

# A Report of Advocacy Visit on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to the New York Permanent Mission of Cameroon to the United Nations Office

Written by Mr. Mbydzenyuy Ferdinand Sonyuy; BSc, PgD

Secretary General, Cameroon NCD Alliance / Chair of the Secretariat, Africa NCDs Network

These advocacy meetings with Permanent Missions of specific Countries were an objective of the NCD Alliance's Advocacy Institutes' Accelerator Program Workshop organized in New York with national and regional Alliances to support their capacity to accelerate advocacy on universal health coverage ahead of the 2023 UN High Level Meeting on Universal health Coverage taking place in September 2023.



This report presents the purpose, objectives, experience, findings, discussions and conclusions regarding Cameroon, to be followed up by the Cameroon NCD Alliance and the Africa NCDs Network, whose Secretariat is based in Cameroon.

## Presented to:

The NCD Alliance (NCDA)  
The Cameroon Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)  
The Permanent Mission of Cameroon to the UN  
The Africa NCDs Network (ANN)  
The Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance (CACNSA)



## Executive Summary

As part of a global advocacy architecture of Civil Society that is advocating for the prioritization of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) globally, the Secretary General of the Cameroon NCD Alliance, Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy who doubles as the Chair of the Africa NCDs Network Secretariat, traveled to New York to attend a civil society workshop organized by NCD Alliance **in New York City from 11-13<sup>th</sup> July aimed at accelerating** advocacy efforts towards the UN High-level Meeting on UHC in September 2023.

The NCD Alliance is a civil society organization advocating for policies and practices that better prevent and address noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the people they affect globally. In Cameroon, the Cameroon Civil Society NCD alliances advocates for the prioritization of NCDs in Cameroon. Similar to other alliances across the



countries, regions /continents and the global advocacy efforts, the Cameroon NCD alliance focuses on awareness creation, advocacy, accountability and improving access to care. Attending this advocacy accelerator program training workshop provided a great opportunity for advocates to learn, network and also meet with Permanent Missions of their countries, given their critical role in negotiating agreements on behalf of their respective governments.

Given the keen interest that Cameroon has had historically in both NCDs and UHC agendas and as a civil society actor that is committed to reduce the burden of NCDs to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality and improve health and wellbeing of all, the alliance sought Audience to meet with the Permanent Mission of Cameroon to the United Nations whose office is engaged in the HLM process on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) on behalf of the Government. The Alliance found that the Permanent Mission was ready and open to discuss inclusion of

NCDs in the UHC process of 2023 as well as to collaborate to advance our mutual goals in pursuit of the right to health of our population nationally, regionally and globally. This report therefore makes four recommendations to sustain these efforts prior to and post the 2023 UN HLM on UHC and the 2025 UNHLM on NCDs. While I wish to appreciate the NCD Alliance for supporting the trip to the USA and the Permanent Mission of Cameroon for opening their doors to a fruitful meeting on NCDs and UHC, I implore actors to gear up for what needs to be done to continue to positively engage ahead of the actual UHC meeting in 2023, as well as the HLM on NCDs in 2025.

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## Acronyms

ANN- Africa NCDs Network

CACSNA – Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance

CSEM – Civil Society Engagement Mechanism

DCOP- Direction of Cooperation

GW4A – Global Week for Action

HLM – High Level Meeting

H.E- His Excellency

MINREX- Ministry of External Relations

MINSANTE – Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)

NCDA – NCD Alliance

NY – New York

NCDs – Non-Communicable Diseases

PM- Permanent Missions

UN – United Nations

UNHLM – United Nations High Level Meeting

UHC- Universal Health Coverage

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

WHO- World Health Organization



## Acknowledgements

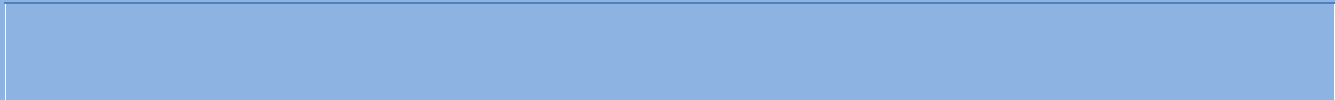


*First of all, I wish to acknowledge the NCD Alliance for supporting the Trip to New York for the Workshop. The workshop would not have been possible without the financial sponsorship of the Alliance.*

