



**Statement by Alliances for Africa on behalf of the SOAWR Coalition at the  
87th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights**

**Observer Status Number 235**

*Honorable Chairperson of the African Commission, Honourable Commissioners, All Protocol Observed:*

**1. A Call for the Universal Ratification of the Maputo Protocol**

We commend the 46 Member States of the African Union who have ratified the Maputo Protocol. We, however, are concerned about the 9 Member States who are yet to [ratify](#) the Protocol. ***We call upon the African Commission to continue urging Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Somalia, and Sudan to urgently ratify the Protocol. We further call upon the African Commission to urge Member States who have placed [reservations](#) on the Protocol to withdraw their reservations to ensure that African women fully benefit from all the rights enshrined in the Protocol.***

**2. Strengthening Implementation of the Maputo Protocol through the Withdrawal of Reservations on Some Provisions of the Maputo Protocol.**

We acknowledge that across Africa, the Maputo Protocol has shaped constitutional reforms, strengthened national legislation on gender equality, and informed progressive laws and policies addressing gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices, advancing sexual and reproductive health rights, women's political participation and economic empowerment. For example, Uganda, in fulfilment of its obligations under the Protocol, has advanced women's

rights as enshrined in the Protocol, through reforming the [Succession Act](#), the [Market Act](#) and enacting the [Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act](#), among others.

However nine African Union Member States have entered reservations on some provisions of the Maputo Protocol- Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, South Africa, and Uganda. In Kenya and Uganda, [reservations](#) to Article 14 focusing on protecting women's reproductive rights, have significantly limited women's reproductive autonomy and has contributed to high rates of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, particularly among survivors of rape and incest.

Additionally, implementation gaps persist due to weak enforcement, inadequate budgets, limited accountability, entrenched patriarchal norms, and cultural resistance. Shrinking civic space and attacks against women human rights defenders.

***We therefore call upon the African Commission to urge Member States to take decisive action towards the full domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol by: withdrawing the existing reservations on key provisions within the Protocol, and allocate adequate resources towards the fulfilment of its provisions; Ensuring effective monitoring, state reporting and compliance; Strengthening national enforcement and accountability systems in fulfilling the rights enshrined; and Continuing to create an enabling civic space in which women's rights organizations can freely and safely operate in.***

### **3. Persistent Non-Compliance with the Two-Thirds Gender Principle in Kenya**

We acknowledge the Republic of Kenya's Constitutional commitment to gender equality, including its recognition of the importance of the two-thirds gender principle. However, we respectfully draw the attention of the persistent non-compliance by the Republic of Kenya to implement this Constitutional requirement, which mandates that no more than two-thirds of members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender.

This two-thirds gender principle, enshrined under Article 27(8) of the [Constitution of Kenya, 2010](#) reflects Kenya's obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol, including the rights to equality, non-discrimination, and political participation. Despite a clear constitutional mandate and subsequent [judicial](#)

[pronouncements](#) affirming its binding nature, this principle remains unimplemented more than a decade later.

As Kenya approaches the 2027 general elections, the urgency of implementing this principle cannot be overstated. Without immediate legislative and administrative measures, there is a significant risk that the upcoming electoral process will once again fall short of constitutional and regional human rights standards.

***We therefore urge the Commission to call upon the Government of Kenya to take immediate steps to enact the necessary legal framework to give full effect to the two-thirds gender principle; remind the State of its obligations under the African Charter, the Maputo Protocol and relevant regional instruments concerning women's political participation; and encourage the acceleration of this compliance ahead of its 2027 general elections.***

#### **4. Nigeria's Compliance with the Maputo Protocol on Women's and Girls' Rights**

We note with concern that despite Nigeria's commitments under the Maputo Protocol and other regional human rights instruments, women and girls continue to face widespread rights violations. Persistent harmful practices, weak law enforcement, and policy gaps undermine their health, dignity, and educational opportunities. [Nearly half](#) of Nigerian girls are married before 18, [one in four](#) women aged 18-24 experienced sexual abuse during childhood, and teenage pregnancy remains prevalent. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) also persists, affecting approximately [18.4%](#) of women aged 15-49 despite federal and state prohibitions.

These realities demonstrate that Nigeria has not fully implemented key obligations under the Maputo Protocol relating to eliminating harmful practices, ending child marriage, and protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Although Nigeria ratified the Protocol in 2004, it has not fully [domesticated](#) it into national legislation, and critical provisions, particularly Article 14 on SRHR, remain inadequately enforced. In April 2025, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice [reaffirmed](#) Nigeria's obligation to provide safe abortion services for survivors of rape and incest, yet access remains restricted. Similarly, the Child Rights Act [prohibits](#) child marriage but has not been adopted nationwide, contributing to a prevalence of [44%](#), while it is estimated that [over 20 million](#) Nigerian women and girls have undergone FGM. High rates of teenage pregnancy and school dropout increase risks of

maternal mortality, poverty, and social exclusion, with Nigeria having one of the highest lifetime maternal mortality risks among adolescent girls globally.

