

## Request by Non-State Actors to Submit a Written Statement at the Virtual Session of the Seventieth Regional Committee for Africa

Non-state Actors that have registered to participate in the virtual session of the Seventieth Regional Committee for Africa and wish to make a written statement must submit a request to the Secretariat not later than two weeks before the start date of the meeting. The statements should be made available no later than one week for posting on the website.

The statement is to be delivered in written form only and should not be longer than 600 words. The statement should focus on technical issues and should be directly relevant to both the agenda item and to the document prepared for the item. The statement should not raise issues of political nature that are unrelated to the agenda item and should not contain any inappropriate or offensive reference to Member States. While there should not be reference to any individual Member States, or areas of Member States, it is recalled that nomenclature must follow that of the United Nations.

The Chair of the Regional Committee decides whether to accept the statement in light of its relevance to the discussion, the respect of the word limits and the compliance with the rules set above.

Accepted statements are posted on the website of the WHO Regional Office for Africa for a limited time period as determined by the Secretariat and will not be retained thereafter.

**Name and acronym of the accredited NSA** (in English, French or Portuguese):

NCD Alliance

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**Date and title of the meeting:** 70<sup>th</sup> session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa

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25<sup>th</sup> of August 2020

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**Agenda item (number, title):** Special Event on the COVID-19 response in the WHO African Region

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**Statement** (in English, French or Portuguese):

**Joint statement by the NCD Alliance, African NCDs Network and Civil Society partners on 'Special Event on the COVID-19 response in the WHO African Region' of the WHO AFRO Regional Meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020 (virtual)**

The NCD Alliance and the African NCDs Network, on behalf of Alliance des Organisations de lutte contre les MNT - Côte d'Ivoire, Africa Diabetes Alliance, Africa Stroke Organization, Burkina Faso NCD Alliance, Burundi NCD Alliance, Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance, Coalition des ONG et Associations - Contre les MNT au Togo, Community Development Awareness and Health Empowerment Foundation, Fondation de Lutte contre le Diabète et les MNT, Foundation for the fight against Diabetes and NCDs, Ghana NCD Alliance, Malawi NCD Alliance, NCD Alliance Nigeria, NCD Alliance of Kenya, Rwanda NCD Alliance, South African NCDs Alliance, Tanzania NCD Alliance, West African Alcohol Policy Alliance, thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the links between non-communicable diseases (NCDs), communicable diseases and global health emergencies.

Emerging evidence from the pandemic suggests that people living with NCDs (PLWNCDs) are at a higher risk of severe illness and mortality due to the coronavirus, and with widespread disruption to essential NCD services, PLWNCDs are highly vulnerable to such negative outcomes<sup>1</sup>.

We ask Member States in the AFRO region to elevate the voices of PLWNCDs, young people and marginalized populations, by assessing the pandemic's impact on their needs, challenges and priorities; and to include them in COVID-19 decision-making processes and response.

WHO estimates a 27% increase in premature NCDs mortality in the AFRO region in the next 10 years, as compared with a 17% global mortality, with a 27% increase in the death toll in the AFRO region. These projections indicate the existing and expected negative socioeconomic impact directly and indirectly linked to NCDs<sup>2</sup>, which COVID-19 can exacerbate.

Due to the current COVID-19 context and its implications, universal health coverage (UHC) needs to integrate NCDs and the needs and perspectives of PLWNCDs to build back better through a people-centred response. We therefore, commend AFRO Member States for integrating UHC targets into their national health strategies.

**In strengthening countries to deliver UHC for NCDs in Africa and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage WHO AFRO and its Members States to:**

- *Prioritize NCDs prevention and control as an essential component of UHC.*
- *Incorporate NCDs prevention among its essential primary health care services as a foundation for UHC.*
- *Save lives by increasing equitable, universal access to quality, and affordable essential*

medicines and products.

- *Address the NCD financing gap by increasing sustainable financing for health and improving efficiency in investments.*
- *Meaningfully involve and empower civil society, youths, and PLWNCDS in decision-making processes, development, and accountability.*
- *Include UHC for NCDs in COVID-19 national response and preparedness plans; addressing any disruptions in the care and treatment of PLWNCDS, and aiming to promote a people-centered approach in promoting healthy lives among populations.*
- *Recognize the need to address the commercial determinants of health, policy coherence in trade and investment that impact on health outcomes.*
- *Be wary of undue influence of unhealthy commodity industries that lobby against and undermine population-based NCD prevention policies and fiscal measures.*
- *Enact strong governance and support structures within ministries of health to coordinate and shape health systems towards UHC.*

We encourage the WHO AFRO secretariat's continued alignment of its country presence towards the individual needs of its Member States.

We stand ready to support Member States to accelerate the implementation of national, regional, and global NCD and UHC commitments by promoting a people-centered approach that meaningfully involves PLWNCDS in NCD and UHC responses. This is essential to build back better after COVID-19 and to advance towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, **The Africa We Want.**

1. <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/01-06-2020-covid-19-significantly-impacts-health-services-for-noncommunicable-diseases>
2. <https://www.who.int/nmh/ncd-tools/who-regions-african/en/>

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<b>Position:</b> Medical Doctor
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<b>Date:</b> 19/08/2020
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