*Secondly, I wish to appreciate the cascade of staff at the Ministry of Health who demonstrated their commitment to the NCD agenda by receiving the request to connect to, and ensuring that that the meeting at the Permanent Mission truly happened. Starting with Dr. Hassan, the Director of Health Promotion, to Dr. Mamoud, and ultimately and noteworthy, Dr. Kamran Yacob who at the last minute, did the final and persistent arrangements for the meeting.*

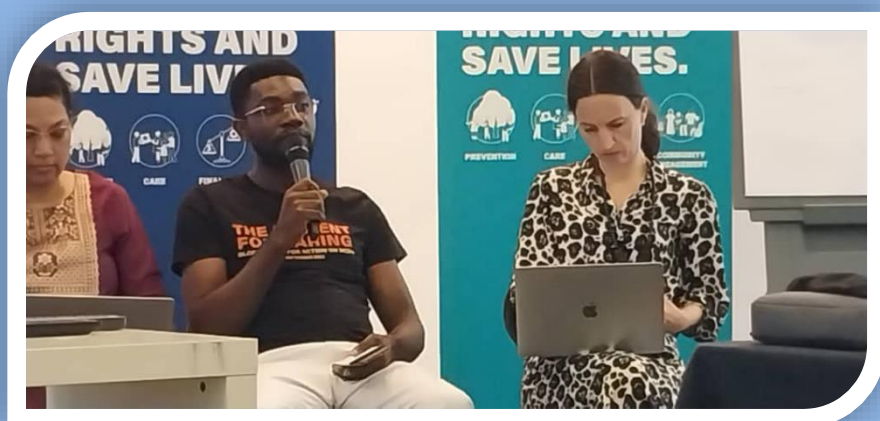
*I also wish to acknowledge the support of the staff of the NCD Unit at the Direction of Disease Control, Manly the Chief of Beureux, Dr. Farida Haoua for her support prior to, and continued engagement after the meeting to ensure that positive work is sustained for NCDs. Further, the sub -director of the NCD unit, Dr. Fedele for his support despite being new to the department and readiness to work on post UHC HLM issues.*

*Finally, H.E Nyanid Zacharie Serge Raoul, Minister Counselor at the Permanent Mission, for his positive reception, engagement and an effective meeting held at the Permanent Mission.*



## Introduction

The Cameroon NCD Alliance (with its Secretariat hosted by the Reconciliation and Development Association, RADA), was founded through a process of consultation and consensus in 2018. Having been a member of the fledging Africa NCDs Network (ANN) since 2016, it became the host of the ANN's physical Secretariat in 2023. Both the ANN and the Cameroon NCD Alliance are members of the NCD Alliance and thus work in conjunction to achieve the role of Civil Society of raising awareness, advocacy, improving access to care and ensuring accountability in the prevention and control of NCDs locally, nationally, regionally and globally. The mission of the Cameroon NCD Alliance is to ensure a collective voice for NCD prevention and control in Cameroon. As a member of the Africa NCDs Network and host of its secretariat, the Cameroon NCD Alliance has thus taken up the responsibility to work in such a way that it fosters both NCD prevention and control prioritization in Cameroon and in the African Continent as part of its own activities and those of the Africa NCDs Network. It is in this light that the Chair of the Secretariat of the ANN, which is the Secretary General of the Cameroon NCD Alliance was invited to a Workshop in New York, organized by the NCD Alliance for countries and regional alliances that are part of the NCDA's Advocacy Institute Accelerator Program. This Accelerator Program has a



*Ferdinant M. Sonyuy sharing Experience of the ANN in Meaningful Involvement of People Living with NCDs at a Panel Discussing During the NCDA Workshop*

