CONTENTS

Foreword by Mr Karel DE GUCHT,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs 2

1. Resources 4
   1. Internal organisation of the FPS 4
   2. Personnel 9
   3. Buildings 11
   4. Budget and financial resources 12

2. Serving the public 13
   1. Protocol 13
   2. Consular affairs 17
   3. Crisis management 19
   4. Peacebuilding focusing on human security 21
   5. Incorporation of EU legislation in Belgian national law and the SOLVIT Centre 22

3. Policy 24
   1. Belgium in a bilateral context 24
   2. Belgium and the European Union 35
   3. Belgium in a multilateral context 41
   4. Belgium and development cooperation 47

4. Annexes 52
   • Organisational chart of the FPS 52
   • Map of worldwide FPS Representations (Belgium and abroad), November 2008 54
   • Acknowledgements 56
2008 was an eventful year. Despite the financial crisis and a domestic political situation that may have come across as confusing to the outside world, our FPS has assured continuity and given shape to Belgium’s foreign policy. After all the world does not stand still, and the challenges remain enormous, so it is vital to take a firm stand in the context of an active foreign policy aimed at safeguarding our interests and contributing to a better world. It is in a secure, free, stable environment where the constitutional state offers sufficient guarantees that our interests are best defended. It is this, therefore, that we continue to strive for.

Belgian membership of the UN Security Council
On 31 December 2008 Belgium's membership of the UN Security Council came to an end. Our mandate in this UN body gave us a unique opportunity to embed our foreign policy in a multilateral framework. We made full use of the levers to promote peace, stability, development and better administration in the world, and were able to notch up successes on various issues: the strengthening of MONUC and the fight against illegal exploitation of raw materials in conflict areas, to cite but two examples. We have also reflected on how we can further build on the experience we have gained in the UN Security Council and what we can do to continue assuming our international responsibilities after our mandate in the Council has expired.

Presidency of the European Union in 2010
In 2008 a start was also made on the preparatory work for the presidency of the Council of the European Union, which Belgium will hold in the second half of 2010. To this end our country will work in close cooperation with Spain and Hungary, the countries holding the presidency in the first half of 2010 and the first half of 2011, respectively. Together with these countries, Belgium is to work out a joint 18-month programme, which the three countries are due to present at the EU’s Council of Ministers in November 2009. This will be done in consultation with all ministers concerned and the Community and Regional governments. In the framework of the preparatory work, special attention will be paid to consultation with the citizens and civil society.

Economic diplomacy
Belgium is the most globalised country in the world. According to the KOF index, which is calculated by the Swiss ETHZ (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich), our country has been top of the rankings since 2004. That also means that if we are to preserve our wealth, we will have to make extra efforts to be present on foreign markets, since international competition is keener than ever. Against this background, Belgium's economic interests clearly have to be accorded a central position in our foreign policy from now on. The diplomatic contact days, which are held every year for all heads of mission, therefore had economic diplomacy as their main
theme. On this occasion thought was given to how we can do more for our companies abroad, with respect for the existing breakdown of competencies concerning promotion of foreign trade and the attracting of foreign investment. The decision was also taken to set up a business council, which is now fully operational. The purpose of this consultative body is to involve the various professional federations and chambers of commerce, but also the Regions, more effectively in our policy.

**Final offensive against cluster munitions**
On 3 December 2008 an international agreement on the prohibition of cluster munitions was signed in Oslo. This disarmament agreement, the first in many years, constitutes the crowning achievement of Belgian diplomacy, which had worked indefatigably for this process from the outset. Belgium had led the way back in 2006, when it became the first country to approve a national law curbing cluster munitions. Since then it has been our aim to rally as many countries as possible around a common project that directly helps protect the civilian population in conflict zones and makes a major contribution to international humanitarian law.

**Democratic Republic of Congo**
2008 was an eventful year as regards our relations with the DRC. Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy and his Congolese counterpart Adolphe Muzito have now signed a joint declaration for the normalisation of relations between the two countries. They agreed to start up and maintain a permanent, honest, open and constructive dialogue, with respect for the democratic and legitimate institutions of the two countries. They also undertook to ensure that relations between the two countries would be managed according to the principles of sovereign equality of the states and reciprocity. Finally, they agreed to give a new boost to cooperation between their countries.

**A difficult year from a budgetary point of view**
The budgetary restrictions of the past year have had an impact on our credits and our personnel policy. Our FPS, along with others, will have to make do with fewer resources than hoped for in 2009. These developments create challenges for our FPS in the policy field, but also in terms of organisation. In the future our country also wants to continue to commit itself intensively to a more just and prosperous world. We will set about the tasks awaiting us with undiminished enthusiasm.

Karel DE GUCHT
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
1. Internal organisation of the FPS

**Action plan for public diplomacy**

Public diplomacy is an instrument in our diplomatic work that aims to strengthen Belgium’s reputation and gain support for our policy views and values amongst public opinion in other countries. Public diplomacy is therefore aimed at foreign media, think tanks, academic circles, NGOs and civil society in general. After all, they form an important link in the creation of an image of our country, since their perception of Belgium indisputably impacts on the view foreign decision-makers, businessmen, potential investors and the general public have of our country. The more positive the image of our country, the greater readiness there will be to work together on the fulfilment of our policy views.

Public diplomacy is inevitably partly a defensive measure. In this context, our action consists of reacting appropriately, and with accurate and truthful arguments, to any critical questions, incorrect reporting or other over-simplified comments about our country abroad.

Public diplomacy should also, and in particular, work in a proactive manner. This involves our missions actively showcasing Belgium’s strong points in their district.

2008 saw the further development of the activities of the Public Diplomacy Unit, which was set up within P&C at the beginning of 2007. This unit offers diplomatic missions a range of tools which they can use to carry out public diplomacy in their district.

**Action Plan 2008**

In the Public Diplomacy Action Plan, specific activities were developed for Belgian public diplomacy.

**Development of Intranet site**

The first area on which attention was focused was the further development of the Public Diplomacy Intranet site, on which information on a wide range of subjects is made available to the diplomatic missions. This Intranet site was supplemented in 2008 with a whole host of memoranda in which the main policy lines are explained per subject. A new development is the ready-to-use PowerPoint presentations that diplomats can use for their speeches. The site also serves as a forum where the diplomatic missions can exchange initiatives and experience in the field of public diplomacy with each other.

**Standard memorandum for new heads of mission**

Another new feature was the standard memorandum on public diplomacy that now forms part of the file given to heads of mission heading off on a new posting. The memorandum makes it clear what kind of activities and measures are expected of a head of mission, and he or she is also encouraged to make proposals for public diplomacy activities.

**Public diplomacy in the mission statement**

As of 2008, heads of mission are also urged to ensure that activities in the field of public diplomacy are also included in their mission statement and annual plans.
Quarterly economic overview
As of the beginning of 2008, the Public Diplomacy Unit sends all missions a quarterly overview of the main positive developments in Belgium in the economic field. The missions are urged to distribute this information locally.

Specific themes
An active communication strategy was set in train around specific themes. The missions abroad were requested to develop initiatives to showcase specific aspects of our country to relevant target groups (journalists, company managers, opinion makers, commentators, etc.). The activities organised included informal invitations to the official residence for representatives of the target groups, radio and television broadcasts, interviews, articles, a supplement on Belgium in the press, and speeches in business clubs, chambers of commerce, universities, etc.

Brochure on Belgium
A new brochure on Belgium was produced, entitled "Belgium at a glance". Illustrated with attractive photos and maps, the brochure covers various aspects of our country.

Electronic newsletter
It was decided that the Public Diplomacy Unit would produce an electronic newsletter on Belgium at regular intervals, for the benefit of all missions and intended for as wide a dissemination as possible among the general public. The missions themselves can supplement this with information relevant for their area.

Diplomatic Days 2008
During the diplomatic contact days two full days at the beginning of June 2008 were given over to an exchange of ideas by all heads of mission on objectives and further development in the field of economic diplomacy. Both the regional Trade Ministers and their senior civil servants were in attendance and took part in the debates, which were fuelled by external specialists, representatives of various business federations, chambers of commerce and employers. Ten workshops dealt with such general subjects as the challenges of globalisation facing Belgium, the experience of other diplomatic corps in matters of economic diplomacy, the Belgian government’s policy options relating to the international challenges facing the Belgian economy, and Belgium’s image. Specific issues were also tackled, such as the operational aspects of cooperation between the federal and regional representatives at diplomatic missions, a joint approach to attracting investments, the role and policy of the BRICs and N11 countries, the point of view of the multilateral context, the necessary cooperation in reporting to the Belgian and regional authorities and society, the importance and methodology of networks, opportunities offered by foreign investment funds and competitiveness in the global knowledge society. Professor Sleuwen gave an overview of the economic reality, whilst Mr Jean-François Richard stressed the need for innovation in our society and the role that diplomacy can play in that process. Commission President José Manuel Durao Barroso outlined the challenges inherent to the European dimension of Belgian diplomacy.
Greater security for Central Administration and missions

In the course of 2008 external partners carried out two two-week inspections on the visible wearing of badges and the observance of safety rules in general. This inspection was repeated at various intervals at unannounced times. After all, this is an essential requirement in the field of security. From the first quarter of 2008 a number of departments indirectly connected with security (dispatching, garage, surveillance of the Egmont Palace, night watchman) were added to the Security Department. The aim of this restructuring was mainly to achieve better coordination and greater efficiency in the field of security.

Enhanced security in garages
The regulations for garages (staff garages and visitors’ garages) were adapted to guarantee still greater security. From now on users must have their vehicles registered and display a garage access sticker on them. Furthermore, the garages can only be accessed from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., on weekdays only. Checks on observance of the rules were stepped up. Dispatching was “computerised”: reports intended for the departments concerned (security departments as well as ICT and maintenance services) were “standardised”, which makes their monitoring more efficient. Between January and October 2008 456 applications were sent to the National Security Authority (ANS/NVO) for security clearance for members of staff working at Central Administration and at missions.

Documents follow the “electronic way”
The beginning of October saw the start of the gradual shift to the “electronic way”. This involves forms being sent electronically to the parties concerned and then, still electronically, to the ANS/NVO via the security officer.

Tighter security at missions
As regards the protection of our diplomatic and consular missions, this year special attention was given to improved security at our missions in Kabul, Islamabad, Kigali and Bujumbura. Security missions comprising people with a good knowledge of the local situation and external security specialists visited Islamabad, Kigali and Bujumbura. It was also arranged for armoured vehicles to be quickly allocated to missions exposed to certain risks.

Surveillance cameras
As a preventive measure but also to ensure follow-up, surveillance cameras were installed at the Egmont Palace and in the buildings at Rue de Namur 59.

The security department worked out far-reaching measures for improved access to the Central Administration buildings. They were presented to the Executive Committee for approval.

Marked increase in number of security clearance investigations
In 2008 the secretariat of the National Security Authority noted a 30% increase in the number of investigations for security clearance vis-à-vis the same period in 2007. In 2008, the ANS/NVO dealt with 4,014 security clearance investigations. Security clearances granted totalled 4,857. The secretariat also processed some four thousand applications for a security certificate and some two hundred applications for a security assessment in 2008.

Swifter issue of security clearances
As of 7 July 2008 an online application simplifies and speeds up the administrative processing of security clearance dossiers. The switchover is occurring in various phases, and by the spring of 2009 all users should have access to this system.
EU cooperation
The National Security Authority played a decisive role in the negotiations that took place in 2008 between the 27 EU Member States to arrive at a multilateral security agreement on the exchange and protection of secret information. Furthermore, Belgium received proposals for bilateral security agreements from Bulgaria, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Poland and Spain.

Revamping of the Foreign Affairs websites
2008 was a year of transition for the websites of the FPS Foreign Affairs. The FPS's website (www.diplomatie.be) was created in 2003 and is currently being modernised, the idea being to use the FPS Foreign Affairs’ house style on all websites and, on a technical level, to work with the same professional technology, both in Belgium and in our missions abroad. The incorporation of the website of the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (www.dgdc.be) in the FPS's website constitutes an extra challenge in this process.

In the summer of 2008 the web team (P&C3.3), together with consultant Namahn, started making enquiries among the main stakeholders at Central Administration and at missions. It thus gained a good idea of what could be changed in the websites from a technical point of view and in terms of content, in order to meet users’ and visitors’ needs more effectively.

From September to November 2008 eight brainstorming sessions were held on the subject of website content, which were attended by all directorates general that have content on the websites. From all the information collected here it was possible to design a new browsing structure that can count on considerable support. Models were made of all revamped web pages, which will be presented to the Executive Committee and the policy units at the beginning of 2009.

In the second phase of the project these models will be fitted out with graphics, whereupon the ICT web team and Fedict will develop the actual websites. In so doing they will use the same technology as was purchased and developed for the federal portal site, www.belgium.be. The sharing of know-how with other FPS which will be using the same content management system, can only contribute to an efficient operation of the federal administration.

