African Union

AU

MUNUC 38

Dear delegates,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Benjamin Wu, and it is both a pleasure and a privilege to serve as your Chair for the African Union at MUNUC 38. I am in my fourth year at the University of Chicago, where I pursue an interdisciplinary course of study in biochemistry, economics, global studies, and human rights. My academic journey is deeply informed by a commitment to both empirical analysis and ethical inquiry, and I strive to bring this same balance of rigor and compassion to Model UN.

Beyond the classroom, I conduct biomedical research at the Knapp Center for Biomedical Discovery, exploring the interaction between intestinal microbiota and the human immune system, with a focus on HSP 25. I also serve as a member of Alpha Kappa Psi, the world's oldest professional business fraternity, and compete as an épéeist on the UChicago Fencing Team. Outside of academics, you'll find me chasing sunsets on my motorcycle, building Star Wars LEGO sets, or experimenting with bold new recipes in the kitchen. Lastly, an interesting fact about me is that prior to my undergraduate studies at the University of Chicago, I served as a combat aviator in the United States Marine Corps for five years.

Now, let's turn our attention to the committee at hand. The African Union is a forum where questions of equity, resilience, and sovereignty come into sharp focus. Our committee will confront two vital issues that sit at the crossroads of structural reform and global sustainability: the representation of women in politics, and drought and desertification. These are not abstract

policy concerns; they are lived realities that shape the political, economic, and environmental futures of nations across the continent. The first topic calls us to question the systems that have historically marginalized women's voices in governance and to explore strategies for inclusive political participation that transcends tokenism. The second demands that we reimagine how African states can assert agency in addressing environmental degradation, driven not only by climate change, but also by the legacies of colonial land management and uneven development. Together, these topics challenge us to think critically about power, justice, and sustainability.

As delegates, I urge you to approach this committee with empathy, insight, and a collaborative mindset. The challenges we face, whether advancing gender parity in political systems or addressing the accelerating impacts of drought and desertification, require more than just technical solutions; they demand moral imagination and collective resolve. Whether you're advocating for institutional reforms that amplify women's voices or drafting multilateral frameworks to combat ecological crises, know that your voice matters. Every policy you propose, every amendment you negotiate, and every speech you deliver is a contribution to a broader vision of equity and resilience. This is your opportunity not only to represent nations, but to reimagine what they can become when guided by inclusion, sustainability, and shared purpose.

Finally, please don't hesitate to reach out before or during the conference with any questions or simply to connect. I'm here to support you every step of the way. I look forward to the ambitious, thoughtful, and passionate debate you will bring to the table. Welcome to MUNUC 38, and welcome to the African Union.

With great anticipation and high hope,

Jia (Benjamin) Yuan Wu | 邬嘉元

Chair, African Union

MUNUC 38 | University of Chicago

benjaminwu007@uchicago.edu

Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 38 and to the African Union committee! My name is Zoe Savala and I am so excited to be one of your chairs this year.

I participated in MUN conferences all throughout high school, but this is only my second year with MUNUC. I cannot wait to see how all of you interact with the complex topics my co-chair and I have set up for you to discuss. Whether this is your first conference or if you have been to several conferences, I encourage you to be willing to listen to diverse perspectives, be open to collaborating with others, and remember to have fun.

A little more about myself: I am currently a second-year at UChicago considering a double major in economics and global studies. I am from Nairobi, Kenya, and I have been doing model UN since high school. Apart from MUNUC, I am also involved with the Chicago Debate Society on campus. In my spare time I like to bake and read, and I can often be found lounging on the quad and enjoying the sun when the weather is nice. Fun fact: at my first MUN conference I forgot the delegation I was representing so the chair had to call me "hot pink hairclip girl" to get my attention and that was how people referred to me for the rest of the conference.

I know that this background guide seems long and daunting, but I hope that you all take some time to go through it because it will set you up to participate in the committee and have an enjoyable experience at the conference. I also want to emphasize the importance of respect in this committee for both the other delegates and for the topics we shall discuss which affect real people.

Please feel free to reach out by email if you have any questions!

Best,

Zoe Savala

zmsavala@uchicago.edu

Co-Chair

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

The African Union (AU), a successor to the Organisation of African Unity, was formed in 2002 as a manifestation of an African continent that was free, united, and in control of its own future.[1] At its inception, the AU was made up of 53 countries; however, since then two countries have joined, bringing the total number of members up to 55. Over the years, the AU has gradually transitioned from focusing predominantly on liberation movements to become a multi-issue organisation. Today the AU concerns itself primarily with increasing cooperation and integration between African countries in order to drive economic growth and development across the continent.[2]

The main policy and decision-making organ of the AU is the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which plays a crucial role in determining what the organisation should focus on, deciding which policies to adopt, and monitoring how decisions are implemented in member states.[3] The organization has a long track record of successes, including several peacekeeping missions in countries such as the Central African Republic and Sudan, setting up the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to promote multilateral trade on the continent, and the launch of Agenda 2063—an initiative that sets out a series of projects meant to transform the continent into a competitive global force within 50 years.[4]

