## CONTENTS

**Foreword** by Karel DE GUCHT, Minister for Foreign Affairs  

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

2. **Serving the public**  
   1. Consular affairs  
   2. Crisis management  

3. **Policy**  
   1. Belgium in a bilateral context  
   2. Belgium in the European Union  
   3. Belgium in a multilateral context  
   4. Belgium and development cooperation  

4. **Annexes**  
   • Organisational chart of the FPS  
   • Map of worldwide FPS representations (Belgium and abroad) (November 2007)  
   • Acknowledgements
Over the last year we have seen confirmation of a long-standing trend towards an ever more complex and globalised world. New themes, new relationships and new players are increasingly making a mark on international relations.

These developments are posing challenges for FPS Foreign Affairs in terms of both policy and organisation, prompting us to modify our structures so that the focus is now more on new overarching themes such as energy, the climate, migration and fighting terrorism. It is an approach that already bore fruit in 2007, with Belgium holding international conferences on migration and good governance, thus raising the international profile of our efforts. We also developed an active policy on human security that was appreciated in Belgium and abroad in light of, for example, the regional conference on cluster bombs and our efforts to promote transparency and good governance in the African raw materials sector.

Belgium has a tradition of conducting an active foreign policy and it has been particularly busy the last year.

The seat we held on the United Nations Security Council made a significant contribution to this, as the UN is after all the ideal forum for addressing new challenges and shaping international relations. Belgium’s involvement in the hottest international issues of the day, such as the Middle East, Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of Congo to name but a few, underlines the importance we attach to an effective multilateral approach.

However, Belgium’s positions on these issues can only be considered credible if we follow up words with deeds, hence the significance of Belgium’s concrete commitment to the peace process in the Middle East as it announced substantial financial support for the Palestinian government at an international donor conference in Paris in late 2007. Similarly, stepping up our development cooperation with Central Africa is important for the coherence and credibility of our policy.

The European Union is one of the best tools for offering a tangible response to the challenges thrown up by globalisation. As a founding member and advocate of further European integration, Belgium is very pleased that the Union has managed to bring the discussions about the EU reform treaty
to a successful conclusion. New challenges such as climate and energy can only be effectively tackled at EU level, and a start was made on these efforts in 2007. This issue will only grow in importance over the coming years and must be vigorously followed up by the FPS.

In terms of bilateral relations, much of our attention focused on the work to support peace, stability and good governance in the Great Lakes Region and our efforts to keep this topic high on the international agenda. Belgium’s bilateral policy is not limited to just Africa of course: we also gave Asia - with its increasing importance on the international stage - the attention it deserves. Belgium also devoted energy to good transatlantic relations and is particularly pleased that its proposal of transatlantic Gymnich meetings has grown into a success story. Particular attention was also paid to ‘economic diplomacy’, which was given fresh impetus. We will further intensify our efforts in that policy area in 2008.

Finally, we can look back with pride on the successful organisation of voting for Belgians abroad, with over 120,000 of them taking part in the recent parliamentary elections.

All these achievements are the result of the boundless commitment of our whole workforce at both Central Administration and the missions and were facilitated by the FPS’s modernisation drive. The modernisation process concerns each and every one of our team and will need to be pursued as time goes on. That is why it is important that it have a broad base of support amongst the personnel. Concrete results can already be seen in the form of renewed recruitment, increased budgetary autonomy, simplified procedures and construction of new buildings.

I would like to thank you all for your commitment and contribution to these achievements, and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future to bring our shared aspirations to life.

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

Entrenching modernisation

No fewer than five new directors-general took over the reins in 2007. This led to the drafting of completely new versions of all the management and support plans – including the one for the Chairman of the Executive Committee. In addition to focusing on new or recent FPS tasks, the plans set out the principles of good governance: clear and measurable objectives and meaningful indicators.

Lessons have also been learned from a year of using the Executive Committee scoreboards. We have found that regular monitoring and supervision of the FPS's basic missions is essential, but this will be streamlined to keep the FPS on the right course, with its focus on serving the public, providing coordination and preparing policy.

Changes in half the members of the Executive Committee also led to further improvements in the management structure. Greater emphasis is being placed on long-term planning and decisions are being communicated better to all personnel.

The revamped Modernisation and Management Support Department (S.06) is contributing to this drive for self-discipline. In 2007 too, the department encouraged personnel (in a user-friendly way) to adopt a project-based approach to their work, so that good intentions are backed up by concrete time-limited projects. The tangible results of this targeted approach are addressed in the various sections of this activity report, e.g. the far-reaching computerisation of consular services, the extension of the Accounting network, the start of a new economic diplomacy drive, the stepping up of the Knowledge Management programme, the restyling of the Missions Inspectorate, the operationalisation of development circles and the constant modernisation of our IT infrastructure.

Renewed attention was also paid to dialogue with our missions. The aim is to produce a task description that more accurately reflects our priority missions.

We completed our Charter for a Customer-Friendly FPS. It reaffirms the desire of all our departments to actually address the needs of Belgian citizens, companies and organisations.

Modernisation and computerisation of management on course

For Budget and Management Control (B&B), 2007 too was a year of modernisation of the management of the FPS – both in Brussels and at the missions.

It must be borne in mind here that the budgetary context was more complex than in previous years, as B&B had to respect principles of budgetary caution inherent to managing affairs for a caretaker government.

The directorates-general have provided B&B with their full backing during this precarious period in the support directorate’s efforts to minimise the impact of B&B’s budgetary caution on the FPS.
Computerisation projects

2007 saw the final rollout of TravelNet (for managing business trips) and Accounting (for the accounting and supervision of missions management) – the product of many years of hard work and fruitful cooperation between the B&B and ICT support directorates.

In terms of risk management, B&B continued to work on introducing new supervision procedures for budget implementation. The following step will be to analyse the risks associated with public procurements in the FPS. For 2008 the launch of an internal audit unit is also on the agenda, to implement the recent royal decrees.

Concrete service standards

With the arrival of new Executive Committee members, it was decided to update the management plans of the DGs and the Chairman. In this connection, B&B provided considerable methodological support in the task of converting the DGs’ operational objectives into concrete service standards – a major step in the process of updating the Executive Committee’s scoreboards.

Finally, mention should be made of the radical changes made to the financial management of our consular activities. The changes aim to increase transparency and simplify administration.

New intranet system: Diplonet

The completely revamped FPS Foreign Affairs intranet, Diplonet, was launched in June 2007. The result is impressive: not only is the design much more attractive than the old intranet, but major changes have also been made to the content.

The information is now logically structured by topic and keyword, with further details being provided in different sections managed by the departments responsible for the relevant information. This decentralised approach offers multiple benefits (such as greater clarity for the user) but also throws up new challenges for the project team in terms of coordination and skills, making it very important that appropriate training is provided for the section administrators.

Other new and promising developments are the efficient search engine and the integration of work sites into the intranet. Work sites are electronic work areas for a restricted group of people (for instance, a department, a project group or a network) where shared lists can be compiled, ideas exchanged, arrangements posted, and so forth. Together with the intranet, work sites represent an important step forward in the drive to improve the FPS’s knowledge management. They enhance the FPS’s collective memory, facilitate the integration of newcomers, reduce the risks of knowledge being lost when there are changes of personnel or personnel retire, and promote joined-up services for the people using them.

The intranet/work sites project will be continued and developed over the coming months and years. The idea is to make it the very heart of the learning organisation that FPS Foreign Affairs wants to become.
**WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?**

- An intranet is an essential tool for any enterprise today.
- Diplonet has become the main channel in the FPS for sharing information and data in electronic form and also for internal communication.
- The more systematic management of our information and knowledge that the intranet entails boosts the FPS’s collective memory and helps to make our operations more efficient and our services better and more joined up.

---

**Increased security for people and data**

**Information security: spearhead of the National Security Authority**

Since February 2007 the secretariat of the National Security Authority (ANS/NVO) has operated autonomously. For administrative purposes, though, it continues to be run by the Chairman of the Executive Committee.

3,088 security clearance investigations were launched and 4,366 security clearances issued between 1 November 2006 and 1 November 2007. The backlog in handling cases was completely cleared. Since 1 January 2007 ANS/NVO has been responsible for carrying out screening and issuing security clearances for European summits. Around four thousand of these were issued in 2007.

A new software program aimed at simplifying the administrative processing of cases is being developed in conjunction with ICT and the ICT department of GISS (the Belgian military intelligence and security service). This program should be operational in the spring of 2008. The application will speed up the service.

**Better protection for diplomatic missions**

In February 2007, the Security Directorate (S.07) split from ANS/NVO. Since then it has specially focused on protecting Central Administration and the diplomatic missions as well as on security clearances for FPS personnel.

**Protecting Central Administration and the diplomatic mission**

A number of ‘sensitive’ departments at Central Administration were given special ‘physical’ protection, meaning that there is no access to these services for unauthorised persons.

In view of the international situation, S.07 tried to provide the most effective protection it could for the diplomatic missions. This involved using security firms at some missions.

Based on intelligence from the Coordinating Body for Threat Analysis (OCAM/OCAD) and information from the missions, inspection reports and similar sources, S.07 gives advice and recommendations to the departments responsible for buildings abroad regarding the physical protection of embassies, consulates general and residences. The same applies to protecting confidential documents.

S.07 also helps to develop security measures for the FPS and embassies and consulates abroad.

**Security clearances for all FPS personnel**

Since the appointment of two security officers at S.07, all security clearances for personnel have been sent to this department which subjects them to an initial analysis and then passes them on to ANS/NVO for follow-up.

Under this procedure, S.07 forwarded 148 forms to ANS/NVO between February and the end of October 2007.

S.07 now also always informs personnel just before their clearance expires.

Between February and the end of October 2007, 260 applications to renew security clearances for personnel were sent to Central Administration and the diplomatic missions.
WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?

To modernise the FPS:
- to offer quicker and better service;
- to make more effective use of taxpayers’ money;
- to provide greater security for people and data.

Two new FPS policy units

Peacebuilding Department funds peace projects

In late 2006 a new unit was set up within the departments attached to the Chairman of the Executive Committee: the Peacebuilding Department. Its task is to fund conflict prevention and peace-building projects “on the basis of specific thematic and geographical priorities of our foreign policy”.

To this end, the Peacebuilding Department (S.05) had at its disposal a total budget of €27,184,000 in 2007.

All funding proposals are assessed on the basis of criteria approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and given on the FPS’s website: [http://www.diplomatie.be/en/policy](http://www.diplomatie.be/en/policy)

The Peacebuilding Department focused on the following areas in 2007:
- building and reinforcing the rule of law;
- combating anti-personnel mines;
- establishing free and democratic media;
- helping refugees and displaced persons;
- managing natural resources efficiently and fairly;
- electoral processes;
- (re)integrating ex-fighters and child soldiers.

The Peacebuilding Department’s geographical focuses were the Great Lakes Region, the Balkans and the Middle East. Particular attention was also paid to Nepal and Sudan.

A separate annual report covering the Peacebuilding Department’s activities in 2007 will be published in the spring of 2008.
WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?

To invest in peacebuilding:
- to end the suffering of people in war zones;
- to make the lives of Belgians safer in countries far away from home;
- to facilitate travel worldwide;
- to create a climate conducive to economic growth and so attract potential customers and suppliers for Belgian companies.

Public Diplomacy Unit safeguarding Belgium’s reputation

Our relations with other countries are by no means limited to contact with foreign governments. ‘Public diplomacy’ is a diplomatic tool that we use to promote support and understanding for our policy ideas and values amongst ‘non-traditional dialogue partners’ abroad (the media, think tanks, academics, NGOs and civil society in general).

The Public Diplomacy Unit was set up within Press and Communication (P&C) in early 2007. It acts as a point of contact for the missions if they encounter specific image problems related to the local situation.

Special intranet site

The Public Diplomacy Unit administers and provides material for a site on Diplonet, the FPS’s intranet. The intranet site aims to supply information to the missions about a wide range of topics. The documents and data are not intended to be sent on to third parties in the form in which they appear on the intranet but to serve as reference documents or sources of inspiration for heads of missions and their personnel. They can refer to them if they have to answer questions in their official capacities, react to negative, incorrect or over-simplified reporting about Belgium, give interviews or make speeches – and, needless to say, the information can also be used in their more informal contacts.