***We urge the African Commission to encourage Nigeria to domesticate and enforce the Maputo Protocol, including Article 14, and ensure nationwide adoption of the Child Rights Act; End harmful practices by strengthening anti-FGM law enforcement and supporting community education and advocacy; Improve education and health services by promoting school retention and re-entry for pregnant girls and teenage mothers and providing adolescent-friendly SRHR services, including comprehensive sexuality education; and Support civil society engagement by backing organizations that raise awareness and monitor implementation of the Protocol.***

#### **5. Concerns Over Senegal's Amended Article 319 and Human Rights Compliance**

We note with concern the [recent amendment](#) and entry into force of Article 319 of the Penal Code in Senegal, following its adoption in March 2026. The revised provision introduces a definition of acts criminalised and introduces new offences criminalising the glorification of unnatural acts, as well as the financing of or support for those promoting or glorifying homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, or any other similar practice. It also doubles the maximum term of imprisonment to 10 years and significantly increases fines. These measures raise concerns regarding Senegal's obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, particularly the principles of equality, non-discrimination, dignity, privacy, and freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, combined with the adverse impacts it may have on affected individuals and increase vulnerability to discrimination.

***We therefore respectfully urge the Commission to call upon the Republic of Senegal to review the amended Article 319 to ensure compliance with the African Charter; Remind the State of its obligations to uphold equality, non-discrimination, and dignity; and Encourage measures to prevent violence, stigma, and discrimination and to align national laws with regional and international human rights standards.***

#### **6. Ending Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa**

We express deep concern over the persistent and widespread use of sexual violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict across the African continent. In contexts

including [Sudan](#), the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Eritrea](#), [South Sudan](#), [Somalia](#), and the [Central African Republic](#), conflict-related sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon of war, intimidation, ethnic targeting, forced displacement, and social destruction.

Despite existing regional legal frameworks, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Maputo Protocol, women and girls continue to endure rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence perpetrated by state and non-state armed actors. These violations are often characterized by extreme brutality, impunity, and the collapse of protection and justice systems. The continued recurrence of these crimes reflects not only ongoing insecurity but also structural failures in prevention, accountability, survivor support, and political will to end impunity.

***We urge the Commission to call upon Member States to strengthen accountability for conflict-related sexual violence by ensuring investigation and prosecution of perpetrators, including through special or hybrid courts and improved evidence preservation, to enhance protection of women and girls by integrating gender-responsive measures in peacekeeping and humanitarian responses, to support full implementation of the Maputo Protocol, to ensure survivor-centered services including medical care, psychosocial and legal support, and economic reintegration, and to address root causes by promoting women's participation in peace processes, strengthening prevention systems, and enhancing regional cooperation to end impunity.***

**Done in Nigeria on 9th April 2026**

About [Alliances for Africa](#):

Alliances for Africa is an international African-led feminist non-governmental human rights, peace, and sustainable development organization. AfA works with partners in, around, and beyond the continent of Africa. Alliances for Africa is a member of the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR).

About SOAWR:

The [Solidarity for African Women's Rights \(SOAWR\)](#) is a Coalition of over 70 organizations working on women's rights in 33 countries in Africa. SOAWR was formed with the principal objective of advocating for the ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), adopted 23 years ago. The SOAWR Coalition is comprised of:

1. Action for Development (ACFODE)
2. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
3. African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
4. Akina Mama wa Afrika
5. Alliances for Africa
6. Association de Promotion de la Culture Environnementale(APCE)
7. Association des Juristes Maliennes (AJM)
8. Association des Juristes Sénégalaises(AJS)
9. Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL)
10. Atwar Organization for Research and Social Development (Atwar)
11. BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights
12. Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionelle Affectant la Sante des Femmes et des Enfants (CPTAFE)
13. Center for Health Human Rights and Development (CEHURD)
14. Center for Human Rights – University of Pretoria
15. Center for Reproductive Rights
16. Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW)
17. Centre for Justice Studies and Innovation (CJSI)
18. Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr)
19. Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW)

20. Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)
21. Communication Techniques for Development (ACT)
22. Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative
23. Equality Now
24. Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya
25. Fondation Pour l'Egalité/ CIDDEF
26. Forum Mulher
27. Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue (FDHRD)
28. Girl Child Network
29. Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD)
30. Haki Nawiri Africa
31. HelpAge International
32. Her Voice Liberia
33. Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS)
34. IGED Africa
35. ICJ Kenya
36. Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Harmful Traditional Practices
37. Inter-African Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV)
38. Ipas Africa Alliance for Women's Reproductive Health and Rights
39. Jossour
40. Journal Féministe Algérien
41. KADIRAT
42. Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
43. Make Every Woman Count
44. Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre
45. MPOWER
46. National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (NADRF)
47. Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM)
48. NGO Gender Coordination Network
49. Oxfam GB
50. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)
51. Question de Femmes
52. Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD)

53. Sister Namibia
54. Source of Peace Organization (SPO)
55. STEWARD Women
56. Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)
57. The New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative (NIGAWD)
58. Tomorrow's Child Initiative
59. Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre (TLAC)
60. Uganda Women Network (UWONET)
61. Union Nationale Des Femmes Djiboutiennes
62. Voix de Femmes
63. Women's Advocacy and Communication Network (WANET)
64. Well Being Africa
65. Women and the Law Southern Africa(WLSA Zambia)
66. Women and the Law Southern Africa (WLSA Zimbabwe)
67. Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF)
68. Women Lead Movement (WLM)
69. Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia(WONGOSOL)
70. Women of Liberia Peace Network(WOLPNET)
71. Women on the Watch (WOW) Society Initiative
72. Women Peace Initiatives Association
73. Women's Advocacy and Communication Network
74. Women's Counselling and Information Centre (WCIC)
75. Women For Justice and Equality (WOJE)
76. Women's Rights Advancement & Protection Alternative (WRAPA)
77. Young Liberian Women Organization for Improvement (WOFIM)
78. Y-PEER PETRI