



African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum

NGO Observer Status No. 372

Statement in response to the activity report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa

81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

17 October- 6 November 2024, Kololi, The Gambia

Item 5: Activity Reports of the Members of the Commission & Special Mechanism

Honourable Chairperson and Commissioners,

The African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) welcomes this opportunity to make a statement on the status of women in Africa. APCOF is a not-for-profit Trust based in Cape Town, South Africa, working on police accountability and governance in Africa.

APCOF commends the work that the Special Rapporteur has already done on promoting the rights of women, particularly within the field of peacekeeping.ⁱ This is important as women are disproportionately affected by conflict.ⁱⁱ Simultaneously women bring unique perspectives in conflict prevention, especially in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and in rebuilding communities.ⁱⁱⁱ The recent rise in

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conflict has however, indicated the need for further interventions that focus on the importance of gender equality while promoting the significance of female police officers in peacekeeping missions.

While gender equality is central to Africa's development and to fostering sustainable peace, of particular importance is the active participation and leadership of women police officers. This is partially due to the nature of police work, with the international legal framework pertaining to policing calling for the minimum use of force.^{iv} Police officers have also become the first responders to modern peacekeeping challenges, often playing an essential role in restoring peace in post-crisis settings.^v In particular, women police officers play a crucial role in building trust in communities, by representing the most vulnerable members of society.^{vi} Police operations that demonstrate a commitment to substantive gender equality further promote inclusivity while strengthening compliance with human rights.^{vii}

Given that gender inequality and GBV undermine peace,^{viii} it is essential to focus on fostering substantive gender equality in policing and to include women police officers in peace-keeping operations. The importance of gender equality and gender mainstreaming is recognised in a number of key instruments including the Maputo Protocol, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, Agenda 2063 and the Guidelines on Implementing the Common Standards for Policing for Eastern Africa.

We therefore call on the African Commission to:

- Encourage States to ensure that women police officers are included in peacekeeping processes and missions and to ensure that they are given room to make meaningful contributions;
- Urge states that have ratified the Maputo Protocol to give effect to Article 8 of the Protocol through investing in gender-sensitive training for law enforcement organs and ensuring that women are equally represented in police organisations;
- Encourage States to collaborate and cooperate with civil society organisations to monitor and improve gender equality training for law enforcement;
- Encourage East African States to operationalise the Guidelines on implementing the Common Standards for Policing for Eastern Africa through a Gender Lens.

Submitted on behalf of APCOF by

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ⁱ African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa. "Intersession Activity Report by Honourable Vice-Chair Janet Ramtoulie Sallah-Njie", presented at the ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights 14th May-3rd June 2024 <<https://achpr.au.int/en/intersession-activity-reports/rights-women-africa>> page 18.

ⁱⁱ African Union (2023) "Women play significant roles in peacebuilding efforts bringing communities together" <<https://au.int/fr/node/43414>> .

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^{iv} Security Workstream (2024) "The Role of Police in Preventing Mass Human Rights Violations" page 11; Geneva Centre for Security Policy (2024) "Ideas Notes 2030: Strategic Reflections on the Future of UN Policing" <https://dam.gcsp.ch/files/doc/ideas-notes-2030?_gl=1*es8zzn*_ga*NTE2NDMzNTIxLjE3MTc0NzYxMDA.*_ga_Z66DSTVXTJ*MTcxNzQ3NjEwMC4xLjAuMTcxNzQ3NjEwMC42MC4wLjA.>> page 45.

^v Angelo Kevin Brown (19 Sep 2022): The impact and experience of female police officers in peacekeeping missions: A qualitative exploration, International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice, DOI: 10.1080/01924036.2022.2125023; Geneva Centre for Security Policy (2024) "Ideas Notes 2030" page 45.

^v L Denny (2019) "Policing and gender" DCAF <<https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/GSToolkitTool-2%20EN%20FINAL0.pdf>> (accessed 08/05/2024).

^{vi} United Nations (2023) "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace" Summit of the Future: "Conflicts also exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination. Misogyny, offline and online, fuels gender-based and sexual violence in all parts of the world, but in conflict settings the added challenges of institutional weakness, impunity and the spread of arms predominantly borne by men massively aggravate the risks." <<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf>> Page 12

^{vii} L Denny (2019) "Policing and gender" DCAF <<https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/GSToolkitTool-2%20EN%20FINAL0.pdf>> (accessed 08/05/2024).

^{viii} United Nations (2023) "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace" Summit of the Future: "Conflicts also exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination. Misogyny, offline and online, fuels gender-based and sexual violence in all parts of the world, but in conflict settings the added challenges of institutional weakness, impunity and the spread of arms predominantly borne by men massively aggravate the risks." <<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf>> Page 13;

Geneva Centre for Security Policy (2024) "Ideas Notes 2030" page 45.