On the site interested parties will find for example topic-based working papers of general interest. They are regularly updated and new ones are added when appropriate. As the missions are best placed to judge those topics they want to be able to quickly obtain information about, suggestions from them are always welcome, not to say vital. The site also features a section with news about Belgium in the local press that has been found by our missions. A section entitled “Good news from Belgium” contains information that shows off Belgium to its best advantage, such as positive statistics, prizes won by Belgians, success stories and world firsts in medicine or science. The site also reproduces interesting press articles about Belgium as well as documents that may act as a source of inspiration for mission personnel. The photos section is also worth a look.

2008 will see the Public Diplomacy intranet site being elaborated further and the section with working papers expanded. In addition, we will organise actions to proactively focus the attention of other countries on Belgium’s assets.

A good reputation is important

‘Public diplomacy’ is a diplomatic tool that concentrates mainly on enhancing Belgium’s image and reputation in public opinion abroad, as the perception of Belgium amongst the ‘non-traditional dialogue partners’ who are our target audience affects the picture that foreign decision-makers, businesspeople and potential investors have of Belgium. In part, ‘public diplomacy’ can’t help but be defensive. However, in view of the definition of the concept of ‘soft power’ of Harvard professor Joseph S. Nye – “the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals” – it is essential that public diplomacy is mainly proactive. In our specific situation that means that we can achieve results on the international stage if we actively communicate our values, norms and strengths, so that other countries feel like following us, copying our example and joining us in striving for greater hope, openness and progress.
WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?

To invest in building and protecting a good reputation:
- to create a sympathetic attitude towards Belgian citizens and companies;
- to promote understanding between peoples.

Increasing numbers visiting FPS websites

The FPS Foreign Affairs website, diplomatie.be – written in four languages – has always set great store by user-friendliness and accessible information for a broad range of users. The number of visitors to the main site www.diplomatie.be is rising every year. In 2007 the website attracted an average of 8,500 visitors per day. More than 45% of them are Belgians. Foreign visitors to the site live in countries with large Belgian expatriate communities such as the Netherlands, France, Germany, the UK, the US and Canada and countries with large numbers of people emigrating to Belgium: Morocco, Algeria, Turkey, India, China, Russia and Thailand.

The most popular pages are the ones containing visa information – “Schengen visa” is the most common search term – and travel information, with a very diverse set of users taking in both backpackers and business managers making much use of the sections providing travel advice, travel documents and addresses of other countries’ embassies in Brussels or of Belgian embassies and consulates abroad. However, diplomatie.be offers a great deal more information than that, with details on Belgian foreign policy (both bilateral and multilateral), consular affairs, treaties, and so forth.

In 2007, the missions made a special effort to substantially expand the information provided by their local websites, which have become a major source of information (both general information and in particular about consular affairs). They save the missions’ ‘customers’ expensive telephone calls. There was also a rise in the number of missions publishing a regular newsletter for Belgian expats and interested non-Belgians.

The www.diplomatie.be site and its sub-sites (over 120 of them) will be completely revamped in 2008.

Development Cooperation website

The DGDC website (www.dgdc.be), launched in 2001, tells the public about Belgian development cooperation and contains news, press releases, general information about DGDC activities, statistics, reports, and so on. In 2007 the DGDC website attracted about 21,000 visitors per month.

Temporary websites

The FPS also developed three temporary websites in 2007. The biggest was set up for the meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development held at Egmont Palace in June. This is a totally separate site from the FPS main site and has its own look and feel. A website was also launched for the “Improving Governance and Fighting Corruption” conference in March 2007, this time within diplomatie.be, featuring specific information about the conference (programme, speakers and their presentations, etc.). Finally, the FPS also has a site (in three languages and again a sub-site of diplomatie.be) to tell citizens about Belgian contributions and activities at the UN Security Council, on which Belgium currently has a seat for two years.

www.gfmd-fmmd.org

International public law

One of the primary missions of the International Public Law Directorate is to disseminate information about how Belgium is applying international customary law and the international treaties it has signed. Requests for such information come from our external partners, such as embassies in Brussels, lawyers, international institutions in Brussels and, lastly, universities and students.
Requests are complied with – as far as time and our limited human resources allow – so as to provide the clearest possible picture of the application of international law in Belgium.

Protocol

Diplomatic missions
Over the last year, the administrative management of diplomatic missions in Brussels has improved further, with optimisation of services and continuing modernisation of operations.

Alongside the diplomatic list that was already available there, the Protocol Directorate website (launched in 2005) has added extra information about the rules of protocol for the diplomatic community.

The year 2007 also saw particular attention paid to the issue of respect for transport legislation by diplomats and also to mediation for settling disputes involving diplomatic missions and their personnel. Furthermore, the directorate attaches importance to the terms and conditions of employment of diplomats’ domestic personnel. A last point to note is that the technical equipment for creating driving licences for diplomatic missions was updated.

The diplomatic community in Brussels continues to grow, in terms of both number of missions and number of personnel, and now numbers 279 diplomatic missions (180 bilateral embassies and 99 multilateral delegations and Permanent Representations). Countries which were previously represented in Belgium by a mission abroad bring the total number of diplomatic missions managed by the Protocol Directorate to 287. Increasing numbers of them are opening a new diplomatic mission in Brussels.

Over the first eleven months of 2007, 10,615 new identity cards were issued. These included 5,642 diplomatic cards, 1,918 for administrative and technical personnel and 2,190 members of the service personnel, domestic personnel and civil servants on an official mission.

In 2007, 1,814 diplomatic corps vehicle registration numbers were issued. Factoring in the number of such registration numbers that were returned, this represented an increase of 374. A total of 6,449 such registration numbers are in circulation: 4,401 for diplomats’ personal vehicles and 2,048 for diplomatic missions’ official vehicles.

In November there were 59,451 people with privileges managed by the Protocol & Security (P&S) Directorate (both holders and their families). Of them one-third were working for diplomatic missions and two-thirds were working for international organisations.

Consulates and international organisations

Seven honorary consuls and six career consuls were appointed in 2007 (as things stood on 20 October 2007). Procedures have been started to open five honorary consulates, one consulate general and appoint twelve honorary consuls and one career consul.

Two new headquarters agreements were also signed/concluded with international organisations, whilst the UN opened another agency. A total of 19,992 civil servants have been issued with a special identity card by the P&S Directorate, and there are some 70 international organisations or representation offices in Brussels.

Visits, royal trips and security of diplomatic missions in Brussels

One state visit to Belgium was organised in 2007: that of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Luxembourg (20-22 March). There were also two Belgian state visits to foreign countries: Latvia (22-25 April) and the Republic of Ireland (8-10 October).
The main working visits were as follows:

- The visits in June by Chinese Trade Minister Bo Xilai and President Calderón of Mexico;
- In July, the preparations for the meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and hosting of VIPs attending the event;
- The visit in August by Mrs Kabila, the wife of the president of the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- The visits in September by President Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo and President Vazquez of Uruguay;
- The visits in October by President Kotcharian of Armenia and President Topi of Albania.

To improve services for VIPs at the airport in Zaventem, P&S together with the Directorate-General for Legal Affairs (DGJ) and B&B drew up a draft agreement between the airport and the Protocol Department. Under the agreement, an annual contribution of €1.2 million will be paid for using the VIP lounge at the airport and for creating diplomatic passes.

**Egmont Palace, conference centre and Val Duchesse**

**Egmont conference centre**

Pursuant to Article 140 of the coordinated laws on government accounting of 17 July 1991, an autonomous public service was expanded and commissioned in 2007 to take over management of paid hire of the conference halls and rooms at the Egmont conference centre (Egmont Palace and Egmont II).

The project, which was included in the programme law of 27 December 2006, came about thanks to close cooperation between P&S and FPS support directorates (B&B, ICT and P&O), the S departments, the Foreign Affairs Policy Unit and the Budget, Finance and Justice policy units.

Through dynamic use of the premises, the government will be able to communicate Belgium’s image even more effectively and at the same time cut the variable costs previously borne by the Treasury.

Specifically, 2007 was marked by:

- The launch and initial implementation of the conclusions of a market study on invitations to tender and tenders, the establishment of a pricing policy and the main features of a business plan;
- The drafting and application of an ad-hoc set of rules on managing the international conference centre at Egmont II-Egmont Palace – CC Egmont for short (Royal Decree of 27 April 2007 on the composition of the management committee and the financial management of the autonomous public service);
- The development of specific management tools (hire contract, choice of suitable software, electronic diary, insurance policies, and so on);

### Some figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applications recorded for</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cards for the diplomatic corps car park at Zaventem:</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cards for priority access to Zaventem airport:</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIP treatment at Zaventem airport:</td>
<td>3,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security measures for VIPs (and applications for VIP treatment at Melsbroek and Abelag airports and Brussels South station):</td>
<td>4,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security cases (burglaries, terrorist threats, protests, etc.):</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the reorganisation of the P&SS Department to prepare personnel for the new challenges facing them (recruitment – partially completed – of ten extra personnel to make up the Conference Centre Team);

> the preparation of a marketing plan (synergy, media tools, website, prospectus, and so on) and a short-term budget;

> the organisation or supervision, since 31 May 2007, of some 25 paying events.

**Conference Management Team**

In addition to the major CC Egmont project, P&SS set up the Conference Management Team to help fellow personnel from the DGs prepare and organise large-scale international conferences, such as the ‘Good Governance’ conference in the spring and the Global Forum on Migration and Development in the summer.

**Regular missions**

It is also worth mentioning that P&SS’s day-to-day maintenance tasks at Egmont Palace and Val Duchesse are continuing, as well as the organisation - here and in the new large Egmont II conference hall - of hundreds of meetings and conferences on Belgian foreign policy.

---

**Nobility and honours**

Pursuant to 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 Honours Department – in close cooperation with the Prime Minister’s departments – has already drawn up a number of specific regulations and equivalences in the public sector, such as for federal civil servants, the integrated police services and educational personnel. Other regulations will follow.

The Honours Department also prepared a convenient guide that will be made available to the administrations involved and provided assistance for the publications “De Belgische Nationale Orden” and “Les Ordres nationaux belges” [“The Belgian Honours List” in Dutch and French respectively], edited by P. Van Hoorebeeke (Uga, Heule, 2007).
Modernisation of personnel policy on schedule

2007 saw FPS Foreign Affairs continuing to modernise its personnel policy, as part of the set of relevant initiatives that have been launched within the federal administration.

Certified training courses
The chance for personnel to develop their professional skills by taking certified training courses is one of the essential components of the modernisation drive.

Accordingly, a large number of level A certified training courses were started in 2007. In the cases of levels B and C, the competency assessments that have been in place since the start of the new career paths involving these two levels were replaced by certified training courses.

New career paths started
In 2007 the new career path for level D personnel was introduced, meaning that now these civil servants too have the chance to register for a certified training course.

Level A job descriptions are given on the federal job map website (www.cartographiefederale.be).

The job map is a database offering an overview of all the jobs in the federal administration. All the jobs became ‘active’ in day-to-day practice for the first time upon the launch of the development circles, in February 2007.

Job map developing
Other typical Foreign Affairs jobs still need to be more closely defined to make the FPS’s job map complete.

The job map will develop in parallel with the FPS’s mission.

Development in personnel
The 2007 personnel plan for Central Administration provided for an increase of several dozen units, with some of these units intended to offset departures. The plan will have been fully implemented by the start of 2008.

The FPS recruited eighteen personnel for the foreign service in 2007: four diplomats, thirteen chancellors and one Attaché for Development Cooperation. The tables on page 14 show the composition of the FPS’s personnel both at Central Administration and abroad as at 1 November 2007, and the number and category of missions. The map annexed at the end of the report shows the location of the missions.
In 2007, two missions were closed: the embassy in Libreville in Gabon and the consulate in Palma de Mallorca. Missions were opened in four locations: an embassy in Baku, a Permanent Representation at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and at other international institutions in The Hague, a consulate general in Bukavu (actual opening in November 2007), and a consulate in Nice (previously an honorary consulate).
3. Buildings

Buildings abroad

The FPS runs approximately 350 buildings abroad, half of which it owns. The total value of the FPS’s fixed assets is about €375 million. Most of the properties are official residences of heads of missions. Other buildings, mainly chancelleries, are rented and cost between €9 million and €10 million per annum.

In 2007, the investment budget totalled approximately €21 million. These resources were used on major construction projects and real estate purchases.

The Buildings Master Plan gives an indicative rundown of revenue and expenditure of the Buildings Fund over the next four years. This pertains to major real estate transactions and priority renovation and construction projects.

