

REQUEST BY NON-STATE ACTORS TO SUBMIT A WRITTEN STATEMENT AT THE VIRTUAL SESSION OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

Non-state Actors that have accepted the invitation to participate in the virtual session of the Seventy-first Regional Committee for Africa and wish to make a statement must submit a request to the Secretariat not later than one week prior to the start date of the meeting.

Kindly note that oral statements should not be more than one-minute long, while written statements 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 Chairperson of the Regional Committee decides whether to accept or reject the statement in light of its relevance to the discussion, compliance with the time and word limits and the rules set above.

The Chairperson of the Regional Committee shall also decide during the meeting whether to grant the non-State actors the right to present their oral statements in light of their relevance to the discussion, time constraints or any other reason. Written statements admitted shall be published on the Regional Committee webpage for a limited time period and will not be retained thereafter.

Name and acronym of the accredited non-State actor (in English, French or Portuguese):

NCD Alliance (NCDA)

Date and title of the meeting: 24-26 AUGUST 2021

Agenda item (number, title): **Agenda item 13: Framework for the implementation of the Global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem in the WHO African Region (Document AFR/RC71/9)**

Statement (in English, French or Portuguese): _____

Joint statement on Agenda item 13: Framework for the implementation of the Global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem in the WHO African Region (Document AFR/RC71/9)

The NCD Alliance, Africa NCDs Network, and its 40 member Civil Society Organizations thank the WHO for preparing the global report to accelerate elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem in the WHO African Region and for giving us the opportunity to make this statement.

Cancer is one of the five main non-communicable diseases (NCDs), sharing common risk factors and health system needs with other NCDs and health conditions. Cervical cancer is the most common cause of cancer in Africa, but it is also preventable, thus needing a holistic approach by integrating it into existing primary NCDs and sexual and reproductive health services.

Caused mainly by persistent infection by the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus (HPV),¹ Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women globally, with Africa accounting for 21% of the global burden with a trend pointing to a mortality increase to 30% by 2030¹. The African Region is disproportionately affected with 19 Member States having the highest burden of cervical cancer globally. Socioeconomic and cultural factors and poor access to health care services, and the HIV prevalence in the Africa Region are contributing greatly to it¹.

We the signatories of this statement, in support of the efforts to implement the Global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem in the WHO African Region, and drawing from the Africa NCDs Network event hosted on August 12, 2021 on prioritizing NCDs at the 71st WHO Regional Committee Meeting for Africa, call all Member States to:

Prioritize cervical cancer elimination through cost-effective, evidence-based interventions, including HPV vaccination of girls, screening and treatment of precancerous lesions, and improving access to diagnosis and treatment of invasive cancers.

Ensure screening services are decentralized, integrated into the primary health care (PHC) system and affordable, particularly those for NCDs and sexual and reproductive health.

- *Prioritize the training of PHC providers on screening and ensure effective referral networks with specialists at different levels of care to ensure the continuity of care.*
- *Intensify awareness campaigns leveraging schools and community networks and relevant stakeholder to address the communication gap on Cervical Cancer and other NCDs including existing services.*
- *Meaningfully involve people with lived experience of Cervical Cancer in all activities related to Cervical Cancer prevention and control at all decision-making levels.*
- *Leverage innovative digital health/telemedicine to drive awareness and message dissemination on Cervical Cancer and NCDs in general.*
- *Promote research, collection and use of local data for evidence-based decision making and programme planning.*
- *Encourage partnerships and collaborative work involving NGOs, academic and relevant private sector to contribute their expertise and resources in implementing action on NCDs thereby reaching many people with healthcare service*

We stand ready to support Member States in the fight against Cervical Cancer, to ensure women do not die of a preventable disease and ensure their invaluable contribution to the development of their respective nations.

Name: Henry Ndhlovu

Position: Member of Secretariat, Africa NCDs Network

Date: 17.08.2021