

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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The African Union conducts a technical In-country Advocacy Mission in Burundi to support the ratification of the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa

The African Union Commission (AUC) Women, Youth and Gender Directorate together with the Gender, Peace and Security Programme has concluded a technical visit to Burundi as part of the advocacy mission to assist AU member states in the ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa also popularly known as Maputo Protocol.

The Mission was comprised of the following: Ms Nadia Roguiai, Coordinator of the Gender, Peace and Security Programme, Ms Ilwad Elmi Mohamed, Senior Policy Officer on Women's Right, Ms Caroline Coletta Akinyi Agendo representative of the Solidarity for African Women's Right Network (SOAWR) and Ms Chereye Saleh Kedellaye, Associate Programme Officer, Peace, and Security Officer. The mission was also conducted with the support and commitment of H.E Mr Sghair M'Bareck Said, the Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region and Head of the AU Liaison Office in Burundi.

Key amongst the Mission's engagements were courtesy calls on Hon. Emerence Bucumi, the President of the National Women's Forum, Ms Flaviana Charles, Director of Gender, Women and Children Program at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Mr Pontien Hatungimana, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights, and Gender, Mr Sixte Vigny Nimuraba, the President of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, Ms Clara Anyangwe, the UN Women Representative, Burundi and Mr Bamazi Kossi Tchaa, Senior Human Rights Adviser for the UN Resident Coordinator's Office.

In his brief remarks, Mr Tchaa said, it is entirely possible to work together with the UN Women to push for the ratification of the Maputo Protocol, he also pledged his support and commitment towards ratification of the Protocol.

The Mission also met with 7 civil society organizations: CAFOB, Reseau Femmes et Paix, AFRABU, COCAFEM/GL, ACOPA-Burundi, PEFE and ABA. According to the Civil Society Organizations, "it would be helpful to translate the Protocol into the local language in order to reach the wider population and also think about creating a coalition among ourselves to lobby the ministry in charge."

Mr Hatungimana, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights, and Gender, in his remarks stated that, "it is important to make the Protocol known especially to Parliamentarians, and to this end, capacity-building workshops and exchange of experience with neighbouring countries that have all ratified would be welcome". In her remarks, Hon. Emerence Bucumi emphasised this observation saying, "Burundi has already adopted multiple instruments that protect the rights of women and girls. We signed the Protocol in 2003 and many of its provisions are part of the national legislation. It is quite possible to achieve the ratification of this protocol; we just need to make it known."

Ms Ilwad Elmi Mohamed, the Senior Policy Officer on Women's Rights, in her response to this call, stated that "We take note of the demand of capacity-building workshops and we will support Burundi in its efforts as we would like to see Burundi among the Member States that have ratified the Protocol. Especially, before celebrating twenty (20) years of the Protocol in July 2023."

Outcomes from these calls consolidated the political will and the overall commitment and willingness of the government of Burundi in ensuring that they are part of the member states that have ratified the protocol.

The Maputo Protocol remains the most comprehensive and progressive instrument on women's rights – laying out provisions for widows, the elderly, women with disabilities and women in distress. It places a responsibility on the African States to eliminate discrimination against women and promote their rights by introducing and effectively implementing measures. So far, 43 countries have ratified the protocol. We have an outstanding of 12 Member States (Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan) who are yet to ratify the Protocol.

Relatedly, the African Union Commission adopted the African Union Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2018-2028) which identified the domestication and enforcement of the provisions of the Maputo Protocol as a key priority, giving rise to the 'All for Maputo Protocol Programme (AMPP)'. It sets among its objective the universal ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Maputo Protocol by all AU Member States.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Ms. Priscilla Mawuena Adjeidu, Communications Officer, AUC Women, Gender and Youth Directorate: AdjeiduP@africa-union.org

Ms. Ilwad Elmi Mohamed, Senior Policy Officer Women's Right, AUC Women, Gender and Youth Directorate: ELMIMOHAMEDI@africa-union.org

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org | **Web:** www.au.int | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | **Follow Us:** [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)

African Union Headquarters P.O. Box 3243, Roosevelt Street W21K19, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[au.int](http://www.au.int)

Tel: +251 (0) 11 551 77 00 **Fax:** +251 (0) 11 551 78 44