Statement of Interest for Re-election as Africa Regional Representative on the HSG Board

By Felix Abrahams Obi, May 2024

I feel really honored to have been nominated to run for reelection as the Africa Regional Representative on the Executive Board of our esteemed society, Health Systems Global (HSG). It has been a rare privilege to have served in the HSG board these past four years, and I humbly accept the nomination as a candidate for the 2024 HSG Board election.

During the 2020 board elections, I committed to becoming a voice for the African continent on the HSG Board and I have consistently made efforts to ensure that the board's decisions take into consideration the unique contexts of our continent. I have championed the African cause within the society and advocated for the members of our HSG Africa Regional Network. For the 6th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research (HSR2020) in Dubai-hosted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic), I coordinated the pre-conferences which held across the different countries/regions of sub-Saharan Africa, and I led efforts to increase the number of HSG members from Africa.

As a pan-Africanist, I was appalled by the mass denial of visas to African delegates ahead of the 7th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research (HSR2022), I had sleepless nights, and engaged in social media campaigns to raise awareness on the visa discriminatory practices against African delegates. I worked tirelessly with the HSG Board and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) to ensure that the visa denials were reversed, which made it possible for many of our colleagues to participate in the HSR2020 in Bogota Colombia. It was a win for our collective efforts as more delegates from African were the highest in number compared to other regions!

During the HSG Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Bogota, I supported some of our colleagues to present a memo for a resolution that denounced the visa denials experienced by African delegates while affirming that equitable access to visas for travels should be a key consideration for selecting a host city/country for future. I also amplified this call during the HSG Board meeting with the hosts of the November 2024 8th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research (HSR2024) in Nagasaki Japan.

As I seek re-election into the HSG Board as the African Regional Representative, I will continue work for the good of our continent while ensuring that our members across the different countries and regions in Africa participate actively advancing the field of Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR) and deepening the generation and use of evidence to inform policy and practice. Having served as the Chair of HSG Board's Regional Networks, I see great opportunities for leveraging the resources of the different Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to build HPSR capacity among our members, foster research collaborations, and deepen our engagements across the regional and language blocs within our continent.

To ensure inclusivity and bridge the language divide, I identified and have onboarded a Francophone Network Coordinator who serves as a liaison and focal point for our French-speaking members. I have also identified a potential Lusophone Network Coordinator who is willing to serve as the liaison for our Portuguese speaking members. I will strengthen our strategic engagements and collaborations with regional bodies such as the African Health Economics and Policy Association (AfHEA), West African Network of Emerging Leaders (WANEL) in Health Policy and Systems, Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET), while exploring potential collaborations with Africa Centre for Disease Control, WHO Africa Regional Office, amongst others.

I cherish the opportunity to serve our society, which I have been a member for over 10 years, and I look forward to continuing to represent our beloved continent in the HSG Board. Let's work together to realize the strategic objectives of HSG's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 in Africa, our homeland!