

## **CiSPHA REGIONAL WEBINAR**

### **African Union (AU) Engagement with CSOs and Update on Global Health Negotiation Processes: The Intergovernmental Negotiations Body (INB)**

On 11th April 2024, the Africa Civil Society Platform for Health (CiSPHA) held a Regional Webinar for representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in conversations on the African Union Engagement with CSOs and Update on Global Health Negotiation Processes: The International Negotiations Body (INB). 45 participants from across Africa and the world joined the discussions. The webinar was moderated by Gloria Mululu, Policy & Advocacy at WACI Health.

Rosemary Mburu, Executive Director at WACI Health, opened the webinar by giving an overview of CiSPHA platform and the role it plays bringing CSOs in the region and emphasized on the importance to collaborate with partners in strengthening Africa's voice in the global health space.

***"Looking at the rising political leadership in Africa, there is a need to engage, mobilize Community and Civil Society voices in the region."***

~Rosemary Mburu

Bright Sefah, Policy Officer at AU-ECOSOCC, spoke on how the AU has evolved from a political organization to being Citizens focused where citizens take center stage and get to participate through Civil Societies and own the Development in the region. He further spoke on AU-CSOs engagement through the new accreditation framework. AU is doing so much to enhance itself in areas of health to achieve a healthy continent as a whole in line with Agenda 2063.

***"We want to bring the best of African CSOs to the AU agencies."***

~Bright Sefah.

The next speaker was Nahason Aluoka, who is the Strategic Advisor at Pandemic Action Network and gave an update on the Intergovernmental Negotiations Body processes, specifically the International Negotiations Body. There is division on issues such as One Health, Pandemic Access & Benefit Sharing System (PABS), IP and Tech transfer, Financing and accountability issues. Another resumed session is planned for 29th April to May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 since INB 9 did not end on a good note and there is limited time to deliver the Convention agreement as many countries are going through elections.

***"During INB 9 it was realized that the world was still divided about major global health issues that are important for equity."***

~Nahason Aluoka

Lizzy Otake, Advocacy and Communication specialist at EANNASO, emphasized on the need for equity in global health processes. She mentioned that there is a need for equity since most Public Health Interventions work are at community level, thus it is important to involve them in the processes. There is a concern on how Pandemic preparedness

programs are formed and the need to identify the role of CSOs in these programs from the start.

***“CSOs need to be at the forefront of programs and interventions and not the glue that is holding the program not to fall.”***

~Lizzie Otaye

## **THE AFRICAN UNION (AU) ENGAGEMENT WITH CSOs**

The AU harmonized accreditation framework for CSOs has made AU-ECOSOCC the single entry point for CSOs engagement with AU. It includes an Observer status to CSOs which allows them to attend AU proceedings and Consultative status which allows CSOs to be consultants in AU discussions. This is further strengthened by the Annual citizens' forum and people assembly, Development of research & policy papers and Development of online knowledge platform & repositories. AU ECOSOCC works with Statutory bodies and Non-Statutory bodies to engage CSOs, which consists of the General Assembly, Standing Committee, Sectoral cluster committees e.g. Health cluster, Credentials committees and National chapters. The non-statutory bodies include all CSOs in Africa and the Diaspora that are championing Agenda 2063.

- Objectives of AU-ECOSOCC include
  - Continuous dialogues and establishing Strong partnerships,
  - Promote participation of CSOs in Africa policy implementations, and
  - Promote advocacy and defend a culture of good governance.
- Functions of AU-ECOSOCC include;
  - Popularizing AU's objectives & vision,
  - Undertake necessary studies & give recommendations,
  - Translation of policies, promotion of human rights and foster partnerships among others.

Key deliverables include; Policy input, CSO capacity building (Training manuals, Research toolkits and Advisory opinion to CSOs), Popularization of AU & its policies.

## **UPDATE ON GLOBAL HEALTH NEGOTIATION PROCESSES: The International Negotiations Body (INB)**

The INB was formed in 2021 due to the challenges during the global response to COVID 19 with the aim to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other instrument in line with WHO constitution on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPPR). INB is led by the INB bureau with 2 co-chairs and WHO as the secretariat. Several activities have been done since the launch such as Public Hearings, informal consultations, Regional consultations and various INB meetings with different stakeholders such as Regional Economic bodies.

CSOs need to continue to coordinate and collaborate among themselves to ensure they are well informed as they continue to champion for their inclusion in these processes; which will help to make the agreement very strong and address the misinformation concerning the process.

**Need for Equity in PPR programs:** In most cases, CSOs are only brought in when interventions are failing yet they are never involved from the start. CSOs are always the bridge between Communities and Health Programs implementation.