

***Statement of the Slovak Republic
150th Executive Board
Item:17 Maternal, infant and young child nutrition***

Geneva, 24-29 January 2022

Chair,

Slovakia aligns itself with the EU positions to the Item 17 Maternal, infant and young child nutrition and related agendas, an important part of Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 sub-target 4.2.

Slovakia welcomes the six commitments of the WHO Global Tokio Nutrition summit, 2021 to accelerate progress on the 2025 nutrition targets and in particular “scale up quality breastfeeding promotion and support”.

We would like to thank for the WHO continuous work on this agenda, in consultation with countries as well as ongoing efforts to prevent an impact of COVID-19 on mother and child care. We welcome the Report *EB150/23*, and decision contained in the report that requests the DG to develop guidance on regulatory measures for Mb States to address digital marketing of breast milk substitutes.

We note with concern the point 6 of the Report that only slow progress has been made in increasing breastfeeding, globally 44% of infants under six months of age were exclusively breastfed in 2020. Only 48 countries have exclusive breastfeeding rates higher than the 50% target. Slovakia considers it not satisfactory and we call to invest more in this Global Health area.

Moreover, we miss the European numbers that we would like to ask to include in the follow-up reporting on this agenda during the WHA.

Improving the nutrition of pregnant mothers, breastfeeding first 6 months and early nutrition quality are important to protect health of children and mothers to reduce the risk of NCDs later in their life. It deserves and requires the whole of government approach, rethinking its economic as well as social and health dimension.

More precisely, addressing such challenges in our society. is the way to create healthy environment for the families, mothers, fathers and their children.

At national level, Slovakia developed recently a preventive guideline on the implementation of *Baby friendly hospitals guided by BFHI* initiative in cooperation with WHO. In 2020, the first evaluation of this updated standard has happened, based on the hospitals answers according to the questionnaire of the Ministry of Health. Comparing the results, we can see an improvement in the implementation of the principles BFHI. Exclusive breastfeeding in Slovakia increased yearly from 62% of exclusively breastfed newborns to 67%. The rooming-in system increased from 65.5% to 68%.

Subsequently, Slovakia draws the attention to the importance of further WHO guidance in this field and sharing the countries' best practice.

At national level, we have identified following challenges as well as needs:

1. Inappropriate marketing of breastfeeding substitutes;
2. Building capacities at national level for proper clinical audits in BFHI hospitals programs;
3. The need for trainings within the assessment of comprehensive breastfeeding support
4. The creation of breastfeeding - friendly environment, including such a working environment in a health care facility where both mothers and health professionals will benefit from breastfeeding best results ("win-win" situation for protection of health of mother and child in short as well as long term):
5. Counselling services for the pregnant and breastfeeding mothers as well as fathers:
to support the education about breastfeeding as part of psychophysical preparation for childbirth or independently - paid for by the health insurance company - to create conditions for midwives and nurses participation
6. Evidence-based interventions continued support of lactation counselling after giving birth - paid for by the health insurance company
7. Necessity to build and increase the access to human milk's banks instead of providing the milk substitutes.

Finally, Slovakia would like to express its continued readiness to further support this important agenda and its strengthening.

Thank you