE Europe and upgrade its network of diplomatic missions, while the country

## Janez Drnovsek Sworn In as Slovenia's New President

**Janez Drnovsek has been sworn in as Slovenia's new president in the parliament. After the national anthem was sung, Drnovsek addressed the parliament by thanking his predecessor Milan Kucan for his work to the benefit of Slovenia and outlining his vision of Slovenia's future.**

The parliamentary session was opened by Speaker of the National Assembly Borut Pahor, who first thanked Kucan - on behalf of MPs and Slovenian citizens - for what he did for the country and its citizens during his terms in office over the past ten years. Pahor also mentioned one of Kucan's most frequently quoted statements; at the ceremony on 26 June 1991 when Slovenia officially declared independence from Yugoslavia Kucan said: "Tonight we are allowed to dream; tomorrow is a new day." Pahor also noted how future generations will remember Kucan as "the statesmen that people liked".

In a lengthy speech following his presidential vow, Drnovsek said that he is taking on a great commitment by assuming the post of president. He pledged, however, to do his work responsibly and to the best of his abilities, with respect and commitment to all citizens of Slovenia.

Drnovsek went on to highlight the main achievements of the "young country" and outlined the main priorities of his presidential term. At the end of the five-year term, he can see an audacious country firmly rooted in Euro-Atlantic organisations with a high international profile, a country that will be an "incubator of ideas, a meeting point of cultures, a bridge of co-operation and the safe fireplace of cohabitation between civilizational, religious and cultural traditions of the European west, east, north and south".

The new president stressed that he is starting his term just as Slovenia has a great historic opportunity - to finally enter the common European arena where it will be able to take an equal part in creating a future European continent based on common values.

He was quick to point out, however, that the beginning of the new period does not signal an end to our national history and the erasure of our identity. Slovenia will have to be even more determined to take care of the national identity, language, culture and arts; it only depends on us whether our values and culture would become a recognisable part of European heritage, he said.

Membership of the EU and NATO is a guarantee of the country's prosperity and safety, as well as credibility and economic success, said Drnovsek, who said he is honoured to be able to act as the supreme commander in a time when Slovenia helps create a new security and defence make-up of Europe on equal terms with democratic European countries.

President Drnovsek particularly highlighted the importance of Slovenia's integration into NATO. "We like to stress that Slovenia is a safe country, but safety is not a permanent good," said Drnovsek.

Slovenia cannot avoid the fact that it has already become part of collective security, which is faced with new security challenges. "That's why I'm convinced that as a member of NATO we'll be safer, and that advantages of NATO membership outweigh its potential disadvantages by far," he said.

In his view, the invitation to join NATO that Slovenia has received is of great importance for the country. At the same time, however, it tasks Slovenia with great responsibility for future actions.

The new president, who is also supreme commander of the Slovenian Armed Forces, said that while the armed forces are being reorganised, he would do everything in his power so that the armed forces would have efficient civilian supervision. Moreover, he would act towards increasing the role, status and reputation of professional and politically unbiased members of the Slovenian Armed Forces both at home and within international peace-keeping and humanitarian missions abroad.

Listing some of the strategic goals of Slovenia's foreign policy, Drnovsek stressed that a key to the country's security is settled and amicable relations with its neighbours. "It is our wish to develop such relations on the basis of mutual trust and co-operation in all areas," he told MPs.

He mentioned in this context a final recognition of territorial integrity from both sides and the unchangeability of state borders as well as the protection of minority rights and the care for their development plus strengthening of economic ties.

A solid co-operation has been established with Croatia within multilateral organisations, but bilateral relations remain burdened with some unsettled issues, said Drnovsek.

While one can sometimes hear people saying that Slovenia's relations with Italy should take a step backward to the times of insecurity, one can justifiably expect that such voices would be drowned by the respect of the adopted international agreements and obligations as well as the readiness for good-neighbourly co-operation, the new president said.

In Drnovsek's view, Slovenia's relations with Austria are developing towards co-operation in all areas, whereas relations with Hungary are very good in all fields.

It is in Slovenia's strategic interest to further consolidate relations with the U.S., not only within NATO, but also on a bilateral basis, he thought. The same goes also for the Russian Federation, particularly in economy.

"12 years after declaring independence, we can say that we have managed to achieve all the most important things; we have reached consensus on the basic values, we have created a safe, socially just and economically successful, tolerant country which has its place on the international scene and, most importantly, is forward looking," Drnovsek pointed out.

As a president, Drnovsek said he would pay special attention to the safeguarding and respect of human rights and basic freedoms. "With a tolerant dialogue, we must overcome old divisions and prevent the emergence of new ones ... we will only achieve this if Slovenia is a law-governed state and if everyone trusts the state and its legal instruments," he said.

The session was attended by Slovenia's top officials from all three branches of power, including the new Anton Rop government, as well as members of the diplomatic corps in Slovenia and Church officials.