In addition to trade, peace, and development, the African Union handles judicial, legal, and human rights matters, and is also working towards creating independent financial institutions

---

[1] African Union, "About the African Union," au.int (African Union, 2019), https://au.int/en/overview.
[2] Ilias Luursema, "The African Union: Achievements, Challenges, & the Future of Africa," The Collector, February 19, 2023, https://www.thecollector.com/african-union.
[3] African Union, "The Assembly | African Union," au.int (African Union), accessed June 6, 2025, https://au.int/en/assembly.
[4] Ilias Luursema. "The African Union."

to bring their manifestation of an independent Africa to life. As a direct result of the grand vision the African Union has for the continent, the organisation has an ever-growing list of aims and objectives, as evidenced by the numerous Key Programme Areas and Commission Departments that tackle specific issues. Among these is the political representation of women through the Gender Equality and Development program, and drought and desertification through the Agricultural Development program.[5,6]

---

[5] African Union, "Gender Equality & Development | African Union," au.int (African Union), accessed June 7, 2025, https://au.int/en/gender-equality-development.
[6] African Union, "Agricultural Development | African Union," au.int (African Union), accessed June 5, 2025, https://au.int/en/agricultural-development.

TOPIC A: DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION

Statement of the Problem

Drought and **desertification** are two of the most pressing environmental challenges confronting Africa today. While often conflated, these phenomena are distinct in their mechanics yet interlinked in their consequences: drought is a temporary reduction in water availability due to below-average precipitation, whereas desertification is the long-term degradation of land in dry areas, primarily caused by human activities and climatic variations.[7] Africa is home to over one-third of the world's arid lands, and as of 2023, more than 45% of the continent's landmass is impacted by desertification.[8] These effects are particularly acute in regions such as the **Sahel** (immediately south of the Sahara), the Horn of Africa, and parts of southern Africa.[9]

These environmental processes are not merely ecological in scope: they are deeply intertwined with socio-political stability, economic development, and human survival. For a continent where the majority of the population depends on rain-fed agriculture, diminishing water security and the depletion of fertile land pose existential threats to food systems and public health.[10] According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), over 485 million people in Africa are directly affected by dryland degradation, and nearly 65% of productive land is degraded to varying extents.[11]

---

[7] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, "Desertification," UNCCD, https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/desertification/overview.
[8] FAO, *State of the World's Land and Water Resources*, Rome: FAO, 2021, https://www.fao.org/3/cb9910en/cb9910en.pdf.
[9] UN Environment Programme, Southern Africa: Leveraging the land, water and energy nexus in SADC, https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-05/220418%20UNCCD%20GLO%20SADC%20thematic%20report-lores.pdf.
[10] International Fund for Agricultural Development, "Dry planet: drought and desertification, region by region," IFAD, 2022, https://www.ifad.org/en/w/explainers/dry-planet-drought-and-desertification-region-by-region.
[11] ELD Initiative and UNEP. *The Economics of Land Degradation in Africa: Benefits of Action Outweigh the Costs*. Bonn: ELD Initiative, 2015.

This former pond in Africa dried up due to drought.[12]

Climate Variability and Human Pressures

Africa's growing exposure to climate change is a principal accelerant of drought and desertification. UNCCD projects that average surface temperatures in Africa will rise faster than the global mean, increasing **evapotranspiration** and reducing soil moisture retention.[13] These

---

https://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/ELD_Filter_Tool/Publication_The_Economics_of_Land_Degradation_in_Africa__Reviewed_/ELD-unep-report_07_spec_72dpi.pdf.

[12] Isah Dahiru, *Gidan Dalla*, February 9, 2019, Online image, *Wikimedia Commons*, February 9, 2019, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gidan_Dalla_1.jpg.

[13] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, "Desertification," UNCCD, https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/desertification/overview.

warming trends not only dry out topsoil but also prolong arid spells, lengthening the recovery time between drought cycles. In addition, rainfall patterns have become more erratic, often characterized by shorter and more intense wet seasons that result in runoff rather than groundwater replenishment. This volatility undermines agricultural predictability and exacerbates vulnerability in subsistence farming systems, where over 90% of crops depend on direct rainfall.[14] These stressors compound the fragility of land ecosystems already suffering from overgrazing, **deforestation**, poorly managed irrigation, and unsustainable **monocropping** practices that further reduce soil fertility.[15]

The man-made drivers of land degradation are reinforced by demographic and urban pressures: Africa's population already exceeds 1.5 billion people and is projected to reach 2.4 billion by 2050, placing immense strain on land, water, and food systems.[16] Simultaneously, governance challenges such as ambiguous land tenure, poorly enforced environmental protections, and under-resourced **rural extension** services limit the capacity of communities to practice sustainable land management.[17] Despite regional and international efforts, including the AU's **Great Green Wall** initiative and the implementation of the UNCCD, most programs suffer from inconsistent funding, a lack of cross-sector coordination, and insufficient engagement with local stakeholders—factors which severely diminish their long-term effectiveness.[18]

