



A just world for all women and girls

**STATEMENT BY EQUALITY NOW**

**(Observer Status No. 281)**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 5 OF THE 87TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ACHPR**

*Honourable Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, All Protocol Observed:*

**1. Adoption of the Advocacy Framework for Withdrawing Reservations on Some Provisions to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa**

Equality Now wishes to congratulate the SRRWA and African Commission on the [adoption of the Advocacy Framework for Withdrawing Reservations on Some Provisions to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](#) during its private ordinary session held from February 23 to March 09, 2026. We appreciate the opportunity granted to us by the SRRWA to collaborate in the development of this Advocacy Framework and stand committed to popularise and disseminate the Framework amongst the relevant stakeholders including our partners.

## 2. Urgent Alarm and Call for Action on the Danger Posed by the Proposed African Charter on Family, Sovereignty, and Values

Equality Now is alarmed by the developments relating to the drafting of the [proposed African Charter on Family, Sovereignty, and Values](#). The highly retrogressive Charter is being developed under the auspices of the Entebbe Inter-Parliamentary Forums, the Pan African Conferences on Family Values, and the African Bar Association annual conferences convened from 2023 onwards through sponsorship by anti-rights groups without participation by African Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), and the mandated organs of the African Union. The Proposed Charter makes the following provisions that greatly undermine gender equality as enshrined in international law, the Maputo Protocol, soft law instruments, and jurisprudence of the ACHPR and other AU/UN treaty and policy bodies:

- **Rejects universal definitions of gender, sexuality, the family, and SRHR:** The Charter contests definition of terms such as gender, sexuality, the family, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in AU and UN instruments. It also includes and develops retrogressive definitions.
- **Urges withdrawal and/or reservations to international human/women rights law such as the CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol:** Articles 4 and Article 10 of the proposed Charter urge African governments to withdraw from treaties that protect SRHR rights and are “contrary” to African family, religious, and cultural values.
- **Weakens African multilateralism and challenges decisions made by AU/UN institutions and special rapporteurs:** Article 10(6) obligates governments to push back against UN Treaty bodies and the African commission, special rapporteurs and country reports on SRHR and ‘gender ideology’.

- **Duplicative bureaucracy and resource wastage undermining the roles of the ACHPR and ACERWC:** Articles 11-23 of the proposed Charter establish an unnecessary new Committee on Family, Sovereignty, and Values as well as reporting and investigation systems, despite existing AU mechanisms already performing these roles.
- **Leaves no scope for reservations, revocation, or withdrawal:** Despite encouraging States to revoke and withdraw from progressive treaties, the proposed Charter itself has no mechanism for reservation and/or withdrawal. Articles 25-26 only provide for ratification and amendment.
- **Explicit reference to anti-rights frameworks:** The proposed Charter replaces binding continental legal frameworks with foreign ideologies by urging Member States to sign onto anti-rights imposed frameworks such as the [Geneva Consensus Declaration](#).

At the Africa Disrupt CSWO 70, African feminists convened by FEMNET put out a [call to action](#) for rejection of the Charter. **We call upon your mandate to urgently engage the relevant African Union policy and human rights organs as well as Member States to stop the development of the Charter which poses a grave danger to existing protections for women’s and girls’ rights in Africa as enshrined in the Maputo Protocol.**

### **3. Issues of Concern on State Reporting on Part B of the Maputo Protocol**

Equality Now commends the 22 Member States that have submitted Part B report on the Maputo Protocol. We note with concern that, of the 46 African States Parties to the Maputo Protocol, only 22 have submitted Part B reports, reflecting non-compliance with reporting obligations under Article 62 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, read together with Article 26 of the Maputo Protocol and the State Reporting Procedures and Guidelines. **We continue to call upon your mandate to urge the 24 Member States that**

**have not provided an initial report on the status of implementation of the Maputo Protocol to forthwith submit the initial reports to evaluate promotion and protection of the rights of women at the national level.**

**4. Engaging with Traditional and Religious Leaders to pushback against backlash on women's rights**

Equality Now calls upon the SRRWA in her specific mandate to “*collaborate with relevant actors responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of women internationally, regionally and nationally...*” to consider strengthening collaboration with traditional and religious leaders as strategic allies in challenging harmful norms and promoting women's rights at the grassroots level. Traditional and religious leaders are custodians of communal norms and practices and often relied upon as guides and the first point of redress for conflict resolution. As such, it is essential that these leaders execute their functions and provide advice and guidance which aligns with regionally recognised human rights normative frameworks including Article 17 of the Maputo Protocol, which provides for the right to live in a positive cultural context and to participate in determining cultural policies. In support of this, Equality Now, in collaboration with the SOAWR coalition, is developing guidelines to support and strengthen CSOs and WROs engagement with traditional and religious leaders in advocacy towards ending violence against women and girls in Africa. **We urge the SRRWA to engage with these leaders as strategic partners in her advocacy on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol by AU Member States.**

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