

Slovakia's VNR presentation, Monday 16th July 2018 approx. 16:30 - 16:45

Speaker	Text
<p>Richard Raši (Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic) 4:30 min.</p>	<p>Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,</p> <p>it is a great honour for me to have a chance to present my country's contribution to the 2030 Agenda at this important event, which brings us all together around our common objective of sustainable development.</p> <p>Slovakia is a small country at the heart of Europe. Maybe we do not have the economic power of Germany, population of China, or cultural influence of France, what we have, however, is a peaceful and innovative people. Three years have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and during this time we have all encountered numerous challenges and obstacles to its implementation. To overcome these difficulties, Slovakia has been and will be guided by three main principles of implementing the 2030 Agenda:</p> <p>First and foremost, sustainable development must be anchored at the heart of all public policies. At the national, regional, and local level, and also in foreign policy. To achieve this goal, Slovakia has taken the necessary steps to establish the 2030 Agenda as the core of its strategic governance framework.</p> <p>Secondly, Slovakia is aware that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is impossible without individual commitment and cross-generational engagement. The government's determination to achieve Sustainable Development Goals is crucial, but the effort must be shared and owned by all – women and men, groups and individuals, young and elderly.</p> <p>Last but not least, we consider partnerships to be essential for finding sustainable solutions. According to this principle, we have put great effort into building partnerships with and among various stakeholders, from the non-governmental sector to academia, from regional and municipal administration to the private sector. In the first half of this year, we have carried out a broad stakeholder participation process to determine our national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>As a small country with limited resources and capacities, we need development priorities that both reflect our specific context and are within our reach. Our six national priorities therefore exhibit our tailor-made way towards a more resilient and sustainable society.</p> <p>I would like to emphasise the crucial role of adequate financing for sustainable development. In cooperation with the OECD, we have developed guidelines for</p>

Daniel Bunda
(Student and Event Manager at Eduma)

3 min.

aligning budget to our national priorities for the 2030 Agenda, which should lead us towards budgetary decisions with a sustainability lens.

Today, I am not alone here to present the progress made by Slovakia and its people in implementing the 2030 Agenda. I am glad to be accompanied by three outstanding individuals, representing three generations. Age is an important factor. As many developed countries, Slovakia has a rapidly aging population, which presents us both with challenges and opportunities in the economic and social sphere. We need to adapt to these changes and would like to use the 2030 Agenda as a tool to build bridges between generations. My three fellow speakers will demonstrate how in each phase of life one can contribute to sustainability in a specific way.

At the same time, each speaker brings with themselves a story of strong individual engagement and what I would like to put emphasis on, also voluntary action towards sustainability. I consider voluntary contributions as an indispensable part of our effort to implement the 2030 Agenda. I am especially proud that the second largest Slovak city and my hometown, Košice, has been selected to be the European Volunteering Capital in 2019.

Now, I would like to give the floor to a young man, Daniel Bunda, who represents our aspiring youth, students, but also the Roma ethnic minority of Slovakia. With his example, he is breaking down stereotypes that have long persisted in our society. We have therefore chosen him as an ambassador for two of our six national priorities, namely Education and Social Inclusion. Daniel, the floor is yours.

Thank you. The national priorities mentioned by the Deputy Prime Minister are very close to me. As a student I am concerned about the quality of education in my country and as a proud member of the Roma ethnic minority, I know how important it is to pay special attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

Slovakia is performing well in educational attainment in global comparison, at the same time our education system faces great challenges in compensating for socio-economic disadvantages. Roma children in schools are facing pressure from their peers and society because of their socio-economic background, skin colour and cultural difference. This has direct impact on their performance in schools. Fulfilling the potential of all individuals irrespective of their ethnicity, socio-economic, or health status is crucial in today's rapidly changing world. The engagement of all groups of society is needed for a sustainable future. On the labour market, inequalities and stigmatisation persist as well, especially in case of marginalised Roma communities. While the rate of economic activity is

relatively high and has an increasing trend, long-term unemployment remains a challenge we need to focus on in the future.

I have already touched upon issues related to poverty reduction and social inclusion, but these topics deserve specific attention. In relative terms, Slovakia is one of the countries with the lowest levels of risk of falling into poverty not only in the EU, but globally as well. Income inequalities have been persistently low as well, therefore Slovakia belongs to the top 5 most equal countries in the world. However, income is not the sole determinant or potential trigger of exclusion. Other groups, such as persons with disabilities or the elderly are also disproportionately at risk of social exclusion, and completely different complex response is needed to address their concerns.

