PAN-AFRICAN YOUTH STATEMENT

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW71) Africa Pre-CSW71 Ministerial Segment



We, young women and young people from 39 African countries, including students, activists, workers, entrepreneurs, refugees, young mothers, rural youth and young people with disabilities, who took part in the “Pre-CSW71 Pan-African Youth Consultations: Towards the Common African Position” convened by the African Union Women, Gender and Youth Directorate and Nalafem (Nala Feminist Collective), through a live consultation on 12 October 2026 with 208 participants and a survey answered by 184 young people in English, French, Arabic and Portuguese;

Noting the findings and recommendations of the Pan-African CSW71 Youth Report;

Recalling Agenda 2063, the Maputo Protocol, the African Youth Charter, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the African Union Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls;

Reaffirming the African Union – Africa Young Women Beijing+25 Manifesto of 2020, shaped by more than 1,500 young women from 44 countries, and its call that “it’s time to co-lead now”;

Welcoming the commitment made by Member States in the CSW70 agreed conclusions in March 2026 to review and repeal laws that discriminate against women and girls;

Understanding that economic exclusion and violence are one problem and not two, with 82.6% of us naming economic challenges, 66.8% naming violence and 52.2% naming both among the greatest challenges young women face;

Acknowledging that collateral rules, customary tenure and discriminatory laws lock young women out of credit and land, that women-led businesses in Africa face a financing gap of USD 42 billion, and that sexual coercion acts as a gatekeeper to work;

Concerned that cuts in international funding have stopped women’s and youth programmes overnight, and that only one in four countries comprehensively tracks public spending on gender equality;

Alarmed that Africa recorded the highest number of women and girls killed by intimate partners or family members of any region in 2023, and that femicide is not yet named as a priority in any Common African Position;

Recognising that technology offers young women a route to income while exposing us to sextortion, deepfakes and online abuse;

Stressing that conflict, displacement and insecurity are too often siloed as emerging risks, although for many young women they are the condition that shapes every other priority;

Deeply concerned that UN-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence rose sharply between 2024 and 2025, and that young women in conflict face sexual violence, abduction, trafficking and recruitment by armed groups while perpetrators go unpunished;

Rejecting tokenism, as 75.5% of us named not being invited, or not being heard, among the main barriers to our participation in decisions;

Affirming that young people trust youth-led monitoring more than government self-reporting, with 60.3% of us calling for youth representatives in monitoring bodies and only 13.6% choosing government progress reports;

HEREBY CALL ON AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING COMMITMENTS IN THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITION FOR CSW71:

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

1. Ratify ILO Convention 190 by 2030 where not yet ratified, and ensure its full implementation; prohibit and sanction sexual coercion in recruitment and employment; protect young women from dismissal or sanction for pregnancy or maternity; extend social protection to young women in informal work; and guarantee paid internships;
2. Measure economic empowerment programmes by the income, assets and decent work young women gain, not by the number of women trained, and link every training programme to affordable childcare and decent, secure employment;

FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

3. Establish collateral-free finance for young women and youth-led organisations, and develop targeted financing, public procurement and digital-innovation opportunities for enterprises owned by young women, including in AI;
4. Channel climate and disaster-risk finance directly to women-led and youth-led organisations through long-term core funding, and make adaptation finance reachable without land title or collateral;
5. Create national and continental mechanisms to identify youth-led solutions from the start and scale them across borders, with technical support, partnerships and access to regional markets;

CRIMINALISING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

6. Declare femicide and sexual violence a national and regional emergency, and adopt a costed national prevention and response plan developed with young women and survivor-led organisations;
7. Reform police and justice systems with survivors, fund and pay women-led response networks that connect survivors to shelter, care and legal aid, and vet all violence-response personnel;
8. Eliminate child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, with enforcement that reaches communities where they are practised in secret, and

protect all children from child marriage and its associated sexual exploitation and abuse;

DIGITAL JUSTICE

9 Develop and adopt a supplementary protocol to the African Union Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls establishing enforceable continental standards on technology-facilitated violence, including non-consensual intimate images and deepfakes, sextortion, and online threats, with clear duties for digital platforms to prevent harm, act on reports, preserve evidence and cooperate with lawful investigations, while protecting freedom of expression and survivors' rights;

10 Prohibit in law arbitrary internet shutdowns and restrictions, publish the legal basis and duration of every restriction, and ensure affordable, safe and accessible connectivity for rural, refugee, stateless and displaced young women and young women with disabilities;

CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

11 Recognise women, peace and security as a standing priority of the Common African Position, and ensure that National Action Plans bridge the women, peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas;

12 Protect young women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence, abduction, trafficking and recruitment by armed groups, and end impunity by investigating and prosecuting perpetrators and publishing aggregate numbers of cases investigated, prosecuted and resulting in convictions, while protecting survivors' confidentiality and safety;

13 Ratify and domesticate the Kampala Convention; issue identity documents and recognise the right of refugee and displaced youth to work and access financial services; safeguard access to and continuity of education for young women and girls affected by armed conflict, insecurity and displacement; and guarantee psychosocial support and sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian settings, paying particular attention to young women and girls with disabilities, from ethnic minority communities, internally displaced or returning to their communities;

14 Guarantee young women's participation in peace negotiations, mediation and recovery, with documentation of their contribution, and allocate a published share of peace and security spending to local peacebuilding led by young women;

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND PROTECTION

15 By 2030, revise, amend or repeal laws that deny women equal rights to inherit, to own land, to pass their nationality to their children, or to borrow and run a business without a husband's consent, and ensure equal protection of women's

land and property rights under customary and civil law, including through joint land titling;

16 Protect young women activists, leaders, politicians and human rights defenders from intimidation, arbitrary arrest, detention and election-related violence; protect the right to peaceful protest and assembly and investigate police violence against youth; ensure the prompt release of those detained solely for exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and civic engagement; and review and repeal laws that unduly restrict civic space and penalise youth and women's organising;

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

17 Guarantee free, safe, quality secondary education for every girl and the right of pregnant girls and young mothers to return to school, with support for fees, transport and tax-free menstrual products;

18 Protect domestic funding for maternal, sexual and reproductive health in line with the Abuja Declaration; provide youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information, including contraception, in schools, health facilities and humanitarian settings, remove legal and policy barriers, including parental or spousal consent requirements that unduly restrict access to essential services; ensure access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment; and finance mental health services co-designed with young women;

INTERGENERATIONAL CO-LEADERSHIP

19 Institutionalise intergenerational co-leadership by enforcing quotas for young women within women's and youth quotas, with target representation of at least 35% of young people aged 15–35, half of them young women, in national delegations and oversight bodies, including every national CSW delegation and the Africa Group's negotiating team, and fully resource youth participation, including transport, interpretation, accessibility and visas;

20 Establish and fund the annual youth consultation as a standing mechanism for every Common African Position, and a public, youth-led tracker of commitments, budgets and outcomes, disaggregated by age and sex.

We, for our part, commit to take this position to our communities and explain it in our own languages; to bring evidence, stories and solutions at every stage between now and New York; and to stand with African negotiators who defend this language at the Commission.

We have been consulted many times. Now we ask to be funded, protected and counted.

Endorsed by participants through a live vote on 12 October 2026, with 95% in favour and 5% abstaining.