

**Statement by H. E. Ivan Korčok,
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic,
at the UN General Assembly Special Session on the COVID-19
pandemic**

Dear Mr. President,

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the number of coronavirus victims and patients increase around the world, I find this special session of the UN General Assembly very useful and timely. It is my belief that **international cooperation** and sharing of expertise and best practices are key to combating COVID-19.

Therefore, I am pleased to take this opportunity to **present Slovakia's views and experience** with fighting the global pandemic.

In the face of COVID-19, Slovakia regularly re-evaluates and puts in place all necessary measures -- including partial lockdown, compulsory mask-wearing and travel restrictions -- in an attempt to slow down the spread of coronavirus and help save lives.

In the recent weeks, Slovakia carried out a **nation-wide testing** of its population. Over the course of two weekends, two-thirds of the population were tested for coronavirus using antigen tests. It was a tremendous effort on an unprecedented scale. Thousands of medics, law enforcement and armed forces personnel, as well as volunteers, joined hands in an operation called "**Joint Responsibility.**"

It has proved successful. The operation allowed for a better overview of the epidemiological situation in the country, resulting in multiple rounds of testing undergone in the regions worst hit by the pandemic.

The mass testing moreover identified over 50 thousand active cases, on top of the patients identified daily by RT-PCR tests. This approach has proven to be an effective tool to slow down the spread of the virus and reduce the number of active cases, making it a suitable alternative to hard lockdowns.

Furthermore, in comparison to nationwide lockdown, mass testing has shown to be less expensive and **less harmful for the economy** of our country. I am pleased to note that the positive example of Slovakia's mass testing has inspired one of our neighbouring countries to proceed with testing in a similar way.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Slovakia's dedication to a coordinated international effort to develop, produce and disseminate efficient and affordable diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. **Ensuring equitable access** to these health technologies must be the utmost priority of international community facing COVID-19. In order to achieve this goal, synergy between the private and public sectors is crucial. Knowledge and good practice need to be widely accessible and prices need to be fair in order to ensure equitable allocation of vaccines.

I would like to stress that we should **leave no one behind** when it comes to information sharing. Every country has the right to access information and to share their lessons learnt with international partners. Experts and scientist from all around the world should be invited to meaningfully contribute to the debate and benefit from our shared experience in combatting the virus.

I must also point out that alongside the global COVID-19 pandemic; we have witnessed an unprecedented increase of **disinformation** and spread of hoaxes. It is essential for all local, national and international actors to fight this dangerous disinformation pandemic together and to promote verified, science-based information accessible to the public.

In my view, **multilateral approach** to fighting COVID-19 is the only way forward and I am pleased to share that both Slovakia's public and private sectors are actively participating in the development and sharing of health technologies and know-how on international scale.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, **Slovakia has contributed more than 10 million euros** worth of material relief assistance and financial aid. Humanitarian contributions were allocated both bilaterally to our partners and to countries worst hit by the coronavirus, notably through the mechanisms of SlovakAid, but also through international organisations such as World Health Organization, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

COVID-19 is a global challenge that no country can fight alone; the **virus knows no borders**. Facing this threat requires international cooperation of policy-makers, health professionals, scientific communities, security forces and other actors in an attempt to save lives and health of millions of people.

The pandemic has accentuated the socio-economic divides and has set back the progress in the implementation of the development goals. But it has also reminded of the importance of international cooperation and solidarity.

Let this be our **lesson for the future** -- we need to work together to address global threats and advance the well-being of all people and the planet.

Thank you for your attention.