

**Statement of the Slovak Republic**  
**154<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board**  
**Agenda Item 7. Follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the**  
**General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases**  
**24 January 2024**

*Director General,  
Madam Vice-Chair,  
distinguished colleagues,  
delegates,*

*Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of EU and its member states and welcomes the agenda reminding us of the high-level political declaration, which is the key to progress on the prevention and control of NCDs.*

*First of all, we would like to appreciate the work of the whole Secretariat team from different departments led by the NCD group on mapping cancer programs and publishing the Cancer report for which we are grateful because it helps us to understand where progress was made and the gaps remain. Slovakia commits to work on further improvement in this field at the national level, but we recognize the need to pay more attention to GPW14 at all levels and ensure that NCDs will be adequately recognized not only at the general level of the appropriate pillar, but also between other fields - especially emergencies, environmental health, patient safety, migrants health and communicable diseases with its strong linkage to UHC, humanitarian agenda, family, school and community health.*

*Regarding the Global Oral Health Action Plan 2023–2030, we recognize the vision to integrate oral health into universal coverage for all individuals and communities by 2030 and here the action plan translates the vision into 100 actions for various stakeholders, including Member States, the Secretariat, international partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector. The reason for this need is clearly stated in the report, which shows that only 31% of countries have an operational national oral health policy, and 43% have implemented measures to phase down the use of dental amalgam as per the Minamata Convention on Mercury.*

*Global Monitoring Framework is established with strategic objectives, global targets, and needs to reflect the context of the countries, as well as measure the impact through outcomes and outputs to ensure that we know where we are and where fragility on the progress lies on the country and the regional level.*

***We urge for specific actions and measures to reduce the intake of free sugars, unhealthy food, harming alcohol consumption, and other environmental and food substances and factors with negative affect on health. We would welcome work on NCD policies and guidelines development on the prevention and management of obesity, diabetes, lung diseases, trauma, and violence-related needs, school and community preventive programs, as well as complex work on legislation, advocacy, and education on substance abuse, health taxes, physical activity, decriminalization of suicide and oral health. We call for a joint approach at all levels to support access to diagnostics, therapeutics, supportive and palliative care for all types of cancers, and all types of NCDs, including the family health living with affected children and family members where social support is needed due to experiencing***

***negative implications of disease, complications, including mental health and all social determinants of health, including poverty worsening.***

*We appreciate the fact that the report focuses on recognizing and emphasizing the importance of national policies, strategies, and action plans to prevent and control the NCDs. More concrete work from WHO is needed in the field and at the country level with focus on achieving universal health coverage, addressing health emergencies, safety and health determinants for all ages, and promoting healthier populations.*

*We are grateful for the extensive technical work outlined in the complementary report to support Member States in implementing WHO's action plans in NCDs, especially on mental health, children's cancer, and palliative care.*

*Slovakia recognizes the WHO Leadership and Global Initiatives in the implementation roadmap for the global action plan for NCDs 2013–2030 as a reasonable way how to guide regions and countries in accelerating national responses.*

*We are concerned about policy and guidelines development on the prevention and management of obesity and diabetes as sets of operational targets with the need to promote more activities on substance abuse, health taxes, physical activity, decriminalization of suicide, data collection and analysis.*

***Q1: How can Member States, with the support of the Secretariat, accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal target 3.4 to reduce by one-third premature mortality from NCDs by 2030, noting that global progress has slowed in recent years? How can the implementation roadmap be optimized, together with the WHO guidance on best buys and recommended actions for prevention and control of NCDs?***

*Accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 3.4, which aims to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by one-third by 2030, requires concerted efforts from Member States, with the support of WHO Secretariat and collaboration with other international organizations, healthcare providers, communities, and individuals to create a healthier and more equitable world.*

*Considering that global progress has slowed down in recent years, optimizing the implementation roadmap and leveraging WHO guidance on the best buys and recommended actions for NCD prevention and control becomes crucial. From our point of view, this are the key strategies in achieving this:*

- *Implementation of comprehensive **legislation** addressing access to innovative, evidence-based, and QALY-addressing drugs and therapeutic modalities.*
- ***Health System Integration:*** *Strengthen health systems to integrate NCD services into primary healthcare. This involves incorporating NCD prevention, early detection, and management into routine health services.*
- ***Capacity Building:*** *Enhance healthcare capacity through training programs for healthcare professionals, which includes improving skills in NCD diagnosis, treatment, and management.*
- ***Health Promotion and Education:*** *Launching public awareness campaigns on the importance of healthy lifestyles, literacy and the prevention of NCDs. Emphasize the role of individuals in adopting healthy behaviours.*

- **School and Community Programs:** Implement educational programs in schools and communities to promote healthy habits from an early age. Engagement of community leaders and influencers to drive positive health behaviours.
- Slovakia recognizes the need to enhance **Surveillance Systems** to monitor NCD prevalence, risk factors and mortality, which involves investing in data collection, analysis, and reporting mechanisms.
- We see the need in **leverage technology** for real-time data collection and monitoring and implementation of digital health solutions to streamline reporting and analysis processes.
- For resource Mobilization, we recognize as optimal ways forward:
  - a) Member States should advocate for increased domestic mobilization of **funding, including innovative financing mechanisms** for NCD prevention and control.
  - b) Collaboration with **international partners**, donor agencies, and global health organizations to secure additional resources for NCD programs. Pool resources for more significant impact.
- Tackling social determinants of health, such as poverty and education is highly linked with the creation of an environment that supports healthy living and reduces NCD risk factors.
- We need to **promote and invest in research** to better understand the causes of NCDs, identify effective interventions, and innovations in healthcare delivery. For progress, we have to use the tools to translate research findings into evidence-based policies and practices.
- **We support advocacy for policy changes** at the national and international levels and work with policymakers to prioritize NCDs on political agendas and ensure the implementation of evidence-based policies. Effective examples on how to strengthen legislation related to NCD prevention and control is e.g. increasing taxes on tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy foods.

