



**Statement by Alliances for Africa on behalf of the SOAWR Coalition at the
85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
Observer Status Number 235**

Honorable Chairperson of the African Commission, Honourable Commissioners:

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 have not ratified the Maputo 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 lift the reservations to ensure that African women fully benefit from all the rights enshrined in the Protocol.

2. Raising Awareness for States to withdraw Reservations on some Provisions of the Maputo Protocol.

We congratulate the Commission on its resolution ACHPR/Res.632 (LXXXII) 2025 acknowledging the need for an Advocacy Framework to raise awareness for States to withdraw reservations on some provisions of the Maputo Protocol and the need to guarantee the universal application of its provisions to enable women across Africa to access the rights and legal protections encompassed within the Protocol. This highlights the Commission's dedication to the full implementation and enforcement of the Maputo Protocol as a pivotal tool for advancing women's empowerment and achieving gender equality. We appreciate the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa for collaborating with relevant Partners, including Equality Now and SOAWR, and other stakeholders in supporting the development of the Advocacy Framework, which the Commission [published](#) for input from the public by 22nd October 2025. The SOAWR Coalition remains committed to supporting the mandate of the ACHPR in encouraging Member States to withdraw reservations

by providing feedback on the Advocacy Framework, and supporting the popularisation of the Framework upon its adoption and launch by the Commission. **We urge the Commission to popularise the [call for inputs](#) on the Advocacy on its social media platforms and during the 85th Ordinary Session, and in particular, to encourage AU member states, NHRIs and NGOs to provide feedback to improve the utility and content of the Advocacy Framework.**

3. Congratulations to the Central African Republic for ratifying the Maputo Protocol

We take this opportunity to congratulate the Central African Republic (CAR) for ratifying the Maputo Protocol. The human rights situation in CAR has been dire, with women and girls disproportionately affected by conflict, insecurity, and weak governance. Communities continue to face cycles of violence, displacement, and widespread sexual and gender-based abuse, often leaving survivors without justice or support. By formally [depositing](#) the instruments of ratification on 29 July 2025, CAR's government has made a powerful public commitment to ending legal discrimination against women and girls. This milestone reflects a clear intent to enhance the country's legal protections, enact and fully implement laws and policies to uphold human rights, and forge a future where women and girls can live safely, freely, and with equal opportunity. **We call upon the government of the Central African Republic to take all necessary measures to domesticate and fully implement the Protocol.**

4. A Call to Ensure Women's Equitable Political Representation in Nigeria

Over two decades after Nigeria ratified the Protocol in 2004, women remain dramatically underrepresented in governance. Since the Fourth Republic to date, the threshold of women's representation in politics has never exceeded [6%](#). In the current records, Nigeria now ranks 143rd out of 144 countries for women's political participation, according to the [2025 Global Gender Gap Report](#). Women occupy just four out of 109 seats (2.7%) in the Senate and 17 out of 360 seats (4.7%) in the House of Representatives, making up only 4.2 per cent of the 469-member 10th National Assembly. There have been efforts by the government, non-governmental organizations, and different women's movements to improve women's political participation. Such efforts include the 2006 National Gender Policy (NGP), which recommends a [35% affirmative action quota](#), seeking a more inclusive representation of women in public service positions. This is in line with the Beijing Declaration during the Fourth World Conference on Women, which advocated 30% affirmative action for women in politics. Despite these efforts, there is still a very low percentage of women's representation in politics in Nigeria. [Research](#) indicates that women's exclusion from decision-making has consistently undermined Nigeria's democracy, weakening policy responsiveness to gendered realities and contributing to the persistence of violence, discrimination, and economic inequality. Structural barriers - including patriarchal norms, financial exclusion, electoral violence, and political party gatekeeping - have created a vicious cycle of

underrepresentation. In 2024, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) issued [General recommendation No. 40 \(2024\) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems](#) which calls for fifty-fifty parity between women and men in all their diversity in terms of equal access to and equal power within decision-making systems. **We call upon the Commission to urge the Federal Government of Nigeria to comply with Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol and promote the equal participation of women in its political sphere through constitutional amendments, legislative changes, and policy measures including implementing fifty-fifty affirmative action quotas at both the federal and state levels.**

5. Our Rights are Non-Negotiable: A Call to Counter Backlash on the 22nd Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol

On 11 July 2025, we [marked](#) 22 years since the adoption of the Maputo Protocol. It has proven to be a critical driver of progress for women's rights, yet its implementation is increasingly underfunded and politically sidelined. At the same time, overlapping crises such as economic instability and conflict have deepened violence against women and girls, while online spaces have amplified harmful masculinities and misogynistic narratives. Together, these trends reflect an intensifying and well-coordinated backlash that threatens to reverse hard-won gains. In recent years, [backsliding](#) on gender equality policies has at times been explicit, where normative commitments have been removed. Examples include: The proposal to repeal the law [banning FGM](#) in the Gambia; the [lifting of the ban](#) on FGM in Sierra Leone; the introduction of the [bill to repeal](#) the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act in Nigeria, and the [recent decision](#) by Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre to appoint a military general, Bashir Goobe, as the new Minister of Family and Human Rights on July 27, 2024, and change the name from Ministry of Women human rights development to the Ministry of Family and Human Rights Development. The removal of the term "women" from the ministry's portfolio was especially shocking, as it symbolically diminished the focus on women's issues in a country where women's rights are continually contested. More often, however, the backsliding has been implicit, where a subtle erosion of commitments takes place, ["hollowing out"](#) policies without changing legislation or policy. Such measures can include: Discrediting gender equality as a legitimate goal; reframing existing policies, such as on education or health, in ways that restrict women's rights; undermining institutional mechanisms including national gender equality machineries, and limiting accountability and inclusion mechanisms for women's rights organizations. Whether explicit or implicit, such rollbacks violate human rights commitments and the principle of non-retrogression. African women and girls continue to face high rates of gender-based violence, harmful practices, and restricted access to sexual and reproductive health care. Women's rights movements and organisations are being [defunded](#) and are having to use the minimal available funding, resisting these forms of backlash rather than being free to focus on their original mandates. At the same time, policy and civic space for women's rights organisations is [shrinking](#) and women human rights defenders are at heightened risk.

We call on the Commission to take action about the growing backlash against women's and girls' rights to ensure gains towards gender equality are not rolled back through: Following up on the ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Maputo Protocol; issuing press releases raising alarm on the retrogression and restating the Maputo Protocol standards; issuing urgent appeal letters to Member States whenever retrogressive laws, policies, or practices are introduced; urging states to reverse any retrogressive laws and policies during the state review process, and conducting fact-finding missions to advocate for redress in affected countries.

Done in Abuja on 30th September 2025

About [Alliances for Africa](#):

Alliances for Africa is an international African-led 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 22 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 Traditionnelle 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 for the Advancement of Women(EASSI)
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. Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD)
29. Haki Nawiri Africa
30. HelpAge International
31. Her Voice Liberia
32. Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS)
33. IGED Africa
34. ICJ Kenya
35. Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Harmful Traditional Practices
36. Inter-African Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV)
37. Ipas Africa Alliance for Women's Reproductive Health and Rights
38. Jossour
39. Journal Féministe Algérien
40. KADIRAT
41. Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
42. Make Every Woman Count
43. Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre
44. MPOWER
45. National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (NADRF)
46. Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM)
47. NGO Gender Coordination Network
48. Oxfam GB
49. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)

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