---

[14] FAO, *State of the World's Land and Water Resources*, Rome: FAO, 2021, https://www.fao.org/3/cb9910en/cb9910en.pdf.
[15] UN Environment Programme, *Global Land Outlook – Africa Chapter*, 2022, https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-regional-reports.
[16] African Development Bank. "Africa Human Development: Tracking Africa's Progress in Figures." Accessed October 1, 2025. https://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications/tracking-africa%E2%80%99s-progress-in-figures/human-development.
[17] UUNCCD. *Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights: Data, Infrastructure, and Governance for Land Degradation Neutrality*. Bonn: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 2022. https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-03/UNCCD%20GLO%20WP%20tenure.pdf
[18] IPCC, *Sixth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2021*, Geneva: IPCC, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/.

Human Consequences and Regional Impacts

The human toll of drought and desertification is both severe and far-reaching. According to the UNCCD, Africa experienced 134 drought events between 2000 and 2019, with East Africa accounting for more than half of them.[19] These climatic shocks have disproportionately impacted rural communities, whose livelihoods depend heavily on rain-fed agriculture and livestock. The 2020–2023 drought in the Horn of Africa, the worst in four decades, affected an estimated 46 million people and displaced over 13.5 million. The drought also resulted in the death of 9.5 million livestock, causing approximately $1.5 billion in economic losses.[20] In Somalia alone, an estimated 43,000 excess deaths due to drought-induced famine occurred in 2022, half of whom were children under the age of five.[21]

These statistics reveal only part of a broader humanitarian crisis, as prolonged water scarcity undermines access to food, hygiene, and health services. Women, children, and the elderly are the most vulnerable. In the Sahel region, desertification has driven forced migration, disintegration of traditional **pastoral systems**, and escalating intercommunal tensions over shrinking natural resources.[22,23] The 2021 report from the UNCCD highlights that land degradation is not merely an ecological concern, but also a catalyst for rural poverty and youth

---

[19] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). *Drought in Numbers 2022: Restoration for Readiness and Resilience*. Bonn: UNCCD, 2022.
https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-06/Drought%20in%20Numbers%20%28English%29.pdf.
[20] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs & United Nations World Food Programme. "Over 9.5 Million Livestock Have Died in Horn of Africa Drought, Causing Over US$1.5 Billion in Losses." In *Horn of Africa Drought: Regional Humanitarian Overview*, 2022.
https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-06/Drought%20in%20Numbers%20%28English%29.pdf.
[21] UNICEF. "New Study Finds that 43,000 'Excess Deaths' May Have Occurred in 2022 from the Drought in Somalia." Press release, March 20, 2023.
https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/new-study-finds-43000-excess-deaths-may-have-occurred-2022-drought-somalia.
[22] The Right to Land and Other Natural Resources, Geneva Academy, 2017, https://www.geneva-academy.ch.
[23] "Climate, Conflict and Displacement in the Sahel." *PMC*, NLM. Accessed October 1, 2025.
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11978414/.

disenfranchisement; either of these may lead to increased recruitment by armed extremist groups.[24] Beyond the clear threat to food systems, desertification also directly undermines water security. Shrinking aquifers and depleted rivers intensify competition in agricultural and industrial sectors, raising the potential for localized conflict and regional instability.[25]

A solitary farmer walks across a vast expanse of cracked, sun-scorched earth in the Sahel.[26]

A Call for Continental Leadership and Resilience

The AU has the unique responsibility to coordinate a transformative response to the twin crises of drought and desertification. Although global agreements such as the UNCCD and the

---

[24] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *Dynamics of Violent Extremism in Africa: Conflict Ecosystems, Political Ecology and the Spread of the Proto-State*. 2022. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-02/Dynamics%20of%20VE%20in%20Africa%20-%20Report%20-%20English%20-%20Final_0.pdf.

[25] Gleick, Peter, and Charles Iceland. *Water, Security, and Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute, 2018. https://www.wri.org/research/water-security-and-conflict.

[26] Climate & Migration Coalition. "Research Round Up: Elite Perceptions and Local Dimensions." Climate & Migration Coalition. Accessed October 1, 2025. https://climatemigration.org.uk/research-round-up-elite-perceptions-and-local-dimensions.

