

AU-CEVAWG CONTINENTAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

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1. THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE: STAGNATION VS. URGENCY

One year after the historic adoption of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU-CEVAWG) in February 2025, the continent finds itself in a period of "normative hibernation." While the Convention was hailed as the first legally binding instrument dedicated exclusively to eradicating violence against women and girls (VAWG), the movement from political signature to legal enforcement has been alarmingly slow.

- **Total Signatures:** 8 Member States (Less than 15% of the AU).
 - **Total Ratifications:** 0.
- **Threshold for Entry into Force:** 15 Ratifications.
- **Human Cost of Delay:** Nearly 36.6% of African women continue to experience physical or sexual violence, with femicide rates remaining among the highest globally.

2. KEY CHALLENGES TO RATIFICATION

Evidence from regional strategy sessions in Dakar and Banjul indicates three primary barriers preventing States from depositing their instruments of ratification:

- **Definitional Gaps:** Concerns from some Member States and Human

Rights Commissions regarding "evasive language" that fails to explicitly name harms such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Child Marriage, and Marital Rape.

- **Institutional Inertia:** A lack of technical capacity within national Ministries of Justice to conduct the necessary constitutional alignment audits.
- **The "Negotiation Trap":** Misguided calls to reopen the Convention for text revisions, which risks the dilution of hard-won rights and sets a dangerous precedent for older instruments like the Maputo Protocol.

3. TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS OF THE CONVENTION

The AU-CEVAWG is designed to be the "Specialized Implementation Engine" that the continent has lacked for decades. Unlike previous broad human rights treaties, it introduces specific administrative mandates:

- **Article 12 (Access to Justice):** Mandates the institutionalization of Specialized Courts and gender-sensitive judicial divisions to move VAWG cases out of over-burdened general court systems.
- **Article 13 (Forensic Services):** Obligates States to provide free,

standardized forensic medical services to improve evidence collection and conviction rates.

- **Article 15 (The Safeguard Clause):** Prevents any "rollback" of rights by mandating that the highest standard of protection (whether from national law or the Maputo Protocol) must always prevail over any ambiguity in the Convention.
- **Technology-Facilitated Violence:** It is the first continental instrument to provide a legal basis for prosecuting cyber-violence, digital harassment, and "sextortion."

4. STRATEGIC ROADMAP FOR 2026

To move the continent toward the 15-ratification threshold by October 2026, the Pan-African Feminist Solidarity (PAFSO) Network and its partners have activated the following roadmap:

- **High-Level Advocacy:** Targeted engagement with Attorneys-General and Ministers of Justice to "shed bright light" on the technical utility of the Convention.

- **Zero Reservations Campaign:** Demanding that States ratify the Convention in its entirety to preserve the integrity of the non-regression principle found in Article 15.
 - **Youth-Led Monitoring:** Institutionalizing youth leadership (via GIMAC and PAFSO) to track and report on digital violence and emerging harms.
 - **Harmonized Domestication:** Providing States with "Model Legislative Clauses" to ensure that national laws bridge the Convention's textual gaps using Maputo Protocol definitions.

5. CONCLUSION: FROM POLICY TO POWER

The AU-CEVAWG represents the "Feminist Promise of Justice." However, a treaty that has not entered into force is merely a voluntary promise. The priority for 2026 is to transform this policy into power by securing the first 15 ratifications. The architecture of freedom is ready; it now requires the collective resolve of African States to move these instruments from paper into the lived realities of women and girls.

Compiled by: Secretariat, Pan-African Feminist Solidarity (PAFSO) Network

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