

THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL ON CLIMATE CHANGE & SUSTAINABILITY

What does the Maputo Protocol say about climate change & sustainability?

Article 18 of the Maputo Protocol, as seen below, goes beyond simply ensuring women's right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment — it highlights the power of women in shaping a more sustainable future.

By emphasising women's leadership in environmental decision-making, it recognises that their participation is essential to effective climate action, the protection of natural resources, and the transition to cleaner, renewable energy sources. Other important rights included in the Protocol are women's rights to sustainable development (**Article 19**) and food security (**Article 15**).



ARTICLE 18 – RIGHT TO A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

1. Women shall have the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to:
 - a) **Ensure greater participation of women** in the planning, management and preservation of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources at all levels;
 - b) **Promote research and investment** in new and renewable energy sources and appropriate technologies, including information technologies and facilitate women's access to, and participation in their control;
 - c) **Protect and enable the development** of women's indigenous knowledge systems;
 - d) **Regulate the management**, processing, storage and disposal of domestic waste;
 - e) **Ensure that proper standards** are followed for the storage, transportation and disposal of toxic waste.



HOW HAVE GOVERNMENTS IMPLEMENTED THIS SO FAR?



Since the **Maputo Protocol's** adoption in **2003**, many countries have adopted constitutional provisions related to the environment and climate change. Several constitution's guarantee the right to a healthy and clean environment. Some impose an obligation on the State to protect the environment.



For example, the **2010** Constitution of **Kenya** in addition to the right and obligation mentioned, also provides persons whose right to a clean and healthy environment has been denied, violated, infringed or threatened with the right to apply to the court for reparations.

There have also been some encouraging laws, policies and achievements made by governments and regional bodies:



Kenya's **Climate Change Act** (2016) mandates the mainstreaming of "intergenerational and gender equity in all aspects of climate change responses" as well as equitable access to the national Climate Change Fund.



Namibia's **Access to Biological and Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge Act** of 2017 promotes women's participation in decision-making related to the conservation, sustainable use, and benefit-sharing of biological and genetic resources. It emphasises gender equality in protecting intellectual property rights tied to traditional knowledge, highlighting women's critical roles in agriculture, medicine, and community development.



Rwanda's **National Environment and Climate Change Policy** (2019) maintains a guiding principle of "Inclusiveness", wherein "Effective involvement of women and youth in environmental management and climate change intervention decision-making is essential and should be encouraged." Similarly, Uganda's **Revised Energy Policy** (2023) aims to mainstream "human rights, gender, equity, culture and inclusiveness in the energy sector".



In 2015, the 15 Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted the **ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access** – the first-ever regional policy on gender-responsive energy development.



Nigeria revised its **National Gender Policy** in 2022 and adopted a **National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change** and in late 2024, Senegal's Ministry of Agriculture is set to launch a **Gender and Climate Action Plan** for the agriculture sector to increase women's participation in formal and community decision-making and foster 'gender-smart' innovations and technologies.

WHAT MORE COULD GOVERNMENTS BE DOING?



- ✓ **Strengthen women's roles in environmental governance** by ensuring equitable representation in local, national, regional and continental decision-making bodies.
- ✓ **Establish or enhance gender-responsive climate funds**, ensuring women, especially in rural areas, can access resources for green technologies and sustainable livelihoods.
- ✓ **Protect indigenous women's knowledge systems** by legislating against biopiracy and integrate this knowledge into national, regional and continental sustainability frameworks.
- ✓ **Enforcing stricter waste management standards**, prioritising eco-friendly disposal practices and community-led waste recycling initiatives.
- ✓ **Conduct targeted awareness campaigns** on the impact of climate change and the role of women in addressing it, particularly for youth.
- ✓ **Divest from fossil fuels and reallocate those resources** to support renewable energy projects, particularly those that empower women entrepreneurs and communities.
- ✓ **Provide incentives for women-led businesses** in the renewable energy sector and ensure their participation in green economic opportunities.

WHAT WOULD A FUTURE WHERE ARTICLE 18 OF THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL IS IMPLEMENTED LOOK LIKE?

Women of all backgrounds, especially those in rural and marginalised communities, are at the forefront of decision-making in climate policies, land management, and renewable energy development. Cities and rural areas alike thrive with green technologies, powered by renewable energy sources co-managed by women, ensuring a balance between technological progress and environmental preservation.

Indigenous women's knowledge systems are protected, celebrated, and seamlessly integrated into sustainable practices, creating a model of development that is both futuristic and deeply rooted in African traditions.

Waste management is no longer a looming crisis, as eco-conscious communities take charge of regulating, processing, and disposing of waste in ways that regenerate the land. This future, where women's environmental rights are upheld, is not just sustainable, but abundant—free from the toxic consequences of waste mismanagement and environmental degradation, fostering a healthier, greener Africa led by the power of women's wisdom and innovation.



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