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Africa Women's Day: More African governments must ratify Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa

In advance of the 43rd anniversary of Africa Women's Day on Sunday, Amnesty International today called on African governments that have not yet done so to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Protocol) quickly and without reservations.

The Protocol, adopted on 11 July 2003 by the African Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government has to date received only 11 ratifications. Fifteen ratifications are required for the Protocol to enter into force. The AU Assembly at its 2nd Summit in 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique expressed a commitment to achieve a speedy and regional wide ratification of the Protocol.

Amnesty International is concerned that more than two years after its adoption, the Protocol has not received sufficient number of ratifications for it to enter into force. The current ratification status is inconsistent with the AU frequently expressed commitment to ensure a quick and full ratification of the Protocol. Member states of the AU must give the Protocol the necessary recognition that it deserves if they are to show that they are truly committed to ensuring the overall well-being of women.

Amnesty International urged African governments to demonstrate their expressed commitment to make women's human rights a reality in their country by ratifying the Protocol quickly.

Background

The AU Assembly adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique. The Protocol guarantees a wide range of women's civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. These rights include the right to life, integrity and security of person; protection from harmful traditional practices; prohibition of discrimination and protection of women in armed conflict. The Protocol also guarantees the right to health and reproductive rights of women and access to justice, among others.

Amnesty International has welcomed the adoption of the Protocol as a significant step in the efforts to increase the promotion and protection of women's human rights in Africa, and has campaigned for the ratification of the Protocol by all the 53 member states of the AU. As of today, however, the Protocol has been ratified only by: Comoros, Djibouti, Libya, Lesotho, Mali, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Senegal. 27 other African states have signed but not ratified the Protocol.