

***Statement of the Slovak Republic***

***150<sup>th</sup> Executive Board***

***Items:7 Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Asssembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases***

***e) Progress in the implementation of the global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem and in the achievement of its associated goals and targets for the period 2020-2030***

Chair,

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement of France delivered on behalf of the EU and its Member States on the agenda item.

Slovakia thanks the Director – General for his leadership in the field of non-communicable diseases, particularly in Cancer related matters. We highly appreciate that the opening remarks of Director-General also referred to the *Global* effort of narrowing the survival gap in children with cancer. Slovakia widely supports a common approach to non-communicable diseases in line with the three-billion targets, UHCs and SDGs, while concentrating the focus on high-risk and most vulnerable groups.

Given that COVID-19 has slowed down considerably the progress in cervical cancer elimination, Slovakia welcomes the commitment of WHO and its MSs to support and work with partners in order to achieve the goals set in the Global Strategy.

Annual world-age standardised incidence rates range from 6.8 per 100,000 women in Western Europe to 16 per 100,000 women in Central and Eastern Europe. Recent research from L- and MIC and HIC and real global data confirm that vaccination reduces cervical cancer by almost 90%. Vaccination against HPV along with the innovations in diagnostics using an artificial intelligence, the community outreach and health education hold the potential for achieving established targets.

With a view to reduce cervical cancer incidence and mortality, the readiness of health systems, the safety and the effectiveness of new technologies and evidence-based guidelines are pivotal preconditions for succeeding. Apart from that, the factors that support sustainability of these programmes need to be better understood and implemented from global to local level. Likewise, we note that the COVID 19 pandemic has severely affected the implementation of preventive programmes at national level.

Currently, we are facing the challenge of re-setting the ongoing screening programs as well as preventive interventions, which were put aside due to constraints arising from the anti-pandemic measures as well as from the patients' fear of contracting the COVID19. As a result, the Ministry of Health has prepared an update of the National Cancer Program Action Plans in line with the WHO guideline.

Slovakia notes with great satisfaction the cooperation with WHO, EU and IARC as the implementation of national cancer programs has been supported through EU4HEALTH Joint Action.

Achieving the ultimate goal of the Global Strategy will require perseverance and long period of sustained effort. Yet, the clock is ticking for us to reach the 2030 targets.

Besides the cervical cancer elimination, Slovakia strongly advocates for paediatric, hereditary and rare cancer diseases falling under the WHO action on *Global Child Cancer Initiative* - We have no time to lose!

The data are truly striking. Approximately 400,000 children worldwide become cancer ill each year, and 100,000 children die each year. Slovakia is pleased to be able to contribute to the global efforts in tackling the child cancer by co-piloting the Global Child Cancer Initiative.

We are also enthusiastic about the creation of the *Global Platform for Access to Medicines for Children's Cancer*, the first of its kind, which can also be a model for other NCDs. We thank the WHO and the champions in research and treatment, including St Jude Hospital, which was closely involved in the platform creation. It will definitely provide comprehensive support, consolidate the supply, assist countries with the selection of innovative medicines, develop treatment standards and build information systems to monitor the effectiveness of care.

In conclusion, Slovakia welcomes and recommends further deep diving into the interventions within the NCDs. It will be also crucial to continue linking them with the initiatives on leaving no one behind and so creating a promising path towards Sustainable development agenda 2030 and beyond.