



**Statement by Alliances for Africa at the
73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
Observer Status Number 235**

Honorable Chairperson of the ACHPR,

Alliances for Africa is an international African-led non-governmental human rights, peace and sustainable development organisation. 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 (SOAWR), a coalition of over 70 organisations working on women's rights in 32 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), which was adopted 19 years ago.

All state parties to the Maputo Protocol and the African Charter must ensure that every individual can enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health. This obligation includes the duty to put legislative, budgetary, programmatic, administrative and other measures that progressively ensure access to health information and services and the immediate duty to refrain from taking any measures that infringe on this right. The SOAWR Coalition notes with concern an increase in regressive declarations and measures aimed at attacking the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health rights. For instance, during the most recent United Nations General Assembly session, Nigeria led a number of African countries in opposition to the resolution on International Cooperation on Access to Justice for Survivors of Sexual Violence. The countries opposed the resolution because it called on states to recognise the intersectional nature of discrimination and to provide access to modern contraception, including emergency contraception, and safe abortion to the full extent allowed by their national laws. These obligations are not inconsistent with states' obligations under the Maputo Protocol, which Nigeria ratified without any reservations. Thus, this action by Nigeria implies an intention to renege on its obligations under the Maputo Protocol and other international human rights instruments to ensure access to contraceptives and safe abortion services. Similarly, the Lagos State government recently withdrew guidelines on the provision of safe and legal abortion services because of public outcry caused by widespread misinformation campaigns. This regressive trend has been witnessed continentally for some years. For example, in 2017, Tanzania banned pregnant girls from attending school and returning to school after delivery. This ban was only partially lifted in 2021. Also, in 2020, Uganda adopted the

Revised Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings which call for the forced pregnancy testing of all adolescent girls in school at least once a term. **We urge the Commission to remain seized of these regressive trends that are becoming pervasive on the continent. We urge the Commission to call on states to put in place measures to safeguard against regression in sexual and reproductive health and rights and include in their reports the measures that they have put in place to ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of all health services and information including the full range of sexual and reproductive health services.**

Honourable Chairperson, the SOAWR Coalition commends the Commission on the launch of its Guidelines on Shadow Reports. These guidelines provide an opportunity for deeper engagement in the Commission's work by a wide range of actors and stakeholders. The periodic state reporting mechanism and the reliance on shadow and alternative reports by the Commission in fulfilling its mandate are important elements of enhancing state accountability under international human rights law. **We look forward to working with the Commission to ensure continued engagement by civil society organisations, human rights defenders and other stakeholders in utilising these guidelines.**

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the proliferation of armed conflict, and an unprecedented rise in unconstitutional changes of government have had a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls on the continent. **We urge the Commission to remain seized of these concerns and integrate the rights of women and girls in its efforts to apply a human-rights-based approach to addressing pressing social, political and economic developments on the continent.**

Honourable Chairperson, the SOAWR Coalition would like to congratulate the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic on its recent ratification of the Maputo Protocol. We urge the Commission to work closely with authorities in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic to ensure the effective domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. More than two years since African Union member states committed to achieving universal ratification of the Maputo Protocol by 2020, 12 AU member states are yet to ratify the Maputo Protocol. **We urge Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan – to urgently ratify the Maputo Protocol to ensure that the women and girls in these countries enjoy their rights as enshrined in the Protocol. Additionally, we call upon the Commission, in cases where countries have ratified the Maputo Protocol, to increase engagement on the implementation of the treaty, including relevant legal and policy reforms on key priority areas as identified by women's rights activists and organizations and to submit regular and timely reports on the progress made in line with the ACHPR reporting guidelines.**

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 Fund
4. African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
5. Akina Mama wa Afrika
6. Alliances for Africa
7. Association des Juristes Maliennes (AJM)
8. Association des Juristes Sénégalaises

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 (CSVSR)
19. Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW)
20. Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)
21. Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative
22. Equality Now
23. Fahamu Networks for Social Justice
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. Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS)
31. IGED Africa
32. ICJ Kenya
33. Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Harmful Traditional Practices
34. Inter-African Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV)
35. Ipas Africa Alliance for Women's Reproductive Health and Rights
36. Islamic Development and Relief Agency (IDRA)
37. Jossour
38. Journal Féministe Algérien
39. KADIRAT
40. Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
41. Make Every Woman Count
42. Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre/ NGOGCN
43. MPOWER
44. National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (NADRF)
45. Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM)
46. NGO Gender Coordination Network
47. Oxfam GB
48. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)
49. Question de Femmes
50. Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance (RHRA)
51. Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD)

52. Sister Nambia
53. Source of Peace Organization (SPO)
54. STEWARD Women
55. Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)
56. Tomorrow's Child Initiative
57. Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre (TLAC)
58. Uganda Women Network (UWONET)
59. Union Nationale Des Femmes Djiboutiennes
60. Voix de Femmes
61. WANET
62. Well Being Africa
63. WLSA ZAMBIA
64. Women in Law and Development in Africa
65. Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia
66. Women of Liberia Peace Network
67. Women Peace Initiatives Association
68. Women's Advocacy and Communication Network
69. Women's Counselling and Information Centre (WCIC)
70. Women's Rights Advancement & Protection Alternative (WRAPA)
71. Young Liberian Women Organization for Improvement (WOFIM)
72. Y-PEER PETRI