

# THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

## What does the Maputo Protocol say about political participation?



The Maputo Protocol **champions women's equal participation in politics and decision-making**. Article 9 calls for affirmative measures such as quotas, targeted capacity-building programmes, and reforms to electoral systems to remove barriers to women's participation, which are necessary to counteract historical and structural inequalities that have excluded women from leadership.

The Protocol also advocates for **equal partnerships between men and women, recognising that shared leadership at all levels is essential for truly inclusive policy-making and development**. By promoting women as equal partners in decision-making, the Protocol highlights the transformative potential of gender-balanced governance for achieving social justice and sustainable progress.

## ARTICLE 9 – RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that:
  - a) women participate without any discrimination in all elections;
  - b) women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes;
  - c) women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programmes.
2. States Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making.



## HOW HAVE GOVERNMENTS IMPLEMENTED THIS SO FAR?



**Eleven African countries (Burundi, Egypt, Eswatini, Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe) have adopted constitutional provisions establishing quotas.** Other constitutions provide for affirmative action, such as in Uganda.

Several African countries maintain legislated quotas on women's representation in national and/or subnational legislatures. **34 out of the 55 AU member states maintain legislated quotas for the lower/single house.** Of these, the majority have set the quota target between 30% - 40% female representation. Four countries (Algeria, Lesotho, Senegal and Togo) have sought to achieve gender parity, that is, the respective legislated quota call for 50/50 representation of women and men. Of the countries with bicameral legislatures, six countries (Burundi, Congo Rep., Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Eswatini and Rwanda) maintain quotas for both houses of parliament.



# 50/50

campaigns to increase women's representation



Across the continent, governments have most commonly integrated approaches related to women's participation in the political and decision-making process in national gender or development strategies. **Countries such as Malawi and Namibia have introduced 50/50 campaigns to increase women's representation in decision-making at the national and local levels.** National women's parliamentary groups have also introduced policies to increase female participation and representation in decision-making.

In several countries, for example in Cameroon, **institutional reforms have focused on women in the electoral process by providing training for women candidates or facilitating access for female voters.** Other reforms have sought to strengthen female participation, raise awareness of women's political participation or ensure that legislative and policy initiatives include a gender perspective. For example, Burkina Faso organised a workshop for various authorities and leaders as part of the government's efforts to popularise the law on quotas.

## WHAT MORE COULD GOVERNMENTS BE DOING?



- ✓ Reform existing legislation to **remove discriminatory provisions.**
- ✓ Provide women with **comprehensive opportunities in political spaces**, ensuring their safety and protection while fostering environments for leadership and decision-making beyond quotas.
- ✓ Develop and institutionalise **capacity-building programmes** for women, alongside implementing parity systems to achieve equitable representation.
- ✓ Create mechanisms to **nurture leadership potential in girls and women**, ensuring a pipeline of empowered future leaders.
- ✓ Launch public awareness campaigns that **celebrate women's achievements** in politics at communal, regional, and national levels, helping to challenge stereotypes and close gaps.
- ✓ Promote intergenerational dialogue and **training for young people** to equip them for political participation.
- ✓ Address social pressures by empowering women to **resist manipulation** or coercion that might deter them from pursuing leadership positions.
- ✓ Amplify the **contributions of female parliamentarians** to dismantle stereotypes and highlight their critical role in governance.
- ✓ Facilitate the **exchange of best practices** among states to inspire and inform progress toward gender-balanced political participation.



## WHAT WOULD A FUTURE WHERE ARTICLE 9 OF THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL IS IMPLEMENTED LOOK LIKE?

Governance is genuinely inclusive, with women and men working as equal partners in shaping the continent's political and developmental landscapes. Women's voices are no longer sidelined but are integral to crafting policies that address the diverse realities of African societies. **Affirmative measures like quotas and capacity-building programmes have evolved into permanent cultural norms that ensure equal representation in all decision-making spaces.** Women leaders are celebrated not only in politics but across all spheres of influence, inspiring younger generations to dream boldly and lead confidently.

This future is marked by transformation—where leadership reflects the diversity of its people, and gender-balanced governance delivers sustainable progress. Communities thrive under inclusive policies. **Women bring their unique and diverse perspectives to the forefront, addressing systemic inequalities and catalysing innovative solutions for shared prosperity.** From rural councils to international forums, the African continent shines as a global model of participatory democracy, proving that equal representation is not just a moral imperative but the foundation for resilience and success.

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