**Q2: How can the Secretariat support Member States to prepare for the fourth high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases due to be held in September 2025? What further strategic support from the Secretariat do Member States deem crucial in order to ensure adequate attention and focus on this pivotal event?**

The Secretariat can play a crucial role in supporting Member States to prepare for the fourth high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in September 2025. Here are key strategic supports that Slovakia sees as highly relevant:

- **Capacity Building:** Organize workshops and training sessions to build the capacity of Member States in planning, implementing, and reporting on NCD prevention and control programs. This includes strengthening skills in data collection, analysis, and program evaluation.
- **Guidance Documents and contextualized clinical guidelines development:** Offer templates for reporting and sharing best practices in preparation, work on result-based

*framework and delivery for impact at country levels with a clear description of outcomes and outputs.*

- *We would appreciate the Secretariate to assist Member States in reviewing existing **NCD policies** and aligning them with international best practices and evidence. Offer technical assistance in developing or updating national action plans for NCD prevention and control.*
- *Provide guidance on the development of comprehensive **legislation** to address major NCD risk factors. Support the implementation of evidence-based policies and regulations.*
- ***Data and Reporting Systems** are key instruments for the implementation process at all levels, but especially at countries level, where real change should be done. We call for data improvement strategies, including the assistance of Member States in enhancing their data collection and reporting systems for NCDs. This includes supporting the establishment of robust surveillance mechanisms and improving data accuracy and timeliness, including the development of standardized templates to report on their progress toward NCD targets. Provide **technical support** for data analysis and interpretation using the instruments as the National Health Information Systems assessment tool.*

**Q3: How can NCDs be more fully integrated into ongoing work on health system strengthening, primary health care/universal health coverage approaches, universal health coverage benefit packages and other mechanisms to improve financial protection, and emergency preparedness and response plans?**

*Integrating NCDs into ongoing work on health system strengthening, primary health care, universal health coverage benefit packages, and emergency preparedness and response plans requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy, including delivery for impact with clear data management and development of measuring the outcomes and outputs at the country level. Following are the key approaches to achieve this integration:*

**1. Incorporate NCDs into PHC Services requires:**

- a. **to train and improve capacity building** by providing training for health professionals, including community health workers, on their capacity to deliver comprehensive care within PHC settings.*
  - b. **to integrate NCD screening programs** into routine PHC services and to implement population-based screenings and opportunistic screenings for common NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, mental health and certain cancers.*
  - c. **to develop protocols and guidelines** for the management of chronic NCDs within PHC settings. Ensure the availability of essential medicines and technologies for NCD treatment.*
- 2. UHC Benefit Packages** introduction with assurance that UHC benefit packages cover a wide range of NCD prevention, diagnosis, and treatment services, including essential medications, diagnostics, and interventions for managing common NCDs in all types of communities and environments, including conflict and humanitarian settings. The new approach is needed through designing benefit packages to ensure equitable access to

*NCD services, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized populations, including migrants and refugees, in which we need to address social determinants of health to reduce disparities in NCD outcomes.*

- 3. **Financial Protection** through implementation mechanisms to protect individuals and families from financial hardship due to NCD-related healthcare costs and to explore innovative financing models, insurance schemes, and cost-sharing arrangements.*
- 4. **Health System Strengthening with Infrastructure Development** for strengthening health infrastructure to support NCD services, which includes upgrading diagnostic facilities, establishing chronic disease clinics, and ensuring the availability of essential equipment.*
- 5. **Health Workforce Planning** requires assess and address workforce needs to manage the growing burden of NCDs and to develop strategies for recruitment, training, and retention of healthcare professionals skilled in NCD prevention and management.*
- 6. To enhance **health information systems** to capture and analyze NCD-related data, and to implement electronic health records and surveillance systems to monitor trends, outcomes, and service utilization.*

*We cannot neglect the need to prepare for **crisis** in the field of NCD Emergency and humanitarian Response Plans development at HQ and regional levels in collaboration with Member States to ensure that strategies for maintaining essential NCD services during emergencies are in place.*

*More **contextualized work on behavioural and lifestyle interventions** under health promotion programs is needed, including implementation of health promotion and education programs to address behavioural risk factors contributing to NCDs, promoting healthy lifestyles, physical activities, and a balanced diet within communities.*

*We would welcome to support countries in **communication and NCD strategies plans** to include all stakeholders.*

*Slovakia supports the proposed decisions under this item led by Spain, Ukraine, and Netherlands.*

*Thank you*