Paris Agreement offer essential frameworks, only a strategy rooted in Africa's ecological, political, and cultural reality can address the urgency and complexity of these challenges. The AU's **Agenda 2063** explicitly prioritizes environmental sustainability and climate resilience, but progress toward these goals remains inconsistent. As of 2023, many flagship initiatives under Agenda 2063, including environmental targets, suffer from fragmented implementation, limited domestic financing, and weak policy enforcement.[27]

Bridging the gap between vision and impact will require a robust approach that integrates traditional ecological knowledge with modern scientific innovations. Such a solution may include establishing region-specific early warning systems for drought, investing in climate-resilient seed varieties, enhancing **agroforestry** and regenerative farming techniques, and scaling up community-led land restoration practices. These interventions must be underpinned by equitable governance, particularly in securing land tenure rights for women, **pastoralists**, and indigenous communities who are disproportionately affected by land degradation but often excluded from formal ownership and decision-making.[28] Without inclusive, transparent, and enforceable policies, restoration efforts risk being neither sustainable nor just. The ongoing spread of desertification not only threatens Africa's agricultural foundation but also may exacerbate intercommunal conflicts, reverse gains in regional integration, or undermine key pillars of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).[29] It is therefore both an

---

[27] Catholic Relief Services. *Landscape Restoration, Food Security and Global Climate Change Policy*. 2023. https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2023_9.11_landscape_restoration_food_security_and_cc_policy.pdf.
[28] TMG Land Governance Team. *Securing Land Tenure Rights to Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality: Four Years of Learning from Monitoring the Implementation of the UNCCD Land Tenure Decision in Six Countries*. Berlin: TMG Research, 2024. https://assets.ctfassets.net/rrirl83ijfda/7cXJXlXgRK0LfHLhYIym6S/1b4f0b99e23d25393f8c4f75bf050dcc/TMG_G SW_Report.pdf.
[29] UNHCR, "Sahel Emergency: Climate Displacement and Security," 2022, https://www.unhcr.org/sahel-emergency.html.

environmental and a humanitarian imperative to protect the rights to food, water, health, and livelihood in the face of intensifying ecological and socio-political pressures.
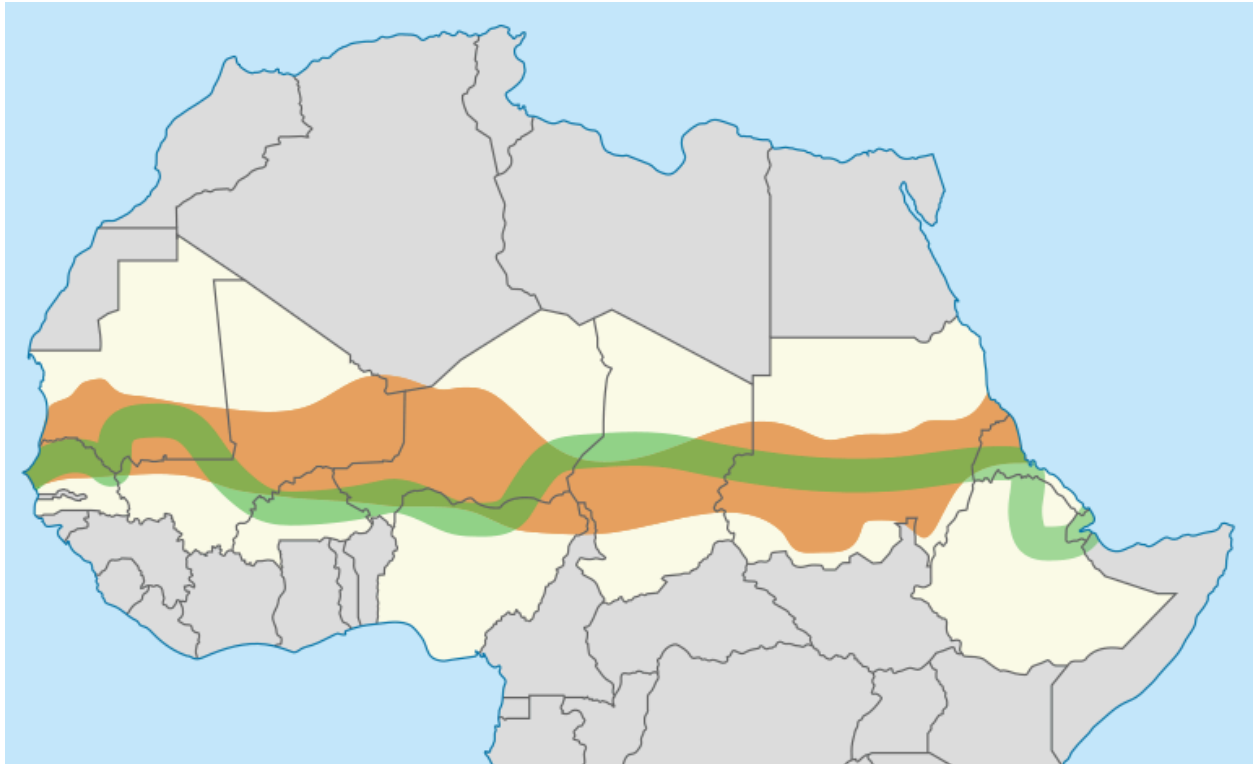
The proposed Great Green Wall is shown in green, the Sahel in brown, and participating countries in white.[30]

---

[30] Sevgart, *Great Green Wall Map*, January 6, 2021, Online image, *Wikimedia Commons*, January 6, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_green_wall_map.svg.

