

PROTOCOL OF THE 7TH SESSION OF THE HUNGARIAN-SLOVAKIAN ETHNIC MINORITY JOINT COMMITTEE

Budapest, September 18, 2007

The Hungarian-Slovakian Ethnic Minority Joint Committee held its 7th session in Budapest on September 18, 2007, under the leadership of Deputy State Secretary Ferenc Gemesi and Ambassador Miroslav Mojzita. The list of participants in the session is attached to the protocol.

I.

The Parties concluded that:

- the Government of the Republic of Hungary in government decision No. 2085/2007. (V. 23.) approved the recommendations included in the protocol of the 6th session of the Joint Committee and assigned the execution of tasks resulting from it to the responsible ministers.
- the Government of the Republic of Slovakia with its decision No.1059 of December 13, 2006, acknowledged the protocol of the 6th session of the Joint Committee and assigned the execution of tasks resulting from it to the responsible ministers.

The Parties agreed that the Joint Committee, by its activities in accordance with the treaty on good-neighborly relations and friendly cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Slovakia, further bilateral agreements and international documents, effectively helps the situation of the Hungarian minority living in the Republic of Slovakia and the Slovakian minority living in the Republic of Hungary. They acknowledged that the two countries' European Union membership ensures favorable possibilities from the standpoint of strengthening cooperation, and that the Joint Committee is an effective instrument for the resolution, in the spirit of European good-neighborly cooperation, of incidental open questions in its sphere of authority.

The Parties highly appreciated the results of the bilateral meeting of the heads of Governments of the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Slovakia held in the recent past in Bratislava. They expressed their conviction that the meeting has a positive effect on the further development of bilateral relations, and that the provisions of the accepted package contribute to the deepening of relations between the two nations, and serve the improvement of mutual understanding and also the improvement of the situation of minorities.

As members of the European Union, they mutually emphasized the significance of the further development of transborder and regional cooperation. In connection with this, the Parties established that developmental cooperation can also be used for the benefit of national minorities.

The Parties agreed that in the following years it is more expedient and necessary than in previous years to rely on the development policy possibilities concerning national minorities and they urge the ever broader utilization of the national, transborder, transnational and interregional European Union program resources that facilitate the realization of these possibilities.

The Hungarian Party gave a briefing about the renewed principles of the Hungarian Government's nationality policy and the organizational changes that happened in the system of support for Hungarians living beyond the borders of the country in the period following the previous session of the Joint Committee.

The Parties welcomed that the representatives of the Slovakian Hungarians and the Hungarian Slovaks are actively taking part in the work of the Joint Committee, because their collaboration greatly facilitates that the committee pays far-reaching attention to their needs and claims.

The Joint Committee, in accordance with article 6 of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of the Republic of Slovakia for mutual support in the field of national minorities, culture and general education signed on December 12, 2003, appreciated the fulfillment of this Agreement and established that the support given on the part of the Republic of Hungary and on the part of the Republic of Slovakia is happening in accordance with the agreement.

II.

The Parties mutually informed each other about the status of the realization of the recommendations accepted in the previous session of the Joint Committee.

They acknowledged that the recommendations have been realized, although most of them are not formulated as one-time tasks, but rather presume continuous and regular fulfillment.

The Parties emphasized that in the near future special attention must be given to the fulfillment of the following recommendations (which are not listed in order of importance):

For both Parties:

Session IV, recommendation no. 2 (modified version):

The Parties, with the collaboration of experts from both countries, will help the continuous publication of the most important Hungarian legislative provisions in Slovakian, and the most important Slovakian legislative provisions in Hungarian, with special attention to the regulations affecting individuals from national minorities.

Session IV, recommendation no. 4:

The Parties shall create an ad hoc committee to carry out a comparative study regarding support for the Hungarian minority living in the Republic of Slovakia and the Slovakian minority living in the Republic of Hungary in the field of education and general education.

Session IV, recommendation no. 8:

The Parties shall examine the financing possibilities in connection with the plan to expand the Slovakian Culture House in Bekescsaba.

Session IV, recommendation no. 10:

The Parties shall create the conditions for the completion and publication of alternative textbooks for teaching history.

Session V, recommendation no. 5:

The Parties shall examine of financial conditions in the interest of preserving the Slovakian schools with small numbers of students in Hungary, and in the interest of Hungarian schools with small numbers of students in Slovakia.

Session V, recommendation no. 10 (modified version):

The Slovakian Party shall ensure the necessary support for the operation of professional organizations that assist the professional, methodological and pedagogical work of Hungarian-language public education in Slovakia: the Hungarian Pedagogues Association of Slovakia and the Comenius Pedagogical Institute. The Hungarian Party shall examine the possibility for regular support the Hungarian Slovaks' Research Institute within the budgetary framework of the National Slovakian Self-Government.