Extension of information services
The existing websites of our consulates and embassies were also further developed in 2008. New mission sites came on line (e.g. Los Angeles), and existing mission sites considerably extended the range of information offered or offered this for the first time in the local language as well, which is a major help to the citizens of the host country.

The Central Administration’s website also made further advances. For example, the Protocol and Travel Advice headings have turned into a source of information much appreciated by all interested parties. In 2008 www.diplomatie.be attracted an average of 9,476 visitors a day, a rise of some 11% compared with 2007. As in previous years, it was first and foremost Belgians who visited the website (in excess of 45%), followed by visitors from countries with a large Belgian expatriate community such as the Netherlands, France or the United States, and countries with a large emigrant population in Belgium, such as Morocco and Turkey. The most popular sections are still Visas, Addresses, Travel Advice for Belgians and Travel Documents for Belgians. On the mission sites, it is all kinds of consular information, and here, too, visa information in particular, that attracts most visits.
First Companies Open Day a success despite the rain

With 2,000 to 2,500 visitors attending, the Companies Open Day 2008, which our FPS organised for the first time on Sunday 5 October 2008, was a splendid success despite the rain. The reception and the numerous visits and tours met with great approval thanks to the professional approach of all the volunteers. The many congratulatory remarks that came our way from the public were heart-warming and clearly showed that the event had been a success. Indeed, it is certainly worth repeating, although next time a ray or two of sunshine would be most welcome.
Modernisation continues

In 2008 our FPS continued with the modernisation of its personnel policy, more particularly in the framework of the initiatives started in this respect in the federal administration.

Certified training courses
Skills development by means of certified training courses is one of the essential components of this modernisation. The certified training courses for level-A staff were continued and almost all civil servants belonging to this group took part in them. For level-B and level-C staff, a series of certified training courses replaced the old skills promotion measures. Furthermore, the first certified training courses were organised for level-D civil servants.

Job map
After publication of the federal map at the end of 2007, our FPS was able to make a start on drafting the job organisational chart per directorate-general and policy support directorate. Together with application of the development circles, these organisational charts make it possible to define and adjust the job descriptions of missing jobs, and thereby take account of the new duties for which the FPS is assuming responsibility or certain slants that the jobs should be given.

Development in personnel
The budgetary restrictions this year led to a reduction in the budget for personnel matters. This resulted in no staff plan being drawn up (for home-service staff), but attempts were made to achieve the objectives of the 2007 plan as successfully as possible, taking into account the way staffing requirements evolved. In 2008 the FPS also organised recruitment exams for the FPS in cooperation with SELOR. In this way a recruitment reserve was established of attaché-analysts for international relations and development cooperation and an exam is also being prepared for attachés specialised in consular matters. For the future, exams are being planned for communication specialists in the field of international relations, among others, and consideration is being given to exams for other levels.

As regards foreign-service careers, the FPS recruited 53 personnel in 2008. Three diplomats and seven attachés were taken on in February, with a further 43 diplomats recruited in November.

Number of staff employed

The tables on the following page present the numbers of staff employed both at the Central Administration and at the diplomatic missions, together with the number and nature of missions, as at 1 November 2008. The diplomatic missions are indicated on a world map at the back of this annual report.
FPS PERSONNEL AT CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION AND ABROAD (1/11/2008)

Total number of established officials and officials under contract at Central Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Established internal officials</th>
<th>688</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officials under contract</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomats</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chancellors</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachés for Development Cooperation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total at Central Administration</td>
<td>1,486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of established officials and officials under contract in missions and at Permanent Representations abroad and Permanent Representations in Brussels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diplomats</th>
<th>246</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chancellors</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachés for Development Cooperation</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate officials under contract</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officials under contract employed on site</td>
<td>1,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in missions and Permanent Representations abroad and in Brussels</td>
<td>1,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total (Central Administration, missions and Permanent Representations)</td>
<td>3,436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number and category of embassies and consulates (1/11/2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missions</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embassies</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulates General</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulates</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Representations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation Offices*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This refers only to cooperation offices in places where there is no Belgian diplomatic mission: Bamako, Cotonou, Maputo, Niamey, Quito and La Paz. Twenty-one cooperation offices are in the grounds of an embassy, consulate general or Permanent Representation.

Two consulates general were closed in 2008, in Lubumbashi and Bukavu. Two missions were opened: the consulates general in Saint Petersburg and Milan (the latter had been an honorary consulate). In Sydney, too, a start was made on turning the existing honorary consulate into a career consulate.
Buildings abroad

The FPS again pursued a dynamic real estate policy in 2008, aimed at reacting appropriately to the needs of our foreign policy and developments on the international property markets.

This was the last year of implementation of the Master Plan 2005-2008 for buildings abroad. The plan was adjusted during the course of the year with the competent budgetary authorities. A start will be made on implementation of the second Master Plan 2009-2012 in 2009.

No property sold

No buildings were sold in 2008. This can be put down to the fact that a great many buildings had already been sold in recent years, in particular the transaction in Tokyo, where the sale of two thirds of our site enabled us to finance the building of a new embassy (on the land we still owned) and still leave us with a very considerable surplus. Work is currently well under way on the site.

Meanwhile comprehensive renovation work has continued on buildings in Bujumbura, Budapest, Washington and Beijing, whilst refurbishment has started or is about to in Algiers, Kigali, Paris and Saint Petersburg.

More minor work has been carried out at numerous missions, involving renovations and improvements in security, whilst interior conversion and refitting work was carried out in various official residences and chancelleries. The financing of all this work came from the ordinary budget.

The department responsible for buildings abroad works in close cooperation with the Public Procurement Unit within the Personnel and Organisation policy support directorate.

Buildings in Brussels

The buildings in Brussels are rented. Egmont 1, the main building, is located at Rue des Petits Carmes 15. Egmont 2 is located at number 24. The FPS also rents the office buildings at Rue de Namur 48 and 59.

The FPS also runs the Egmont Palace and the Castle of Val Duchesse in partnership with the Buildings Agency (Régie des Batiments/Regie der Gebouwen).
### 4. Budget and financial resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Commitment credits in thousands of euros</th>
<th>Organisation credits in thousands of euros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strategic bodies of the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>3,208</td>
<td>3,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Strategic bodies of the Minister for Development Cooperation</td>
<td>2,685</td>
<td>2,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Strategic bodies of the State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Strategic bodies of the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Management bodies</td>
<td>68,100</td>
<td>68,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Management and supervision</td>
<td>68,100</td>
<td>68,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>General services</td>
<td>16,078</td>
<td>16,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Protocol</td>
<td>2,832</td>
<td>2,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Conferences, seminars and other events</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Humanitarian aid</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>1,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Representation abroad</td>
<td>3,548</td>
<td>3,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Communication, information and documentation</td>
<td>1,686</td>
<td>1,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>International cooperation</td>
<td>5,470</td>
<td>5,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Embassies, consulates and cooperation missions</td>
<td>187,111</td>
<td>216,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subsistence programme</td>
<td>173,746</td>
<td>173,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Buildings fund</td>
<td>13,365</td>
<td>43,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Directorate-General for Legal Affairs</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subsistence programme</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Directorate-General for Bilateral Affairs</td>
<td>7,021</td>
<td>7,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subsistence programme</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bilateral relations</td>
<td>4,237</td>
<td>4,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Economic expansion</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>2,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Directorate-General for Consular Affairs</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subsistence programme</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>International institutions</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Humanitarian aid</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Directorate-General for Multilateral Affairs and Globalisation</td>
<td>155,684</td>
<td>152,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Multilateral relations</td>
<td>100,072</td>
<td>100,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Science policy</td>
<td>3,808</td>
<td>3,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Humanitarian aid</td>
<td>51,299</td>
<td>48,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Directorate-General for Development Cooperation</td>
<td>1,827,170</td>
<td>1,109,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subsistence programme</td>
<td>2,396</td>
<td>2,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Governmental cooperation</td>
<td>319,874</td>
<td>281,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Non-governmental cooperation</td>
<td>471,443</td>
<td>197,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Multilateral cooperation</td>
<td>854,233</td>
<td>477,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Special missions</td>
<td>179,224</td>
<td>149,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Directorate-General for European Affairs and Coordination</td>
<td>3,374</td>
<td>3,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>European relations</td>
<td>3,374</td>
<td>3,374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 2,272,412 1,581,092
SERVING THE PUBLIC

1. Protocol

Services to 284 diplomatic missions
The department responsible for the management and application of preferential rights and immunities of the diplomatic missions in Brussels has continued with the modernisation of operations and optimisation of services over the past year.

More information on the website
The Protocol Directorate’s website, which was launched in 2005, already provided the available diplomatic list. More information was added to it in 2008 concerning rules of protocol and administrative rules, mainly in the form of circulars with an administrative-cum-practical content.

Monitoring of observance of traffic rules
Last year the service also paid special attention to observance of the traffic regulations and mediation in disputes involving diplomats and their members of staff. The employment conditions of diplomats’ domestic staff were also monitored.

Number of missions increases again
The diplomatic community in Belgium continues to grow both in terms of number of missions and staff numbers. There are now 284 diplomatic missions. In addition to this, there are also 184 bilateral embassies and 100 other diplomatic missions, namely those accredited to international organisations. A year ago there were 279 diplomatic missions in Brussels.

The 284 missions in Brussels now have a grand total of 9,094 members of staff, including 5,342 diplomats, 2,068 administrative and technical personnel, and 1,684 others. Counting family members, the total comes to 19,293, a slight increase compared with 2007. All of these staff and the members of their families need an identity card, which is issued by the Protocol Department.

Diplomatic corps vehicle registration numbers
Protocol also issues diplomatic corps vehicle registration numbers. In the diplomatic missions, there are now 6,511 diplomatic corps vehicle registration numbers in use, 4,410 for diplomats’ private cars and 2,101 for diplomatic missions’ official vehicles. The figures reveal a slight increase here, too.

People with privileges
In total the Protocol and Security Directorate currently (as of November 2008) manages 63,407 people with privileges (holders and their family members), of whom a third are from diplomatic missions and two thirds are involved in international organisations. In 2007 Protocol issued 24,613 identity cards. By mid November 2008, 19,926 had been issued.

Foreign consulates in Belgium
As of 12 November, 17 honorary consuls and 12 career consuls had been appointed in 2008. A procedure is ongoing which will result in the opening of four honorary consulates and one career
consulate, together with the appointment of 12 honorary consuls and one career consul. Twenty-five identity cards were issued for honorary consuls. The department also issued 24 CC plates for the vehicles of honorary and career consuls. Since the stock of CC plates had been used up, an invitation to tender was organised for the production of 500 new sets of CC plates. There were numerous contacts with the consuls, which proved very useful when it came to keeping dossiers up to date and exchanging information on procedures. All this made it possible in many cases to reduce the time needed for the appointment of consuls. In 2008 the data in the database concerning the consulates and the address list were updated. The addresses of consulates are regularly updated and published on the website.

More international organisations

Belgium is host to around ninety international organisations, most of which have their head offices in Brussels. In 2008 Belgium signed seven new headquarters agreements with international organisations which came to establish their head office in Belgium. The Protocol Directorate issued 12,411 special identity cards to the officers of international institutions in 2008 (as of 12 November). It also issued ten driving licences and around a hundred diplomatic corps vehicle registration numbers. Meanwhile the department is finalising the updating of the database on international organisations. There is a whole host of other duties with which the Protocol department concerns itself. One of these is the forwarding of requests for documents to the various competent authorities, such as judiciary letters or affidavits and the handling of petitions relating to legal disputes.

In 2008 the department handled 250 judiciary letters relating to traffic offences. On top of this there were in excess of a hundred writs of summons resulting from legal disputes (non-payment, alimony not paid, etc.).

Visits and security of diplomatic missions

Official and state visits

Three official and state visits were organised in 2008:
- state visit of the president of Hungary
- official visit of His Serene Highness, the Prince of Monaco
- official visit of the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam

Working visits

2008 saw around a hundred working visits of foreign heads of state, heads of government or Foreign Affairs Ministers, in which the P2 department played an active role. This department, in close cooperation with the Crisis Centre of the FPS Home Affairs, also organises the visits that take place in the framework of the European Councils in Brussels. In 2008 there were four Council meetings and one extraordinary meeting.

Security of diplomatic missions, badges and access cards

In 2008 the new agreement was signed between BAC (Brussels Airport Company NV) and our FPS. This agreement concerns the service provided to persons with VIP status and the terms of access to Brussels Airport. Among other things, it makes provision for use of the VIP lounge and the services provided to VIPs to be financed by our FPS. A consultative committee put together by the two parties will oversee implementation of the agreement and will also discuss and solve any problems that arise.

