

Statement of the Slovak Republic
178th Session of the World Health Assembly

Agenda Item 12. The role of the global coordination mechanism on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in WHO's work on multi-stakeholder engagement for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases: report on independent evaluation, 13.1 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

19-27 May 2025

Honorable Chair, Director-General, Excellences, colleagues, patients, civil society Representatives, professional and academic partners,

The Slovak Republic aligns itself with the European Union and its Member States. We appreciate the Director-General for the comprehensive report on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and commend the WHO Secretariat for its unwavering commitment in advancing this critical global health challenge and line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While progress has been noted, significant challenges continue to rise, and Slovakia welcomes this opportunity to provide constructive input.

NCDs remain a leading cause of premature mortality and disability worldwide, exacerbated by preventable risk factors and compounded by socio-economic disparities and fragmented investment in prevention and early detection. In Slovakia, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer continue to represent a significant proportion of our national disease burden. While little progress has been achieved through pilot initiatives such as national diabetes prevention activities and collaboration with the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to strengthen cancer screening and care coordination, systemic challenges persist. These include limited integration of preventive programs into national governance frameworks, insufficient sustainable financing, and unequal access to services

We underscore the urgent need for enhanced global leadership, coordinated multi-sectoral action, and stronger political commitments, especially in preparation for the fourth high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on NCDs. Slovakia calls for the development of a clear global roadmap, including measurable milestones and accountability mechanisms, to guide collective efforts toward achieving the NCD-related targets of the 2030 Agenda.

*We further encourage WHO to support **resource mobilization** through innovative financing mechanisms, while fostering cross-sectoral policy coherence with broader development priorities, such as **economic resilience, social equity, and sustainable health systems**.*

Slovakia advocates for the systematic integration of mental health, behavioral and cultural factors, commercial determinants, migrant and climate-related health determinants into the NCD policy framework. These dimensions are essential to addressing the holistic well-being of populations and closing health gaps.

At the technical level, we see room for greater innovation in care delivery models to address disparities in health promotion, control, screening, prevention and treatment.

We call for accelerated implementation of evidence-based strategies, including:

- *Elimination of cervical cancer through HPV vaccination and screening*
- *Early detection of breast, colorectal and lung cancers*
- *Expansion of childhood cancer care*
- *Scaled-up and sustainable care for diabetes and cardiovascular diseases*
- *Investments in early childhood health promotion and life-course interventions targeting risk factors from the earliest stages of life*

We encourage WHO to support Member States in translating successful pilot initiatives into scalable, nationally integrated programs, particularly in primary health care settings.

At the regional level, Slovakia supports continued cooperation within the WHO European Region. We recommend that particular focus be placed on regional strategies for cancer prevention and NCD risk reduction, enhanced by pooled knowledge and financing instruments. Ensuring equitable access to preventive services remains a shared challenge requiring joint action.

Nationally, Slovakia recognizes the need for tailored technical assistance to strengthen health system resilience and ensure alignment with UHC principles. We emphasize the importance of capacity-building for frontline healthcare professionals, robust health data infrastructure, and stronger community engagement through health literacy. These investments are fundamental to supporting informed health choices and improving long-term outcomes.

As we look ahead to the next high-level meeting on NCDs, Slovakia calls for an actionable, equity-oriented and innovation-driven global strategy that includes:

- Full integration of mental health in the NCD agenda*
- Specific mechanisms to address disparities in access, affordability and quality of care*
- Strong partnerships with non-State actors, including professional societies, academic institutions, and the private sector*
- Digital transformation of health systems, including the use of AI and telehealth to improve reach and efficiency*

We also reaffirm our support for intersectoral governance and people-centred models of care, which are indispensable to closing the gap between prevention and treatment, and between intent and implementation.

*Slovakia sincerely thanks to the cosponsor and supporting partners of the resolution as well as side events on **“Primary Prevention and Integrated Care for Sensory Impairments, including Vision Impairment and Hearing Loss, Across the Life Course,”** proposed by Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Croatia, Ecuador, Georgia, Hungary, Japan, Federated States of Micronesia, Panama, Philippines, Romania, Somalia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain, which reflects our shared commitment to inclusion, equity, and UHC. It addresses a critical step toward a pressing global health issue that affects over one billion people worldwide. It aligns with the objectives of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and WHO’s commitment to health equity and inclusion.*

Why This Resolution Matters Now

Sensory impairments have severe health, economic, and social consequences, yet they remain underfunded and deprioritized. With aging populations, increasing environmental risks, and widening health disparities, inaction is no longer an option.

This resolution underscores the urgent need to strengthen primary healthcare systems through early screening, workforce training, and the adoption of innovative technologies such as AI-driven diagnostics and telemedicine. It also highlights the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships to mobilize resources, integrate sensory health into broader development strategies, and foster equity in access to care.

Slovakia sincerely thanks the Member States for their support and co-sponsor-ship of this resolution. Together, we can build a future where sensory impairments are no longer barriers to health and well-being but opportunities for innovation, inclusion, and progress.

In a time of budget constraints and competing priorities, this resolution provides a practical, cost-effective approach to improving health equity, economic resilience, and social inclusion. By co-sponsoring this resolution, Member States and all stakeholders including NSA, academic and professional partners including Slovak ORL Society, Christian Blind Mission (CBM), European Academy of Otology and Neuroethology (EAONO), International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (OAPB) and many others demonstrate a commitment to a future where sensory health is a right, not a privilege. Let us act together to ensure **no one is left behind in silence or darkness.**

*Moreover, let me echo my colleague delegates who call to further work on risk factors, in particular Alcohol, which remains a leading risk factor for NCDs and mental ill health, and social harm. Effective, evidence-based policy solutions - as the **SAFER** package - are proven and cost-effective tools to reduce this burden and generate vital public resources.*

Slovakia joined the consensus in adopting the Global Alcohol Action Plan in 2022 and endorsed the WHO European Framework for Action on Alcohol. It is important that these milestones are now implemented fully. Regular review at WHO governing bodies is therefore important.

*We see the need for stronger **integration of alcohol policies – particularly taxation** – into **WHO's strategic guidance**, monitoring and technical support to Member States. This is essential to achieving our shared goals in the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and the promotion of mental health.*

In conclusion, Slovakia stands firmly committed to the global fight against non-communicable diseases and mental health challenges. By championing strong partnerships, driving innovation, and integrating prevention into every level of our health systems, we can accelerate progress toward global health equity. Slovakia is ready to join forces with the WHO and all Member States to turn these shared ambitions into tangible results for people everywhere.

Thank you.