History of the Problem

Colonial Land Transformation and Ecological Disruption

While modern discourse on drought and desertification often focuses on climate change and population pressure, the foundations of land degradation in Africa are historically rooted in colonial transformations of land use. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European colonial powers imposed extractive agricultural models that privileged commodity production for export—such as cotton in Sudan, cocoa in Ghana, groundnuts in Senegal, and coffee in Kenya—over diversified subsistence agriculture that had long sustained local populations.[31] These systems disrupted local food security and undermined ecological balance by introducing continuous cropping and **monoculture** cultivation, which depleted soil nutrients and heightened erosion.[32]

In West Africa, French colonial policies promoted intensive peanut cultivation without fallow periods or crop rotation, leading to soil exhaustion and reduced vegetation cover.[33] The British similarly introduced large-scale mechanized agriculture in the Sudan Gezira Scheme and parts of East Africa, with irrigation methods that eventually caused salinization and reduced soil fertility.[34] These practices displaced traditional farming systems such as agroforestry and shifting cultivation, both of which had evolved to suit local ecologies and climate rhythms.[35]

---

[31] UNEP, *Global Land Outlook: Africa Chapter*, 2022, https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-regional-reports.
[32] FAO, *State of the World's Land and Water Resources* (Rome: FAO, 2021), https://www.fao.org/3/cb9910en/cb9910en.pdf.
[33] Michael Mortimore, *Roots in the African Dust: Sustaining the Drylands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 42–44. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560064.
[34] Sara Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 115–119. https://doi.org/10.2458/v1i1.21158.
[35] Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, *Environmental Histories of Europe and Africa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 87–91. https://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/massard-guilbaud-rodger.pdf.

Compounding these pressures were reforestation campaigns driven by colonial fears of "desert advance." In the Sahel, authorities introduced fast-growing **exotic species** such as *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, intended to halt land degradation. However, these species often had high water demands and low ecological compatibility, accelerating water depletion and crowding out native flora.[36] In effect, these projects, while well-intentioned on the surface, replicated the same top-down logic of control and "improvement" that marked the broader colonial approach to land management.

Pastoralist and nomadic populations were disproportionately harmed. In regions such as Mali and northern Nigeria, transhumant herders were forced to settle as colonial regimes sought to control livestock movement and tax rural populations.[37] By criminalizing or restricting seasonal grazing migrations—long practiced as sustainable responses to rainfall variability—colonial powers undermined resilience systems that had evolved over centuries in arid and semi-arid zones.[38] Moreover, colonial land ordinances frequently denied **customary land tenure**, transferring ownership to state entities or settler elites, which excluded indigenous populations from meaningful participation in land governance.[39]

The legacies of these interventions continue to shape land degradation patterns today. Many of the most vulnerable areas to desertification, such as the Sahelian belt, parts of the Horn of Africa, and southern Madagascar were regions where colonial policies imposed the most

---

[36] Patrick Gonzalez, "Desertification and a Shift of Forest Species in the West African Sahel," *Climate Research* 17 (August 15, 2001): 217–28, https://www.int-res.com/articles/cr/17/c017p217.pdf.

[37] David Anderson and Vigdis Broch-Due, *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), 63–66. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X0321452X.

[38] Santanu Mukherjee, Arbind Kumar Patel, and Manish Kumar, "Water Scarcity and Land Degradation Nexus in the Anthropocene: Reformations for Advanced Water Management as per the Sustainable Development Goals," in *Emerging Issues in the Water Environment during Anthropocene*, ed. Manish Kumar, Daniel D. Snow, and Ryo Honda (Springer, 2019), 317–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-32-9771-5_17.

[39] Sara Pantuliano, "Charting the Way: Integrating Land Issues in Humanitarian Action," in *Uncharted Territory: Land, Conflict and Humanitarian Action* (Practical Action, 2009), https://cdn-odi-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/5561.pdf.

radical changes to land use and tenure systems.[40] These historical disruptions left a lasting institutional vacuum, weakening local governance mechanisms and knowledge systems that could have otherwise adapted to modern climatic challenges.

People displaced due to drought and famine in Somalia.[41]

Drought, Famine, and the Sahelian Crisis

The ecological vulnerabilities seeded during the colonial period came to catastrophic fruition during the Sahelian droughts of the late 20th century. Between 1968 and 1985, the semi-arid region of the Sahel spanning parts of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal experienced one of the most prolonged and severe drought events in modern African

---

[40] UNCCD, *The Global Land Outlook 2*, 2022. https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo2.

