



## **Africa Pre-Commission on the Status of Women's Seventieth Session (CSW70) Ministerial Consultative Meeting on the theme**

“Promoting and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and addressing structural barriers”

### **KEY MESSAGES AND STRATEGIES FOR CSW70 (DRAFT)**

We, African Union (AU) Ministers in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs, meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025, in Addis Ababa, capital of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in preparation for the seventieth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 70) on the priority theme: **“Promoting and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices addressing structural barriers”**, with a view to adopt a consensual Common Africa Position (CAP) to guide the African Group negotiations on the CSW70 agreed conclusions on strategies and actions to be implemented by all Member States to ensure African women and girls access to justice through available, effective and gender responsive justice institutions.

The content of this CAP stems from our conviction that access to justice is both a *legal* and *practical necessity* for the realisation of women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa. It is in line with **Aspiration 3** of the African Union Agenda 2063 (2015), which focuses on a continent characterised by good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, the rule of law and with **Aspiration 6**, which sets clear goals for full gender equality, ending discrimination and violence, equal economic rights, increased access to resources, political parity and quality services.

**Informed** by recommendations made by regional groups during the Africa preparatory meeting to the CSW70 held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 24-25 November 2025.

**Recalling** the commitments made by AU Member States in African and global normative frameworks, relating to women's rights and women's access to justice.

**Concerned by** the multiple and persistent structural, economic, social, financial, cultural and environmental challenges faced by women and girls in accessing justice and the existence of discriminatory laws that violate the rights of women and girls.

**Taking note of** the measures implemented by AU Member States to address those challenges and facilitate women and girls' access to justice.

**Cognisant** of the agreed conclusions and political declarations on women's access to justice made in previous sessions of CSW.

**Reiterating** provisions of the African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028, which aim to enhance women's access to justice, by

- Maximising opportunities,
- Addressing issues of violence against women,
- Implementing laws and policies that promote their participation in political and economic activities.

**Aware and concerned** by the resurgence of conflicts especially armed conflicts, as well as the emergence of new threats posed by social, environmental and technological advances that promote online violence, which hinders women's access to justice.

**Cognisant** that women and girls living in vulnerable situations, including those with disabilities, living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, in extreme poverty, migrants, refugees, IDPs and minorities face additional challenges in accessing justice.

**Commending** the AU for its commitment to the principle of gender parity in line with the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, establishing the Specialised Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and other specialised technical committees, which offer important platforms for coordination, learning and strategy development to address the imperative of women's access to justice.

**We commit to:**

**I-      *On normative and legal frameworks***

- a) Consider ratifying or acceding to AU and international human rights treaties, if they have not yet done so, and consider reviewing any reservations and take measures for the domestication and effective implementation of ratified treaties.
- b) Consider signing ratifying and domesticating the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls.
- c) Take all measures necessary to implement commitments and obligations to respect, protect and promote women and girls' rights and ensure that every woman and girl, irrespective of their status or situation, can seek and obtain an effective remedy from competent, independent and impartial justice institutions when those rights are violated.
- d) Engage with cultural and religious institutions with a view to align customary laws with national, regional and international human rights frameworks in abolishing harmful

practices, including child marriage, female genital mutilation and in adjudicating property rights, land and inheritance issues as applicable.

e) Recommit to resolution CSW60/2 on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS to ensure access to justice for all women and girls living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

f) Develop national strategies that combine legal reform with social norm change, including public education campaigns especially targeted at men and boys as well as religious and customary leaders.

g) Integrate gender-responsive provisions, which respond to women and girls' needs, interests and perspectives, into national justice sector reforms.

h) Review and repeal gender discriminatory laws.

i) Ensure meaningful participation of women and girls in legal reforms and justice sector.

j) Develop and enforce laws and policies to promote women's rights and safeguard women and girls from violence, threats of violence and intimidation.

k) Enact and enforce laws that protect witnesses

## **II- Support for women and girls' victims of rights violations**

a) Scale up and institutionalise legal aid for women and girls victims of rights violations, including those living in extreme poverty, living with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS and those with disabilities.

b) Launch effective nationwide awareness campaigns to educate women and girls about their rights and available legal remedies and procedures, using accessible formats and languages.

c) Establish and expand safe spaces, shelters, one stop centres and psychosocial services, peer support and advocacy services for victims of gender-based violence and survivors of GBV.

d) Strengthen partnership and support to women organisations and networks that offer support, including legal and advocacy services for victims.

e) Promote alternative dispute resolution that is victim-centred and aligned with legal and constitutional protections.

f) Create or strengthen dedicated funds for victims of rights violation to cater for immediate needs, legal services and financial support.

g) Ensure women and girls' access to justice during disasters, conflicts, especially armed conflicts, post-conflict settings and humanitarian contexts through effective implementation of transitional justice mechanisms.

- h) Ensure the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities and older women by developing and enforcing disability-responsive justice measures and facilities.

### **III- Capacity of the justice system**

- a) Institutionalise regular pre-service and professional development training for personnel in the justice system, including judges, magistrates, investigators, forensic staff, prosecutors, correctional service providers, social and probation workers, customary and traditional courts actors, and those involved in national reconciliation processes on women's rights and their responsibilities to ensure women and girls effective access to justice.
- b) Promote and support initiatives that aim to increase women's representation and leadership in justice sector institutions, including courts, police and oversight bodies.
- c)
- d) Remove procedural barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing courts or justice mechanisms.
- e) Strengthen the justice sector including through adoption of gender responsive budgeting to ensure adequate financial, technical and other resources.
- f) Encourage the adoption of the good practices and innovations by Member States, including the specialised courts on violence against women and girls, gender units, social workers, para-legal, mobile and e- courts.
- g) Strengthen national, regional and international partnership to support women and girls' access to justice, including capacity development, technology transfers and financial support.

### **IV- Independent oversight and monitoring bodies**

- a) Establish or strengthen national human rights institutions to regularly monitor the justice system as applicable, investigate complaints and address impunity, corruption and enforce decisions related to women and girls' rights at all levels without interference.
- b) Deploy digital case management systems that track case progress, backlog with a view to ensure expedited justice delivery and outcomes on access to justice.
- c) In collaboration with national, regional and international partners, develop and adequately resource systems to collect and analyse sex, age, geographical location, disabilities status, marital status, refugee and Internally Displaced Persons, socio-economic status disaggregated data on access to justice, case outcomes and barriers faced by women and girls, including violence related to stigma and discrimination.

- d) Provide support to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Regional Judicial, Human Rights Mechanisms, to enhance their effectiveness and promote women and girls access to justice through these institutions.

**Done in Addis Ababa 26/11/2025**