Regional Advocacy Program under which the Africa NCDs Network benefits from technical, financial and collaborative assistance to advocate for NCDs in Africa. As part of the Advocacy Institute Accelerator Program Workshop to prepare our advocacy efforts towards the UN High-level Meeting on UHC in September 2023, one of the objectives of the workshop was to support

national Alliance to hold meetings with permanent missions of their countries in order to advocate for inclusion of NCDs into the UN political Declaration on UHC which was being negotiated, post the first draft of the Political Declaration. This meeting was important because it is the Permanent Missions of Countries that negotiate the content of global agreements on behalf of their countries. As a key structure in the Decision-Making process, meeting with the Permanent Missions would facilitate this inclusion given the opportunity to be in New York, and also to learn more about how the Mission includes itself in the negotiations as well as how the Cameroon NCD Alliance and its partners could be of support as a non-state actor in these processes and future ones. The Objectives of the visit were thus to:

1. Introduce the Cameroon NCD Alliance and its partners to the Cameroon Permanent Mission
2. Present the NCD Community's advocacy asks to the Permanent Mission
3. Understand how to better engage with the Permanent Mission pre and post the UNHLM on UHC in September 2023 as well as the upcoming UNHLM on NCDs in 2025

NCDs and their five risk factors remain the leading global, regional and national threat to lives and stand on the way of the goals of Universal Health coverage, responsible for 71% of annual global deaths. It

cannot be ignored at any level if UHC is to be attained. People Living with NCDs and Advocates for NCDs prevention and control have therefore taken a critical stance on the need to reach out to local, national, regional and global leaders to ensure that NCDs are appropriately reflected in global agenda if the SDGs must be achieved. The navigation of the Bureaucratic and political structures to ensure that the voice of those who need the services most are heard is usually challenging and hardly understood by advocates. This report therefore shares the experience, successes, lessons learned and makes recommendations of next steps that can be followed by the Cameroon NCD Alliance, the Government of Cameroon, the Africa NCDs network, the Ministry of External Relations for Cameroon, the NCD Alliance to support the UHC process, engage in fruitful NCD prevention and control advocacy and government action pre- and post-2025 HLM on NCDs as well as next steps that the Cameroon NCDA with the Support of its partners will take to leverage the positive results of this activity in Cameroon.

## Approach

Prior to departure from Cameroon, the Cameroon NCD Alliance engaged with the Focal Point for NCDs at the NCD unit of the ministry of Public Health's department of disease control (DELMEP) to provide information about the workshop; its purpose, and the plans to meet with the Permanent Mission. The NCD Unit made a referral to the Directorate of Health Promotion. From the Directorate of Health Promotion, both information about our request and purpose were forwarded to the Department of Cooperation (DCOP) at the Ministry of Health. The DCOP made inquiries on availability and possibility to the Ministry of External Relations, and subsequently, to the Permanent Missions to Geneva and New York and with constant follow up and responses to inquiries, the meeting was approved and a final date and time was scheduled.

Apart from follow up with the above regular process, emails were sent to the Permanent Mission by the Cameroon NCD Alliance with the NCD Alliance in copy, just in case it was possible to engage directly. The Africa NCDs Network also made similar effort in coordination with the ANN's regional representative for the Southern region and the Chair of the South Africa NCD Alliance to reach the South Africa Permanent Mission, mandated by the AU to the UHC negotiations on behalf of Africa, to no avail. Both emails in this light received no response initially, but the Cameroon email later received a response and a scheduling. Prior to meeting the Permanent Mission Office, the NCD Alliance workshop provided an overview of how the UN system works, the role of the Permanent Missions and the opportunity of advocacy as well as the key advocacy asks of the NCD Community. The Cameroon NCD Alliance and the Africa NCDs network were both engaged in the process of development of these advocacy asks for UHC towards the HLM in September 2023. Hence, aligned with the asks and were even more ready to present them the Permanent Mission.

The Civil Society representative from Cameroon was received by His **Excellency (H.E) Nyanid Zacharie Serge Raoul, Minister Counselor** at the Permanent Mission in the unavoidable absence of the Cameroon Ambassador to the UN. H.E was very receptive, open, welcoming and collaborative. The meeting was insightful as introductions were made, asks presented and the Minister Counsellor provided a comprehensive and collaborative feedback, provision the use of the document by the team working on negotiations, validation of elements that can be defended by Cameroon with the Ministry of Public Health and use of these elements in its stance.