New recommendations:

1. The Parties shall mutually examine the possibility of supporting the realization of the Madach exhibition in Alsosztregov. Beside this, in the spirit of the Hungarian-Slovakian European Territorial Operative Program 2007-2013, they recommend the development of cultural tourism built on the Hungarian and Slovakian Madach and Mikszath Memorial Sites and the Slovakian peasant-house network, the organization of literary excursions, the organization of annual-biannual Mikszath and Madach literary days and a series of related cultural events with mutual support, as well as intensified publicity in both countries for the Madach Day in Balassagyarmat.
2. The Parties recommend the intensification of interregional contacts at different levels – between regions, subregions and settlements – and of joint initiatives and projects, which for their realization must more effectively than before incorporate EU resources in the area of economic development, infrastructure and human-resource development. The Parties request the Joint Committee for Self-Governments and Public Administration Bodies Dealing with Transborder Cooperation to take all of this into consideration in the course of its future work.
3. The Parties shall make a declaration by December 31, 2007, about the possibility of determining the resources that will serve to support the National Slovakian Self-Government scholarship system.
4. The Parties shall take steps toward the establishment of a Slovakian Hungarian general education institute, which both countries will jointly maintain. They recommend that the new institute be built upon the personnel and material resources of the Csemadok General Culture Institute (Dunajska Streda).
5. The Joint Committee urges that a meeting between competent experts from both countries review what effect the planned switch to digital television will have on programming service as a whole, and also agree on this with representatives of the minorities.

For the Slovakian Party:**Session III, recommendation no. 1.2 (modified version):**

Within the settlement of relations between the state and the churches, the Slovakian Party shall examine the fulfillment of law no. 161/2005 regarding the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia.

Session IV, recommendation no. 14 (modified version):

Within the preparation of the law regarding the financing of culture, the Slovakian Party shall regulate the financing of the development and dissemination of national minority cultures.

Session IV, recommendation no. 17:

The Slovakian Party shall reconsider the renewed participation of graduating Slovakian high school students in Hungary in the one-year expense-free preparatory courses for language and professional

university entrance exams.

Session IV, recommendation no. 7:

The Slovakian Party shall ensure the satellite broadcasting of the public Slovakian Television – or a special daily broadcast produced from its programs especially for the purpose – and free access for Slovaks beyond its borders, especially Slovaks living in Hungary.

Session V, recommendation no. 9:

The Slovakian Party shall continue to ensure the necessary material conditions for the operation and development of Selye Janos University in Revkomarom.

Session V, recommendation no 11:

The Slovakian Party shall examine the possibility of providing sufficient material conditions to ensure the complete and effective operation of the Hungarian cultural institutions under the supervision of county governments. In the case of the Jokai Theater in Revkomarom and the Thalia Theater in Kosice, it shall provide support for their activities beyond the borders of the counties where they are headquartered.

New recommendations:

6. The Slovakian Party shall take steps to improve the financial and technical conditions of Patria Radio.

For the Hungarian Party:

Session I, recommendation no. 4:

The Hungarian Party shall solve with legal regulations the parliamentary representation of the Slovakian national minority in Hungary.

Session III, recommendation no. 2.5 (modified version):

The Hungarian Party, according to an earlier recommendation, shall ensure the placement of the Jan Kollar memorial plaque in a worthy place in Budapest.

Session IV, recommendation no. 21 (modified version):

The Hungarian Party shall find resources for financing of the expansion and renovation of the Slovakian Elementary School, High School and Dormitory building in Bekescsaba.

Session IV, recommendation no. 22 (modified version):

It shall examine the possibility of publishing Slovakian minority journals and find a solution for ensuring reliable regular support for the weekly *Ludove Noviny*.

Session V, recommendation no. 12:

The Hungarian Party shall expand Slovakian language teaching and the framework of content taught in Slovakian, including general-knowledge subjects.

Session V, recommendation no. 14:

The Hungarian Party shall urge at the National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT) the broadcasting of the Slovakian language minority transmission at a more favorable time and its repetition on Hungarian public television.

Session V, recommendation no. 15:

The Hungarian Party shall ensure the necessary conditions for the Slovakian-language minority

broadcast on Hungarian public radio and its reception on the entire territory of the country, with particular attention to areas inhabited by the Slovakian minority.

New recommendations:

7. The Hungarian Party, with instruments determined in the budget law, shall henceforth fully ensure the operating expenses of the public education institutions entrusted to the maintenance of the National Slovakian Self-Government (Bekescsaba, Satoraljaujhely, Szarvas). The Joint Committee calls the attention of the concerned Hungarian bodies to take into consideration the financing needs of the listed institutions in the course of framing regulations.

8. It shall support, according to the application by the maintaining body, the second phase of construction of the elementary school in Lucfalva, which currently has 4 classrooms, so that Slovakian-language education in the Salgotarjan area remains sustainable.

9. The Hungarian Party – if possible, not through an application process – shall with annual regularity ensure the so-called publication and event-organization support for the Hungarian Slovaks' Research Institute.