The main real estate transaction in 2007 was the partial sale of the Belgian embassy in Tokyo. The revenue from selling part of the site will pay for construction of a new embassy on the section that remains the property of the Belgian government, and this still leaves a considerable surplus.

Buildings in Brussels

These buildings are rented. The main building, Egmont I, is located at 15 Rue des Petits Carmes and Egmont II is at 24 Rue des Petits Carmes. In addition, office buildings are being rented at 48 and 59 Rue de Namur.

The FPS also runs Egmont Palace and the castle of Val Duchesse in partnership with the Buildings Agency (Régie des Bâtiments/Regie der Gebouwen).

WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?

MORE MOTIVATED PERSONNEL = BETTER SERVICE

The Personnel and Organisation support directorate aims to constantly improve the service it offers to the public. With this goal in mind, it intends to use its recruitment policy and appropriate training courses as tools to ensure that the FPS has competent, motivated personnel working within the most appropriate organisational structures (both at Central Administration and at the missions), thus allowing them to satisfy the demands made of them.

The FPS is represented at job fairs and holds information sessions about vacancies.

2007 saw the Personnel and Organisation support directorate recruit a diversity officer to ensure that the federal government’s diversity policy is implemented.

The FPS put a great deal of effort into improving its service to the public in 2007, focusing in particular on public access and the reception that members of the public are given, as well as on the security of the buildings.
## 4. Budget and financial resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Commitment amount (in € thousands)</th>
<th>Organisation amount (in € thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,020</td>
<td>3,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,480</td>
<td>2,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>1,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67,689</td>
<td>67,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15,613</td>
<td>15,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,983</td>
<td>1,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,480</td>
<td>2,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>1,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>1,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,517</td>
<td>3,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>1,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67,689</td>
<td>67,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23,522</td>
<td>14,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>422</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>170,191</td>
<td>170,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6,742</td>
<td>6,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,219</td>
<td>2,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>134,540</td>
<td>136,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,016,808</td>
<td>953,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,410</td>
<td>3,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,410</td>
<td>3,410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
122,000 Belgians abroad cast their vote

As in 2003, the FPS organised the participation of Belgians living abroad in the federal parliamentary elections of 10 June 2007.

The operation started in December 2006 with the FPS writing to about 250,000 Belgians, inviting them to register to vote. When registering, they had to indicate their voting method and the municipality where they wanted to be entered in the electoral register. 122,140 voters were registered.

Preparation of elections

When electoral registration forms came in, our embassies and consulates checked to see that they were correctly filled in and that no information had been omitted. Then they sent them on via the FPS to the relevant municipalities in Belgium, where voters were added to the municipal electoral register, and the appropriate entries were made in the national register.

In collaboration with the municipalities, FPS Home Affairs and the major polling stations, invitations to vote were sent to voters and ballot papers sent to embassies and consulates.

**Choice of voting method:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting method</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Belgium (in person or by proxy)</td>
<td>29,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At an embassy or consulate</td>
<td>16,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By post</td>
<td>75,745</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Choice of Belgian constituency:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>16,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limburg</td>
<td>5,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Flanders</td>
<td>9,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Flanders</td>
<td>8,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flemish Brabant (Leuven)</td>
<td>3,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde</td>
<td>29,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walloon Brabant</td>
<td>7,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hainaut</td>
<td>14,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liège</td>
<td>13,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>6,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namur</td>
<td>5,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ballot papers were sent to the 75,000 Belgians across the world who had chosen to vote by post.

**Elections on 8 and 9 June**

Belgians residing outside the European Union voted on Friday, 8 June, whilst Belgians living in another EU country voted on Saturday, 9 June. Belgians cast their votes in a total of 110 embassies and consulates. In most of them there was one polling station (in some cases two, given the number of voters) where Belgians could vote.

Completed ballot papers were brought to Brussels in good time from the embassies and consulates.

Postal votes were brought to their respective destinations in Belgium.

The FPS counted the votes cast in embassies and consulates and also the ballot papers for Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde.

The count was held in a room in the Tour and Taxis complex and involved 252 civil servants (some of them from other federal FPSs). There were 41 counting stations and one ‘canton station’.

The results from the special vote counting station were available before midnight on 10 June.
2. Crisis management

FPS Foreign Affairs, travellers and crises

The Crisis Centre – Travel Warning Unit – B-FAST Department (S.01) has been in operation within FPS Foreign Affairs since 2003. It has three areas of action:
> assisting Belgian citizens who find themselves in crisis situations abroad;
> travel advice for Belgians who are planning to go abroad;
> providing emergency aid for local communities who are in a crisis situation, by deploying B-FAST.

Assisting Belgians abroad

The Crisis Centre is activated whenever there is a threat to the security of a group of Belgian citizens abroad and there is an unusually high number of telephone calls coming in from Belgians seeking information regarding the situation. In such cases, it acts as a coordination centre, communicating with all those concerned and the population. Of course, this involves close cooperation with the embassies and consulates in the countries concerned and also with the relevant countries’ embassies in Brussels.

In 2007, the Crisis Centre was pressed into action in March in response to the violence in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ultimately, however, it was not necessary to start evacuating Belgians from the country.

Travel advice for 136 countries

The FPS tries to help prevent Belgian citizens abroad from ending up in difficult situations. To this end, we provide information for those planning to go abroad on the situation at their destination and warn them of any problems or dangers they might encounter.

In 2007, the FPS published travel advice for 136 countries.

1,500 website visitors per day check our travel advice

FPS Foreign Affairs has been posting travel warnings on www.diplomatie.be since 2001. Every day an average of 1,500 visitors check the warnings. The FPS also receives a large number of telephone and written enquiries. The information provided by the FPS puts travellers in a better position to weigh up the risks involved in staying in a specific country – in terms of security, social or political unrest, natural phenomena and health risks.

The situation in countries where there are problems or there is a risk of problems occurring is closely monitored.

The travel advice format was changed in November 2006. For example, one innovation is a number indicating the safety risk. We have learned useful lessons from our experience over the year that the new system has been up and running and changes are planned to further improve the information available to travellers.

The website also gives information about the incidence of bird flu.
Belgians in crisis situations are not the only people to benefit from Belgian solidarity. In the event of disasters and emergency situations affecting primarily the local population, the local authorities often ask for emergency aid from Belgium and the international community.

In 2000 the Belgian Council of Ministers decided to set up a cross-departmental rapid reaction unit known as the Belgian First Aid and Support Team (B-FAST), which can be deployed in such situations.

The Royal Decree of 28 February 2003 governing the establishment of B-FAST defines ‘emergency aid abroad’ as “any deployment of personnel and/or equipment abroad, which is to be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on the specific nature of the situation in the country hit by the catastrophe or calamity, and excluding the emergency aid provided for aftercare and rehabilitation [...]”.

In other words, a B-FAST operation consists in the first place of short-term direct or indirect emergency aid abroad. For this aid, B-FAST can call on posted workers provided by bodies participating in B-FAST, such as the Ministry of Defence, FPS Home Affairs, FPS Health and FPS Foreign Affairs. Sometimes B-FAST limits its activities to providing material aid to a country that has been hit by a disaster, in which case it operates through one of its partners.

**Active in the field**

2007 saw B-FAST interventions in Peru in August following a severe earthquake that hit the country and in Mexico in November after floods affected over one million people there. In July and October, B-FAST provided an expert to the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) for missions to Pakistan and Ghana to assess the damage following major floods in those countries.

Lastly, B-FAST provided material assistance for a training course and an exercise organised in Lausanne by UNDAC in late April-early May 2007.

**WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?**

To invest in crisis management and travel advice:
- to make the world a safer place;
- to make travel safer and more pleasant;
- to facilitate investments;
- to better protect investments.
Western Europe

Towards a new Benelux Treaty
A ceremony was held in Luxembourg on 18 June 2007 to mark the official launch of negotiations for a new Benelux Treaty. On behalf of the Committee of Ministers composed of the three partners, chairman Karel De Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs, made a statement in the presence of his Dutch and Luxembourg counterparts, Maxime Verhagen and Jean Asselborn. In it, he emphasised the political will of the three countries to extend the Benelux Treaty beyond 2010, when the current treaty is due to expire.

The statement declares that the intention is to modernise the treaty and update it to reflect developments since 1960, with the Benelux Economic Union being reformed to make it a modern, dynamic regional organisation with a suitably high profile abroad. The changes to the Benelux Treaty will also take the federal structure of the Belgian state into consideration.

In terms of their content, the negotiations will mainly seek to streamline the institutions, increase political control of the organisation’s activities by the Committee of Ministers and make it more flexible, with a view to enabling the Benelux to react quickly to new needs and also take account of EU political dialogue.

Five rounds of negotiations have already been held since the official launch. FPS Foreign Affairs is in charge of the Belgian delegation and domestic coor-

dination with the Regions and Communities and the multiple federal ministries concerned.

Luxembourg
The highlight of Belgian relations with Luxembourg in 2007 was Grand Duke Henri and Grand Duchess Maria-Teresa’s state visit to Belgium from 20 to 22 March 2007.

The outstanding level of cooperation between the two countries was underlined yet again at the sixth joint meeting of the respective governments on 8 February and in the activities of the Belgian-Luxembourg Administrative Commission.
SAR LOR LUX
In 2007 Belgium ratified the SAR LOR LUX agreement on accession of the federal state, the German-speaking Community, the French Community and the Walloon Region to this cross-border cooperation arrangement between Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and France.

The Netherlands
Belgium pushed forward with the tradition of close bilateral consultation with the Dutch government immediately after Balkenende IV took office. Talks between the prime ministers and the Belgian and Dutch ministers for foreign affairs, European affairs and development cooperation were held in Brussels.

“Kunst en cultuur aan huis”
For the fourth year in a row, the residence of the Belgian ambassador in The Hague was the setting for the project “Kunst en cultuur aan huis” [Art and Culture at Home]. Very popular with the Dutch public, it enables Belgian plastic artists and musicians to convey an impression of contemporary artistic developments going on in Belgium.

Germany
Belgian relations with Germany in 2007 were dominated by the German Presidency of the European Union. The smooth bilateral relations between the two countries, our matching positions on European, security and multilateral policy in very many cases and the excellent personal rapport between the ministers were a solid basis for close and fruitful cooperation.

There were numerous meetings between members of the governments and the administrations.

The good relations between the Belgian and German diplomatic services were highlighted again by the working visit of a large group of young German diplomats to the FPS.

France
The importance that Belgium and France attach to their bilateral relations and their European and multilateral cooperation was aptly illustrated by the visit to Brussels of President Sarkozy, accompanied by his foreign and European affairs ministers, shortly after he took office.

Euro-district in the making
There was substantial progress in 2007 on the project to establish a cross-border Euro-district, the ‘Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis’.

In its final report the Belgo-French working group, partially funded by the FPS, made concrete proposals regarding the operation of the future Euro-district and the reinforcement of cross-border cooperation in general.

FPS Foreign Affairs continued to coordinate the federal and regional authorities in preparations for the meetings of the founding committee’s technical working group. The working group is responsible for drawing up drafts for the cooperation agreement and bye-laws for the Euro-district and also calculating an approximate budget.

On 19 March the authorities responsible for developing the Franco-Belgian conurbation signed the letter of intent for establishment of the Euro-district. The signatories want to implement it as soon as possible in 2008.

United Kingdom
Belgian relations with the United Kingdom came under the spotlight in view of the official visit of Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip on 11 and 12 July. On 12 July they and senior representatives of Commonwealth countries, took part in the commemoration services in Passendale and Ypres to mark the 90th anniversaries of the Battle of Messines and the Battle of Passchendaele.

To coincide with the commemorations, the Belgian ambassador in London organised an exhibition entitled “Passchendaele: The Belgians have not forgotten” at his residence.

On 13 and 14 November the eighth Belgo-British Conference – co-organised by the FPS and the Egmont Institute – was held in London. The 2007 conference, whose theme was “Bridges across the Channel”, again brought together around 80 Belgian
and British policymakers, opinion leaders, academics and businesspeople to swap experiences and ideas about politics, culture, business and education.

Minister De Gucht gave a speech at the conference on the importance of Belgo-British bilateral relations and European and multilateral cooperation. The conference also gave him an opportunity to have discussions with his British counterpart.

Republic of Ireland

The state visit by King Albert and Queen Paola to Ireland from 8 to 10 October was a rare chance to focus specifically on the age-old ties between Ireland and Belgium. The delegations of Belgian business leaders and heads of Belgian universities who travelled with the king and queen boosted business and academic ties.