Assistance to international diplomatic personnel

P2 has acquired an additional area of competence and a new department. This department is taking over some of the responsibilities from the BIPA (Bureau for Information, Prevention and Assistance), which falls under the competence of the CIPS (Interministerial Committee for Headquarters Policy).
A few figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processed applications for</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cards for Brussels Airport Company diplomatic corps car park</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cards for priority access to Brussels Airport</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIP treatment at Brussels Airport</td>
<td>5,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling of applications for temporary badges for Brussels Airport</td>
<td>1,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling of applications for permanent badges for Brussels Airport</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling of security measures for VIPs (as well as handling of applications for VIP treatment at the airports of Melsbroek and Abelag and at the Brussels Midi railway station)</td>
<td>4,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security cases (burglaries, terrorist threats, protests, etc.)</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working visits

VIP lounge

Specifically, the new department concerns itself with the management (assistance, administrative support, etc.) of individual complaints lodged by members of the diplomatic staff of the diplomatic representations in Brussels.

Optimising the running of the Egmont Palace, conference centre and Val Duchesse

The Egmont Palace staff was organised in such a way as to deal with management, accounting, user relations, coordination, production, general control (technology, maintenance and operation) and catering aspects (maitre d’hôtel and catering) more efficiently.

A carefully considered distribution of the work between our own staff and “external” staff makes it possible to take better advantage of the fluctuating volume of activities in the Palace. To enable the new conference room to be brought into use, extra hall personnel (technician, cleaner, etc.) had to be recruited. Once five new members of staff have been taken on under contract (two of these are already working), there should be sufficient man-power available to meet the needs. This will make it possible to make the most of the potential offered by the new conference room in Egmont II.
The Egmont III project and the “turning” of the Palace towards the park (entrance via the Passage de Milan) means that the complex will eventually be able to fulfil its role as a top-level conference centre to optimal effect, since the interventions will enable a rationalised use of the rooms and a new management will ensure optimal employment of the available skills and services. In the meantime work has been ongoing on the conference centre’s website, which should be ready in the first quarter of 2009.

Income allays costs
The SAB/SEGS (the Autonomous Public Service), which was set up in 2007 to make it possible to rent out the Egmont Palace’s conference halls and rooms, had delivered a surplus of EUR 108,994.94 as of 1 January 2008. The income from the Public Service is used to allay the operating and conservation costs. On 15 November 2008 the amount collected by the SAB/SEGS totalled EUR 121,321.20.

New rates
The SAB/SEGS carried out a rate review further to the introduction of a weekend fixed rate, the adjustment of the time slots, the increase in the price for half days, and the billing of work outside normal hours.
An Executive Committee decision during the last quarter led to a modification in the discounts, whereby other FPSs and government bodies were granted a 50% discount and NGOs received a 33% reduction on the normal price.

Nobility and honours
In close cooperation with the office of the Prime Minister and the administrations involved, the Honours Department again prepared a series of specific regulations and equivalences in the public sector. This concerns implementation of the law of 1 May 2006 on the awarding of honorary distinctions within the Honours List and the Royal Decree of 15 October 2006 establishing the rules and procedure for the awarding of honorary distinctions within the Honours List, both published in the Belgian Official Gazette of 24 October 2006.

The department also cooperated in the staging of the exhibition “175 years of the Order of Leopold & the Belgian Honours List”, which ran from 11 February to 29 June 2008 in the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces in Brussels.
The new Belgian passport, a document with even more advanced security features

As of February 2008, anyone applying for a new passport receives a completely revamped document. It has been given a makeover aesthetically, but has also been substantially enhanced as far as the security features are concerned. Invisible security features have been incorporated, some of which are to be found in the paper and the printing ink. The passport has also had an extra page in polycarbonate inserted, which acts as a built-in control device to make data on the data page visible. If you view the photo through the polycarbonate page under a certain light, the passport number appears in the photo. The page with pictograms is kept. It contains a copy of all data on the data page, which are only visible under UV light.

The film that used to be stuck over the data page to protect the data is replaced in this new passport by a dirt-repellent lacquer that cannot be loosened or partially removed in any way without this being noticed. This makes it even more difficult for potential forgers to alter the personal data. As before, the chip in the passport contains all the personal data on the data page and the holder’s photo and signature. At a later stage two fingerprints of the holder will also be added. 396,000 passports of this new model were issued in the course of 2008.

Deeds

In 2008 in excess of 5,000 deeds were also executed, of which 950 notarial deeds, 320 deeds of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and no fewer than 3,780 deeds of nationality.

Contact days between the FPS Foreign Affairs and the municipalities

The Belgian municipalities received their invitation to take part in the contact days with the FPS Foreign Affairs, which took place on 17 and 18 March for the French-speaking municipalities and 19 and 20 March for the Dutch-speaking municipalities.

Our FPS stressed its desire to make every effort to maintain and further develop close contacts with the municipalities in the future.
Then the new ultra-secure passport was presented, and the municipalities were given an explanation on the impending changes regarding the electronic identity card which is to be issued to Belgians resident abroad. A few words of explanation were also given on the meaning of legalisation of documents. There was also an opportunity for those present to ask questions on the subjects dealt with and on matters relating to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and nationality.

**BIODEV-VIS project**

In the context of the Biodev pilot project, Belgium issues biometric visas in its missions in Washington, Kinshasa, Kigali, Bujumbura and Bamako. Seven other European countries are taking part in the project. Each participating country ensures that biometric data are recorded in a number of diplomatic and consular missions abroad and are checked upon the visa applicants’ arrival in the Schengen area. During this project extra attention is devoted to enhanced European cooperation in consular matters. For example, the biometric data of visa applicants in some missions are taken by other Member States and sent by secure line to the Member State that needs them. There they are stored in the central database and can subsequently be used for control purposes at the border.

This also makes it possible to ascertain whether the systems used by the participating countries are mutually compatible.

By taking part in this European pilot project, Belgium gained the experience necessary to issue biometric visas and can now fit out all visa missions with the equipment needed to issue biometric visas.

This European obligation goes hand in hand with the setting up of the Visa Information System (VIS), a joint European database which will contain both the alphanumerical and biometric data of visa applicants, and is to be used by all Schengen Member States. This database is due to be set up in June 2009.

**Fast-track handling for foreign investors**

The Fast Track India/China pilot project started up on 1 May 2008 and is scheduled to last one year.

The purpose of the project is to pursue an active policy of support to potential foreign investors and prominent businessmen and executives in the diplomatic and consular missions in China and India. This is done in partnership with the various players at federal, regional and local level. In this pilot project the emphasis is placed on seeking the most appropriate procedures and information and communication channels, so that administrative constraints are kept to a minimum. It is therefore the intention to provide investors with a guiding line and a flexible procedure in order to keep the period between visa application and establishment of the person’s residence in Belgium as short as possible. Cases meeting the fast-track criteria will in principle be given individual support and guidance from the beginning to the end of the procedure.
3. Crisis management

Our FPS, travellers and emergency situations

The Crisis Centre/Travel Advice/B-FAST service was created within the FPS in 2003. It is active in three fields:

- assistance to Belgian nationals who find themselves in an emergency situation abroad
- travel advice for Belgian nationals who are travelling abroad
- assistance to the local population who find themselves in an emergency situation, through the B-FAST structure.

Assistance to Belgians abroad

The Crisis Centre is activated whenever the safety of a group of Belgian nationals abroad is jeopardised and numerous telephone calls are received from people asking for information. The Crisis Centre plays the role of coordinator and assumes responsibility for the communication with all interested persons and the population.

The Crisis Centre always works in close partnership with the Belgian diplomatic and consular missions of the countries in question and with the embassies in Brussels. In 2008 the Crisis Centre came into action on several occasions: the crisis in Kenya; the evacuation of Belgian subjects in Chad; protection of Belgian nationals in Zimbabwe; liberation of four Belgian hostages in Guatemala; the beginning of the crisis in Lebanon; crises in Georgia and North Kivu (Democratic Republic of Congo); the accident involving a coach in Egypt, in which six Belgians died and many suffered serious or minor injuries; the terrorist attacks in Mumbai (India) in which ten Belgians had to be rescued; and the closure of the airports in Bangkok resulting in thousands of foreigners, including a few hundred Belgians, not being able to leave Thailand on the scheduled date.

On 5 October the Crisis Centre took part in the Companies Open Day organised in the FPS, with a stand presenting the duties of the S1.1 service. There were also presentations of the department’s activities and tours of the Centre in which 200 people took part.

The Crisis Centre’s 150 volunteers received a month-long training in October – an important factor to ensure an optimal service is guaranteed if and when a crisis arises.

The Crisis Centre in action. © FPS Foreign Affairs, B-FAST
Travel advice for 171 countries

The FPS wants to help avoid Belgian nationals getting into problem situations abroad. Therefore we provide Belgian citizens wishing to travel to other countries with information on the situation in situ and warnings about any problems or dangers they may face.

In 2008 our department provided travel advice on 171 countries – a substantially larger number than was the case a few years ago (in 2004, for example, the travel advice we gave related to 106 countries).

Website visits up by a third

The FPS Foreign Affairs has been providing travel advice on the website www.diplomatie.be since 2001.

An average of 2,300 people visited the Travel Advice section every day in 2008, representing a 50% increase compared with last year. On top of this, countless telephone calls and written requests for information are also received. On the basis of the information they obtain from us, travellers can assess the risks that a stay in a particular country might entail in terms of safety, political and social unrest, natural phenomena and health problems.

We keep a close track of the situation in countries where problems are occurring or could occur. Since November 2006 the travel advice has been presented in a different way, with the security situation now being expressed in the form of six different security levels. After a year in use, we assessed the new presentation method, and in so doing have taken additional measures to further improve the way information is provided to travellers.

The website also presents all the necessary information about how to avoid bird flu. Visitors to the Companies Open Day had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the travel advice on the website and its possibilities, and to try everything out.

B-FAST

When it comes to expressing its solidarity with others, Belgium does not focus solely on Belgian nationals in emergency situations.

When natural disasters and emergency situations occur abroad and the local population is affected, the local authorities often make an appeal for emergency assistance from our country and the international community in general. To be able to ensure a swift reaction, the Council of Ministers decided in 2000 to set up an inter-departmental rapid inter-

vention unit, which was christened the Belgian First Aid Support Team, but is better known by the acronym B-FAST.

In accordance with the Royal Decree of 28 February 2003, which regulates the creation of B-FAST, “emergency assistance abroad” is understood as meaning: “any dispatch to another country of personnel and/or material, to be assessed on a case-by-case basis according to the specific nature of the situation in the country affected by the disaster or calamity, and excluding emergency aid for aftercare and rehabilitation”.

A B-FAST operation therefore basically consists of direct or indirect emergency aid for a short duration in another country. For these operations B-FAST can count on seconded personnel in the form of high-priority teams that can be mobilised quickly. They are provided by the members of B-FAST, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Federal Public Services for Home Affairs, Public Health and Foreign Affairs.

B-FAST can also limit its interventions to the supply of material resources to countries in need, via one of its partners.

Missions in 2008

B-FAST came into action several times in 2008, for example in Myanmar, which was severely affected by typhoon Nargis in May, and also twice when earthquakes shook the Chinese province of Sichuan.

In September B-FAST provided the UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team) with an expert for an assessment mission to Haiti, which was ravaged by hurricane Ike.

The B-FAST stand at the Companies Open Day received a large number of visitors.
The Peacebuilding Department has the job of financing projects in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and to do so “in line with certain thematic and geographical priorities of our foreign policy”. To this end it had a budget of EUR 28,007,117 at its disposal for the year 2008. All financing proposals are tested against criteria that have been approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. These are mentioned on the FPS’s website: www.diplomatie.be/en/policy.

In 2008 the Peacebuilding Department paid special attention to the following areas of activity:
- development and strengthening of the rule of law
- development of free and democratic media
- good management of natural resources
- support to peace processes and electoral processes
- disarmament, mine clearance, and the fight against the proliferation of light weapons, antipersonnel mines and fragmentation bombs
- support to civilian victims of conflicts

In the framework of the above areas on which action is to be targeted, and in accordance with the provisions of the coalition agreement of 18 March 2008 which inter alia describes the concept of human security, special attention will be devoted to the following subjects during the period 2008-2011 in the Central African region:
- the problem of sexual violence and child soldiers
- the problem of natural resources
- rebuilding of the judicial system and transitional forms of justice
- security sector reform (SSR)
- light weapons, antipersonnel mines, disarmament and mine clearance

Geographically speaking, our interventions in 2008 focused chiefly on the Great Lakes Region, the Middle East, the Balkans and Asia.
Transposition of EU law

For the second year in a row, Belgium has succeeded in keeping to the European rule of a maximum deficit of 1.5% concerning transposition of EU internal market directives into national law. This rule was established as part of a system that has assessed the transposition rate by means of a scoreboard since 1997. An investigation of existing transposition structures was started in 2008 with the aim of optimising these and thereby preparing the country for the new European maximum deficit norm of 1%, which will apply from 2009 onwards.

Specific solutions for cross-border problems

For six years now the SOLVIT network has been endeavouring to find quick and pragmatic solutions to cross-border problems facing citizens and companies and resulting from the poor application of legislation on the internal market by the national administrations. SOLVIT provides its services free of charge, and comprises 30 centres that together strive to make the internal market work more effectively. There is a SOLVIT centre in every Member State as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The SOLVIT centre in Belgium is attached to the Directorate-General for European Affairs and Coordination of our FPS.