The issues I have raised are among the key challenges which the Slovak government has identified in the field of education and social inclusion, and it has committed itself to reinforce efforts to resolve them by 2030. I am determined to add my share through leading by example. In recent years, I have been active in civil society organisations and travelled across Slovakia to visit schools in disadvantaged areas, trying to break down social barriers and persuading people that the human essence, is the same in every one of us. With my example I try to inspire Roma children as I was once inspired by a Roma activist and writer, and in this way contribute to a more inclusive society.

Richard Raši
15 sec.

Thank you Daniel. It is my pleasure now to introduce Ivana Maleš, a woman determined to find sustainable solutions for our circular economy, environment and municipalities. Ivana, the floor is yours.

Ivana Maleš
(Founder of the Institute for Circular Economy)
3:30 min.

Thank you. As the co-founder of the non-governmental Institute for circular economy, I am in every-day contact with the representatives of municipalities, self-governing regions and state administration, which are all playing an indispensable role in making Slovakia's economy more sustainable.

In the face of current megatrends, especially in the environmental and technological domain, it is clear that Slovakia is in the need of a twofold transformation of its economy until 2030.

Our current economic model is overwhelmingly linear – extract, produce, distribute, consume and dispose. While it has brought considerable advances in all aspects of well-being, it is in no way demographically or environmentally neutral.

In terms of demographics, due to an aging population it is projected that in 2030, there will be only 1.38 employed per one retired person, compared to 1.75 in

2013. To balance such developments, it is essential to focus our attention on building a knowledge-based economy, grounded in innovation and domestic research and development.

The current economic model also entails considerable environmental risks, such as the degradation of ecosystems or wasting in the area of production and consumption. What we need, is a paradigm shift towards a sustainable circular economy, which will use the full potential of our natural resources and preserve our environment. The 2030 Agenda provides us with a unique opportunity to follow these transformations through.

Slovakia is aiming to be a central-European leader in transitioning to the green economy. In 2016, the Bratislava Green Economy Process was launched. A part of this process is an information and learning platform, which shares practical solutions for the business community in the area of green economy.

Another very closely related priority for 2030 focuses on climate action. In the area of mitigation, Slovakia is fairly successful, with a 44 % drop of greenhouse gas emissions between 1990 and 2016. The share of renewable sources in the energy mix is also increasing, and reached 12 % in 2016. Adaptation measures, on the other hand, must be strengthened substantially. We need measures that are close-to-nature both in urban environments and the countryside.

Access to clean and affordable energy for the private sector and households is supported by various schemes for renewable energy sources. The “Green to Households” initiative enhances the use of small renewable resources. In this way, it contributes to increasing the share of renewables in energy consumption as well as to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

It is important to recognise that both in the area of the circular transformation and renewables, targeted action is needed to meet the diverse needs of businesses, municipalities and households. Therefore my ambition is therefore to help build a network of professionals and practitioners in this field, who can share good examples, launch common innovative projects and pressure transformative regulations and legislation.

Richard Raši
15 sec.

Thank you Ivana. Finally, I am pleased to give the floor to professor Vladimír Krčméry, a man and doctor who has devoted all his professional career to improving health not only in Slovakia but also in developing countries. He is our ambassador for the two remaining national priorities – Health and Good governance. Professor, the floor is yours.

Vladimír Kréméry

(Rector of the St. Elizabeth University of Health Care and Social

Work)

3:30 min.

Thank you Mr. Deputy Prime Minister. Helping others has been my lifelong passion and as a doctor, the issue of health naturally stands closest to me.

In Slovakia, we recognise, that for the sustainable development of society it is indispensable to ensure a healthy life and promote well-being for all people at all ages. Special attention must be given to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of the population. To accomplish this goal, we must take into consideration all health determinants, including individual behaviour and lifestyle, socio-economic conditions and the environment. Approximately 35 % of all diseases in the Slovak Republic are caused by preventable causes that can be influenced by a change in behaviour, such as lifestyle, physical activity, or diet.

There are also substantial health disparities, based on gender as well as socio-economic background. Slovak men are living on average over seven years shorter than women, and people with a low level of education live approximately ten years shorter than those with university education. To promote healthy lifestyle choices by citizens and to address these disparities, a network of Health Advisory Centres has been developed. They provide counselling based on examining the main personal risk factors and serve to raise awareness on health-related issues.

As a representative of the generation, which grew up under a totalitarian regime, I also relate very strongly to our final national priority – good governance, democracy and peace.