### New President Should Be President of All Citizens, Says Archbishop

*Ljubljana, (STA)* - The change in the office of the president of Slovenia means a kind of a new period for our state, Ljubljana archbishop and Slovenian metropolitan told the public TV broadcaster on Sunday evening. Franc Rode would like to see the new President Janez Drnovsek to be a president of all Slovenian citizens, rather than "only one faction".

Speaking for TV Slovenija in a traditional Christmas interview, the top Slovenian Roman Catholic official also said he wishes that the new president always advocated law and justice, both publically and privately. Moreover, the new head of state should also work towards raising Slovenia's profile abroad.

Listing some of former President Milan Kucan's achievements, Archbishop Rode stressed Kucan's efforts for what has been termed national reconciliation, as well as his decisive promotion of Slovenia's integration into the EU and NATO. "The Church in Slovenia is in favour of the country's integration into the EU, as well as NATO, because this is the safest and cheapest system of defence for our country," Rode told the TV station.

The Roman Catholic Church official was also hopeful that the policies of new Prime Minister Anton Rop would continue those of former PM Janez Drnovsek, and that Drnovsek's readiness to settle relations with the Church would also be present in the new government team.

Touching on the replacement of the education minister in the new government, Rode hopes that Slavko Gaber would make fewer mistakes this time than during his first stint as education minister from 1992 to 1999. Rode also said that compared to other European countries, Slovenia's school neglects love of one's country, cultural values as well as European and Slovenian tradition, which is based on Christianity.

According to the archbishop, the Church has been making efforts to increase its presence in the public. Since it was not present for 50 years, some now perceive its actions as meddling with politics, although it may only be about moral teachings. Archbishop for six years, Rode says that he has come to know in this period how hard it is to change people's way of thinking, their habits and character.

Rode also commented on recent cases of sexual abuse and pedophilia among priests around the world, which he considers a very serious issue. He believes it is good that the Church has been able to face this reality, to see the mistakes and condemn them.

It is true, however, that journalists tend to highlight mistakes in the ranks of Catholic priests, although this is a phenomenon present in all segments of society, he noted. Rode, who is not aware of any such case in Slovenia, also stressed that canonic law is very strict in persecuting these kinds of actions.

As for the legalisation of prostitution, the archbishop believes that the situation in Slovenia is not as urgent as, for example, in the Czech Republic, where the auxiliary archbishop of Prague has taken a public stance in favour of legalising prostitution.

## Cheaper to Be in NATO Than Stand Alone

*Ljubljana, (STA)* - The NATO "membership fee" upon joining will amount to one to two percent of Slovenia's total defence budget for 2002, i.e. SIT 300m (EUR 1.3m), State Secretary at the Ministry of Defence Janko Dezelak said in an interview for daily Delo Friday. Talking about expenses, the Social Democrat said that he does not understand "the unbelievable persistence and fact-twisting of some respectable participants in the public forums on NATO".

The second expenditure item are the expenditures for increased number of Slovenia's experts and diplomats at the NATO seat in Brussels. They will gradually be introduced to their service from this year onward and are expected to be in full line-up in 2004. According to Dezelak, the group will number some 100 people, which would cost the country some SIT 1bn (EUR 4.3m) yearly.

The third indirect cost item relates to Slovenia's increased participation and contingent of Slovenian soldiers in peacekeeping missions around the world. The estimated costs for moving and keeping one motorised and logistically self-sufficient company of soldiers and officers (some 120 people) abroad amount to over SIT 1.2bn (EUR 5.2m) yearly. This concludes the story on costs of NATO, Dezelak was convinced.

As for costs of restructuring of Slovenian Armed Forces, the state secretary said that the reorganisation includes some 8,000 soldiers of regular professional army and 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers in reserves. The result of that will be increased defence expenditures from 1.5 to 2 percent of the GDP in 2008. However, this has nothing to do with NATO, stressed Dezelak and added that this is a sovereign decision by Slovenia on restructuring defence system aiming to modernise and rationalise the Armed Forces.

When asked to comment Delo's calculations that the pays for 8,500 professional soldiers and 6,000 reserves alone would amount to SIT 19bn (EUR 82.6m) yearly, Dezelak said that this estimate is a bit high, however, correct "in general terms". He also added that this is not related with NATO and that this sum would be reached by the end of the transition period and certainly not by the beginning of 2003.

If the Slovenians say No to NATO at a referendum, the country will be forced to give out more for the defence per inhabitant, Dezelak pointed out. The current expenditure of US\$ 150 would then rise to US\$ 300. The state secretary's opinion is thus that being part of NATO would prove to be a cheaper option than remaining on the outside.

## NATO Support Grows in Wake of Membership Invitation

*Ljubljana, (STA)* - The decision of NATO to invite Slovenia to join has caused support for membership of the Alliance among Slovenians to grow, a poll published in Saturday's daily Delo shows. The percentage of NATO membership supporters has grown by more than ten percentage points to 49.2 percent over that in the days ahead of summit.

