



**Statement by Alliances for Africa on behalf of the SOAWR Coalition at the
83rd 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. THE STATUS OF RATIFICATION OF THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL

We commend the 45 Member States of the African Union who have ratified the Maputo Protocol. We, however, are concerned about the 10 Member States who have not ratified the Maputo Protocol. **We call upon the African Commission to continue urging Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Somalia, and Sudan to ratify the Protocol. We further call upon the African Commission to urge Member States who have placed reservations on the Protocol to forthwith lift the reservations to ensure that African women fully benefit from all the rights enshrined in the Protocol.**

2. CONDEMNING THE USE OF RAPE AS A TOOL OF WAR IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

We note with concern that the population in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has, for nearly [30 years](#), suffered insecurity and violence from foreign and Congolese armed groups, as well as from the government forces that are supposed to protect them. Women have been devastatingly affected by the war and conflict, with their bodies being turned into “*objects of unspeakable suffering, targeted with mutilation, rape and other forms of unimaginable violence, often perpetrated in front of their families*”. In a horrific incident in February 2025, [hundreds of women were raped and burned alive](#) by male inmates who were escaping from Munzenze Prison after M23 rebels closed in on the City of Goma. While 4000 men managed to break out, approximately [153 out of 163 women](#) who were being held in the prison were raped and burned to death while only 2 out of the 28 children being held with their mothers survived the macabre

ordeal. In the DRC, as in almost all conflicts, rape is used as a weapon of war, to assert dominance, sow fear, and break communities. The assault on these already vulnerable women is an illustration of the risks faced by female detainees. These events are not isolated incidents of violence but rather are part of a deeply entrenched pattern of sexual violence against women in [prison settings](#). **SOAWR calls on the African Commission to urge the DRC to provide separate detention facilities for male and female detainees and to ensure the protection of women from systemic conflict related sexual violence and torture as mandated by the Maputo Protocol and other treaties which the DRC has signed and ratified. We further urge the African Commission to ensure holistic reparations for the survivors and the families of the women raped and massacred at Munzenze Prison in line with the African Union theme of the year on Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations.**

3. PROGRESS IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: CELEBRATING GAINS IN HIGH GENDER REPRESENTATION IN NAMIBIA AND GHANA

We warmly congratulate Her Excellency [Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah](#) on her historic election as Namibia's first woman President and Her Excellency [Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang](#) on becoming Ghana's first female Vice President-elect. These groundbreaking victories mark a pivotal moment not only for Namibia and Ghana but for the entire African continent, as they reaffirm the power and potential of women's leadership in the highest levels of public office. Their [leadership](#) has the power to inspire millions, advance the fight for gender equality, and prioritize women's rights on national and regional agendas. As history has shown, when women are in positions of power, issues such as education for girls, ending gender-based violence, and economic empowerment receive the critical attention they deserve. We further commend President Netumbo Nandi-Ndairwa for appointing Her Excellency Lucia Witbooi as the Namibia's first female Vice President and appointing a gender equal cabinet [comprising nine women among the fourteen cabinet members](#) stamping Namibia as a trailblazer in gender equal political representation in Africa and beyond. Regrettably, in Ghana, President Mahama only appointed two women among the nineteen cabinet members failing to meet the quota threshold of 30% established by the Country's recently enacted Affirmative Action Act of 2024; a regressive step that has been condemned by various stakeholders including the [Speaker of Parliament](#). **SOAWR commends the African Commission through the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa for [celebrating](#) Namibia's historic all-female leadership and gender balanced cabinet. We urge the African Commission to continue calling on AU Member States including Ghana to fully implement Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol to ensure equal political participation in the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government.**

4. CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE SENATE OF NIGERIA

We continue raising the alarm on sexual harassment which is a human rights concern that robs victims of their entitlement to life with dignity. Sexual harassment cuts across all workspaces in Nigeria, including but not limited to public and private workplaces, religious institutions, institutions of learning, and informal workspaces. It is systemic and deeply underreported, especially in institutions of power. On 20 March 2024, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan was suspended by the Nigerian Senate for alleged gross misconduct after she presented a petition [alleging sexual harassment by Senate President Godswill Akpabio](#) since 2023. She cited repeated unwanted advances and inappropriate conduct during official engagements. The Senate Ethics Committee dismissed the petition on procedural grounds and framed her conduct as "unruly," avoiding a substantive inquiry into the allegations. Her suspension reinforces a hostile environment where women who report sexual misconduct are punished rather than protected. Nigeria is a party to the Maputo Protocol whose Article 13(C) enjoins State parties to ***“Ensure protection against workplace harassment and exploitation”***. These instruments, along with Sections 34 and 39 of Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution—guaranteeing dignity and freedom of expression—are ignored when women challenge entrenched power. **SOAWR calls on the African Commission to:**

1. Issue a public statement condemning Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan's suspension and urging the Nigerian government to uphold women's right to speak out against harassment.
2. Mandate the Country Rapporteur for Nigeria in conjunction with Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa to initiate a country-specific inquiry into the institutional handling of sexual harassment in Nigeria’s legislative bodies and other public institutions.

5. A CALL TO WITHDRAW THE RESERVATION ON ARTICLE 14 AND FULLY IMPLEMENT THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL IN UGANDA

We are extremely concerned that Uganda continues to face elevated maternal mortality, with unsafe abortions being a major, preventable contributor. Article 14 (2)(c) of the Maputo Protocol provides for safe abortion under specific circumstances, but Uganda maintains a reservation on this provision, limiting access to critical reproductive healthcare. Women who become pregnant as a result of rape, incest, or health risks are particularly affected. The [restrictive legal framework](#) on abortion forces many women to seek unsafe, clandestine procedures, exacerbating health

risks and undermining their rights. Broader structural challenges—including inadequate menstrual hygiene support in schools, early marriage, child labour, and limited access to essential health services in rural areas—compound the vulnerabilities of women and girls. **SOAWR calls on the African Commission to urge Uganda and other Member States to fully implement Article 14, promote menstrual hygiene in schools, enforce child protection laws, strengthen access to essential medicines, and protect SRHR defenders in order to advance health equity, reduce maternal mortality, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as well as Agenda 2063 of the African Union.**

Developed in Nigeria on 15th April 2025

Presented in Banjul, The Gambia on 10th May 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 organisations 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 20 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