In 2018, Slovakia celebrates 25 years of independence. Along with celebrating this anniversary, the time has come to evaluate and revise certain institutional and functional settings of the system of public power. Part of this effort is the “Value for Money” initiative. This initiative aims to make public spending more effective by revising expenditures in healthcare, transportation and other important policy areas. At the same time, citizens are invited more often to co-create national policies. Public participation has also been an inevitable part of setting the national framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The Slovak Republic has ever since its foundation been a responsible member of the international community. It contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals not only at home but also abroad, mostly through development assistance.

As the rector of the St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social Work, I am also deeply engaged in this endeavour. Having successfully implemented more than 30 projects in around 20 countries, I feel as my duty to transmit my experience and guiding values, to the next generation of devoted health professionals and global citizens.

For me, the abbreviation SDGs does not only mean Sustainable Development Goals, but also Solidarity Done Globally. And it is this thought of the connectedness of sustainability and solidarity that I would like to leave you with.

Thank you.

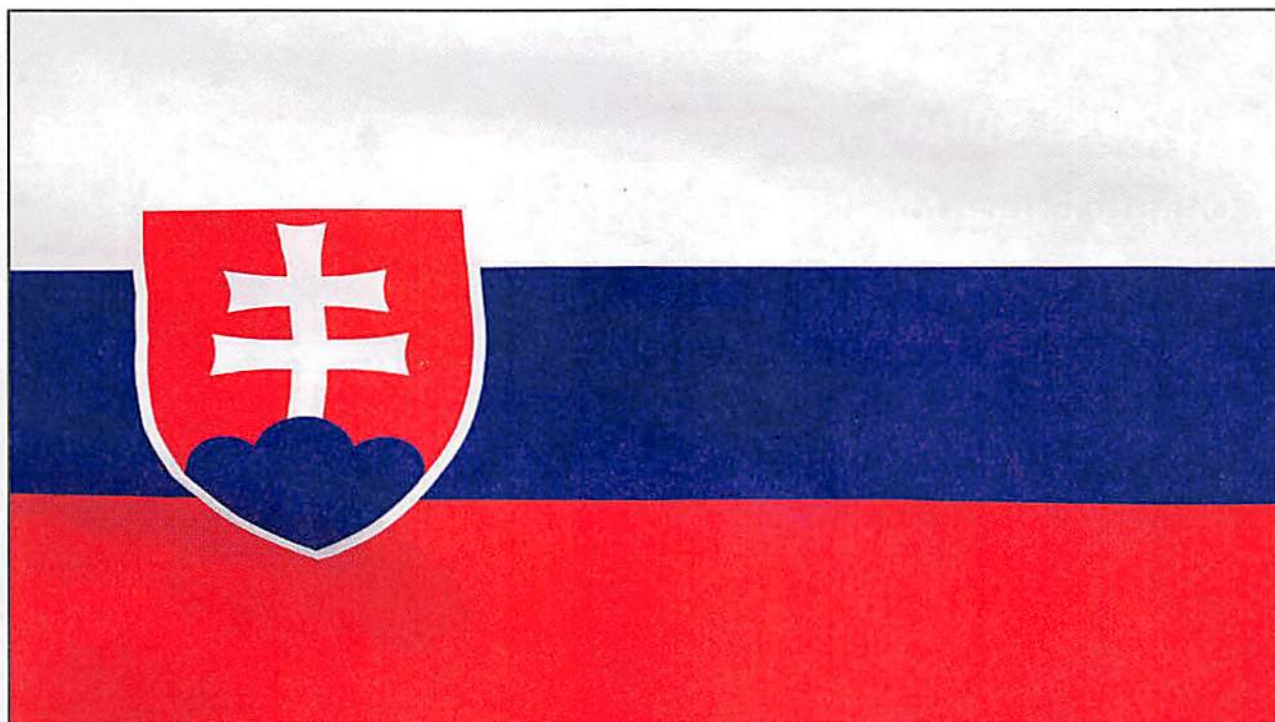
Voluntary National Review of the Slovak Republic on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

United Nations High-level Political Forum
on Sustainable Development

16 July 2018
New York, USA




DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
FOR INVESTMENTS
AND INFORMATIZATION
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC




Richard Raši
**Slovak Republic
& the 2030 Agenda**

Daniel Bunda
Quality Education

Daniel Bunda
Social Inclusion



Ivana Maleš
Economic Transformation



Ivana Maleš

Climate Action



Vladimír Krčméry

Good Health