Meanwhile, opposition to NATO membership fell from 38.7 percent before the NATO invitation to 34.1 percent in the latest survey, carried out on 27 November. Moreover, 16.7 percent of the 692 persons surveyed were undecided, down six percentage points on the pre-summit survey.

The latest survey also reflects the prevailing anti-war sentiment in Slovenia. Having been asked about their view on Slovenian military participation in the case that another NATO member becomes involved in a military campaign, 51 percent said they oppose any Slovenian intervention. On the other hand, 37.8 percent of the polled support the involvement of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

The respondents expressed doubt about Slovenia's ability to be an equal in the Alliance decision-making process, with 49.9 percent saying that Slovenia would not get an equal chance to be involved in the process. On the other hand, 41.6 percent thought that Slovenia would be equally involved in the decision-making. Moreover, 73.3 percent of Slovenians believe that the U.S. has the main influence in the Alliance.

The survey also found that the percentage of Slovenians who intend to attend a NATO membership referendum increased by 3.4 percentage points to 86.4 percent. What is more, 63.9 percent of Slovenians believe that a referendum should be held on the issue, as opposed to 29.8 percent who see no need for it.

## Small Countries Will not Weaken NATO, Robertson Says

*Brussels, (STA)* - NATO Secretary General George Robertson underlined that it has been a good year for the Alliance, as it has succeeded in restructuring, increasing its military capacity and inviting seven new countries to join over the last year. Touching on preparations for a possible attack against Iraq, Robertson told the public TV Slovenija network on Thursday that there has been no decision on the matter, but added that small countries could do their bit in case of intervention.

Robertson explained that small countries, such as Slovenia, can in case of war in Iraq contribute special forces, mountain units, special teams for weapons of mass destruction and other defence services. He told the Slovenian public TV service that professionalization of the armed forces is not an alternative, but a must in the new security environment.

Asked whether a failed NATO referendum in Slovenia would affect the accession process, Robertson stressed that he was confident Slovenians would recognise that this was the deal of a lifetime and will vote for membership. The question on whether to stage a NATO membership referendum together with one about the EU is a decision for the Slovenian authorities to make, he added. Slovenia is to take part in two rounds of accession talks in January of next year. These will also touch on the question of money. Robertson said it was clear that the new countries would have to invest more in defence. As he added, they were part of a previous system that is no longer suitable for the future.

Slovenia currently invests less than two percent of GDP for defence and will likely have to invest more if it wishes to be a strong member of the alliance, Lord Robertson told the network. Once Slovenia signs the accession protocol in the spring of next year, it will gain the status of observer. Having signed the protocol, the candidates will truly become a part of the debate, they will be able to express their view even though they will not yet be able to vote, Robertson added.

## Invitation to NATO Just First Step, More Hard Work to Follow, Lipic Says

*Brussels, (STA)* - By fulfilling realistic goals and establishing itself as a credible partner, Slovenian Armed Forces contributed to Slovenia's invitation to join NATO, were the words of Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Brigadier Ladislav Lipic after the regular autumn session of Euro-Atlantic Partnership Military Council (EAPMC). However, the invitation is only the first step on the way to the Alliance and more hard work awaits the Slovenian armed forces, Lipic stressed in Brussels on Tuesday. The Slovenian armed forces have to establish themselves as a credible partner, capable of defending its country and co-operate in international operations, Lipic pointed out. He stressed two specific tasks which the Slovenian armed forces have to fulfil over the following years, namely establishment of professional armed forces and the final formation of rapid reaction forces.

Professionalization of the Slovenian armed forces, which has to be carried out by 2008, is running according to plans, the brigadier said. The permanent line-up of the armed forces is increasing. This year the scheduled number of the employees has already been reached, especially among the soldiers, while the number of those in military service is gradually decreasing, Lipic explained. The compulsory military service will be terminated in 2004, he pointed out.

Rapid reaction forces will be established in full by 2008, while their core will consist of battalion combat group with full combat and logistics support. The group will number 700 to 1,000 people, according to Lipic. These forces will represent Slovenia's contribution to NATO as well as to the EU in its project of setting up joint defence and rapid reaction forces for regional crisis, the brigadier said. The 10th motorised company of the 1st brigade is going on its first mission at the beginning of 2003. It will take part in the NATO peacekeeping mission SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Together with Polish and Portuguese units, the 85 Slovenian soldiers will serve under U.S. command in sector North. Some Slovenians will also serve as high-ranking officers.

The next session of EAPMC will take place on 13 and 14 May 2003, following the conclusion of the accession talks between Slovenia and NATO and after the signing of the accession protocols, planned for March 2003. At that time, Slovenia could participate as an observer in the session of the NATO military council as well.