Where SOLVIT can help

Citizens and companies can call on the services of SOLVIT if they are faced with:

- a cross-border problem
- caused by an unfair application of EU legislation
- in which a national, regional or local authority is involved.

The cases that SOLVIT has mostly had to deal with, as far as private individuals are concerned, have hitherto chiefly related to:

- social security
- residence permits
- recognition of professional qualifications
- registration of vehicles
- tax matters

Companies tend to contact SOLVIT to solve problems in the field of:

- market access for goods
- delivery of goods
- establishment as a self-employed operator

The strategic position of SOLVIT Belgium

On account of its central location and the considerable openness of its economy, Belgium attracts large numbers of European citizens and cross-border workers. Sooner or later, they have to deal with the administration.

If difficulties arise as a result of incorrect or inaccurate application of EU law, SOLVIT is the obvious means of helping solve the problems and promoting a better application of the internal market rules. The results show that the system works and helps optimise contacts between citizens and the public services.
Help to Belgian citizens and companies abroad

Belgian citizens can also call on the services of SOLVIT-Belgium to help solve cross-border problems stemming from poor application of EU legislation by the administration of one of the 30 member countries of the network. As a “Home Centre”, SOLVIT-Belgium ensures the preparation and follow-up of their case, and keeps them informed of the progress made by the “Lead Centre” in finding a solution. In 80% of cases SOLVIT manages to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement.

Already 290 problems dealt with in Belgium, and 3,000 in Europe

The network set up in 2002 has already been able to solve approximately 3,000 disputes without these having to go to court, and usually in less than ten weeks. More than two thirds of the cases dealt with by SOLVIT are brought by private individuals, the rest by companies. Since it was set up, SOLVIT-Belgium has handled 290 cases, placing it ninth in the ranking of thirty European SOLVIT centres. SOLVIT-Belgium’s good results are down to the efficient cooperation between the administrations involved.

HOW TO LODGE A COMPLAINT

People who want to lodge a complaint can do so by contacting their local SOLVIT centre (known as the “Home Centre”), which will make an initial appraisal to see whether the complaint is well founded.

- Then a case file is entered in an online database, so that it can immediately be forwarded to the SOLVIT centre in the Member State where the problem has arisen (the “Lead” SOLVIT Centre).

- The Lead SOLVIT Centre must indicate within a week whether or not it accepts the case file.

- Once it has accepted the file, the Lead SOLVIT Centre has to propose a solution for the problem within ten weeks. During the investigation period the SOLVIT centres are in contact with each other and keep the complainant informed of the progress made in his case and the proposed solution.
1. Belgium in a bilateral context

Western Europe

Benelux
On 17 June 2008 the Prime Ministers and Foreign Affairs Ministers of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and the Ministers-President of the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels-Capital Regions and of the French and German-speaking Communities, signed a new Benelux treaty in the Hague. The signing of the treaty sends out a strong signal and gives a new impulse to the cooperation within the Benelux treaty. A joint working programme 2009-2012 is linked to the treaty and forms the basis for implementation of the fundamental missions and political direction indicated in the treaty.

France
On 28 January 2008 the partners in the Belgian-French cross-border cooperation met in Kortrijk to set up, by convention, a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) called “Eurometropool Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai (LKT)”. The main task of this grouping consists in promoting and supporting efficient and coherent cross-border cooperation in its area.

United Kingdom
The eighth Belgian-British Conference, which was attended by Minister Karel De Gucht, took place in London on 13 and 14 November 2007. Once again this prestigious bilateral event brought together participants from the academic, political and business world, as well as representatives of the media. Ideas were exchanged on complex issues that have an obvious impact on our day-to-day lives as Europeans. The chosen theme was “Bridges across the Channel”. Four working groups met to discuss education, the economy, politics and culture in the two countries.

Monaco
At the invitation of King Albert II and the Belgian government, His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco paid an official visit to Belgium for the first time.

Central and Eastern Europe

Russia
On 3 September Minister De Gucht travelled to Russia for a meeting with his Russian counterpart,
Sergei Lavrov. Since the meeting took place during the Georgian crisis, the talks were largely devoted to this issue. Belgium promised Georgia EUR 1.5 million for its reconstruction and the implementation of reforms.

On 19 September Prime Minister Yves Leterme, accompanied by some thirty Belgian businessmen, went to the investment forum organised in Sotsji, in anticipation of the Winter Olympics which will be staged there in 2012. On this occasion, the Belgian premier had talks with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin.

The bilateral talks due to lead to a new action plan for the period 2009-2011 were continued. The next BLEU-Russia Joint Committee is scheduled for 14 January 2009.

Ukraine
On 2-3 March Minister De Gucht visited Ukraine for talks with his counterpart Volodymyr Ogryzko and president Victor Yushchenko, among others. Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations were discussed candidly and constructively. As in Poland (see below), the talks also covered “Euro 2012”, the European Football Championships which are to be held in Poland and Ukraine. In the context of “economic diplomacy”, the Minister was accompanied by Belgian captains of industry interested in the investment opportunities that Euro 2012 will present.

The signing of the Road Map for bilateral relations with Ukraine, the commercial/economic Joint Committee and the visit by Prime Minister Leterme to Kiev on 31 October and 1 November further strengthened ties with Ukraine.

Poland
During Minister De Gucht’s meeting with his Polish counterpart Radoslaw Sikorski, in Warsaw on 3 March 2008, it appeared that both countries wanted to entertain more in-depth relations at bilateral level. The celebration of the 90th anniversary of our diplomatic relations in 2009 should form a high point in this respect.

Baltic States
Relations with the Baltic States are also excellent. This was evidenced once again during the state visit of the Belgian royal couple to Estonia on 11 and 12 June 2008. This rounded off a cycle of state visits to the Baltic States, following visits to Lithuania in 2006 and Latvia in 2007.

Hungary
The Hungarian president László Sólyom paid a successful state visit to Belgium from 15 to 17 April 2008. In the contacts that took place alongside this visit, for example between Minister De Gucht and his Hungarian counterpart Kinga Göncz, the will to make the joint EU presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary (2012-2011) a success was more than palpable.
South-east Europe

Western Balkans
Belgium takes an active part in the efforts being made by the international community to improve the situation in the countries of the Western Balkans. Belgium’s commitment can be gauged by the direct contribution it makes to the military missions in some of the countries concerned. In Bosnia-Herzegovina two Belgians are taking part in the European Union Police Mission (EUPM), whilst in Kosovo Belgium has around 200 soldiers deployed as part of the NATO peacekeeping force (KFOR). Furthermore, 45 Belgian police officers, magistrates and experts are taking part in the European Union’s EULEX mission.

Support to the peace process
Within the EU, Belgium continues to provide its political support to the peace and stabilisation process in which the countries in the region have involved themselves. In this context Minister De Gucht in particular oversees observance of the conditions set by the EU, notably as regards cooperation with the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia.

Conflict prevention
The Belgian commitment also manifests itself in projects resulting from initiatives taken in the field of “preventive diplomacy” and “conflict prevention”. They are especially aimed at the return of displaced persons in Kosovo, the fight against the proliferation of light weapons, the destruction of arms and munitions stocks (Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina), strengthening of the judicial system, the fight against impunity (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and reinforcement of regional cooperation.

Recognition of Kosovo
The FPS Foreign Affairs continues to work on consolidating bilateral relations between Belgium and the various countries of the Western Balkans. On 24 February Belgium signed the official recognition of Kosovo’s independence (which had been declared seven days previously) and has since further developed relations with the young state. In May 2008 Minister De Gucht paid a working visit to Albania, where he decided that a diplomatic and consular representation would be opened. Work is currently being done to this end.

Turkey
Belgium is pleased at Turkey’s election to a seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2009-2010. Indeed, our country backed the candidacy. This election constitutes a confirmation of the key role Turkey plays in peacekeeping and international security and a recognition of the value of the initiatives Ankara has taken in its own region. Minister De Gucht holds regular meetings with his Turkish counterpart, Ali Babacan, and visited Istanbul on 30 and 31 October to attend the World Economic Forum.

Minister De Gucht takes the floor at the World Economic Forum in Istanbul, 30 and 31 October 2008. © BELGA
Transatlantic relations

United States

Celebration of the 175th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Belgium and the United States

On 8 April 2008 Belgium and the United States celebrated 175 years of bilateral diplomatic relations. More than 200 eminent Belgian and American figures from the political and academic world and the business community came to the Palais des Académies for the event.

In their respective addresses, Minister Karel De Gucht and ambassador Sam Fox both stressed the strong bond of friendship linking the two countries, at both political and economic level.

Canada

Economic mission headed by Prince Philippe in British Columbia

Accompanied by a delegation of 140 businessmen, His Royal Highness Prince Philippe headed an economic mission to Vancouver from 11 to 13 March. The atmosphere was excellent and the results very positive, both as regards official and company visits (Asco, Boeing, Electronic art and Vanoc) and meetings between Belgian and Canadian employers. During the visit the prince opened the Belgian stand at the “Globe 2008” trade fair, and delivered a speech focusing on environmental issues before an audience of more than a thousand people.

North Africa and the Middle East

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The conference held in Annapolis at the end of 2007 made it possible for the talks between Israel and Palestine to resume, whereupon the Palestinian Prime Minister presented his three-year reform plan in Paris. The international community promised him USD 7.4 billion in support, spread over three years. Belgium’s contribution to this amounted to EUR 26 million for the year 2008.

In June Minister Karel De Gucht attended the Berlin conference, aimed at strengthening security and the rule of law in Palestine. Belgium continues to support the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency). The work this agency is doing in Gaza is absolutely vital, given the disastrous humanitarian situation there. The Minister decided to earmark an extra EUR 730,000 to the initiatives of EUPOL-COPPS (the European police mission in the Palestinian territories) in order to improve the security situation in Gaza. Belgium also added an extra participant to this mission.

During his visit for talks with Prime Minister Leterme, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad personally outlined the progress that had been made in the implementation of the three-year reform plan.

Egypt

The economic mission to Egypt headed by Prince Philippe comprised around a hundred Belgian businessmen. Eminent Egyptian figures at a very high level were given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with Belgian know-how in a whole range of areas, in particular construction and transport. Prince Philippe also had talks with President Hosni Mubarak and the Egyptian Prime Minister.

Libya

Minister De Gucht paid a short visit to Libya at the beginning of 2008. For the Minister it was a good opportunity to inquire about Libyan projects but also about the situation in the region – an important factor in light of Belgium’s participation in the EUFOR-Chad mission.
Lebanon
The Belgian government decided to take part in UNIFIL and to extend the mandate of our service-men until the end of 2008. A Belgian frigate, the "Leopold I", was also added to the Maritime Task Force. Its task is to carry out patrols off the coast of Lebanon.

Iran
As occurred the previous year, 2008 was largely dominated by the nuclear issue. In the Security Council, Belgium took part in the vote on two resolutions concerning the imposition of sanctions against Iran. Minister De Gucht reiterated the Belgian standpoint and recalled Belgium's concern regarding respect for human rights on various occasions, for example in meetings with his counterpart Mottaki and in his talks with the negotiator in nuclear matters, Jalili.

Iraq
Belgium renewed its contribution to the financing of the "Middle Ring" of the UN mission's protective force in Iraq (MANUI). Belgium is also actively participating in EUIJUST-LEX, the Joint European Action aimed at training Iraqi police officers and magistrates in Europe/Belgium. The FPS Foreign Affairs is closely involved in this. The Belgian part of the new EUIJUST-LEX training course was held in Brussels from 14 to 22 November. The Belgian part of the previous training cycle took place from 30 June to 4 July.

Africa: commitment to a lasting peace

Democratic Republic of Congo
In 2008 Belgium again devoted itself to the task of bringing about lasting stability and restoring the rule of law in Congo, mobilising all its partners in the international community in the process.

Working for stability
Belgium's special endeavours to bring about stability can be evidenced by the country's active participation in the monitoring of the Nairobi Communiqué (where we often represent the European Union in the Joint Monitoring Group's Task Force) and our presence at the Goma conference in January 2008. In the spirit of this conference Belgium ascribed a special place in its policy to the security and humanitarian situation in Eastern Congo, as witnessed by the Minister's visits to Kivu in January and April 2008.

However, the Nairobi and Goma processes appear still to be treading water, and the hostilities have again plunged the region into chaos.

In response to this, Belgian expertise was once again enlisted and intense diplomatic efforts were made, in particular from Belgium's side, in an attempt to bring some calm to the situation, to achieve a degree of rapprochement between Rwanda and the DRC, and to review the role of the MONUC and get African countries more involved in it. In this way it was hoped that the Goma and Nairobi processes could be given fresh impetus.

In specific terms, this meant Belgium continuing to take part in the Contact Groups for the Great Lakes and making use of its seat on the UN Security Council.