10. It shall ensure material support, according to the needs of publishers, for the publication of domestic Slovakian cultural and scientific journals, at least at such a level that will ensure their subsistence.

III.

Recommendations from earlier sessions of the Joint Committee, the fulfillment of which the Parties continue to consider as their tasks

For Both Parties:

Session IV, recommendation no. 5:

They shall survey the financial support possibilities for the establishment and operation of the network of Hungarian Slovakian and Slovakian Hungarian regional cultural centers.

Session IV, recommendation no. 6:

Through joint efforts they shall facilitate the possibility for Slovaks living in the Republic of Hungary and Hungarians living in the Republic of Slovakia to practice mother-tongue religious ceremonies, including the training and preparation of clerics.

Session IV, recommendation no. 7:

They shall prepare a joint plan for the complete renovation and joint use of the Castle in Bors, with joint material efforts. They shall take steps toward incorporating the EU development programs into the joint project. On the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Rakoczi War of Independence — between 2003 and 2011 — the renovation of the Rackozi birth-house should proceed.

Session IV, recommendation no. 11 (modified version):

The Parties shall make efforts toward the development of the holdings of the Hungarian Slovakian and Slovakian Hungarian libraries, with special attention to the augmentation of holdings and development of information technology.

The Hungarian and Slovakian Parties shall examine the possibility of supporting public libraries, primarily in the border regions, visited by Slovakian Hungarian and Hungarian Slovakian readers, creating mobile libraries, and continually supplying them with Hungarian-language and Slovakian-language documents.

Session IV, recommendation no. 13

They shall examine new forms of cooperation between hosting institutions in the competitive selection of Slovakian teachers studying in Hungary and Hungarian teachers studying in Slovakia.

Session IV, recommendation no. 16 (modified version):

The Parties shall support activities of the Slovakian Hungarian Cultural Museum in the Republic of Slovakia directed towards the exploration of Slovakian Hungarian memorial sites, and take steps toward the reconstruction of the Mikszath Memorial House in Sklabina and Madach Memorial House in Alsosztregova, work to be completed through joint efforts.

Session V, recommendation no. 1:

The Joint Committee recommends that the Parties mutually inform each other about recommendations regarding the preparation and acceptance of European Union norms in minority politics, and cooperate as far as possible.

Session V, recommendation no. 2:

The Parties shall examine the support given to the civil organizations working to ensure the development of linguistic and cultural identity of the Hungarian Slovakian and Slovakian Hungarian minorities, as well as the possibility of increasing this support.

Session V, recommendation no. 4:

The Joint Committee recommends that the Parties examine the possibility of establishing the Training-Education and Continuing Education Center of the National Slovakian Self-Government, on the territory of the Republic of Slovakia, and support its operation.

Session V, recommendation no. 6:

The Joint Committee shall support signature of the Hungarian-Slovakian agreement under preparation regarding the care of war graves.

For the Slovakian Party:

Session III, recommendation no. 2.4:

It shall support the continuous further education of Hungarian Slovakian general education specialists in the Republic of Slovakia, as well as the sending of Slovakian general education specialists to the Slovakian regional centers in Hungary.

Session V, recommendation no. 8:

The Slovakian Party shall support the cooperation of the National Slovakian Self-Government's cultural, scientific and public education institutions with the appropriate Slovakian state institutions (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak National Museum, State Archives, Slovak Film Institute, National General Education Center, Theater Institute of the Culture Ministry, Methodological Institute of the Education Ministry, etc.).

For the Hungarian Party:

Session IV, recommendation no. 19:

It shall guarantee sufficient financial, material and professional conditions for more effective Slovakian schools in Hungary.

Session IV, recommendation no. 25:

It shall support the National Slovakian Self-Government's efforts toward the establishment of the Slovakian evangelical missionary center (the so-called Luther House).

Session IV, recommendation no. 26 (modified version):

It shall examine, on the basis of a recommendation by the Budapest Slovakian Self-Government, the possibility of preparing a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a Slovakian Cultural Center in the so-called Bobula Palace in Budapest or another suitable building.

Session V, recommendation no. 13:

The Hungarian Party shall guarantee the necessary financial conditions for the nationality kindergartens, nationality education and dormitories, in such a way that the degree of state support does not decrease.

Session V, recommendation no. 16:

The Hungarian Party shall ensure, within the framework of the Bologna Process, enhanced material support for the operation of the higher education institutions' Slovakian-nationality basic and master-level training. In the interest of the further fulfillment of the training of Slovakian intellectuals in Hungary, it shall examine the possibility of whether the acquisition of national-minority culture related secondary and further professional qualification can be guaranteed within the framework of state-financed education.

IV.

Prepared in Budapest on September 18, 2006, in the Hungarian and Slovakian languages, in 2 copies each. Both versions are equally valid.

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