Meanwhile, in March 2007 the Irish president, Mary McAleese, came to Leuven to take part in celebrations marking the 400th anniversary of the Irish College. For centuries the college has played a very important role in preserving the cultural identity of Ireland and maintaining relations between the people of Ireland and Europe.

MARITIME INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The Maritime Information Exchange (MIK) officially came on stream at a ceremony at the navy base in Zeebrugge. The MIK is a unit within the coastguard service and is responsible for coordination and consultation between the federal and Flemish public services responsible for the North Sea. The FPS is taking part in this venture through the bilateral departments, the International Transport Policy Directorate and the Crisis Centre.
South-East Europe

Western Balkans
Belgium is playing an active role in the international community’s efforts to help the western Balkan countries, which are continuing on the path of stabilisation, with the aim of these countries joining the European Union and NATO.

Belgium’s engagement is clear from a series of projects covered by our preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention budgets. These projects address, for example, the return of displaced persons (Kosovo and Croatia), the fight against the proliferation of light weapons (Kosovo), teaching young people democratic values (Croatia and Serbia), mine clearance (Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina), reinforcement of the legal system (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and reinforcement of regional cooperation.

End of participation in Althea
Belgium had to end its participation in the EU (EUFOR) mission Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina due to commitments elsewhere. This operation was drastically scaled down in 2007 anyway in view of the continuing stabilisation of the security situation. There are still two Belgians taking part in the European Union Police Mission (EUPM).

200 soldiers in Kosovo
Belgium’s contribution in Kosovo consists of about 200 soldiers for the NATO peacekeeping force (KFOR). Belgium is also actively participating in the preparations for a European police and justice mission, with police officers and magistrates undergoing training to take part. Other experts are already in the field where they are drawing up a plan for the mission.

Support for stabilisation and association process
In the EU, Belgium continued to offer political support to the stabilisation and association process in which the western Balkan states are currently involved. This process aims to bring EU membership closer for them. Each country will be judged on its own merits when deciding on whether it can join the organisation.

In this connection Belgium is keeping an especially close eye on ensuring that the conditions the EU has set are actually observed, and is reserving special attention for seeing that the countries concerned tackle the impunity of those who have committed crimes against humanity or who are guilty of genocide.

Security Council mission
In the UN Security Council Belgium is taking part in discussions about the international community’s guardianship of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo and led a successful Security Council fact-finding mission to Kosovo in April to look at this issue.

Numerous meetings were held between senior officials from Belgium and from the western Balkan states. Minister De Gucht made a tour of the region in January, taking in for example Zagreb and Belgrade. He also had frequent contacts in Brussels with his ministerial counterparts from Serbia, Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Turkey and Cyprus

Turkey
Belgium continues to support Turkey joining the European Union. However, it is concerned about the slackening pace of political reform in the country. Belgium is using its preventive diplomacy budget to support a range of initiatives in Turkey.

Cyprus
Belgium supports the multilateral efforts to reunify Cyprus, in line with international standards, UN resolutions and the founding principles of the European Union. Belgium insists in this regard that the parties concerned implement in good faith the 8th July Agreement.

Transatlantic relations

United States
2007 continued to see Belgium investing considerable energy in its relations with the United States of America. King Albert and Queen Paola combined their working visit to the United Nations with a visit to New York City, where they remembered the victims of ‘9/11’ at Ground Zero.
Minister De Gucht had various meetings with his US counterpart, Condoleezza Rice, during the year. Health Minister Rudy Demotte and a delegation from the Belgian Chamber of Representatives also made working visits to the United States.

**Tax convention**
The Belgian parliament quickly approved the new bilateral convention for the avoidance of double taxation and thus gave the go-ahead for Belgium to officially ratify the agreement, which radically overhauls bilateral arrangements on taxation. The main objective of the convention is to facilitate commercial exchanges and reciprocal investments.

**Canada**
Canada was prominently represented at the commemoration services to mark the 90th anniversaries of the Battle of Messines and the Battle of Passchendaele. Members of the Canadian government attended the services on 12 July and took part in the programme of commemorations specially dedicated to Canada on 10 and 11 November.

**Prospects in British Columbia**
Economy, Energy, Foreign Trade and Science Policy Minister Marc Verwilghen and a delegation of business leaders made a working visit to the province of British Columbia at the start of the year. The visit focused on port logistics, maritime transport and energy, as well as the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler. The mission opened up promising prospects for Belgian companies, which will no doubt be concentrating more on Western Canada from now on.

**WORKING HOLIDAY PROGRAMME A SUCCESS**
The Belgian-Canadian ‘working holiday’ agreement came into effect on 1 January 2007. It means that young people can go on exchanges for a year without having to follow the usual residence and work permit procedures. More than 200 young people have already made use of the new arrangements.
Central and Eastern Europe

New EU member states
Belgium continues to foster good relations with the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe, as witnessed by the growth in trade and the extent of official contacts between Belgium and these countries.

Having visited Lithuania in 2006, the Belgian king and queen made a state visit to Latvia from 23 to 27 April 2007. Following the economic mission to Romania and Bulgaria led by Prince Philippe in December 2006, the presidents of Bulgaria and Romania visited Brussels for a meeting with King Albert in October 2007. They also attended the opening of Europalia.Europe.

Relations with Slovenia were a particular focus in 2007. The country will hold the Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2008, thus becoming the first new EU member state to do so. Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt took part in the event on 15 January 2007 to mark Slovenia joining the euro zone, and Minister De Gucht and Prime Minister Verhofstadt also made an official visit to Slovenia from 30 to 31 January 2007. The number of personnel at the embassy in the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, was also increased.

Russia
Bilateral relations – specifically economic and trade relations – between Russia and Belgium are on what is clearly an upward curve. In early March 2007, Prime Minister Verhofstadt, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Didier Reynders and Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht made a successful visit to Moscow. Topics discussed included reciprocal investments, energy and the diamond trade.

Ukraine
Belgium and Ukraine are making steady progress on preparing the Belgian-Ukrainian Joint Committee. There was a preparatory meeting in Brussels in February and it is hoped that the first meeting of the Joint Committee itself will be held in the first half of 2008.

The Southern Caucasus and Central Asia
Belgium also wants to put itself on the map in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia.

Belgium decided to open a new embassy in Baku to promote cooperation and bilateral relations with Azerbaijan. The new ambassador took office on 25 September 2007.

On 1 October 2007, State Secretary for Administrative Simplification Vincent Van Quickenborne opened the new Belgian embassy in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. The embassy, which is shared with the Netherlands, is Belgium’s first diplomatic mission in Central Asia.

North Africa and the Middle East

Morocco
Belgium’s particularly close political relations with Morocco were given concrete form by the launch of the first meeting of the High-Level Joint Partnership Commission between Morocco and Belgium on 19 March 2007, chaired by the countries’ prime ministers, Driss Jettou and Guy Verhofstadt.

No fewer than seven agreements were signed at the meeting: the memorandum on establishing the High-Level Commission, two protocols on the transfer of convicted criminals and on seizures and confiscations, a declaration on structural cooperation between the countries’ foreign ministries, a joint police action plan, an agreement on promoting triangular cooperation and, lastly, a protocol agreement between telephone operators Belgacom and Maroc Telecom.

Prime Minister Verhofstadt, Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Affairs Minister Patrick Dewael, Development Cooperation Minister Armand De Decker and their Moroccan counterparts also held accompanying bilateral discussions, and Prime Minister Verhofstadt had an audience with King Mohammed VI.
Iran
The nuclear issue dominated relations with Iran in 2007. When it joined the UN Security Council, Belgium was elected to chair the sanctions committee pursuant to Resolution 1737 of December 2006. It will continue to chair the committee until the end of its term in 2008.

Efforts to secure kidnapped Belgians’ release
The kidnapping on 12 August of Stefaan Boeve and Carla Van den Eeckhoudt (who was freed after a few days) by drugs traffickers in Sistan and Baluchestan Province led to action being taken by both the embassy in Tehran and the relevant FPS departments. Executive Committee Chairman Jan Grauls made three trips to Tehran for discussions with the Iranian authorities on this thorny issue.

As part of the efforts to secure Stefaan Boeve’s release, Minister De Gucht travelled to Tehran on 15 September.

Belgium pledged €500,000 via the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to the fight against drugs trafficking in Iran.

Qatar and Bahrain
Belgium’s bilateral relations with Qatar and Bahrain were intensified further in 2007, with the centre-piece the economic mission headed by HRH Prince Philippe from 3 to 8 November 2007.

The prince was accompanied by 150 representatives of the private sector. Qatar and Bahrain have embarked on a series of political and economic reforms centring in particular on diversification of their economies.

One very important result of the mission was the signing of agreements on the protection of investments and avoidance of double taxation.

Embassy opened in Qatar
At his express request, Minister De Gucht officially opened the embassy in Qatar himself. He held talks with Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jaber al-Thani and the deputy minister for foreign affairs responsible for representing Qatar on the UN Security Council (2006-2007).
First delivery of LNG to Zeebrugge

Two long-term (20-year) contracts were signed with Qatar in 2004 and 2005 regarding the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG). The first delivery was made to Zeebrugge in April 2007.

Lebanon

Belgium continues to show its firm commitment to Lebanon, renewing the mandate of its 400 troops in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) until at least 2008. Belgium fully supports the political process pursuant to UN Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1701 and 1757.

Aid for reconstruction

The Paris III donor conference (January 2007) saw Belgium undertaking to support the economic reconstruction of Lebanon, pledging €10 million in aid to back up this commitment. Part of this is intended for the health sector in Southern Lebanon, where the Belgian peacekeepers are deployed. The Belgian troops, alongside their security and demining mission, are keeping a cutting-edge field hospital open for use by the local population.

Political support

Belgium’s engagement in Southern Lebanon was reflected by the Belgian foreign ministry’s action in the Security Council and direct interventions in the region, as exemplified by Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht’s trip to Lebanon and Syria in March 2007 and the discussions he had.

One striking example of Belgium’s concrete commitment to promoting the rule of law in Lebanon was its support for Resolution 1757 authorising the creation of a special international tribunal for Lebanon to throw light on the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. Belgium also put forward a candidate judge. Since then, Belgium has been considering a financial contribution to the tribunal’s budget.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

As regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Belgium gave the Palestinian Fatah-Hamas government of national unity the chance to build up experience. Consequently, the indirect aid to the Palestinians via the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) was continued and there were contacts with the Fatah ministers and independent ministers in the government of national unity. At the same time, Belgium continued making firm demands of Hamas and driving home the values that must be respected for recognition by the Belgian authorities and money from Belgian taxpayers.

Belgium eighth largest European donor

Belgium gives aid to the Palestinians through the TIM, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and bilateral structural development projects. Belgium supplied €15 million of aid to the Palestinians in 2007, making it the eighth largest European donor.

Belgium showed its commitment to stabilising the security situation by sending five police officers with the European missions EUPOLCOPPS (assisting in training the Palestinian police) and EUBAM Rafah (assistance with border controls between Egypt and Gaza).

Belgium also continued providing humanitarian aid to the population after the Hamas violence in Gaza. Furthermore, in the international organisations and bilateral contacts it called for ‘passageways’ to be opened up between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Central Africa

Democratic Republic of Congo

Belgium and its European and international partners continued to support the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in its efforts to achieve peace and security after the end of the country’s ‘transition’
period. In 2007, amongst other developments, participatory institutions and governmental structures were put in place at central and provincial government levels and national and provincial assemblies were created.

Belgium is continuing to monitor the further decentralisation which is laid down in the Congolese constitution and the organisation of local elections to round off the agreed electoral calendar.

Throughout the year, Belgium reiterated the international community’s calls on the government to make good this commitment and to ensure the security and welfare of the population, to work on reconstruction and to provide for good political and economic governance.

**Belgian initiatives**

As well as its contribution at European and bilateral levels to the SSR/DDR (Security Sector Reform/Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) process, Belgium has made significant efforts to promote peaceful solutions to the security crisis that is scourging Eastern Congo. In this context, there is also an argument in favour of extending the mandate of the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC).

Belgium also put forward a proposal for a post-transition follow-up mechanism that will ensure coordination between DRC’s main partners and the start of a dialogue with the newly elected authorities while of course respecting Congolese national sovereignty. The mechanism, which has a ‘P3+2’ structure (Belgium, France and the United Kingdom + the United States and South Africa, with these countries meeting under the auspices of the UN (MONUC)), has now reached cruising speed.

