

Statement of the Slovak Republic
156th Session of the Executive Board

Agenda Item 21 Updated road map for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution
10 February 2025

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Slovakia fully supports the ambition of the updated road map to reduce air pollution-related mortality by 50% by 2040. We recognize the critical role of multisectoral collaboration in achieving this goal. However, for this framework to succeed, it must be built on **clear implementation strategies, measurable impact assessments, and strong coordination to avoid duplication** with existing initiatives. Slovakia welcomes this initiative but believes that certain areas require **further refinement to enhance its effectiveness and feasibility**.

First, we emphasize the **need for a robust monitoring and evaluation system**. While the road map identifies four pillars, knowledge, monitoring, capacity-building, and leadership, it lacks clear, standardized metrics for tracking progress at the national level. Currently, there are no uniform indicators to assess institutional capacity gains, such as the **percentage of health workers trained annually** in air pollution-related health risks. Furthermore, the road map provides **limited guidance on integrating air pollution reduction into primary healthcare systems**. To address this, Slovakia recommends **developing a structured monitoring framework** with SMART indicators, such as the **reduction of PM_{2.5} and NO₂ levels in urban areas** and the **percentage of national health budgets allocated to air pollution interventions**. In addition, we encourage **the use of real-time exposure tracking technologies**, including IoT and community-led sensors, to complement traditional monitoring efforts.

Another key priority is **ensuring coordination and avoiding overlaps** with existing initiatives, such as the **Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)** and **UNEP's pollution programs**. The road map does not clearly outline how WHO will work with these organizations to prevent redundancy. Slovakia, therefore, proposes the **establishment of an inter-agency task force** to map roles and responsibilities and align efforts. Additionally, WHO could **leverage its convening power to host regional workshops**, such as in Central Europe, to facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative air quality models.

We also believe that **financial transparency and administrative rationalization** are essential for the success of this initiative. The **proposed budget of \$34.46 million lacks clarity** in regional allocations. Notably, only **\$0.3 million is allocated to Europe for 2024–2025**, despite persistent air pollution challenges in cities such as **Bratislava**. Moreover, a **\$1.66 million funding gap in the current biennium** raises concerns about delays in implementation. Slovakia recommends **adopting an equity-based funding approach** that prioritizes **regions with limited monitoring infrastructure**, such as Eastern Europe. We also encourage **blended financing models**, including public-private partnerships, to close funding gaps, as demonstrated successfully in the **BreatheLife campaign**. Additionally, WHO should **streamline administrative costs** by integrating air pollution training into **existing WHO Academy modules** rather than creating parallel programs.

Beyond financial considerations, Slovakia believes that **sustainability and resource efficiency should be further reinforced** in the road map. This initiative should align more closely with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EU Green Deal priorities**. We encourage the **integration of air pollution targets into National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)**, as well as the **scaling up of WHO's Clean Household Energy Solutions Toolkit (CHEST)** to promote accessible, low-cost solutions that reduce fossil fuel reliance. Moreover, rather than hiring additional specialists, **existing healthcare workers should be trained** to address air pollution risks, ensuring a more efficient allocation of resources.

To strengthen the road map, Slovakia proposes several **concrete amendments**. First, we recommend adding a **"Synergies" Annex** to map overlaps with initiatives like CCAC and propose joint actions to enhance coordination. Second, we urge WHO to **improve financing transparency** by publishing **annual expenditure reports disaggregated by region and activity type**. Third, we suggest requiring **Health Impact Assessments** for policies affecting air pollution, particularly in **transport and energy sectors**. Finally, to ensure a people-centered approach, Slovakia recommends that **20% of the allocated funding be directed toward interventions targeting children, pregnant women, and marginalized communities**, who are most vulnerable to air pollution.

The proposed **budget lacks regional clarity**. Approximately 1/3 of total budget is allocated to the regions, with the rest allocated to the WHO Headquarters. Slovakia suggests adopting an **equity-based funding model** that prioritizes regions with **limited monitoring infrastructure** and ensuring **clear annual expenditure reports**.

Three Key Questions for Discussion:

1. **How does WHO plan to ensure that Member States retain flexibility in integrating this framework into their national policies while maintaining a harmonized global approach?**

Some regional and national strategies, such as the **EU Green Deal and National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)**, already address air pollution. It is not clear how will WHO align with these frameworks without creating additional administrative burdens and overlap in the actions.

2. **What mechanisms will WHO establish to prevent overlap with existing international air pollution initiatives?**

We encourage the WHO to consider creating a **formal coordination platform** with organizations such as **UNEP, CCAC, and other relevant regional bodies** to avoid duplication and ensure efficient use of resources.

3. **Can WHO provide more clarity on regional funding allocations and the criteria used for distributing financial resources?**

We would appreciate to receive though PBAC from the Secretariat **annual expenditure reports which include financial breakdown by region and activity type** to improve transparency and accountability.

*Slovakia welcomes further discussion on these points and looks forward to working collaboratively to ensure that this road map is not only **ambitious but also practical, transparent, and effectively implemented.***

*In conclusion, Slovakia urges WHO to refine the road map by incorporating clearer implementation metrics, stronger financial transparency, and better governance mechanisms to prevent overlaps. To facilitate ongoing consultations with Member States and ensure that this framework remains responsive to emerging challenges, Slovakia proposes the **creation of a Working Group on Air Pollution Implementation.** We remain committed to supporting WHO's efforts in tackling air pollution and improving global health outcomes.*

Thank you.