Pacification
As regards pacification of the country, Belgium continued its involvement (at European and bilateral level) in the SSR (Security Sector Reform) and DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) processes. It was in this context that Belgium took part in the SSR Round Table organised by the Congolese authorities in Kinshasa on 25 and 26 February.
“Good governance”
A large part of the Minister’s trip in April was devoted to good governance in the economic field and reconstruction of the country. As far as mine clearance is concerned, Belgium continued to support the DRC’s efforts to obtain the status of pays conforme (country adhering to the rules) within the ITIE process. With the same aims, Belgium also supported the Task Force on Mineral Resources in Central Africa (TF MIRECA).

Combating child labour
Social aspects were not overlooked in any of these matters. For example, Belgium supports initiatives combating child labour in mines that are worked according to traditional methods and initiatives aimed at creating dignified working conditions in the mining sector.

The Great Lakes Region
Belgium has made stability in the Great Lakes Region the main priority for its policy in Central Africa. Moreover in 2008 Belgium worked hard to garner support for re-launching the idea of the Economic Community of the Countries of the Great Lakes (Communauté Économique des Pays des Grands Lacs/CEPGL).

Rwanda
Belgium continued to entertain good relations with Rwanda in 2008, as can be seen from our development cooperation figures. Ministers Michel and De Gucht met the Foreign Affairs Minister, Ms Museminali, in a meeting peripheral to the UN General Assembly. On 1 November Minister De Gucht had talks in Kigali with President Kagame on the crisis in Eastern Congo.

Burundi
In Burundi Belgium contributed to a détente in the political impasse in which the country had been stuck for a large part of the year. Our country continued to implement its large-scale programme for development cooperation with Burundi. A partner committee met in October. In the multilateral context, our country adopted a favourable stance regarding calls for greater cooperation in the field of SSR.

Stabilisation Pact in force
The Pact for Stability, Peace and Development that the eleven states concerned had signed at the International Summit on the Great Lakes Region in Nairobi in 2006 has come into force. Its entry into force was the result of the fact that eight countries (strongly encouraged by Belgium) had ratified the Pact.

Efforts at multilateral level
Belgium took part in the efforts made by the UN (resolutions, verification of observance of the arms embargo, the problem of child soldiers, etc.), the African Union, the Francophonie and the EU. In all these fora it endeavoured to mobilise its partners to commit themselves in favour of Central Africa.

Southern, East and West Africa
South Africa
The heightened cooperation with South Africa continued in 2008. The interim meeting of the Joint Committee was held in Brussels on 30 May. The theme “Peace and Security in Africa”, especially in the Great Lakes Region, occupied an important position in the political discussions both at bilateral level and in the context of the two countries’ membership of the Security Council during the period 2007-2008.

Sudan
Belgium also kept close track of the situation in Sudan. Our country advocated correct implementation of the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) and supported projects promoting reconstruction in Southern Sudan. As regards Darfour, Belgium stressed the vital importance of the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes, and recognition of the essential role that the International Criminal Court has to play in this respect. To prevent the crisis in Darfour spilling over to eastern Chad and the north east of the Central African Republic, the EU, in the framework of its Foreign Security and Defence Policy, launched the “EUFOR-Chad-CAR” operation. Eighty to a hundred Belgian servicemen are taking part in this operation, which started at the beginning of 2008. In February Minister De Gucht paid
a working visit to Chad and the Central African Republic. Belgium currently holds the presidency of the Commission for Consolidation of Peace for the Central African Republic in the UN and is involved in SSR in Central Africa.

**Horn of Africa**
As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Belgium devoted special attention to the Horn of Africa. Up until the end of 2008 our country was in charge of the delicate issue of the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Its role consisted in coordinating the various standpoints and overseeing the drafting of resolutions on the subject.

**Kenya**
In relation to the situation after the elections in Kenya, Belgium provided financial support at the beginning of 2008 for the mediation work led by Kofi Anan and carried out via the conciliation bureau of the Panel of African Eminent Persons.

**West Africa**
The Security Council also occupies itself with West Africa. In this context Belgium followed the developments in the reconciliation process in Ivory Coast. The country’s Prime Minister Guillaume Soro visited Belgium for talks with his Belgian counterpart in June, whereupon Belgium undertook to support the electoral process in Ivory Coast.

**Asia**

**China**
The fact that our bilateral relations are being maintained at a qualitatively very high level can be seen from the succession of visits by important persons, and the excellent reception given to prominent Belgian figures when they visit China.

Minister De Gucht visited Beijing and Shanghai in May. An official senior-level Olympic delegation led by HRH Prince Philippe also went to China, and Prime Minister Yves Leterme attended the ASEM summit (“Asia-Europe Meeting”) in October.

The friendship and mutual respect did not prevent thorny issues from being addressed, such as human rights.

**Japan**
Our relations with Japan were further strengthened in 2008. Three working visits at director-general level were held in Brussels.

**Economic diplomacy**
Our embassy in Tokyo was very active in the field of economic diplomacy, and it is in this context that the successful mission of Flemish Minister-President Peeters at the beginning of October can be viewed. This mission acted as a catalyst for attracting high-tech investments in sectors that are vitally important for our country.

Special mention should be made of the study visit to Japan by the Enterprise and Simplification Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne, from 18 to 21 June. As a result of the Belgian visit, a mission of the Keidanren (the Japanese business federation) came to Belgium on 7 and 8 October 2008.

**South Korea**
On 9 October 2008 the South Korean Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Yu In-Chon, paid a short visit to Belgium to mark the opening of a prestigious cultural event in Brussels, and was greeted by State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Olivier Chastel. Korea is the theme country of an exhibition-cum-festival running from the beginning of October 2008 to the end of February 2009 and showcasing the country’s traditional culture and modern art.
Visits
Two Ministers paid visits to South Korea in 2008. One visit was a bilateral meeting between Finance Minister Reynders and his Korean counterpart Kang, and the other was a study visit by Enterprise and Simplification Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne.

Southeast Asia
In 2008 our economic diplomacy was heavily focused on Southeast Asia. At the beginning of June there was Minister De Gucht's mission to Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, and crown prince Philippe led an economic mission to Indonesia and Singapore at the end of November. With an eye on the very strong economic growth of these countries and the potential for our exports, we continued our efforts in this region.

India
India plays a key role in the WTO (World Trade Organisation), has launched a satellite to the moon, makes a major contribution to UN peacekeeping operations and has an agreement with the USA authorising it to resume its nuclear programme.

Investments
As regards relations with Belgium, investments are continuing in both directions. The two countries are now connected by three daily flights. India was guest of honour at the annual trade fair in Ghent where an Indian Business Forum took place, attended by hundreds of businessmen. A number of subjects of a bilateral and multilateral nature were broached during the fruitful bilateral political consultations that took place in June. There was also an intense exchange of ideas on consular affairs.

State visit
The high point in this crowded agenda of Belgian-Indian activity was the state visit to India by the King and Queen, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and numerous representatives of economic and academic circles in November. The visit took in New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai. Numerous agreements were signed between companies and universities, and seminars enabled the participants to consolidate their mutual cooperation in various fields.

Afghanistan
When offering an answer to the challenges facing Afghanistan, assistance to improve the security situation and development aid cannot be disassociated from each other. It was with this in mind that our Ministers for Defence and Development Cooperation paid a visit to the country in October 2008.

Military contribution
Belgium continues to make its contribution to the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force). This year this involved making more than 400 armed forces available – most of them in Kabul, where the Belgian contingent was responsible for management of the airport from October 2007 to September 2008. There is also a contingent in Kunduz, and as of 2008 four F-16 type fighter planes (with a hundred servicemen) are stationed at Kandahar airport.

Contribution via partners
In Afghanistan Belgium takes part in the High Commission for Refugees, the World Food Programme, UNFEM (the UN's development fund for women), and UNDP (the United Nations Development Programme). Our country supports a programme of the Aga Khan Foundation for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the provinces of Badakhshan and Takhar. It is also still financing mine clearance operations.
Belgium contributes to the Asia Foundation programme aimed at improving local administration and the Belgian government also co-finances the programmes run by Belgian NGOs active in Afghanistan: “Mothers for Peace” and “Solidarité Afghanistan-Belgique”.

**Turkmenistan**
Accompanied by a sizeable delegation, Deputy Prime Minister Tagièv of Turkmenistan came to Belgium in February for talks with Minister De Gucht.

**Australia and New Zealand**
The memory of the First World War remains very much alive in Australia and New Zealand, as evidenced by the fact that many families and a number of dignitaries wanted to take part in the ceremonies held in Belgium to commemorate the battles of the First World War (especially the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917) and the Armistice of 1918.

**Australia**
The new Australian government wants to inject fresh energy into its relations with Belgium. With this in mind, a series of talks were held in 2008 with the Australian Ministers who visited Belgium (infrastructure, Australia Europe Business Council Delegation).

**Latin America**
For many years relations between Belgium and Latin America and the Caribbean were of a rather low profile. Given the growing importance of the political and economic role this region is playing, it was decided that a new boost should be given to our relations with the LAC countries.

**Conference on action plan**
The “Latin America” policy paper approved by the Council of Ministers in 2007 was discussed at great length. The completion of the draft action plan ensuing from this policy paper constituted the main task of the regional diplomatic conference held in Mexico City on 12 and 13 April 2008. Under the chairmanship of Minister De Gucht, the heads of mission in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as representatives from various of the FPS’s directorates, federated bodies and a number of federal institutions, examined 11 horizontal themes. These comprised a wide range of subjects, ranging from social cohesion to terrorism. The idea is for an operational framework to be worked out for Belgian policy vis-à-vis the region.

**EU-LAC**
Special attention was also devoted to the status of relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean (EU-LAC). For example, Belgium was heavily involved in the preparation, at all levels, of the fifth EU-LAC summit. This involved a total of 13 preparatory activities, with those relating to social cohesion, the environment and migration being the most important.

The EU-LAC summit took place in Lima on 15 and 16 May 2008. The main themes were the fight against poverty, inequality and exclusion, on the one hand, and sustainable development (environment, climate and energy), on the other. Prime Minister Yves Leterme headed the Belgian delegation and took part in the meeting of heads of state and government. The Minister for Enterprise and Simplification Vincent Van Quickenborne represented Belgium at the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers. When the debates were closed the Lima Final Declaration was approved. This summit gave a fresh political boost to the EU-LAC partnership.

**Environment and climate**
As a follow-up to the Lima summit the Latin America department organised an Environment and Climate Round Table on 25 June 2008, at which all the interested players at federal and federated level received
feedback on the commitments enshrined in the Lima Declaration. Not only was a list made of existing initiatives in Latin America, but consideration was also given to the measures that now need to be taken for the Lima Declaration to be put into practice.

Economic mission
The economic mission to Argentina and Uruguay was another example of the way our relations with Latin America and the Caribbean are being strengthened. The mission took place from 5 to 10 October 2008 and was led by HRH Prince Philippe who headed a sizeable delegation consisting of sixty representatives from Belgian trade and industry.

Diplomacy and economy
Business Council
The Business Council, which is made up of some 40 Belgian CEOs of Belgian and foreign companies, was convened for the first time in September 2008. It will advise the Minister for Foreign Affairs on all areas in which, in the context of economic diplomacy, he can support Belgian companies abroad and maintain foreign investments in Belgium. The Council sets its own agenda, which was established at the second meeting, on the basis of an extensive survey of its members.

Finexpo
The Finexpo committee also has the job of supporting Belgian companies that export services and capital goods. Finexpo thus works with exporters that conclude export contracts and with the banks that provide for the financing.

In excess of 100 files
The Finexpo committee met nine times in 2008, giving advice on around 100 stabilisation files, 12 interest rate subsidies with or without supplementary gift, and 10 loans from one state to another.

In 2008 the Council of Ministers approved seven state-to-state loans: one loan to São Tomé and Principe, Ghana, Vietnam, Mozambique and Tanzania, and two loans to Cameroon. Three interest rate subsidies with or without supplementary gift were signed in 2008: the first for a dredging project in Honduras, the second for a transport project in Ghana, and the third for a transport project in Jamaica. There was also one pure gift signed in 2008, namely for a telecommunications project in Ivory Coast.

Positive review
As determined by the management plan of the Directorate General for Bilateral Affairs, Finexpo carried out a diagnostic review of its own activities. This process involved meeting with every exporter and every bank, during which a whole series of prepared questions were used. The answers showed that the business community assesses Finexpo’s work positively, but also revealed that exporters, and in particular the SMEs among them, are not always well acquainted with Finexpo’s activities. A report on the diagnostic review was drafted and initiatives (information sessions) will be launched in order to ensure that the exporters’ and banks’ requirements are met more effectively.

Quality image
The budget for promoting Belgium’s image was used for a number of large-scale and more minor projects both at home and abroad. For example, our FPS helped organise two prestigious economic network activities in Brussels: the sixth European Business Summit and the Brussels Forum 2008.

