Statement of Slovakia at the EB146th session
Geneva, 3 -8 February 2020

7.1 Follow-up to the high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on health related issues – Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier report

Mr Chairman,

Slovakia would like to thank Secretariat for presented Report and the opportunity to present at this high level meeting

The general health of the Slovak population has increased substantially over the last 15 years and the health care sector has undergone major reforms. The level of out-of-pocket payments is comparable to the EU average. Attention should be paid to some population groups – especially in vulnerable minorities e.g. such as Roma – who face significant limitations in access to health service.

Effective way to improve care for this community, was to introduce Roma health assistants, facilitating health education/health promotion and mediator between health care workers and individuals in Roma communities, facing their specific health, social and educational needs.

Slovakia has undertaken several steps and action on broad field of healthcare system improvement to address major tasks and challenges such as shortage of Health-care workers. Enhancing health care standardization and quality improvement, digitalisation especially eHealth implementation and preventive programs with the aim to decrease number of avoidable deaths by 25% in the future were introduced.

With regard to the WHO efforts focused on helping Mb States to implement UHC we agree with point 20 of the report that further work needs to be done to implement UHC in ways that best suit to reach those with least access to effective health interventions.

Pursuing this objective, in February 2019, the WHO European Region Collaborative Centre was established in Slovakia with the clear aim to implement the TB and other communicable diseases educational programs for health mediators from Roma communities. Furthermore, the National Healthy Communities Project 2A, implemented by the organization Healthy Regions, contributes to improve the health situation in excluded communities.

With regard to the points 16-17 of the report we welcome efforts of WHO and its member states in investing in universal health coverage and eliminating catastrophic health expenditure. We would like to remind that modelling of different stages of service coverage and catastrophic health spending should also take into account those situations where citizen are in such a poor state that they lack access to health care.

Relative shortage of medical workforce can limit access to health service in some regions and medical fields in the future. Increasing age of GP’s – one of the pillars of UHC, with lack of motivation will be the major task for the future. Slovakia has undertaken steps already to
support and develop the tools to increase the number and improve the position of GP’s in the healthcare system. Residency program, financial support for starting practitioners altogether with increasing competence and widening of prescription are among the first.

**Within the UHC, our strategic efforts are focused** on reversing adverse trends and achieving a 25% reduction of the mortality from the most serious non-communicable diseases, cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

Another considerable threat is the ageing population and the needs of elderly citizens. Linkage of palliative and long-term care into general health care is considered as benefit for addressing the issue of aging populations and the related provision of health care, that society today is facing.

Slovakia is aware of the patient safety’s importance, therefore a new legislation was implemented with commitment of health care providers to introduce an internal evaluation system within two years. Modern tools of digitalization and electronic Health should be helpful and beneficial for future action plans enhancing proper data collections and evaluation of indicators.

**We have also transformed our UHC commitments into a political leadership action at national level by declaring the year 2019 as the Year of Prevention.** The public health priority is to create a new functional model of public health, based on the principle of health in all policies, the responsibility of the citizen for his own health and the promotion of citizens’ awareness.

Finally, for us it is indispensable to consider 3 key points when talking about making progress towards Universal Health Coverage:

1. Availability of quality health care;
2. Availability of prevention, health promotion, early diagnosis and treatment for all;
3. Patient safety with strong focus on improvement of the early detection and increased participation in screening programs.

Slovakia has a long history and tradition based on equal right of each citizen in access to health care services anchored in Constitution. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to sustain, develop and improve all the commitments of UHC in the future.

We conclude by appreciating the opportunity given to Mb States to cooperate in this important field and we encourage WHO to support countries in scaling up national implementation efforts.

Thank you for your attention.