It is clear that the process of engaging the Permanent Mission is complex and takes time. It was arduous despite the evidence that it didn't have to be. The Cameroon NCDA needs to standardize its process of engaging with



the Ministry of Health, Ministry of External Relations and the Permanent Mission so as to ease the process. Similarly, with any other ministry in relation to the specific issues concerned. Having learned the expected engagement procedure, a brighter engagement is ahead for the post UNHLM on UHC and the Pre and post UNHLM on NCDs in 2025 where Cameroon will be highly engagement and hopefully, the Africa NCDs Network for the regional engagement from Africa.

## Discussion

The **objective** of this visit to the Permanent Mission was to meet with the Ambassador and to introduce the Cameroon NCD Alliance and its partners and to discuss advocacy for UHC and NCDs and the relationship with the Cameroon NCD Alliance and its partners pre and post the UHC and NCD HLMs in 2023 and 2025. The objective was met, despite the fact that the Ambassador was not met. The Cameroon NCD Alliance representative met with the Minister Counsellor H.E Nyanid Zacharie Who was already expecting him. The following Key discussions unfolded.

**Introduction of the Cameroon NCD Alliance and Partners:** Following reception at the Permanent Mission, the secretary general introduced himself as well as the Cameroon NCD Alliance and its partners – the Africa NCDs Network and the NCD Alliance and went further to state the objectives of the visit and presented the key advocacy asks in the advocacy brief, handing a copy. He also expressed the wish and the importance of collaboration with the Permanent Mission post the UNHLM on UHC and ahead of the UNHLM on NCDs. On His side, the Minister Counselor introduced himself and indicated the absence of the Ambassador. Expressed his gratitude for the efforts of the Cameroon NCDA and also indicated thanks to the department of Cooperation at the Ministry of Health who worked had by reaching out to finally get the appointment scheduled. He went on to ask further questions about the alliance in terms of its relationship with the government, to which responses were given.

**The role of NGOs and Engagement with the Government:** H.E, the Minister Counsellor indicated that the Permanent Mission (PM) is in NY to support the position of the Cameroon government. In which case, there must be coherent action between the PM and the government. In like manner, the CSOs they work with at international level should thus be Civil Society organizations that accompany the government and not those that oppose the government policies. In which case, there is need for evidence of effective collaboration with the government back home, if they must engagement with a home based CSO in the international scene. He indicated that the PM cannot support advocacy for positions that are against the government’s agenda, hence the need to establish the right and strong kind of technical collaboration at the home front prior to engagement with the PM at international Stage. He then appreciated the fact that the Cameroon NCD Alliance has been engaging with the Ministry of Health and its secretariat has a Letter of Collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health. It





was consensus that this level of collaboration bred the level of trust for the effort that went into scheduling the meeting with the PM.

#### **Process of Engagement with the Permanent Mission:**

He went further to indicate that the process of engaging with the PM includes a letter of introduction from the Minister of Public Health, indicating that if such a letter was prepared and forwarded, it would have been easier to receive the Civil Society representative as this is not only proof of strong accompaniment of the government and collaboration in general but the specific Mission of the CSO would be known, recorded, supported and its positions that align with those of the government on the issues being engagement on would be attached to the government's letter to facilitate their update and use in defending the government's position. He then indicated that the advocacy asks shared would nonetheless, be shared with the team lead working on the UHC HLM negotiations for government policy screening and validation and then, inclusion of those that align in Cameron's inputs into the UHC Declaration. He said that it was important to start the process in time, and in collaboration with the MoPH, follow this process so as to give more strength to the asks due to the formal endorsement of the Minister. He therefore concluded by indicating that once they are informed by the relevant government ministry this becomes a government position and they will support.

***National Familiarity and use of Civil Society Advocacy and Process of Engagement:*** It was clear that several civil society organizations did not engage with the Cameroon Permanent Mission and this is why we do not see much of the action with Cameroon based CSOs. Also, even if they desire to engage, they do not do so following the right processes. Worst of all, some actually take antigovernment positions instead of contributing constructively to government positions. This makes working with CSOs impossible unless they understand the process and engage properly. Following presentation of more evidence of engagement with the MoH despite the absence of a formal letter from the MoH, H.E re-assured that the team will identify what aligns and uphold it in the negotiation process. And encouraged the Alliance to leverage its collaboration and always obtain a letter presenting the trip, purpose, our recognition by the ministry and this will help them to receive and work with us in NY or Geneva easily.