Events
Our FPS also co-financed a number of Belgian exhibitions and cultural activities organised abroad by prestigious Belgian institutions such as the Centre for Fine Arts, the Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie and the Royal Museum for Central Africa.
Publications and celebration of the 175th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the USA

Money also went into various publications in foreign magazines and newspapers, a general brochure on Belgium to be disseminated through the mission network, and the 175th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Belgium and the United States of America.

Cocoa

This year Minister De Gucht paid special attention to the cocoa sector. The “Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Cocoa Labour Issues – Towards a Sustainable Cocoa Economy without the Worst Forms of Child Labor” took place in Washington on 17 June. This forum was jointly organised and chaired by our FPS and the US State Department.

Combating child labour

The objective consisted in drawing up recommendations for the sustainable development of the cocoa sector, in conjunction with the main stakeholders. Doing away with the worst forms of child labour is the top priority.

Subsidisation of chambers of commerce and joint industrial committees

In 2008 the federal government granted subsidies to 36 Belgian chambers of commerce abroad and joint industrial committees in Belgium. In all, this represented an amount of EUR 499,999.53. The three Regions contributed to the 2008 subsidisation programme to the tune of EUR 499,968.55.

Foreign Trade Advisers

Sixty-five Foreign Trade Advisers were appointed in 2008, on the recommendation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In addition to this, four advisers were given the honorary title of “Foreign Trade Adviser”.

Bilateral investment treaties

Bilateral investment treaties were successfully negotiated/initialled this year with Tajikistan, Barbados, Colombia, Jordan and Oman. The agreement with Panama was re-signed after amendment. The treaties with Peru and Cameroon came into force.

Bilateral double taxation treaties

As far as double taxation treaties were concerned, an initial round of talks was held with Botswana, Sudan, the Russian Federation and Kirghizistan. The agreements with China, Libya, Tajikistan and the Isle of Man were signed. Various rounds of negotiations with France eventually led to the signing of a new Endorsement.

Social security treaties

Social security treaties were negotiated by the competent department of the FPS Social Affairs with Argentina, Serbia and Montenegro. Negotiations were held with Tunisia with a view to a review of the existing treaty.

Agreements on international transport

At the request of Belgian airlines, negotiations were successfully conducted on air traffic rights with Senegal, Cameroon, Ghana, Egypt, Tunisia, Hong Kong, Brazil, and the Netherlands Antilles.
Energy and climate issues at the top of the European agenda once again

Increasing concern over climate change, growing dependence on imported energy and price increases had already led to “climate and energy” topping the European agenda in 2007. This implied a confirmation of the strategic objectives of Europe’s new energy policy: sustainability, continuity of energy supply and competitiveness.

2008 was to be the year when the climate and energy package would be fleshed out.

Commission proposals
In January the Commission produced a series of proposals for legislation with a view to fulfilling the commitments the heads of state and government had made at the European Council of March 2007. These involved a 20% reduction in greenhouse gases vis-à-vis 1990 (the reduction will be adjusted to 30% by 2020 if a new agreement on climate change is reached at world level), a 20% improvement in energy efficiency, and an increase to 20% by 2020 of the share represented by renewable energy sources in consumption (this being 10% in the transport sector).

The Commission’s legislative proposals made provision for ambitious and binding target figures for each Member State. Under the impetus of the French presidency a political agreement was reached during the European Council of December 2008, meaning that approval on first reading by the European Parliament could still occur in the current legislature.

The proposed measures were set out in four legislative instruments.

More predictability and harmonisation
The amendment to the Emissions Trading Directive (EU ETS) ensures more predictability on the one hand, and harmonisation of the method used to set upper limits and to enable Member States to assign emission quotas to the various installations, on the other. The most polluting industries in the EU will gradually have to pay for emission rights (from 20% in 2013 to 100% in 2025), which have hitherto been free of charge. From 2013, the electricity sector, which is responsible for a large proportion of CO2 emissions, will have to pay the full price for emission rights, which are sold by auction. Energy-intensive industries faced with a significant risk of “carbon leaks” (the relocation of activities to avoid the high costs of carbon emissions) will be able to receive rights free of charge. The new Emissions Trading System (ETS) will apply to more sectors and a larger number of greenhouse gases (at the moment only CO2 emissions are taken into account).

The income from the EU ETS will be paid to the Member States and should in part be used to help the EU switch over to an environmentally friendly economy. Part of this can be used in the context of an international agreement to assist developing countries in their fight against climate change.

Distribution of the efforts
In the sectors to which the EU ETS does not apply, such as transport, construction, services, small industrial plant, agriculture and waste processing, the efforts needed to honour the commitments entered
into for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions are distributed on the basis of the Member States’ Gross Domestic Product. This results in Belgium having to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in these sectors by 15% by 2010, whereas the EU average is a 10% reduction.

**Binding target figures for renewable energy**

Every country is assigned binding target figures in the field of renewable energy. Belgium will have to derive 13% of its energy consumption from renewable energy sources by 2010. In the transport sector the proportion of energy derived from renewable sources should be 10% in all Member States.

**Legal regulation of carbon storage and state support for the environment**

The Member States also agreed on a draft legal framework to regulate the collection and storage of carbon. Earlier a new blueprint was set out for state support in the field of the environment.

**Belgium supports objectives**

Meetings of the energy and environment councils and the European Council on the climate and energy package took place throughout the year, with the Directorate General for European Affairs and Coordination coordinating the Belgian standpoint on this issue. The various Belgian bodies were closely involved in this process and an intensive search was made for partners at European level, who could support our country in this area.

All this was possible thanks to the commitment and application of the representatives in the technical working groups, Belgium’s permanent representation at the EU and the network of embassies in the Member States.

Belgium fully subscribed to the ambitious objectives approved at the spring 2007 summit and the agreement reached at the end of 2008.

The fulfilment of these objectives will enable the European Union to play a leading role in the negotiations in Copenhagen at the end of 2009 that should lead to an international agreement.

**Being attentive to competitiveness**

Belgium is convinced that the measures taken to combat climate change offer opportunities. At the same time we are mindful of the consequences that these efforts may have for the competitiveness of European industry in general and the problem of “carbon leaks” in particular.

Belgium is also of the view that the efforts should be spread in a manner based on principles of cost efficiency and fairness. The packet should entail comparable costs for comparable countries. Attention was also paid to ensuring that the mechanisms offer enough flexibility for ambitious goals to be attained.

Most measures are aimed at supply and technical solutions. Belgium is pleased to see that energy-efficiency aspects figure prominently in the Action Plan for Energy Security and Solidarity proposed by the Commission in November 2008.

**European Security and Defence Policy: civil crisis management**

The EU has decided to develop the civil aspects of crisis management in four priority areas determined by the European Council of Feira in June 2000: police, rule of law, civil administration and civil defence.

It should be possible for the specific capacities in these four areas to be deployed in the context of autonomous EU-led missions or in the event of operations set in train by organisations such as the UN or the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe).

**Police**

The European Union wants to be able to implement every decision on police matters, be it for consultative, support or training tasks or the replacement of the local police force.

The Member States have undertaken to supply up to 5,000 policemen by 2003, 1,400 of whom should be available for deployment within thirty days.

**Strengthening of the rule of law**

Efforts were made at international level to strengthen, and where necessary rebuild, credible local police forces. However, these can only operate successfully if the police can count on a solid and sound judicial system and prison system. Member States have committed themselves to supplying almost 300 officers who can act as crisis managers in this field (solicitors, judges and civil servants for the prison service).
Civil administration
As regards civil administration, a pool of experts has been created, all of whom are able to carry out crisis management missions in the civil administration and can be deployed very swiftly.

Civil defence
The objectives have been achieved in this field, too. The EU can avail itself of:
- two or three evaluation and/or coordination teams, which can be mobilised around the clock and consist of ten experts who can be sent within three to seven hours;
- intervention teams comprising up to 2,000 people that can be deployed very quickly;
- additional or more specialised teams that can be sent to the place in question within two to seven days depending on the specific requirements thrown up by the crisis unfolding.

The Ministers’ conference of 19 November 2002 on capacities for civil crisis management confirmed that with the commitments entered into voluntarily by the Member States, the target goals in the four areas had been achieved and even surpassed.

Belgian commitment
The coalition agreement of 18 March 2008 states the following in the context of foreign policy: “The government fully subscribes to the ambition of developing a fully fledged and coherent European foreign policy, including a security and development policy. The government also wants to assume responsibilities on the spot... Mere military instruments are not enough to ensure a lasting peace. For this reason more and more civil instruments are being deployed, and the government is developing the necessary capacities to this end”.

This reference to the development of the necessary capacities for civil instruments builds further on the commitments already entered into by Belgium to contribute to European civil crisis management missions. In all there are currently 69 Belgians deployed in seven different operations abroad. The coalition agreement of 18 March 2008 refers to the Belgian presidency of the EU in 2010 as: “An excellent opportunity to make the European project tangible and accessible for the citizens”. Belgium also has to work out priorities for this presidency, and civil crisis management constitutes an area to which great importance will be attached in this regard.

Added value for Belgium
A Belgian contribution to civil crisis management missions in strategic regions such as the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Democratic Republic of Congo offers an immediate added value for the national security policy. Solidarity within the European Union and the confirmation of a growing contribution by the EU as a geopolitical player on the world stage play a part here, too. If Belgium wants to enjoy the economies of scale that stem from a strong European security and defence policy, it also has to make sure it makes credible contributions to ESDP missions.

The FPS Foreign Affairs oversees the strategic and political coordination between the various federal authorities and is responsible for coordinating the administrative support.

In 2009 the Egmont Institute will thus be organising two basic courses for Belgian candidates for civil ESDP missions. Training courses and sessions such as these improve the chances of Belgian candidates being selected for foreign missions.

National Strategy for Civil Crisis Management
In a ministerial declaration at the last “General Affairs” Council, the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the European Union undertook to work our national strategies for development and the exchange of information in the field of civil crisis management. In the run-up to the Belgian presidency of the EU in 2010, Belgium will also work out such a strategy.

Europe and world trade
The Doha development agenda
The Doha round was initiated by the World Trade Organisation in 2001. Its main aim was to strengthen the multilateral trade system by promoting liberalisation of the trade in goods and services combined with a better involvement of developing countries in the world economy. After several years of ups and downs, various ministerial conferences, political declarations and technical work, the negotiations were resumed in Geneva in 2008 – talks in which the European Union and Belgium have adopted a prominent role. After it was established, at the impetus of WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy, that the negotiations on agriculture and industrial goods
(NAMA – non agricultural market access) were sufficiently advanced to make an agreement possible, a mini ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation was convened in Geneva at the end of July. The goal was to arrive at agreement on the so-called “terms” for agriculture and NAMA. Services were also still included in the talks. This was possible thanks to a Signalling Conference, a meeting at which participants can give an oral and non-committal indication of how much they are prepared to concede. Although considerable progress was made at the 12-day-long mini ministerial conference, a number of WTO members felt it had not been enough to be able to say that there were prospects of an overall agreement on these issues.

**Belgium continues to work towards an agreement**

Belgium lamented the fact that this ministerial meeting had been unsuccessful, but stressed that considerable progress had been made on the further liberalisation of world trade. The Belgian government therefore confirmed its continued commitment to work hand in hand with the European Commission towards making the Doha round a success. After all, it is convinced that multilateral negotiations based on a system of clear and fair rules constitute the best way of boosting and strengthening the world economy. In the context of the current financial crisis and the resultant economic stagnation, it is absolutely vital that this course of action be adopted in preference to the introduction of measures aimed at protectionism.

With this in mind, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy decided to take up the thread of the negotiations again immediately. Instead of the usual “reflection period”, the ministerial conference was on this occasion immediately followed by a series of bilateral consultations to enable a compromise to be outlined. These constructive talks provided a stimulus for the trade talks that started again in Geneva at the beginning of September.

**Other matters**

Whilst the discussions on the terms for trade in industrial and agricultural products are continuing, further work is also ongoing within the Doha round on such matters as services, trade promotion and the protection of intellectual property.

The original aim of the Doha round (i.e. better integration of developing countries in world trade and a greater legal certainty) is of course still high on our list of priorities.

**Trade and development**

**Negotiations within the WTO**

During the negotiations on the Doha development agenda, Belgium also made sure that enough account was taken of the development aspect. The agreement on terms which was on the verge of being approved in July 2008 made provision for a more sizeable reduction in developing countries’ prices than was demanded of the industrialised countries. This relates in particular to favourable rules governing tropical products, the possibility of special products being indicated that receive a more flexible treatment, the possibility of reacting to a sudden rise in imports by means of a Special Safeguarding Mechanism (SSM), and a slower rate of trade liberalisation in respect of products affected by the gradual reduction of preferences. Belgium advocated these kinds of mechanism, which make it possible for developing countries, and especially the poorest among them, to maintain substantial room for manoeuvre in determining a policy suited to the specific problems they are faced with, such as food security and the need to protect burgeoning industries.