[41] Tobin Jones, *Women, Walking with What Possessions They Can Carry, Arrive in a Steady Trickle at an IDP Camp Erected next to an AMISOM Military Base near the Town of Jowhar, Somalia*, November 12, 2013, Online image, *Flickr*, November 12, 2013, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/10823979704/.

history.[42] Over the course of nearly two decades, irregular rainfall patterns and desert encroachment combined to decimate local ecosystems, destroy food production systems, and lead to widespread human suffering.[43] It is estimated that these droughts led to the deaths of nearly 100,000 people and the loss of over 12 million livestock.[44]

The crisis was not purely climatic. Decades of land mismanagement accelerated by colonial infrastructure, state-driven **cash crop** schemes, and post-independence development projects had already degraded soils and reduced vegetation cover.[45] With weakened root systems and diminished tree canopies, the land was unable to retain moisture or withstand wind erosion. Rainfall, when it came, often ran off compacted soils, deepening erosion and silting rivers.[46] In Niger, for instance, farmers reported rainfall events that failed to replenish groundwater or fill traditional water catchments due to degraded topsoil and increased surface runoff.[47] Pastoralist societies, whose livelihoods depend on the seasonal availability of grazing—were among the hardest hit. In Mali and Chad, long-standing migration routes were disrupted by expanding desert margins and deteriorating vegetation zones.[48] With fewer grazing areas and rising tensions over water access, resource competition escalated into localized conflicts.[49]

---

[42] Michael Mortimore, *Roots in the African Dust: Sustaining the Drylands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 56–60. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511560064.

[43] UN Environment Programme, *Global Land Outlook – Africa Chapter*, 2022, https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-regional-reports.

[44] Tor-Gunnar Vågen and Thomas Gumbricht, "Sahel Atlas of Changing Landscapes: Tracing Trends and Variations in Vegetation Cover and Soil Condition," *UNEP* (United Nations Environment Programme, December 13, 2012), https://www.unep.org/resources/report/sahel-atlas-changing-landscapes-tracing-trends-and-variations-vegetation-cover-and.

[45] Thomas Bassett and Donald Crummey, *African Savannas: Global Narratives and Local Knowledge of Environmental Change* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), 91–93.

[46] FAO, *State of the World's Land and Water Resources*, Rome: FAO, 2021, https://www.fao.org/3/cb9910en/cb9910en.pdf.

[47] Pierre Hiernaux et al., "Desertification, Adaptation and Resilience in the Sahel: Lessons from Long Term Monitoring of Agro-Ecosystems," in *The End of Desertification?*, ed. Roy H. Behnke and Michael Mortimore (Springer, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-16014-1_6.

[48] David Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson, *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History* (London: Lester Crook, 1988), 102–104.

[49] Sara Pantuliano, "Charting the Way."

At the same time, sedentary agricultural communities experienced record crop failures. Cereal production fell by over 30% in some regions during the peak of the drought, contributing to soaring food prices and widespread malnutrition.[50] The crisis also marked a turning point in how desertification was conceptualized globally. Prior to the Sahelian droughts, land degradation was largely seen as a localized issue. But as images of starving populations and cracked landscapes filled international media, desertification gained traction as a global environmental and humanitarian concern.[51] In response, international donors and governments launched emergency food relief, but long-term development assistance often emphasized technical fixes such as boreholes and reforestation schemes without addressing underlying governance or land tenure challenges.[52]

Despite these limitations, the crisis did lay the groundwork for international consensus on dryland degradation. It directly influenced the 1977 United Nations Conference on Desertification in Nairobi, one of the first multilateral efforts to articulate desertification as a challenge to development, peace, and environmental sustainability.[53] Although many early programs underperformed, they set the stage for later frameworks such as the UNCCD, which would emerge two decades later with a broader mandate and better integration of community participation. Ultimately, the Sahelian droughts illustrated the devastating intersection of climate shocks and socio-political fragility. They revealed that desertification is not merely an environmental process, but a dynamic entanglement of ecological collapse, historical injustice,

---

[50] UNCCD, *The Global Land Outlook 2*.

[51] United Nations, *Desertification: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), Preface. https://library.unccd.int/Details/fullCatalogue/61.

[52] S. Batterbury and A. Warren, "The African Sahel 25 Years after the Great Drought: assessing progress and moving towards new agendas and approaches," *Global Environmental Change* 11, no. 1 (2001): 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-3780(00)00040-6.

[53] UN, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Desertification*, Nairobi, 1977. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/733000?v=pdf.

and policy failure. The legacy of this crisis continues to influence land restoration efforts and vulnerability assessments across the African continent today.

People experiencing the 2016 drought in Ethiopia.[54]

Accelerating Change in the Anthropocene

As the 21st century progresses, drought and desertification in Africa have become increasingly entangled with the intensifying dynamics of global climate change. The African continent is now recognized as one of the regions most vulnerable to the adverse effects of global warming, despite contributing less than 4% of cumulative historical greenhouse gas emissions.[55]

---

[54] UNICEF Ethiopia, *Drought in Ethiopia*, February 17, 2016, Online image, *Flickr*, February 17, 2016, https://www.flickr.com/photos/unicefethiopia/24455460983.
[55] World Meteorological Organization, "State of the Climate in Africa 2022," WMO, 2023, https://library.wmo.int/records/item/67761-state-of-the-climate-in-africa-2022.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that Africa will warm at a rate higher than the global average, with temperature increases of up to 3°C in some regions by mid-century, even under moderate emissions scenarios. These temperature rises accelerate evapotranspiration, lower soil moisture retention, and disrupt rainfall patterns that are already highly variable in dryland ecosystems.[56]