**Post UHC HM engagement:** On Post UNHLM on UHC engagement, He was very supportive of the idea to establish a Task force on UHC and NCDs that collaborates on the issues of focus and helps prepare the alliance and the government for proper engagement and to achieve the task force's goals including the goals of engagement with the Permanent Mission ahead of 2025. He indicated that one confidence is established, and collaboration has been put in place, every other thing is easier. In response to one of the asks, he added that the Mission was extremely open to co-hosting a side event with the alliance's partners as long as the concept note is worked on with the Ministry of Public Health, communicated through the Minister and received in time.

The meeting with the Cameroon Mission was the last of all the meetings due to a delayed scheduling, which was mainly due to the short period of time the meeting was requested. There was clear need to strengthen specific persons along the scheduling chain The meeting ended at 12: 20 pm with exchange of gratitude, a snapshot, wishes for a successful rest of stay in NY and a safe trip back home.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Cameroon NCD Alliance to submit a report of the meeting and its recommendations to the Minister of Public Health



2. That the Cameroon NCD Alliance with RADA as its secretariat, and the Ministry of Public Health, set up a Task Force for NCDs and UHC to support advocacy for UHC, NCDs and preparations leading up to the 2023 HLM on UHC as well as 2025 HLM on NCDs
3. That the Cameroon Permanent Mission to the UN, is ready to co-host side events with global partners bilaterally or multilaterally provided concept notes are developed and validated in time for adequate preparations
4. That the Cameroon NCD Alliance with RADA as its secretariat remains a strong partner of the government in NCD prevention and control at home and abroad. In order to best support the alliance's advocacy goals that align with government policy, the MoH would need to forward a letter of introduction each time there is alignment, opportunity and need to present such positions to the Permanent Mission for defense.

## Conclusion

The Permanent Mission of Cameroon was very ready to meet with the Civil Society representative. Despite unavoidable absence of the ambassador, the alliance met with the Minister Counselor and had fruitful discussions. These discussions are capable of translating into fruitful continuous involvement of the Cameroon Ministry of Public Health as well as the Permanent Missions to the UN and Geneva, in global NCD Advocacy. This potential is not only limited to global advocacy by Cameroon but also in regional advocacy and hence, a strong incentive for national advancement of NCDs and UHC as priority areas of health that cannot be ignored if the SDGs will be met. The Last section of this report is therefore specific recommendations as well as acknowledgements of all who played a key role to achieve this collaboration.

## Special Appreciations

First, we wish to thank the NCD Alliance who's technical and financial support made this trip possible to the workshop and to the Permanent Mission. Secondly, we wish to appreciate the collaboration of the staff of the NCD unit of the Ministry of Health's department of Disease Control, particularly, Dr. Farida Haoua, for her support and referrals to the right quarters. Similarly, appreciations to the staff of the Directorate of Health Promotion, Dr. Hassan for his support and referral to the Department of Cooperation. Further, heartfelt appreciations to Dr. Mahmoud, the Director of Cooperation (DCOP) at the Ministry of Public Health for facilitating under tight timelines, our ability to meet at the Permanent Mission. Last and not the least, appreciations to the Minister Counsellor, H.E Nyanid Zacharie for making out time to meet with us in the unavoidable absence of the Ambassador and also for demonstrating national collaboration in providing relevant feedback on continued collaborations with the Government at home and linkages to the Mission.

### Submitted by:

**Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy**

*Secretary General, Cameroon NCD Alliance*

*President, RADA*

*Chair, Africa NCDs Network Secretariat.*

*Tel: +237 674733730 (WhatsApp)*

*Email: [ferdinantmbiy@recdev.org](mailto:ferdinantmbiy@recdev.org) / [camencdalliance@gmail.com](mailto:camencdalliance@gmail.com) / [info@cacsna.org](mailto:info@cacsna.org)*