In addition, Belgium has undertaken a range of other initiatives to help DRC.

For example, it provided academic expertise to help settle the border disputes between DRC and Angola and Uganda and organised a conference in Tervuren in October for the countries concerned.

Belgium also organised a series of round-table discussions as a follow-up to the “Compact Governance” initiative, in order to run through the options in terms of providing aid and launching appropriate cooperation between the Belgian public and private sectors and DRC. “Compact Governance” is a joint initiative of the World Bank and the European Union defining specific principles of good governance in various sectors. It was part of the Governance Contract appended to the programme of the new Congolese government. In the transport sector Belgium encouraged efforts to launch a partnership between the ports of Antwerp and Brussels and the ports of Matadi/Boma and Kinshasa, whilst in the mining sector it was the driving force behind a number of initiatives, with its support for DRC joining the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) which strives for good governance of poor countries with natural resources and its continuing support for the Task Force on Mineral Resources in Central Africa (TF MIRECA). The mining initiatives culminated in a colloquium being organised in Lubumbashi by the Free University of Brussels (VUB), the University of Lubumbashi and the Royal Museum for Central Africa. The colloquium’s recommendations were then applied in the field.

**Great Lakes Region**

Belgium made stability its key priority in its policy on the Great Lakes Region. Great diplomatic efforts were made to enhance communication between DRC and Rwanda and prompt Rwanda to adopt a more constructive approach to the continuing tensions in Eastern Congo.

Belgium also continued to push for effective coordination between members of the international community,
for example by taking part in the Great Lakes Contact Group and Security Sector Reform.

In terms of international cooperation, Belgium also attached particularly major significance to the re-launch of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL).

The Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, together with his Burundian, Congolese and Rwandan counterparts, attended the organisation’s relaunch on 17 April. Belgium will continue with its commitment to the new-formula CEPGL.

Following the breaking-off of diplomatic relations between France and Rwanda, Belgium declared itself willing to defend French interests in Kigali. Belgium also carried on with its development cooperation with Rwanda. The Partners Committee had a meeting in September.

In Burundi, Belgium helped to break the political deadlock that gripped the country for much of the year. Belgium is implementing an extensive development cooperation programme there. The Partners Committee met in October.

In Sudan, Belgium continued to closely monitor the situation in Sudan. Minister De Gucht undertook a tour there in May, during which he placed emphasis on the crucial importance of fully implementing the North-South Peace Agreement. Belgium is also supporting institution building projects promoting the reconstruction of Southern Sudan. The crisis in Darfur continued to be a concern for Belgium, which is convinced that a negotiated political solution is absolutely essential, leading it to provide financial assistance to initiatives aimed at bringing together the countries that have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA).

Chad and the Central African Republic
In the autumn the European Union launched the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operation ‘EUFOR Chad-CAR’ in an effort to avoid the crisis in Darfur spilling over into the east of Chad and the north-east of the Central African Republic. The Belgian government decided to send 80 to 100 soldiers there.

The Horn of Africa
Belgium focused special attention in its role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on the Horn of Africa. Belgium was in fact made coordinator of work on the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, coordinating the differing positions and supervising the drafting of resolutions about this topic.

In this connection, Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs with regard to UN Affairs Pierre Chevalier visited Asmara, Addis Ababa and the headquarters of the African Union in February 2007.

South, East and West Africa

South Africa
Belgium continued to work on developing a strategic partnership with South Africa in 2007. The second meeting of the Joint Committee bringing together the two countries was held in Pretoria on 24 and 25 October. Areas covered were defence, foreign affairs, cooperation and business.

Sudan
Belgium continued to closely monitor the situation in Sudan. Minister De Gucht undertook a tour there in May, during which he placed emphasis on the crucial importance of fully implementing the North-South Peace Agreement. Belgium is also supporting institution building projects promoting the reconstruction of Southern Sudan. The crisis in Darfur continued to be a concern for Belgium, which is convinced that a negotiated political solution is absolutely essential, leading it to provide financial assistance to initiatives aimed at bringing together the countries that have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA).

Chad and the Central African Republic
In the autumn the European Union launched the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operation ‘EUFOR Chad-CAR’ in an effort to avoid the crisis in Darfur spilling over into the east of Chad and the north-east of the Central African Republic. The Belgian government decided to send 80 to 100 soldiers there.

The Horn of Africa
Belgium focused special attention in its role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on the Horn of Africa. Belgium was in fact made coordinator of work on the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, coordinating the differing positions and supervising the drafting of resolutions about this topic.

In this connection, Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs with regard to UN Affairs Pierre Chevalier visited Asmara, Addis Ababa and the headquarters of the African Union in February 2007.
Somalia
In Somalia, Belgium gave financial assistance to the African Union’s peacekeeping force (AMISOM) and the National Reconciliation Congress.

Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia

Asia

Afghanistan
The Afghan government faces several enormous challenges: it must prevent the Taliban from regaining a foothold in (southern) Afghanistan, develop the economy, fight the production of illegal drugs, build up a credible administration and the rule of law and improve the population’s standard of living.

Belgium is continuing to do its bit towards ensuring that these efforts succeed. Nearly 350 soldiers are deployed in Kabul and Kunduz as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to support the Afghan government’s efforts to improve the security situation.

The Belgian contingent took charge of Kabul Airport in 2007. The Belgian soldiers’ main focus is on training up the Afghan airport authorities personnel.

In 2007 Belgium gave financial assistance to support the functioning of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and to set up irrigation networks in the provinces of Ghor, Dai Kundi and Nimroz. It also provided backing for the construction of shelters for refugees returning from Iran and Pakistan and support for the International Committee of the Red Cross’s mine action plan.

Egmont (the Royal Institute for International Relations) held an international conference on 7 and 8 February entitled “Security and Development: the case of Afghanistan”, attended by numerous representatives of international institutions operating in the country such as NATO, the EU and the UN.

Nepal
Nepal is gradually emerging from a period of internal armed conflict and now faces all the challenges such a situation brings with it in terms of rebuilding the structure of society and the state.

The Belgian aid, launched during a visit by Minister Karel De Gucht in November 2006, has three major focuses.

The first is providing support for the democratic transition process. An example is the fund set up to finance initiatives such as the electoral activities of the UN mission in Nepal and the Carter Center’s observation of the forthcoming elections.

The second focus is contributing to the fight against the extreme poverty prevailing in Nepal. The last one is helping to finance the re-establishment of the rule of law and the promotion of human rights, e.g. with regard to the social reintegration of minors who were formerly part of armed groups, access to justice and the fight against impunity.

India
Reciprocal investment and trade with India are growing all the time. This led to FPS Foreign Affairs substantially increasing its presence and that of the Regions’ commercial attachés in the country in 2007. A new direct air link between Brussels and various Indian cities, offering a number of flights each week, was set up in August 2007. Substantial numbers of Belgian companies, including SMEs, are showing an interest in the Indian market.

Belgium is amongst those working on preparing a free-trade agreement between the EU and India. A number of common scientific and technological projects are under preparation looking ahead to the state visit scheduled for 2008.
China

2007 was another particularly good year for our relations with China.

A Joint Committee meeting and a series of high-level political discussions were held in preparation for a new economic mission headed by Prince Philippe. In view of the large number of companies and participants involved in the ten-day mission, which visited a number of big provincial cities such as Shenyang and Chengdu and focused on attracting Chinese investments in Belgium, the mission can be considered a major success.

The forthcoming Olympic Games (2008), Europalia China (2009) and Shanghai World Expo (2010) will guide the continued development of relations between Belgium and China.

Japan

Belgium enjoys excellent relations with Japan, as witnessed by the successful and much remarked-upon visit to Belgium of Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in January 2007. This was the perfect occasion to put Japanese investments and the large and much valued Japanese community in Belgium in the limelight.

The interest the two countries have in each other was reflected by the numerous cultural events and high-class, image-boosting activities in both Japan and Belgium. High-tech cooperation projects continue to yield good results. A final point to mention is that the historic Belgian diplomatic compound in the heart of Tokyo was demolished in 2007, to be replaced by a prestigious building project which mirrors the closeness and importance of the ties between the two countries.

South-East Asia

Belgium has had close relations down the decades with most of the countries in South-East Asia. Belgium took part in the activities in November 2007 in Singapore to celebrate ASEAN and thirty years of cooperation between the EU and ASEAN.

Generally speaking, the development cooperation aspect of the two countries’ relations is gradually making way for forms of economic cooperation – a result, of course, of the strong development of most of the countries.

Australia and New Zealand

The 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele was commemorated in 2007. During the battle thousands of soldiers from Australia and New Zealand died fighting for Belgium’s freedom.

Tribute was paid, in the presence of Australia and New Zealand’s heads of government, to these brave soldiers who ensured that Belgium will have a perpetual bond with these far-away countries.

Latin America and the Caribbean

For many years relations between Belgium and Latin America were fairly low profile. These days, though, the region has great potential, thanks to the (now irreversible) restoration of democracy in the 1980s in almost all the countries of the region and the economic recovery process since then.

Renewed attention for the area

Belgium, conscious of the growing political and economic role being played by the Latin American and Caribbean countries (LAC), decided to inject fresh energy into its relations with the region.

This involved the FPS first setting out a blueprint of what our new policy regarding Latin America and the Caribbean might look like. After putting the working paper to the Belgian Council of Ministers, the minister presented it to the heads of missions of the countries concerned at a round table on 29
June 2007. The countries’ representatives were delighted with the renewed attention being paid to their region.

As a follow-up to the first – general – round table, a series of bilateral round-table discussions were launched. A scoreboard with all the actions and initiatives in progress in all areas was developed for each of the 33 countries. The conclusions included in the scoreboards were used as the basis for an action plan for Belgian relations with the LAC countries that was developed in late 2007.

More proof of Belgium’s intensified relations with Latin America and the Caribbean was provided by Minister De Gucht’s trip to Argentina, Brazil and Colombia in November 2006. The minister aims to be an advocate of the new policy for the region and was particularly well received. The Chairman of the Executive Committee and the director of the directorate concerned visited Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

Belgium also devoted special attention to the evolution of European Union-Latin-America/Caribbean (EU-LAC) relations. Belgium thus took part in numerous EU-LAC meetings at all levels and is currently making preparations for the summit of the two regions’ heads of state that will be held in Lima in May 2008.

**Diplomacy and business**

**Economic missions**

HRH Prince Philippe led two economic missions in 2007.

The mission to China in June saw Prince Philippe and Princess Mathilde accompanied by around 345 VIPs, business people and journalists. The mission visited five cities: Beijing, Shenyang, Chengdu, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

The second mission, in early November, took Prince Philippe and Princess Mathilde and the other 180 participants – VIPs, business people and journalists – to Bahrain and Qatar.

The Economic Interests Directorate also helped to take care of the economic aspects of Prime Minister Verhofstadt’s visit to Moscow in March 2007.

**Belgium’s image as a provider of quality**

The budget for strengthening Belgium’s image as a provider of quality products and services was mainly used on events connected with the celebrations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, exhibitions and concerts abroad organised by prestigious Belgian institutions such as the Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie, the Centre for Fine Arts - Brussels, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts and the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

The budget was also used on the fiftieth anniversary of Belgian diplomatic relations with Ukraine, half a century of Belgian relations with Malaysia, a conference in Tel Aviv about Jewish children who were hidden during the Second World War, the costs for inviting Japanese journalists to Belgium and international congresses in Brussels.

**Finexpo**

Finexpo makes use of three financial instruments to support Belgian companies that export capital goods...
and services. Firstly, there is the commercial mechanism of stabilising interest rates, and then there are two financial assistance mechanisms: state-to-state loans and interest credit. In June 2006, a third kind of financial assistance mechanism was added: an outright grant.

Use of the interest rate stabilisation mechanism has dropped off dramatically because of low market interest rates, whereas concessional assistance projects are making up a growing proportion of Finexpo’s activities.

The new mechanism, the outright grant, is identical to the conventional assistance mechanisms, but focuses on helping SMEs – although larger companies are not excluded. Initiatives to advertise this mechanism were launched and will continue to be organised, thanks to support from the employers’ organisation Agoria, amongst others.

Finexpo works in close collaboration with the departments of the National Delcredere Office; a joint form was designed for companies or banks wanting to apply for government assistance for tied aid.

Similarly a questionnaire was devised for projects that qualify for non-tied aid. The two documents were updated in 2007 to better reflect OSCE’s environmental recommendations.

 Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is a unique international voluntary scheme for cooperation between governments, NGOs and the diamond industry to ensure that conflict diamonds are not traded on the international scene.

In cooperation with Belgium, the European Commission – which is currently chairing the KPCS on behalf of the EU member states – organised the KPCS intersessional meeting in the Egmont Palace in Brussels from 12 to 14 June. The annual plenary was held from 5 to 8 November, again in the Egmont Palace.

The EU action plan “From conflict diamonds to prosperity diamonds” calls for the Kimberley Process to be bolstered to become an active instrument of international cooperation.

In that document the EU prioritises strengthening internal controls, improving the monitoring system, developing the capacity to respond quickly and appropriately to crises which pose a threat for peace and stability and lead to trade in conflict diamonds.

In line with the European Union action plan, FPS Foreign Affairs joined forces with the Egmont Institute to launch an international study on small-scale diamond mining, and the FPS, together with civil society, supported an orientation and capacity-building training seminar.

Finally, the FPS gave financial assistance to the “Diamonds for Development in Liberia” project, a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Liberian government and the International Alert peacebuilding organisation.

 Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) supports good governance in countries with substantial natural resources through the verification and full publication of company payments and government revenues from oil, gas and mining.

In 2007 Belgium joined the World Bank’s Multi-Donor Trust Fund which financially supports the EITI. Belgium also managed to convince the Democratic Republic of Congo to become a member of the EITI.
Treaty of Lisbon generates renewed enthusiasm

After the ‘no’ votes in the referenda that were held in France and the Netherlands on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, the Union was in deadlock. Everyone agreed that a reform of the Union was urgently needed, but the tool which was meant to allow it to happen, having been the subject of endless debate, could now no longer come into force. A period of reflection launched in 2005 did not provide a solution either.

The first – albeit small – step in getting the process back on track was taken by the European Council meeting of June 2006. The European Council asked the future German Presidency to provide it with a report by the Summit of June 2007. The aim was to give an assessment of the debates on the Constitutional Treaty and to analyse the options for getting out of the crisis. However, 2007 would allow the EU to go much further.

A new start
The German Presidency’s determination relaunched the process.

From January until June 2007, the German Presidency held a series of bilateral discussions in order to outline a possible compromise. The decisive boost was given by the Berlin Declaration, which was adopted on 25 March 2007 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. The declaration states: “With European unification a dream of earlier generations has become a reality. Our history reminds us that we must protect this for the good of future generations. For that reason we must always renew the political shape of Europe in keeping with the times. That is why today, 50 years after the signing of the Treaties of Rome, we are united in our aim of placing the European Union on a renewed common basis before the European Parliament elections in 2009. For we know, Europe is our common future.”

One crucial point, of course, was to define the possible basis for a new intergovernmental conference. The most important thing was to avoid having debates that only focused on the French and Dutch preoccupations, as those were the countries where the Constitutional Treaty had been rejected in referenda, or on the preoccupations of the countries that hadn’t completed the procedure for adopting the Constitutional Treaty.

For Belgium, it was essential that the Constitutional Treaty be taken as the basis because, although it wasn’t perfect, it did represent a fair overall compromise.

Meeting in Madrid
On 26 January 2007, a meeting was held in Madrid of the countries that had ratified the Constitutional Treaty or, at least, supported it. The meeting was an opportunity to put the exercise back on a firm footing and not only look at it from a negative perspective. Indeed, the participants reiterated their commitment to both the content and the balance of the European Constitution.

In its diplomatic contacts with its partners, the FPS reaffirmed this basic principle and made efforts
to increase the cohesion between member states sharing the same view.

On 20 April 2007, a diplomatic conference was held with the heads of missions in the member states to exchange information on changes in positions and raise the awareness of our diplomatic network with a view to ensuring that Belgium was as well prepared as possible for the European Council meeting in June.

The participation of a representative of the German Presidency in this conference made it possible to gain a clearer picture of the German government’s goals.

The coordination process – led by the Directorate-General for European Affairs and Coordination and involving the Regions and the Communities – made use of all the additional information to work out a more precise strategy.

The coordination process would subsequently be continued, culminating in the adoption of the Treaty at the Lisbon Summit in October 2007.

*European Council meeting of June 2007: approval of the mandate*

The European Council meeting of June 2007 approved the mandate for the intergovernmental conference, thus abandoning the idea of a single consolidated treaty.

Moreover, certain symbolic elements and terminology such as “Constitution”, “Union Minister of Foreign Affairs”, “European laws” and “symbols of the Union” were dropped.

The chosen method involved amending the existing treaties. However, most of the innovations introduced by the Constitutional Treaty were retained. The intention was that the Treaty on European Union should integrate the acquis of the Constitutional Treaty concerning the values of the Union, the democratic fundamentals, the institutional framework, closer cooperation and the common foreign and security policy.

The Treaty establishing the European Community, which from now on will be called the “Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union”, would embrace all the innovations that were originally part of the Constitutional Treaty, except those for which an exception had explicitly been made.

At the European Council meeting of June 2007, Belgium showed its determination to safeguard as much as possible of the acquis of the Constitutional Treaty and to retain the institutional balance the treaty had created.

The mandate of the intergovernmental conference ultimately preserved most of the fundamental amendments as laid down in the Constitutional Treaty:

- single legal personality;
- integration of the pillars;
- binding character of the Charter of Fundamental Rights for the institutions and the member states in the application of Community law;
- accession to the European Convention on Human Rights;
- preservation of the double mandate of the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy;
- gradual reduction of the number of Commission Members;
- extension of the scope of qualified majority voting and codecision;
- public nature of the legislative debates of the Council;
- reinforcement of the European Parliament in budgetary matters and concerning the conclusion of treaties;
- extension of the powers of the European Court of Justice;
- right of popular initiative;
- clarification of the competences of the Union;
- simplification of the instruments;
- closer cooperation on defence;
- solidarity clause;
- enhanced decision-making autonomy for the euro zone;
- horizontal social clause;
- legal basis for services of general interest;
- respect by the Union for the constitutional structure of the member states, including regional autonomy;
- ‘passerelle’ clauses enabling the introduction of qualified majority voting;
- voluntary withdrawal from the Union.

However, some amendments concerning both the form and the content proved necessary to respond to the preoccupations of certain member states. Concerning the form, the mandate led to various statements and provisions reiterating the limits of the competences of the Union and the specificity of the foreign and security policy.

The major amendments concerning the content are reflected in a number of opt-outs, such as the British opt-out on police and penal cooperation, as well as the opt-out regarding application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by British and Polish courts.

Other noteworthy points are: the postponement until 2014 of the introduction of a new method for calculating qualified majorities, reinforcement of the Ioannina Compromise (which allows negotiations to be extended if there is a minority of member states that is opposed to the taking of a decision but this minority isn’t quite large enough to represent a blocking minority) as well as strengthening of the role of national parliaments regarding the monitoring of subsidiarity.

The mandate also incorporates a protocol laying out the values the Union must respect with regard to economic services of general interest. It also states that the Union must include the fight against climate change amongst its objectives.

**Legal experts contribute**

The intergovernmental conference started on 23 July. A group of legal experts was convened to transpose the points agreed on within the mandate into treaty language. The FPS, together with the other federal FPSs and the regions, saw to it that the draft text was in line with the mandate of the intergovernmental conference.

The legal experts also had to decide on an issue that hadn’t been settled by the mandate: the details of the participation of the United Kingdom and Ireland in the development of the acquis of the Schengen Treaty and European justice and home affairs policy.

Along with the other Schengen countries, the Belgian delegation made sure that the non-participation of the two member states (via a form of ‘opt-out’) in the further development of the acquis, to which they probably would have agreed previously (by opting in), wouldn’t harm the coherence and the practical implementation of the system or its future development.

**Final result**

The conclusions of the legal experts’ working group were submitted to the heads of state and government at the informal Lisbon Summit on 18 and 19 October.

Although the text was perfectly in line with the mandate as adopted at the European Council meeting in June, some member states such as Poland wanted certain points of the text to be reconsidered.

Poland’s main demand was that the Ioannina Compromise be incorporated into EU primary legislation. Belgium as well as other countries which opposed this demand, believed that it was crucial to avoid the procedures in the Ioannina Compromise
being given the same legal status as qualified majority voting. Poland didn’t get its way in the end. The Ioannina Compromise remains a decision that is part of secondary legislation, but it has been agreed that this decision can only be amended unanimously.

The informal Summit also had to deal with another issue that didn’t figure on the agenda of the intergovernmental conference (although it was politically linked in with the conference): the composition of the European Parliament for the term 2009-2014; the European Parliament had – at the request of the European Council – adopted a resolution on the distribution of seats for the next parliamentary term but Italy opposed the resolution. The European Council eventually decided to increase the maximum number of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) by one and to give the extra seat to Italy. Incidentally, Belgium will retain 22 of its MEPs during the legislative period 2009-2014, as laid down in the Treaty of Nice.

Once these last obstacles had been cleared, the Treaty amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community could be signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007. The Treaty is scheduled to come into force on 1 January 2009. Now the member states are expected to ratify it in 2008.

New record for transposing EU legislation

Quick transposition of EU directives is essential for the European Union and its member states, as well as for citizens and companies.

It will come as no surprise then that in 1997 a system was set up, in the form of a scoreboard, to track member states’ progress in transposing EU directives. Since 2001 every Member State has had to achieve a transposition deficit of no more than 1.5%. When this rule was brought in, Belgium had a deficit of between 2.9% and 2.4% – already a major improvement on its percentage of 8.5% in 1997 when the scoreboard was introduced.

Belgium has met the target of 1.5% on two occasions: in May 2002 and most recently in July 2007. Even better scores are in prospect because the yearly average will not only be under 1.5% – it will hit a record level of just 1.2%, which represents a substantial advance on the previous record of 1.5%.

Belgium is now well on the way to achieving the following target: a deficit of only 1% in 2009.

WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?

To invest in Europe because:
- European integration leads to peace and security;
- concerted action gives us more say in the world;
- we can only tackle international problems by working with others.

Energy and climate: high priorities for the EU

Energy is a relatively new European Union priority. Growing concern about climate change, increasing dependence on imported energy and rising prices prompted European leaders to look for a common approach. They set the following objectives for the new European energy policy: sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness.

Integrated approach to energy and climate
In early 2007 the European Commission published an energy package which argued above all for an integrated approach to climate and energy and pointed out the need for a European economy with increased energy efficiency and reduced CO2 emissions.

EU pledges 20% reduction in emissions
At the 2007 Spring Summit, the European Council underlined the EU’s leading role in the international debate on climate change and a new climate regime after 2012 (i.e. post-Kyoto).

The EU made a commitment to unilaterally reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% by 2020. If a comprehensive international agreement
could be reached also involving other industrialised countries and emerging economies, the EU declared that it would even be prepared to cut such emissions by 30%.

These two objectives gave the Union a strong mandate for the important UN Climate Change Conference in Bali where a framework needed to be set out for the post-2012 climate negotiations. The exact distribution of the burden amongst EU member states will be discussed later. The Commission will only submit a concrete proposal in this regard in early 2008, i.e. after the Bali conference. The proposal will be part of a package, together with a proposal for a review of the EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and a proposal regarding renewable energy.

**More energy efficiency**

Noteworthy in this regard are the particularly ambitious quantitative targets approved by the Council in terms of energy efficiency (20% savings in consumption by 2020) and renewable energy. The proportion of renewable energy sources (wind energy, solar energy, biomass, and so on) in total energy consumption is to rise from under 7% today to 20% by 2020. Here again there will have to be differentiated distribution of the general EU target across the member states. Furthermore, the member states are to increase the proportion of biofuels used in transport to 10%.

In the run-up to the Spring Summit, the Directorate-General for European Affairs and Coordination (DGE) was responsible for coordinating the Belgian position. The various Belgian authorities were fully involved in the process. After the summit had fixed the quantitative targets mentioned above, a decision was taken to proactively tackle the issue of the distribution of the burden amongst EU member states. This meant establishing exactly what Belgium’s interests in this area were. DGE directed the process of identifying those interests. The process made full use of the expertise in the technical working groups.
Overall Belgium supports the ambitious European approach to energy and climate policy, but it does ask that the burdens be distributed fairly, taking into account such factors as the principle of cost-effectiveness.