**Economic Partnership Agreements with the ACP countries**

In 2008 further progress was made in the negotiation process to arrive at EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements) with the ACP countries (countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific). These agreements had to replace the trade preferences of the Cotonou agreement, which expired at the end of 2007, with a system in keeping with the WTO rules. The intention is also to contribute to the development of the ACP countries by promoting regional integration and a gradual involvement in world trade. The EPAs are highly “asymmetric” in nature, in the sense that they are heavily in favour of the ACP countries. For example, they give this group of countries the right to export to the EU completely free of import duties and quotas.

The first “full” EPA was signed with the countries of the Caribbean in October 2008. What this amounts to is that the agreement does not only relate to
trade in goods but also applies to other aspects such as services and investments. “Interim” EPAs were also signed with various African countries during the course of the year. These EPAs, which only relate to the trade in goods, meant it was possible to avoid a break in trade flows once the Cotonou preferences lapsed. Under the terms of these interim agreements, which were signed at the end of 2007, the EU granted the countries in question free access to its market from 1 January 2008 onwards, without these countries having to wait for a “full” EPA.

Belgium makes every endeavour to ensure that the development potential of these agreements is fulfilled to best effect, for example by making provision for specific accompanying support measures.

**Assistance for trade**

On the occasion of the WTO Conference held in Hong Kong in 2005, the EU announced that it would be raising the amount earmarked for “assistance for trade” for the benefit of developing countries to EUR 2 billion.

In line with this initiative the Minister for Development Cooperation launched a national strategy for “trade assistance” in June 2008.

A large part of the available funds is intended for ACP countries and will be used to support fulfilment of the EPAs.

**General Preferences Scheme**

Belgium took part in the activities leading to the approval of a new regulation for the General Preferences Scheme in July 2008. This system enables the EU to grant preferential access to the EU market for products from developing countries.

**Free trade agreements and agreements of association**

With the prospect of increasing globalisation, the EU held talks with certain countries and regions with a view to the signing of free trade agreements, in fulfilment of the multilateral commitments entered into in the framework of the Doha development agenda. These are based on the WTO rules, but strive for a quicker opening of markets pursuant to agreements being made on the liberalisation of areas for which no approved multilateral agreements yet apply. This is the case, for example, for the facilitating of investments, the observance of intellectual property rights or access to the market of public procurement contracts.

In addition to this, the EU has determined ambitious opening criteria for the negotiations under way with countries such as South Korea, India and Ukraine. These were especially intense in 2008, since they ran parallel to the talks with the partners in the ASEAN and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The EU also pursued the negotiations with the Andes Community and the countries of Central America with a view to regional association agreements also incorporating political dialogue, closer cooperation and trade. The main aim, from the European standpoint, is thereby to promote regional economic integration.

The FPS Foreign Affairs and its federal and regional partners have defended Belgian interests in all these agreements, and kept a close track of developments in these matters in the Council’s Committee 133, which meets every week and has the job of supporting the European Commission in its trade negotiations.

**Preparation of Belgium’s Presidency of the EU in 2010**

On 1 July 2010 Belgium will take over from Spain and hold the presidency of the EU for six months. In the coalition agreement the government set up an internal steering group (the Monitoring Group) with a view to the Belgian presidency of the EU, and also undertook to set up a Task Force 2010 designed to make the European project tangible and accessible for citizens. In both these bodies, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the State Secretary responsible for preparation of the presidency, the Deputy Prime Ministers and the Ministers-President of the Regions and Communities play an active role. The Task Force has a threefold task: consulting with civil society, informing the public (as a platform for awareness-raising campaigns), and promoting initiatives started up during the Belgian presidency.

The launch of the interactive discussion forum in four languages, “You and Europe”, in November 2008 – a sounding board for people’s opinions on European politics and European policy issues – was the first initiative aimed at boosting interaction between citizens on the European project (via a range of themes). There then followed the initial preparatory work for the consultation of and dialogue with Belgian civil society. Between March and July 2009 seven conferences will be organised in cooperation...
with the Royal Institute for International Relations/Egmont with existing official consultative bodies, social partners and umbrella NGOs on the same number of themes, all in line with the subjects already broached in the forum. The results of this exchange of ideas could be used in the drafting of the programme for Belgium’s presidency of the EU. The discussion of the programme for the Belgian EU presidency takes place at national level, of course, but a start has already been made in close consultation with the two other Member States forming part of the triple presidency of 2010-2011, Spain and Hungary. In consultation with the Commission, these three Member States will together work out a joint programme covering the 18 months of their combined presidencies. This is due to be done by December 2009.

Parallel to the consultation of the public, the practical preparations for the presidency started up in October 2008. A special unit has been created in the DGE, under the responsibility of a member of staff appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In time this versatile team will be extended. Broadly speaking its job will be to support the preparation of the presidency, on behalf of all FPSs, and, for certain areas of competence, federated bodies as well. This general support entails: the drafting of a budget in the form of inter-departmental annual tranches, the definition of good practices and general rules for fulfilment of the presidency and the precise description of the cooperation with the European institutions. As far as the FPS Foreign Affairs is concerned, this unit also oversees general coordination of all the actions taken by the various policy support directorates, with special emphasis on the appointment and assignment of staff. The Presidency Unit will also help draw up the schedule of events for the presidency and will be responsible for coordinating the major ministerial meetings in the second half of 2010.
Belgium in a multilateral context

Belgium is also involved in the fight against terrorism...

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 shocked the world because suddenly we were faced with a movement that did not hesitate to take the lives of thousands of innocent people in order to underline its message.

The UN has taken various measures to tackle terrorism on a world scale.

The UN General Assembly approved a “World Strategy against Terrorism”. The text states that the fight should be fought along four main lines. Firstly, the circumstances propitiating the spread of terrorism should be tackled. Secondly, suitable measures should prevent and combat terrorism. Thirdly, the abilities of the Member States to combat terrorism should be strengthened. Fourthly, in this fight human rights and the rule of law should be respected.

Security Council sanctions

EU Action Plan
The EU outlined an action plan in September 2001 and in December defined a strategy to combat terrorism at world level, in consideration of human rights.

Europe should thus become more secure, so that its citizens can live in an area of freedom, security and justice. By streamlining national policy lines, the EU can provide an added value in terrorism prevention, protection against attacks, the pursuit of criminals and assistance to victims.

Belgian contribution
Belgium fully subscribes to these two complementary strategies. The FPS Foreign Affairs has an Anti-terrorism Unit, headed by the Anti-terrorism Coordinator who monitors the numerous international initiatives and is responsible for the way Belgium interprets and reacts to these. The unit ensures that the necessary measures are taken within the FPS, and ensures smooth coordination of the measures taken by all Belgian bodies.

Thanks to its extensive network of diplomatic and consular missions, the FPS Foreign Affairs helps provide the services involved in the fight against terrorism in Belgium with high-quality information. The purpose of this is to provide insight into the terrorism phenomenon and the means used to combat it internationally.

... whilst ensuring respect for human rights in the process

In the fight against terrorism our FPS pays the greatest possible attention to the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, international humanitarian law and the right to asylum.

These aspects are regularly raised in the various regional and international institutions.
The first organisation to clearly confirm the need to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terrorism was the Council of Europe, when it approved guidelines on this subject in 2002. Since then the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe have deliberated on the issue of the secret detention and illegal transportation of captives.

**Belgium supports Mexican initiative at the UN**

At the UN General Assembly in 2002, Mexico took the initiative of submitting a draft resolution on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terrorism. The country thereby demonstrated its concern over certain measures that some countries were taking to combat terrorism. The European Union backed the Mexican initiative. Since then the country has submitted a resolution on the issue at every session of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Committee (which was replaced by the Council for Human Rights in 2006). The EU Member States are always joint submitting parties when these resolutions are tabled.

These resolutions request states not to keep people in detention in secret, to treat prisoners in accordance with international law regardless of the kind of institution they are kept in, and to respect the right to a fair trial. Belgium regularly negotiates on this resolution on behalf of the EU and is making every effort to have it approved.

**Special Reporter**

In 2005 the Human Rights Committee created the mandate of “Special Reporter” on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terrorism. This post is currently held by the Finn Martin Scheinin. Belgium supports this mandate (the support also entailing a financial contribution).

**Respect for human rights incorporated into the fight against terrorism**

The Security Council has gradually incorporated human rights aspects into the activities of the various mechanisms active in the fight against terrorism. The Council’s resolutions constantly reaffirm the obligation to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terror. There is also regular contact with the Special Reporter.

As chairman of the Committee for Sanctions against Al Qaeda, Belgium has endeavoured to make the procedures fairer and clearer. The UN’s strategy against terrorism contains a major human rights aspect and the Task Force entrusted with implementation involves the High Commission for Human Rights and the Special Reporter in this. The obligation to respect human rights in the fight against terrorism is repeatedly endorsed at European level. The Foreign Affairs Ministers have called for Guantanamo to be closed or for the prisoners to be treated in accordance with international law. This subject is discussed at regular intervals in contacts between the EU and third countries, in particular the USA.

For Belgium, respect for human rights and humanitarian law in the fight against terror is a priority. Our country ensures that account is taken of this in all bodies involved in the fight against terrorism.

**Belgium helps ban cluster munitions**

Diplomatic miracles are not yet a thing of the past. Who could have thought that an international treaty on the prohibition of cluster munitions could be negotiated in the space of barely a year and a half? After all, these kinds of munitions were to be found in large numbers in the military arsenals of countless countries and were still considered in many circles to be necessary for waging war.

Belgium believed that a treaty was possible, as did Norway and a small group of other countries. In February 2007 a diplomatic process was started up with the acceptance of a declaration of prin-
principles. A specific step-by-step plan was also proposed, with conferences in Lima, Brussels, Vienna, Wellington and Dublin. Belgian diplomacy regularly took steps on a worldwide basis to get as many countries as possible “on board”. The number of participants grew and grew, and the outlines of a possible agreement began to come more sharply into focus. The treaty that these persistent efforts led to was signed in Oslo on 3 December by a hundred countries, including some large countries still with stockpiles of cluster munitions.

Of course it would have been better had all the major powers and countries in conflict regions also signed this new treaty, but the broad acceptance we have already achieved is important in itself, since a humanitarian rule has been created which has a dissuasive effect on possible users.

Major progress

The humanitarian importance of this treaty cannot be emphasised enough. Victims in conflict areas are given effective assistance and the unacceptable consequences of cluster munitions on people and the environment are tackled in resolute fashion. It should also be stressed that the international community has been able to reach a multilateral agreement on disarmament for the first time in many years: a category of weapons has been made illegal on account of the excessive suffering the device causes among the civil population.

Ambition and pragmatism

Oslo provides the proof that a combination of healthy ambition and pragmatism is the best recipe for success. Belgium’s concern has always been to bring more and more countries together around a joint project. That sometimes prompted a discrete approach, albeit without detracting in any way from our essential objective. Minister De Gucht had clearly set the course for this goal: the same humanitarian considerations and human values as underpinned the national law of 2006,
whereby the Belgian parliament became the first in the world to ban cluster munitions, should also be promoted universally, since only then would they have the desired effect. The excellent interaction between Foreign Affairs and Defence led to coherence during the negotiation process and convincing Belgian interventions as a result.

Help from NGOs and victims’ first-hand accounts

Our diplomatic action was very usefully supplemented by a high-quality campaign organised by civil-society bodies. With unflagging energy, NGOs, headed by Handicap International, made sure that the problem was brought to the attention of a broad public. The “Coalition against Cluster Munitions” also made valuable contributions to the content of the debate between the states. Finally, we congratulate the NGOs in particular for the way in which they have supported victims of cluster munitions and on some occasions even brought them to the negotiating table itself. Each with their personal story, these victims reminded everyone why an international agreement was so urgent and vital. When the signatories of the treaty in Oslo look the victims in the eye, they will see that the result achieved very amply exceeds their expectations, too.

Belgium rid of cluster munitions by mid 2009

Indeed, the treaty contains clear and measurable obligations. Broadly speaking, the definition of prohibited cluster munitions corresponds to that used in the Belgian law of 2006. The treaty prohibits the use, manufacture, trade or storage of such munitions. A large number of countries have already decided to decommission their arsenal, whilst others have announced that they will no longer be trading in such cluster munitions. These are tangible results that set the tone for countries that have hitherto not ranged themselves behind the treaty. The term for the destruction of existing stocks has been set at eight years, extendable subject to agreement. To meet their commitments the countries concerned will have to make the necessary investments. The Defence Ministry already concluded a contract for the destruction of the Belgian stocks in 2007, under the terms of which all cluster munitions will be destroyed by mid 2009. The operation costs EUR 3 million.

Major clearance operation

The areas where cluster munitions were used have to be cleared, for which a term of ten years (extendable subject to agreement) has been agreed. To enable as efficient a clearance as possible of areas where remains of cluster munitions are still to be found, international cooperation will be extended. It has also been specifically laid down that information must be forwarded on the types, numbers and locations of cluster munitions used. As is the case with landmines, the clearance of cluster munitions in conflict areas is an essential task, for it is only once this has occurred that people can resume their normal lives.