One of the most alarming manifestations of this trend is the transformation of Africa's hydrological cycles. Across the Sahel, rainfall patterns have shifted from prolonged seasonal rains to shorter but more intense downpours.[57] These sudden events lead to increased surface runoff, soil erosion, and flooding, rather than replenishing groundwater or promoting agricultural regeneration. Meanwhile, inter-annual rainfall variability has become more extreme, resulting in longer dry spells and the reduced predictability of crop and grazing cycles, which both threaten over 60% of Africa's rural population that depends on rain-fed agriculture.[58]

These climate-driven shifts compound pre-existing anthropogenic stressors. In many dryland regions, population pressures have led to the overexploitation of marginal lands for farming and grazing.[59] Widespread deforestation often driven by demand for **fuelwood** and farmland has stripped ecosystems of vegetation cover, accelerating wind and water erosion.[60] Overgrazing by expanding herds depletes grasslands, while unregulated irrigation in some areas

[56] IPCC, *Sixth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2021*, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/.
[57] FAO, *State of the World's Land and Water Resources* (Rome: FAO, 2021), https://www.fao.org/3/cb9910en/cb9910en.pdf.
[58] Paxina Chileshe and Zira Mavunganidze, "Africa Is in the Eye of the Climate Change Storm. Here Is What Its People Are Calling For," IFAD, August 31, 2023, https://www.ifad.org/en/w/opinions/africa-is-in-the-eye-of-the-climate-change-storm-here-is-what-its-people-are-calling-for.
[59] United Nations Development Programme, "Combatting Land Degradation - Securing a Sustainable Future," UNDP, August 27, 2019, https://www.undp.org/publications/combatting-land-degradation-securing-sustainable-future.
[60] Martina Igini, "Deforestation in Africa: Causes, Effects, and Solutions," Earth.org, March 24, 2022, https://earth.org/deforestation-in-africa/.

has led to salinization and aquifer depletion. The cumulative effect is a reinforcing cycle in which land degradation reduces productivity, forcing communities to intensify their exploitation of shrinking resources, thus deepening ecological collapse.[61]

Urbanization and economic development trends, though promising in some sectors, also contribute to land pressure. Infrastructure expansion, mining, and road-building often encroach upon fragile ecosystems without adequate environmental assessment or restoration planning.[62] In peri-urban areas, informal settlements typically lack adequate waste management and contribute to pollution and erosion, particularly along flood-prone zones.

Institutionally, many African nations face challenges in addressing these multidimensional threats. Climate **adaptation** strategies are often fragmented or underfunded, and coordination between environmental, agricultural, and water ministries remains weak in several countries.[63] Moreover, rural communities frequently lack access to climate information services, early-warning systems, or technical support that could enable them to adapt practices or adopt more resilient livelihoods.[64] Land tenure insecurity also inhibits long-term investment in sustainable land management, as farmers and herders hesitate to adopt costly soil restoration practices on land they do not formally control.[65]

---

[61] African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2022*,
https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2022.
[62] Mactilda Mbenywe, "New Approach to Land Management in Africa Aims to Climate-Proof Ecosystems,"
Mongabay, September 23, 2024,
https://news.mongabay.com/2024/09/new-approach-to-land-management-in-africa-aims-to-climate-proof-ecosystems/.
[63] UNCCD, *The Global Land Outlook 2*.
[64] Raffaello Cervigni et al., eds., "Enhancing the Climate Resilience of Africa's Infrastructure," *Www.worldbank.org* (World Bank Group, 2015),
https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Feature%20Story/Africa/Conference%20Edition%20Enhancing%20Africas%20Infrastructure.pdf.
[65] Global Landscapes Forum Africa, "Restoring Africa's Drylands," June 2021,
https://www.globallandscapesforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/GLF_Africa_Restoring-Africas_Drylands_Concept_Note.pdf.

Despite these challenges, Africa is also a site of innovation and resilience. Local communities across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of Southern Africa have revived traditional land-use techniques including contour bunding, agroforestry, and water-harvesting methods such as "zai" pits to regenerate degraded lands and improve food security.[66] These practices not only align with ecological restoration principles but also draw upon culturally embedded systems of knowledge and collective stewardship. Ultimately, the convergence of climate volatility and historical land degradation represents a defining environmental and socio-political challenge for Africa in the Anthropocene. As droughts become more frequent and desertification spreads into previously fertile areas, the question is not whether adaptation is necessary, but whether it can be implemented in time, at scale, and in a manner that is just and inclusive.

---

[66] Paxie W. Chirwa and Larwanou Mahamane, "Overview of Restoration and Management Practices in the Degraded Landscapes of the Sahelian and Dryland Forests and Woodlands of East and Southern Africa," *Southern Forests: A Journal of Forest Science* 79, no. 2 (February 2, 2017): 87–94, https://doi.org/10.2989/20702620.2016.1255419.