Completing the internal energy market
The action plan agreed at the Spring Summit also included measures to ensure the efficient operation and also completion of the internal gas and electricity market. In September, the European Commission directed its focus specifically on unbundling energy generation and transmission. Consideration was also given to increased cooperation between national regulators, a charter for energy consumers, increased transparency on the energy market, and so on. Finally, continued attention was given to better interconnections between EU member states and with third countries.

DGE is actively following up on these aspects of the energy issue. Belgium believes that there is room on the internal energy market for far-reaching EU measures on unbundling and supervision. Belgium is committed to optimising interconnections – within the EU and also with third countries. A European agency needs to help guide investments in production capacity.

A common external energy policy is essential for diversification of supply and a stable international regulatory framework. Chairing the Benelux in the first half of 2007, Belgium coordinated a joint text which places the concept of coherence centre-stage: not only coherence between internal and external energy policy, but also coherence with the general external policy of the Union.

Working together for reliable supply
There is an international commitment to find a set of clear bearings for an effective international energy policy. The EU member states are working towards a coherent and focused external energy policy that makes use of EU internal and external policy instruments and enables the EU to speak with one voice. The goal is to ensure reliable flows of affordable and sustainable energy. One way the EU plans to achieve this is through creating functioning energy markets by extending, for example, the Union’s market rules to the EU’s neighbouring countries. Another way it plans to do this is by diversifying energy sources, the geographical origin of energy and transit routes. Finally, the action plan stresses the importance of increased cooperation between producer, consumer and transit countries.

WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?
In meeting the above objectives, an appropriate balance needs to be struck between members of the public’s growing concern about greenhouse gas emissions and climate change on the one hand and their hankering for long-term energy security on the other. In line with the European strategic objectives, promoting competitiveness, and therefore employment, must not be neglected either.
Belgium a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council

On 1 January 2007, Belgium became (for the fifth time) a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and will hold a seat on the Council until the end of 2008. This prompted a visit by King Albert and Queen Paola to the UN in New York in May 2007.

Belgium’s seat on the Security Council presented fresh opportunities for multilateral action. Belgium intends to serve the Security Council, and beyond the Council the international community and its citizens, to the best of its ability by contributing to efforts to reinforce global peace and security.

The FPS intends to ensure that Belgium’s participation in all the Security Council’s activities will be constructive and based on correct information (made possible through the support of its network of diplomatic missions and additional personnel at Central Administration). The Belgian Permanent Representation in New York plays a leading role in all of this.

It was against this backdrop that Belgium led the Security Council mission to Kosovo in May 2007 and has taken on the role of coordinator for the Eritrea-Ethiopia issue.

Belgium also chairs a number of Security Council committees in New York: the Côte d’Ivoire Sanctions Committee, the Iran Sanctions Committee and ‘Committee 1267’ on sanctions against al-Qaeda, the Taliban and their associates.

Belgium’s presence on the Security Council has also made it easier to get the United Nations and the international community to take action for DRC. Belgium was actively involved to the full in looking for solutions for the conflict in Darfur and will also take part in the multidimensional operation in Chad that has been mandated by the Security Council. Belgium will also intensify its efforts to strengthen the European input in the Security Council, both in New York and in the members’ capital cities.

WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?

Playing a role in the major international organisation is important because:
- in the globalised world of today, everyone depends on everyone else;
- global trade can provide welfare for all;
- major problems can only be tackled at international level;
- global peace is vital for everyone.
Response to global climate change a priority

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to former US vice-president Al Gore and the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created under the Kyoto Protocol, shows how the issue of global warming has quickly become very much an international political priority and reflects the great concern felt by the public, who fear that the number of natural disasters will increase further as a result of climate change.

Belgium and EU playing an active role

The European Union (Belgium included) played a leading role in raising global awareness of the risks associated with the plundering of our planet. The ball started rolling as early as 1992, when the EU signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in Rio. Then in 1997 came the signing of the Kyoto Protocol, which imposes legally binding individual targets on industrialised countries for reducing and limiting their greenhouse gas emissions. Alongside these targets, though, the protocol also featured ‘flexible mechanisms’ giving polluting countries various ways of meeting their target. For example, they can use the carbon emissions market or finance projects producing clean energy in other countries (industrialised or developing countries), meaning that they can accumulate emission credits.

The European Union is determined to unilaterally reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 even if no international agreement is reached on the issue. If a comprehensive agreement materialises which also includes the large, most heavily polluting countries, the Union is even willing to cut its emissions by 30%.

The proposals made by the EU in Bali take account of the dramatic decline in the global warming situation since 1998 and the IPCC’s conclusion that there is an immediate causal effect linking human activities (especially industry) and the rise in temperatures.

Consequently the EU proposed that all industrialised countries step up their efforts to reduce emissions and that close attention be paid to emissions from sea and air transport. The Union also shifted the emphasis to focus more on countries’ ‘adaptation’ to climate change. Previously, activities had centred mainly on reducing emissions (‘mitigation’). However, it became clear that the old approach was not yielding sufficient results, while the situation was rapidly deteriorating.

WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?

Special climate envoy at FPS Foreign Affairs

Recognising the massive international scale of the problem of climate change, the Minister for Foreign Affairs created a new position in the FPS: a special envoy, holding the rank of ambassador, with specific responsibility for climate issues.

The special envoy’s job involves a number of tasks, but the most important is without a doubt the public diplomacy element, which aims to improve knowledge of Belgium’s post-Kyoto policy and the range of concrete measures that have already been or will be taken to meet the targets on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in Belgium and abroad.

Another part of his duties sees him supporting federal and regional authorities in the difficult negotiations that lie ahead, as well as proactively looking out for Joint Implementation/Clean Development Mechanism (JI/CDM) projects. Clean development projects are absolutely essential for Belgium if it wants to meet its target for reducing emissions.

The creation of the new position in the FPS has been very warmly welcomed by the federal and regional environmental authorities. The private sector and the relevant segments of civil society, too, are very pleased with the new post. It acknowledges the key role the FPS has to play in multilateral negotiations.
Migration and development: Belgian global forum a success

Under the right circumstances, migration can have benefits for all those involved: migrants' country of origin, the country of destination, migrants themselves and the migrants' families. The crucial phrase here is “under the right circumstances”, with research about this element currently part of a global debate.

Governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations are taking part in this broad-based discussion. All kinds of meetings and seminars are held to exchange experiences and compare best practice.

Global Forum in Brussels

Belgium, which is particularly active in this area, organised the first meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in July 2007.

With this ‘first’, Belgium stressed that migration can have a positive impact on economic development in the migrants' country of origin. Potential benefits include the investment of remittances (the part of the migrants' salary they send back to members of their families) in the local economy, the specialist knowledge migrants bring back to their home country at the end of their contract of employment (e.g. in the case of circular migration) and improved international cooperation in the fight against human smuggling and trafficking, to name but a few examples.
Over 800 people, representing a total of 156 countries and 20 international organisations, took part in the Global Forum meeting in Brussels. You can read the report on the meeting on the FPS Foreign Affairs website (www.diplomatie.be). Belgium was much applauded for its excellent organisation of the event. This was a difficult task because it involved not merely setting up a one-off meeting – it also entailed the preparations for the meeting and the follow-up. Therefore a special task force was established, with participants from the Netherlands, Switzerland, the Philippines, international organisations and, of course, Belgium.

There have been various follow-up activities to the meeting, with Belgium still being regularly invited to take part in international meetings and working groups. A lot of follow-up work needs to be done on the domestic front too now. The FPS is carrying out these activities in Belgium in consultation with all the competent authorities and NGOs which actively took part in preparations for the meeting and in the event itself. In addition, Belgium is actively involved in preparing the second Global Forum meeting, to be held in Manila in the autumn of 2008.

In a nutshell, organising the meeting put Belgium on the map in terms of the international migration debate.

Information on special website
The meeting made active use of the internet. Those interested could find all relevant information about the programme and background articles that were used as a basis for the round tables, speeches and so forth on a website specifically set up for the purpose (www.gfmd-fmmd.org). The website also included a secure area for Friends of the Forum only. Daily traffic varied from 2,000 to 5,000 visitors, reaching its peak in the immediate run-up to the meeting. Afterwards the site was kept online so that those interested could consult the Global Forum’s decisions and recommendations.
Belgium expressly bases its cooperation strategy on international consensus about the objectives and strategies for reducing poverty. This annual report expands on two focal points: 1) progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals; and 2) improvements in the effectiveness of aid thanks to harmonisation and better alignment of donor activities.

The emphasis on these aspects of policy is based on a conscious choice by the FPS to reinforce the role of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGD) preparing and following up on policy. With this mind, in late 2007 DGD drew up an updated management plan that will guide work over the coming months.

Millennium Development Goals not yet within reach

2007 saw the world half-way through the period for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At this pivotal point there is a mixed picture. Whilst in a number of aspects and countries it is clear that progress has been made, in many cases results still fall below expectations and efforts will have to be stepped up if the goals are to be met. Overall results often disguise the gulf between cities and the countryside, between rich and poor regions and between dominant and disadvantaged communities.

In 2007 DGD drew up a second progress report and submitted it to Parliament. It detailed the action Belgium is taking to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and gave an overview of the situation in the eighteen Belgian development cooperation partner countries.

DGD strives for results-oriented management of cooperation, but in the case of the MDGs it is not feasible to directly couple Belgian activities to results. For that to happen, the other donors’ contributions and the many other factors that play a role will have to be analysed in greater depth. The extensive UN report provides more details: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007/pdf.

**MDG 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
The fight against poverty holds a central, priority position in Belgian development cooperation. However, the most tangible contribution to eradicating hunger is being provided by the Belgian Survival Fund, which was set up to increase food security in those African countries which suffer from a chronic shortage of food or whose people risk starvation or malnourishment.

Worldwide there have been a number of successes in achieving the goal. The number of people living below the extreme poverty line of one dollar a day fell from 32% in 2000 to 19% in 2004. Meanwhile though, the data on poverty and malnourishment levels show just how alarming the situation is in West Africa – and in particular in Mali and Niger – and in Central Africa.

**MDG 2 – Achieve universal primary education**
Education is a basic pillar of the aid provided to developing countries. In terms of multilateral cooperation, DGD has been involved since 2003 in financing the Education For All - Fast Track Initiative, a global partnership set up pursuant to the Monterrey Consensus, with a view to achieving the goal.
Governmental cooperation focuses mainly on supporting the national development goals for education, training of teachers and teaching instructors, the creation, dissemination and use of teaching materials, and so on.

The evaluation of Belgian education cooperation in 2007 shows that more efforts are needed in the area of primary education. A look at the data shows that a number of partner countries have already fulfilled the indicator of “primary enrolment” that was chosen for education. There has been quite a substantial improvement in West Africa, but progress has slackened in the Great Lakes Region.

**MDG 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women**

Gender, and in particular equal rights and opportunities for men and women, is an overarching theme of Belgian development cooperation. Belgian development cooperation promotes gender equality with a strategy that intends to support the efforts made by the countries concerned.

Two approaches are taken in pursuing the objectives in this area: 1) integrating the gender issue into policy instruments and actions; and 2) launching or supporting positive actions to improve women’s lot.

In terms of indirect cooperation, DGDC supports such organisations as the NGO ‘Le Monde selon les Femmes’ (‘The world according to women’), which fights for equal rights between men and women. At multilateral level, Belgium Development Cooperation supports the joint programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on preventing and combating sexual violence against women, young people and children in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the action of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

For the indicator “ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education” there has been an improvement in the figures or maintenance of already good results. That said, progress in Burundi and Palestine is slowing down.

**MDG 4/MDG 5 – Reduce child mortality/ improve maternal health**

Belgian cooperation’s actions to combat child mortality and health problems suffered by new mothers focus on strengthening health systems in general and improving access to healthcare.

For instance, Belgium is supporting the health districts of the department of Dosso in Niger and improvements to access to healthcare in the city of El Alto in Bolivia. A noteworthy development was that in March 2007 Belgium approved a policy paper on sexual and reproductive health and rights which proposes a multidimensional approach to sexual and reproductive health that goes beyond public health in the strict sense.

A general improvement can be seen in terms of child mortality. Indeed the countries of South America are achieving very good results and the situation in Vietnam, Morocco and Algeria is improving.

In sub-Saharan Africa there is a noticeable improvement but it is less significant than in other regions, whilst in Central Africa the situation has not improved and in South Africa things have actually got worse.

**MDG 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

The thread running through the Belgian government’s strategy document is that concerns about AIDS/HIV need to be integrated into all aspects of development cooperation.

