

Statement of the Slovak Republic
156th Session of the Executive Board
Agenda Item 14. Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health
27 January 2025

Chair, esteemed members of the Executive Board,

The Slovak Republic aligns with the European Union and its Member States. We appreciate the opportunity to engage in this critical discussion on advancing the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health. Recognizing the importance of global collaboration, Slovakia supports the implementation of comprehensive strategies to address systemic inequities and prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable populations, aligning with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international frameworks and agreements.

*Slovakia underscores the vital role of **exclusive breastfeeding** as a cornerstone for child health and development. WHO's Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) provides an essential framework for fostering breastfeeding practices globally. To strengthen this initiative, Slovakia recommends the establishment of **lactation support clinics** within hospitals to assist mothers with breastfeeding challenges and the enforcement of **strict regulations** to limit the marketing of infant formula to cases prescribed solely for medical purposes. Incorporating **breastfeeding education** into prenatal care programs and training healthcare workers in evidence-based practices are equally crucial steps to achieve widespread adherence.*

*Addressing the health needs of **children in adverse environments**, including low-resource settings and conflict zones, requires a multisectoral approach. Slovakia advocates for the creation of **community health hubs** to provide multidisciplinary services, such as nutrition, healthcare, and education, while prioritizing **early intervention services** to mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Innovative solutions, such as **mobile health clinics**, should be deployed to extend essential healthcare access to children in remote or conflict-affected areas, ensuring their right to equitable health services.*

*The health of **refugees and migrant children** remains a priority, as these groups face barriers related to trauma, cultural differences, and access to care. Slovakia emphasizes the need for **culturally adapted health materials**, **digital translation tools**, and trauma-informed mental health services to support these vulnerable populations. Furthermore, enhanced **cross-border healthcare frameworks** are essential to ensure continuity of care for migrant families across regions.*

*The use of **digital tools** and **behavioral insights** represents an opportunity to revolutionize pediatric care globally. Slovakia encourages the development of partnerships with academia and international organizations to explore **AI-driven solutions** for early diagnosis and care delivery. Additionally, **behavioral and cultural insights (BCIs)** should inform culturally sensitive health campaigns, improving vaccine uptake and reducing health disparities. Digital applications tailored to support parenting and mental health can further empower families to overcome barriers to health services.*

*To strengthen **social pediatrics** and **preventive care**, Slovakia calls for child-friendly healthcare environments and improved collaboration across inpatient, outpatient, and community-based services. Legislative reforms are necessary to align national standards with the latest evidence, ensuring comprehensive preventive measures are embedded in healthcare systems.*

*Reliable data collection underpins effective policymaking. Slovakia emphasizes the need for **harmonized health data systems**, including the development of standardized **pediatric disease registries** to facilitate national policies uptake and cross-country comparisons. Establishing robust **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** is essential to measure the effectiveness of interventions and inform policy adjustments.*

*At the **global level**, Slovakia urges WHO to expand initiatives such as the Every Newborn Action Plan to include metrics for breastfeeding, maternal mental health, and adolescent well-being. Mobilizing resources for low-resource settings and enhancing global monitoring systems will help address systemic disparities.*

*At the **regional level**, facilitating platforms for knowledge exchange and collaboration will support the adaptation of global frameworks to regional contexts. Capacity-building programs for healthcare workers, particularly in midwifery and early childhood care, are essential to address regional disparities effectively.*

*At the **national level**, Slovakia calls for technical support to develop integrated health information systems and standardized methodologies for data collection. Capacity-building initiatives for healthcare workers and resources for early childhood development programs will strengthen national health systems and address the specific needs of vulnerable populations.*

*In line with the Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer, Slovakia highlights its leadership in creating comprehensive pediatric cancer registries, advocating for cost-effective models, and implementing frameworks for early diagnosis and survivorship care. Collaborating with global partners such as **St. Jude Children's Research Hospital**, **International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP)** and **Childhood Cancer International (CCI)**, Slovakia seeks to enhance outcomes for children with cancer while aligning national efforts with WHO objectives.*

*To address inequalities in sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health, Slovakia recommends implementing **multisectoral approaches** that tackle the social determinants of health, such as poverty, education, and access to care. Expanding early interventions, including prenatal care, breastfeeding support, and nutrition programs, will ensure improved health outcomes for marginalized populations. Targeted policies for refugees, migrants, and conflict-affected children are necessary to close gaps in healthcare access.*

Slovakia reaffirms its commitment to collaborating with WHO and Member States to advance the health of women, children, and adolescents. By addressing systemic inequities, fostering global partnerships, and leveraging innovative solutions, we can collectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and secure a healthier, more equitable future for all.

Thank you for your attention.