

2nd AU Men's Conference concludes with far-reaching recommendations to advance gender transformative social protection.

Despite numerous efforts by member states and stakeholders to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls in Africa, the scourge still persists, mostly linked to harmful socio-cultural norms and practices. African Union Heads of State and Government have recommitted to further actions to sustainably address the vice which remains the most widespread and socially accepted form of human right violation.

Among the key recommendations is the engagement and active involvement of men and boys in leading the preventive actions against violence, and to nurture a culture of positive masculinity; increased investment in gender transformative social protection programmes; and a commitment to facilitate, negotiate and adopt, the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. The development of the Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls that addresses the specific needs of African women and girls, is among key outcomes of the [inaugural Men's Conference](#) on Positive Masculinity convened in 2021, where the Heads of States also adopted the [Kinshasa Declaration and Call to Action](#) on Positive Masculinity to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa. The Africa Union Commission will provide the technical support and resources for the drafting of the Convention which will be submitted for consideration by the African Union policy organs.

While convening the 2nd Men's Conference on the 10th November 2022 in Dakar, Senegal under the leadership of H.E., President of the Republic of Senegal and the 2022 AU Chairperson, in collaboration with H.E. Felix Tshisekedi, President of the Republic of the Democratic Republic of Congo; H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa; H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana; H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of the Republic of Liberia and the Patron of the African Women Leaders' Network (AWLN); and H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Heads of State committed to five key areas to advance, promote and accelerate actions to prevent, sustainably address, and end the scourge of violence against women and girls on the continent. The key areas on intervention include:

1. The introduction of gender-transformative intervention such as of Domestic Violence Prevention Training Programmes (DVPT) for boys and men at the community level using the existing local governance structures and institutions and galvanise their participation in the Continental Men's Coalition to end VAGW as a strategy for the promotion of positive masculinity as a new equitable gender norm in Africa;
2. Increase investment in gender transformative social protection programmes and public social services in the rural areas and develop legal and policy framework that will reduce the impact of drivers of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) such as Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW), negative attitude towards Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (SRH&RR), Stereotypes and other forms of discrimination against women in Africa;

3. Develop an intentional policy framework or guidelines to incentivise private sector and academic entities who demonstrate the meaningful representation and participation of women in their enterprises;
4. Institutionalize a structure for systematic and continuous engagement with traditional and religious leaders, including their strategic participation and interaction with Heads of State and various AU champions and other mechanisms on campaigns and programmes on Elimination of Harmful Practices and Violence Against Women and Girls;
5. Continue to encourage Member States of the African Union to support the capacity enhancement of their various gender machineries to respond to and accelerate the implementation of the [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](#) already initiated in the Kinshasa Declaration, facilitate effective participation and leadership of women in development, peace and security and provide more resources in support of the African Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion of Women and youth through various empowerment programmes especially for informal sector.

Addressing the Men's Conference, H.E. President Macky Sall underscored the need to not only raise awareness but to act against all forms of violence against women and girls. He stated, "let's not forget that violence is not only physical. It is also through harassment, threats, insults and other derogatory or humiliating remarks that hurt as much. No religion, no law, no social rule justifies violence against a human being. In short, there can be no legal or moral basis for violence in any form. whatever form it may take. Nothing can justify a woman or a girl being abused, marginalized or discriminated against. Altogether, public authorities, religious and traditional leaders, members of civil society and citizens, we must all raise our voices and say Enough! Enough of the brutality, enough of the abuse, enough of the harassment, enough of the bullying, enough of the insanity, rape and other unwanted solicitations. But it is not enough to say enough. It is necessary to act so that the custom of silence ceases, in times of peace as in times of war." Read the full statement [here](#).

H.E. President Cyril Ramaphosa, expressed the commitment of his government to end gender based violence and empower women on the continent. "We recently convened the second presidential summit on gender based violence and femicide in South Africa, at that summit, I once again made the call for the involvement of men in this fight. Gender based violence is a problem of men, not of women. We cannot win this struggle until we fundamentally transform how masculinity is expressed", he stated. The president further called for the speedy development of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and offered to join the African Union circle of Champions of Heads of State leading the call for positive masculinity.

Through various normative frameworks, programmes and campaigns, the African Union has been keen on putting a definitive end to inequalities and prejudices that propagate the various forms of violence against women and girls, including ending child marriage, eliminating Female Genital Mutilation, and prevention of violence of women in conflict situations. H.E. Moussa Faki, reiterated the need for enhanced collective and individual

actions and particularly, a change of the mentality. He observed, “violence against women remains the most widespread and pervasive violation of human rights in the world affecting an estimated one in three women. The statistics of such violence have not changed much in the last decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has even intensified violence against women and girls and has exacerbated deep structural inequalities, reversing decades of progress. Finding the necessary resources and working to mitigate these negative impacts in the daily life of every woman in every household, remains one of the priorities of the African Union Commission. African men and especially leaders must become more involved in this fight. We must go further, be more concrete to protect women, denounce and punish harshly the perpetrators of violence against women. It is up to men, the main perpetrators of physical and psychological violence, to reverse the trend by fighting in themselves, the impulses which push them to violate women.” Read the full statement [here](#).

H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, on her part, underscored the key role men and young men play in ending the violence and discrimination and called for more actions to support women and girls in all spheres on life. “I recognize I have a few years ahead of me than those behind me, therefore forgive my impatience. I would like to see at least three women elected as president. There are several countries holding elections in the coming years, it is not impossible. I would like to see a resolution of at least three of the ongoing hostilities on the continent, and other potential conflicts prevented through the participation of women in the peace and security architecture. I would also want to see women included in the African Continental Free Trade Area as this also gives impetus to the African Union Decade on Economic and Financial Inclusion of Women 2020- 2030”, she noted.

While presenting the outcomes of the 2nd Men’s Conference that was preceded by consultative meetings by civil society leaders, male youth leaders, male leaders in business and private sector, male leaders of the academia, religious and traditional leaders who took stock of progress in the implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration on Positive masculinity, and made far-reaching recommendations and commitment as agents of change to lead the fight against violence against women and girls, H.E. Bineta Diop, African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security emphasized the importance of supporting the campaign on the elimination of violence against women and girls and its importance in realizing the Aspirations of Agenda 2063; and other normative frameworks including, the [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](#) (Maputo Protocol), the [Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa](#) (SDGEA), the [AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment](#); the [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the Continental Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security.

Involving and engaging men in the fight to end violence against women and girls has proven to be a catalyst in the ending of the vice. The partnership is not only to see men end physical violence in spaces such as homes and workplaces, but also curb non-physical aggression meted on women and girls in the digital spaces where cyber-bullying and harassment are on the rise.