A number of actions have been taken with this in mind. They have included: representing Belgium in
the relevant international forums; encouraging partnerships between the private and public sectors in the area of research and development of new products such as microbicides and vaccines; cooperating with other Belgian players (e.g. civil society) in the fight against AIDS in developing countries; promoting access to medicines; offering technical assistance to partner countries in devising and implementing projects to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and so on.

Data on the occurrence of HIV confirm the general trend, with more cases of people contracting it in South Africa and Central Africa, and there was a rise in the occurrence of tuberculosis in a number of partner countries: Senegal, Niger and (to a lesser extent) Benin.

**MDG 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability**

The law on international cooperation makes the environment one of the four overarching priorities of Belgian development cooperation. Therefore Belgium is playing an active role, through multilateral cooperation, in the international negotiations to protect the world’s environment, e.g. negotiations on climate change, biodiversity, desertification and sound management of chemicals.

Belgium finances the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In 2007 Belgium organised the International Conference on Sustainable Forest Management in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The conference’s top priority was to raise Belgian, Congolese and international partners’ awareness of sustainable forest management and encourage them to adopt this approach to managing forests.

The report shows that access to water is improving quicker than sanitary facilities. The situation is particularly acute in Niger, where only 13% of the population has access to proper sanitation. Furthermore, the situation slightly deteriorated in Burundi and South Africa. By contrast, there were good results for Equatorial Africa, with 89% of the population having access to sanitation and 94% to drinking water.

**MDG 8 – Develop a global partnership for development**

Countries like Belgium are expected to help achieve MDG 8 by offering increased and more efficient aid and adapting the partner country’s national policy on debt management, investments and the regulation of trade to global developments. In terms of expenditure (in euro), Belgian development cooperation has increased by about 50% since 2000. Indeed, expenditure on development cooperation totalled almost €1.576 million in 2007 as opposed to €865 million in 2000.

It requires more than just aid, though, to meet the development goals – achieving them also depends on the decisions taken in a large number of sectoral and macroeconomic policy areas. Belgium is working on increasing the coherence between the various policy instruments, with a focus on introducing internal and external coordination mechanisms.

Belgium also helps the partner countries create conditions that are favourable to development through its activities in the area of ‘good governance’, an issue to which Belgium is attaching increasing importance. A guidance note on the subject was drawn up to help shape policy in this domain. Moreover, Belgium - in cooperation with the World Bank and OSCE - organised an international conference in March 2007 on “Improving governance and fighting corruption: towards new public-private partnerships”.

Belgium has also been very active with regard to the Governance Initiative, the common European approach to good governance for the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries.
Improving aid effectiveness: harmonisation and alignment

The last Millennium Development Goal, i.e. the ‘global partnership’ goal, is clearly apparent in the commitments made in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness signed in 2005. The European Union has since transposed the ‘harmonisation’ aspect of the declaration into the Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour in Development Policy. The code of conduct advocates, amongst other things, increased geographical and sectoral concentration of aid, arrangements with the relevant donors about ‘delegated cooperation’ and further reforms by the donors to make the aid more efficient and reduce the management burden for recipient countries. Since the Declaration recipient countries and donors alike have drawn up an action plan of their own. Belgium has been no exception, reworking the Paris Declaration into a concrete action plan in 2007 that also incorporates the European code of conduct.

The terms ‘ownership’, ‘alignment’ and ‘harmonisation’ are central to the action plan, alongside the principles of managing for results, with attention being paid to institutional capacity building in the partner country and mutual accountability.

Twelve indicators covering these areas were listed in the declaration. Four are specifically the responsibility of the recipient countries while the other eight are in the first instance the responsibility of the donors.

Belgian action plan to boost effectiveness

The Belgian action plan translates the twelve indicators into concrete steps to boost the effectiveness of Belgian cooperation. The focus is on the following issues:

**Cooperation planning**

Indicative cooperation programmes are aligned to fit the partner countries’ poverty reduction plans (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers or other plans). This means aligning not only the content (objectives and strategic choices), but also organisational aspects (schedule, follow-up missions, use of national procedures and institutions, and so on).

**Role of technical assistance (TA)**

In the international technical assistance it offers, Belgian development cooperation has to take into account the partner country’s national policy on capacity building and, in particular, subscribe to pooled fund mechanisms for TA (donors’ funds (co-)managed by the partner country to obtain international TA). Belgium also tries to recruit as many mission personnel as possible from the local community and give them professional training, whilst taking care that this does not lead to weakening of the partner country’s own institutions (a ‘brain drain’).

**Coordination of implementation mechanisms**

Taking into account the institutional capacity of the recipient country, Belgium is working on an approach whereby the partner institutions themselves implement and are responsible for cooperation initiatives.

This basic preference for ‘national implementation’ means that we must make efforts to avoid parallel follow-up systems wherever possible and ensure that existing partner institutions take care of follow-up.

**Intensification of policy dialogue**

With a view to creating an enhanced and realistic (multi-donor) policy dialogue, Belgian cooperation will bolster its risk management mechanisms by acquiring appropriate knowledge and experience of Public Expenditure Framework Assessments (PEFAs), Public Expenditure Review (PER) or other relevant mechanisms.
Expenditure Reviews (PERs) and Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETSs).

To develop this expertise, Belgian cooperation needs to adopt a suitable personnel policy and cooperate effectively with the relevant academic circles.

Predictability of aid
When working on projects, Belgian cooperation tries to actually implement the planned expenditure within the periods foreseen. If changes in the schedule of payments cannot be avoided, the partner country must be informed (in good time and in a spirit of transparency).

For budget support – where a long-term perspective of five to ten years is desirable – the financing schedule will be given in the Indicative Cooperation Programme (ICP). Decisions on payment of the second instalment and subsequent instalments are taken locally, in consultation with the other donors involved.

Division of labour and complementarity between donors
Following the above-mentioned EU code of conduct, Belgian governmental cooperation will in principle focus on a maximum of two sectors/subsectors for each partner country. This is meant to ensure that work is intensive and of a high quality, rather than being fragmented. Between 2005 and 2010 the package of standalone projects (i.e. projects that fall outside the sectoral/subsectoral programmes) must be cut by two thirds.

In other sectors, Belgium can try to find forms of delegated cooperation and act as a silent partner. Improving the effectiveness of cooperation requires donor specialisation. Belgian cooperation is making a commitment to invest, where appropriate, in bolstering national public contract systems. Relatively few bilateral donors have supported such programmes up to now.

Joint analyses
Belgian assessments of the partner’s poverty policy and institutional capacity and other donors’ strategies are based on the EC common framework for Common Strategy Papers and involve cooperation with the partner country and other donors (EC).

Checks and evaluations are increasingly being organised for a number of programmes together. Wherever possible, project formulation and follow-up missions will also be organised with the other donors involved.

Belgium intends to work with other donors on financing and implementing analytical studies.

Belgium plays an active role in the ‘Paris 21’ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) partnership with a view to ensuring improvement of the quality of partner countries’ statistical material and actual use of such material.

Further follow-up
An assessment of the progress being made by both Belgium and the partner country towards meeting the goals on harmonisation and alignment will be made at the Joint Committees (with partner countries that have also signed the Paris Declaration).

The first progress report on the Belgian action plan will come out before the DAC mid-term review in September 2008 in Accra (Ghana). The second progress report (final evaluation) will be drawn up before the DAC Paris+5 meeting in 2010.

Belgian governmental development cooperation’s eighteen partner countries
Algeria, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Benin, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Vietnam

Evaluations contribute to more efficient development aid
The new FPS Foreign Affairs management culture introduced in 2002 aims to foster results- and performance-oriented management. New working methods were developed to respond more effectively to the expectations of the public, who expect a quality service from a responsible, accessible and transparent administration.
The Belgian public and the partner countries insist on development aid making the most efficient possible contribution to poverty reduction. Evaluations make this a reality. Feedback and evaluation results are integrated into the learning process, making it more efficient. In 2007 the Special Evaluation Unit and the DGDC’s evaluation department paid special attention to capitalising on the results of their evaluations.

Special Evaluation Unit for Development Cooperation
The Special Evaluation Unit carried out an evaluation of direct bilateral development cooperation. The DGDC management produced a response to the recommendations that emerged from this evaluation and applied the recommendations in practice.

The need for urgent improvement of the functioning of bilateral development cooperation was recognised. The joint DGDC/BTC (Belgian Technical Cooperation) management committee was reactivated, with a division of labour designed to meet specifically defined objectives. Consideration was also given to how the control mechanisms could be improved further.

BIO
The evaluation of the Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO) shows that over the first five years of its existence BIO has built up a portfolio that maintains a good balance between financial sustainability and development relevance.

However, BIO now needs its management and internal division of labour to be reorganised. Furthermore, it should coordinate better with the departments of Development Cooperation. Also, new rules are needed on the working of the funds it uses to make its investments.

Humanitarian aid
The evaluation of humanitarian aid makes recommendations to simplify this area of Belgian development cooperation, which is currently provided through a number of channels. The recommendations cover mostly processes and envisage mainly new, more results-oriented forms of management.

Public health
The DGDC evaluation department carried out an evaluation of Belgian development cooperation in the area of public health. The recommendations produced by the evaluation were considered when updating the strategy document. They were translated into a feasible strategy intended to serve as a framework for the activities of Belgian players involved in improving primary healthcare in developing countries. This conceptual framework should lead to improved coordination, complementarity and an increased impact of the healthcare programmes being financed by Belgium.

Decentralisation
A similar exercise covering Belgian aid for decentralisation and local government is under way. A committee involving the relevant partners has started developing a strategic framework to improve the positioning of the programmes pursued by Belgian players active in government decentralisation.

Education
The recommendations emerging from the evaluation of Belgian development cooperation in the area of education will be used as a basis when updating the 2002 strategy document.

Budget support
The evaluation of Belgium’s participation in support for general and sectoral budgets in the partner countries should make it possible to review the procedures applied when allocating Belgian aid to these new forms of cooperation.

Results and reports available for consultation
Citizens expect us to report back on the results of development aid and on how their money has been spent in this area. We make information on results available through various channels. The final reports are distributed to all the parties involved and they are discussed at work seminars.

The Special Evaluation Unit’s evaluation reports can be consulted on www.diplomatie.be. The reports of DGDC’s sectoral and thematic evaluations can be found on www.dgdc.be.
Articles concerning specific evaluations appear in the DGDC public information magazine *Dimension 3* and also the magazine *Mo*.

The Special Evaluator is accountable to Parliament for its operations. Its report for 2006-2007 will soon be available on the above website.

**WHY? WHAT’S THE POINT?**

Development cooperation: an issue of mutual importance

For many Belgians development still remains an issue far removed from their everyday concerns. However, the realisation is dawning on them that poverty and the risks associated with it – instability, environmental degradation, actual and potential conflicts – do not stop at developing countries’ borders. The ultimate aim of working on poverty reduction in the South is a better distribution of the world’s resources, with benefits for people’s welfare and a safe environment in both the North and the South. This makes it important to bring this issue closer to the public.

There is now a more direct link between the Belgian public and cooperation in terms of awareness raising and communication. The Millennium Campaign, launched in 2004 and associated with a mobile exhibition, was continued in 2007. Then there is also “Deadline 2015”, the new DGD website, on which journalists, teachers and students, political policymakers, members of parliament and NGOs can find the latest news, trends and opinions regarding the MDGs. The MDGs are also integrated into the BTC training cycle and learning programmes, as well as DGD stands at exhibitions.

Sunday, 29 April 2007 witnessed development cooperation in action as around 200 scouts rolled up their sleeves to build the longest Bridge of Solidarity in Brussels’ Cinquantenaire Park. With this initiative – part of the celebrations for the centenary of the Scout Movement – the scouts working together with Belgian Development Cooperation created public enthusiasm for the Millennium Development Goals by both literally and figuratively ‘building a bridge’ between North and South.
Organisational chart of FPS
Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade
and Development Cooperation
ANNEXES

Map of worldwide FPS representations (Belgium and abroad) (November 2007)
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.dgcd.be – www.diplomatie.be)

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

Graphics, layout, printing and binding:
› CIBE, centrum voor overheidscommunicatie v.z.w., Ghent

Content Officer:
Jan Grauls, Rue des Petits Carmes 15, B-1000 Brussels

The information contained in this report is for information only. The Federal Public Service is in no way legally bound by it.

February 2008

Legal registration: 0218/2008/03
Activity Report 2007