

SOAWR COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE AU-CEVAWG

26 January, 2026

The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition issues this communiqué to clarify its position regarding the newly adopted African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU-CEVAWG). SOAWR recognises the African Union's commitment to strengthening continental responses to violence against women and girls and notes the Convention's description as "a legally binding instrument that seeks to prevent, eliminate, punish, and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres, in times of peace and conflict."¹ We commend the continued continental attention to combating violence against women and girls as a critical priority.

SOAWR is a network of more than 70 civil society organisations working across over 30 African Union Member States. Established in 2004, its mission is to accelerate and promote the ratification, domestication, and full implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol). For over two decades, the Coalition has championed the protection, promotion, and realisation of African women's and girls' rights through evidence-based advocacy, capacity strengthening, and strategic partnerships.

The Coalition wishes to clarify that SOAWR, as a Coalition, was not involved in the development of the AU-CEVAWG, nor were we involved in the drafting, negotiation, or consultation processes that informed the instrument. As a diverse Coalition, our 70-plus member organisations maintain their own independent and varied positions and initiatives on the Convention, reflecting their mandates, expertise, and national or thematic priorities. These individual positions and engagements do not represent, and should not be interpreted as, a collective SOAWR stance.

At the Coalition level, SOAWR stands for the promotion and protection of the human rights of African women and girls. While we are encouraged by all continental efforts aimed at ending violence against women and girls, particularly initiatives that contribute to the realisation of Article 4 (*The Rights to Life, Integrity and Security of the Person*) of the Maputo Protocol, our Coalition's mandate remains firmly focused on the advancement, implementation, and full realisation of the Maputo Protocol itself. This includes supporting AU Member States, institutions, and civil society partners to uphold the rights enshrined in the Protocol and to address persistent gaps in protection, prevention, access to justice, and accountability.

SOAWR remains committed to productive engagement with African Union organs, Member States, and partners to ensure that all normative frameworks existing and emerging ultimately reinforce the rights, agency, and dignity of women and girls across the continent. Our work will continue to centre the Maputo Protocol as Africa's principal, comprehensive, and legally binding instrument for women's rights.

1. African Union. Press release announcing the adoption of the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. Available at: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20241121/adoption-convention-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>