The Belgian mine clearance specialists in Southern Lebanon are clear proof of our commitment to set an example in this field, too. These are tough operations with a degree of risk. A clearly defined distribution of the work among the countries that have sufficient clearance capacity would be desirable.

Assistance to victims

Assistance to victims is an area that receives a lot of attention. The treaty is innovative here, since it takes into account not only the physical but also the psychological and social consequences, including the effects on families and local communities. Belgium has always stressed that assistance to victims should not be arranged over the victims’ heads, but that the victims themselves should be directly involved.
Checking compliance
Belgium has argued vigorously in favour of a clearly defined monitoring structure for the treaty, whereby compliance and the progress made have to be checked at set times. Belgium has gained considerable experience with these reporting and transparency measures, in the context of the treaty on the prohibition of landmines. Indeed, our pioneering role in this field is recognised and appreciated across the board.

Ongoing efforts
Finally, the treaty’s closing paragraphs are very important. All signatory countries will promote the ban on cluster munitions internationally and urge other countries to stop using this form of munitions. Military cooperation with non-treaty countries is still possible in the context of international military operations, but each country’s responsibilities are clearly demarcated. As regards Belgium and the other signatories, the rule is that we reject the use of cluster munitions and will not help other countries use them.

These closing clauses illustrate the treaty’s dynamic nature. The work is not yet over. We are committed to correct observance, international cooperation and the promotion of the generalisation of the ban. Thirty ratifications are needed for the treaty to enter into force. This process needs to be actively monitored.

We must resolutely continue to play the pioneering role we have assumed. It is encouraging to see that so much has been achieved in the short space of time that those taking the initiative set themselves. Belgium began the campaign at the end of 2006. The result today is significant and directly benefits civil populations in war areas. It will protect the majority of the victims of cluster munitions, and speed up post-conflict social and economic reconstruction. This fulfils one of the objectives central to Belgian diplomacy: human security, with respect for the dignity of all people.

Belgium also continues to push for progress in the fight against landmines, the illegal trade in light weapons and the recruitment of child soldiers. In the meantime civil society also has to remain alert and actively get involved in promoting the new treaty on cluster munitions. The countless initiatives taken by individual citizens and associations to raise funds and support projects for the victims of landmines can be extended to include the fight against cluster munitions. A partnership between citizens and government is possible.

Security Council
In 2008 Belgium exercised a mandate in the Security Council for the second year running. This came to an end on 31 December. The structure that had been worked out the year before was maintained unchanged (the five extra diplomats assigned to the representation in New York and the five-man coordination unit in the United States directorate in Brussels). First Ambassador Johan Verbeke, Ambassador from June onwards Jan Grauls, and their adjuncts in New York represented Belgium in the Security Council, while the unit in Brussels acted as sole point of contact and coordination centre for the daily sending of instructions to New York. The mandate in the Security Council brought into sharper focus our FPS’s interest in all crisis situations in the world (Sudan, Congo, Somalia, Kosovo and the Middle East, to name just a few) and in the whole peace and security issue (e.g. the way peacekeeping missions work, the balance between looking for peace and concern for justice, and natural resources and conflicts). Thus Belgium championed a more focused approach on the part of the European Union in the Security Council: it did unflagging work in the fight against impunity, made efforts aimed at more transparent sanctions procedures, and deliberated in no uncertain terms in the debate on
Central Africa. Belgium also tactfully assumed the difficult presidency of the Council in August 2008, when a crisis had blown up between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The well-informed and balanced approach adopted by Belgium in dealing with these issues, its resolute yet pragmatic action, its readiness to arrive at compromises, its firmness of principle, and its responsibilities as a member of the Council have given our country great credibility and visibility and turned our membership of the Council into a genuine success.
Towards more effective development cooperation

In 2005 Belgium signed the “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness”. In 2007 the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGD) transposed this declaration into an action plan of its own and has since worked on the application of this plan. In September 2008 our Minister for Development Cooperation took part, with the DGD, in the monitoring conference in Accra, Ghana. This summit constituted a major occasion for testing progress and fine-tuning commitments. The declarations of intent made by aid-donor and aid-recipient countries, which were reconfirmed and adjusted in Accra, all relate to a number of major principles.

Ownership: the partner countries no longer undergo the aid measures, but manage them themselves
Alignment: the strategies of the partner countries, and no longer the interests of the donor countries, determine the development priorities
Harmonisation: there will be an end to “each donor to himself” and “flag-waving” aid. Donors will henceforth strive for greater effectiveness by means of better coordination and by working in a complementary fashion
Result-driven management: measures will be prepared, budgeted for, implemented and assessed on the basis of results we want to achieve in the short, medium and long term
Reciprocal responsibility: from now on donors and developing countries are development partners.

This implies less geographic and thematic dispersal, concentration on countries and sectors for which Belgium has enough expertise and skills, greater coordination with the other bilateral and multilateral donors, and use of the systems in place in the partner countries. All this goes hand in hand with support to the reform of local bodies and training, predictable aid, and enhanced coordination between all players within their own borders and in their own institutions.

Bilateral direct cooperation

Belgium made up a lot of ground in 2008 as regards bilateral direct cooperation (from one government to another). Seven Joint Committees took place, in which a new “Indicative Cooperation Programme” (ICP) was negotiated each time, with greater account being taken of the Paris Declaration. The number of sectors has been limited to two, efforts are made to bring the various players together in the preparation process and cooperation possibilities are sought with other donors, among other things by means of “delegated” cooperation. The new cooperation programmes negotiated in 2008 with Palestine, Benin, Mozambique, Bolivia, Mali, Niger and Uganda all have a four-year term. Belgium is committing itself to the tune of more than EUR 300 million vis-à-vis these countries.

Indirect cooperation

The undertakings to achieve greater aid effectiveness also relate to indirect cooperation (with NGOs, universities, etc.). Thus the reform of cooperation with NGOs was
completed in 2008. Preference is now given to NGOs being assessed and granted subsidies on the basis of a long-term programme instead of separate projects. This creates opportunities for a more coherent long-term approach, both for the NGOs in question and for the managing department at the DGD. All programme proposals submitted last year were carefully examined and considered in an appraisal committee. The NGO department spent a lot of time on the policy dialogue with the organisations concerned on the subject of this assessment process.

**States General**
Consultations at a larger scale also took place, in the shape of the States General, which was held on 13 and 14 May 2008. The aim was to exchange ideas with all players on the modernisation of Belgian development cooperation, further to the Paris Declaration and its follow-up in Accra, but also on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Prestigious international speakers led the debates.

Internationally used pictograms depicting the MDGs

The discussions centred on the following themes:
- the Millennium Development Goals
- synergy with indirect players
- geographical concentration, sectoral specialisation and assignment of tasks.

Finally, consultations with indirect players were also intensified with a view to improving the way the Joint Committees worked and implementation of the new Indicative Cooperation Programmes. The Joint Committees with Niger and Uganda formed trial projects in this respect.

**Cooperation with less multilateral organisations**
The above-mentioned long-term programme approach has already been in force for some time in respect of cooperation with multilateral organisations. The list of organisations to which Belgium gives voluntary development contributions was adapted in 2008. The number was reduced from 23 to 21: six organisations disappear from the list, and four new ones have been added. These 21 multilateral partner organisations can count on long-term structural contributions, be it for specific projects or not. In principle a policy dialogue is also held with them every year. In addition to these voluntary contributions, many multilateral organisations also receive obligatory membership dues. As a rule these sums have served as core funding, to cover the general operating expenses of the organisation in question.

**Continuing commitment to the Millennium Goals**
By 2015 the international community should have fulfilled eight Millennium Goals. Belgium was one of the countries that signed the Millennium Declaration, in 2000, which enshrines this commitment.

All eight goals are included in Belgium’s development cooperation programme. For this annual report, we will place the spotlight on just two of them, both of which having received special attention at various times in 2008: the 7th goal, sustainable development, and food security.
Focus on sustainable development
The international conference “Climate change, a new challenge for development cooperation?” wholly fitted into this framework. Belgium organised this conference in March 2008, in cooperation with climate professor J.-P. Van Ypersele, who has since been elected chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC). In October 2008 he handed the Minister for Development Cooperation a report entitled “Climate Change and Belgian Development Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities”, in which he makes 13 recommendations for Belgian development cooperation:

- use a precise diagnosis as a base
- work out a clear policy framework for integration
- organise the main integration areas into a hierarchy
- for the time being attach greater importance to adaptation in bilateral projects
- ensure strict supervision of forest protection projects
- ensure strict supervision of projects for the cultivation of energy crops (biofuels)
- keep to the original spirit of the CDM (Clean Development Mechanism)
- launch pilot projects for moderation in the field of energy
- create an Environment/Climate unit within the DGD
- introduce the problem of climate change in contacts with partners at all levels
- increase the budget for development aid
- contribute to greater legibility, simplicity and coherence in the multilateral financing instruments for the fight against climate change
- help strive for a thorough review of development cooperation

The DGD is also working on raising awareness among the general public vis-à-vis the climate problem, which will play a central role in its activities in the next two years. In this respect the DGD is concentrating mainly on bio-diversity and drinking water supply and the effects of climate change on development, and to this end is staging a number of exhibitions:

- the photographic exhibition “Water in Burkina Faso”. This photo-reportage shows how the inhabitants of the Sahel store, manage and deal with such a scarce resource as water. The report is intended to make the public aware of the water problem
- an exhibition on water, entitled “A source of life and a lever for sustainable development”
- an overview of the Millennium Goals
- an exhibition on climate change and desertification and the effects of these phenomena.

A number of Belgian development projects are used as an impetus for finding solutions

- an exhibition on the forests in Congo

To mark World Water Day, the DGD organised a mini exhibition and an awareness-raising event at the Central Railway Station in Brussels.

Paying attention to the food crisis
The financial crisis has to some degree overshadowed the food crisis that various countries in the South are suffering and which nonetheless affects more than 900 million people, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa. In June 2008 a high-level conference on food security was held in Rome, where Belgium undertook to substantially increase the share of total development aid earmarked for farming (to 10% in 2010 and 15% in 2015). In so doing, our country mainly wants to contribute to the supply side of the food problem. There is also a manifest willingness among our partner countries to devote greater attention to the farming sector: in five of the seven new ICPs concluded in 2008, farming or rural development is one
of the two priority sectors. The increase in our contributions to IFAD (the International Fund for Agricultural Development) and CGIAR (Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) is also part and parcel of this objective. Efforts are simultaneously being made to ensure improved access to food. The Belgian Survival Fund makes a point of incorporating the various aspects of the food security problem.

When it came to alleviating the most pressing needs, Belgium provided food aid. Belgian food aid is administered to a large degree through the UN’s specialist agencies, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In this context Belgium argues in favour of food being bought from local farmers’ organisations and in 2008 supported the WFP’s revolutionary project “P4P – Purchase for Progress”, which is aimed at strengthening the local market.

Relations with Belgian citizens
Our FPS endeavours to ensure that its work comes to the attention of as wide a public as possible, not only because Belgian taxpayers have a right to know what is done with public funds, but also because development cooperation should not be viewed as something “that’s got nothing to do with me”. It should be something with which all Belgian citizens should concern themselves. After all, development cooperation aims to do its bit to create rosier prospects for the future and better living conditions for people in the South. If, by doing this, we manage to contribute to greater stability and security in the South, we will also be building greater stability and security worldwide.
Magazine
The quarterly magazine Dimension 3 is just one of the tools used by our FPS to provide better communication on development cooperation. The publication was given a makeover in 2008. The magazine is also available online.

Website
The DGD website (www.dgdc.be), which started up in 2001, provides the public with information about Belgian development cooperation in the form of news items, general information on activities in the field of development, statistics, reports, etc. All decisions taken by Belgian development cooperation concerning the granting of subsidies can also be found on the website. In this way the DGD also wants to ensure transparent communication about how development cooperation works. In 2008 around 21,000 people visited the development cooperation website.
Organisational chart of the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
Minister

Chairman Executive Committee

DG Bilateral Affairs (B)

DG Consular Affairs (C)

DG Development Cooperation (D)

DG European Affairs and Coordination (E)

DG Legal Affairs (J)

DG Multilateral Affairs and Globalisation (M)

Policy unit

B&B Budget & Management Control

P&O Personnel and Organisation

ICT Information and Communication Technology
Map of worldwide FPS representations at home and abroad, (November 2008)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
Communication Department
Rue des Petits Carmes 15
B-1000 Brussels
Tel.: +32 (0)2 501 81 11
www.diplomatie.be
(www.dgdc.be – www.diplomatie.be)

Photographs:
› FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
› BELGA

Graphics, layout, printing and binding:
› CIBE vzw communicatie op maat van de publieke sector

Content Officer:
Dirk Achten, Rue des Petits Carmes 15, B-1000 Brussels

The information contained in this publication is for information purposes only and does not legally bind the FPS in any way.

May 2009

Legal registration: 0218/2009/08