Colonial Land Transformation and the Institutional Legacy of Degradation

While climate changes and population pressure are common explanations today, the deeper issues of desertification and deforestation trace back to colonial land policies that reshaped African landscapes for export production. **Cash-crop monocultures**, like groundnuts in Senegal, cotton in Sudan, and cocoa in Ghana, replaced diverse agroforestry and fallowing systems. This led to soil erosion and reduced plant cover.[67] Mechanized irrigation projects, such as the Gezira Scheme, sped up salinization and soil compaction, harming productivity over time.[68] Sedentarization and taxation of pastoralists limited their grazing movements, disrupting long-standing strategies that adapted to rainfall changes.[69] Colonial forestry replaced native tree species with water-intensive exotics, particularly eucalyptus, stressing both aquifers and biodiversity.[70] When African countries gained independence, they faced degraded soils, insecure customary land rights, and weakened local institutions—conditions that were poorly suited to handle new climate and economic challenges.[71]

---

[67] UNEP, *Global Land Outlook: Africa Chapter*, 2022, https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-regional-reports.
[68] Sara Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 115–19. https://doi.org/10.2458/v1i1.21158.
[69] David Anderson and Vigdis Broch-Due, *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), 63–66. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X0321452X.
[70] Patrick Gonzalez, "Desertification and a Shift of Forest Species in the West African Sahel," *Climate Research* 17 (August 15, 2001): 217–28, https://www.int-res.com/articles/cr/17/c017p217.pdf.
[71] Sara Pantuliano, "Charting the Way: Integrating Land Issues in Humanitarian Action," in *Uncharted Territory: Land, Conflict and Humanitarian Action* (Practical Action, 2009), https://cdn-odi-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/5561.pdf.

Post-Independence Development Models and Intensified Resource Pressures

After independence, development strategies focused on agricultural expansion, logging, and mining to generate foreign earnings. This led to more forest clearing in woodlands and drylands.[72] Transport corridors, dams, and rural roads improved access to markets but also allowed settlement and timber extraction in previously untouched forests.[73] The reliance on fuelwood and charcoal, driven by high urban energy costs, was a significant factor in forest loss where modern energy options were too expensive.[74] Conflict in areas like the Sahel and eastern DRC linked forests to displacement, small-scale extraction, and funding for armed groups, making enforcement and restoration more difficult.[75]

---

[72] Food and Agriculture Organization, "The State of the World's Forests 2024," FAO, 2024, https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/ec487897-97b5-43ec-bc2e-5ddfc76c8e85.

[73] African Development Bank, "Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa," African Development Bank Group, accessed July 2025, https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/programme-for-infrastructure-development-in-africa-pida.

[74] World Bank, "Wood-Based Biomass Energy Development for Sub-Saharan Africa," *ESMAP Papers*, September 2011, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/9bb75b9a-7102-513b-99be-4895fbff7e2f.

[75] Peacebuilding Support Office and United Nations Environment Programme, "From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and Environment," *United Nations*, August 5, 2008, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/wgll_background_note_08_05_2008.pdf.

Water distribution during a 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa.[76]

Multilateral Frameworks, Continental Initiatives, and Foreign Investment

Since the 1990s, African countries have worked together on multiple fronts. The UNCCD (1994) established national action plans and aimed for **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)**.[77] Agenda 2063 promoted restoration, while AU initiatives like the Great Green Wall (GGW) have mobilized commitments covering over 125 million hectares.[78] Global initiatives like the **Bonn Challenge** and the UN Decade on **Ecosystem Restoration** brought in technical and financial support, and **REDD+** improved monitoring for several nations.[79] However, a significant gap in delivery still exists. By 2021, the GGW had achieved only about one-fifth of its goal, slowed by

---

[76] Oxfam East Africa, *Water Distribution in Horn of Africa*, February 24, 2011, Online image, *Wikimedia Commons*, February 24, 2011, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Water_distribution_in_Horn_of_Africa.jpg.

[77] UNCCD, *The Global Land Outlook 2*, 2022. https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo2.

[78] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, "The Great Green Wall: Implementation Status and Way Ahead to 2030," UNCCD, September 7, 2020, https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/great-green-wall-implementation-status-and-way-ahead-2030.

[79] IUCN Bonn Challenge Secretariat, *Restoration Barometer Report 2022* (Gland: IUCN, 2022). https://iucn.org/resources/annual-reports/restoration-barometer-2022-report.

insecurity, delayed funding, and uneven community involvement.[80] Africa's net forest loss remains the highest in the world, around 3.9 million hectares per year from 2010 to 2020.[81]

At the same time, foreign investment has changed land dynamics. Chinese policy banks, state-owned enterprises, and private companies, often linked to the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, financed rail, port, power projects, and agribusiness.[82] Gulf and Asian investors sought large-scale farmland and livestock projects, while European and global demand shaped timber, cocoa, and rubber supply chains. These investments improved connectivity and market access, yet intensified pressure in areas where land rights were unclear, environmental and social protections were weak, or **concession** management was poor. New **Green BRI** guidance and regional standards show potential, but their application and verification by third parties remain inconsistent.[83]

[80] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, "Green Wall Accelerator," UNCCD, accessed July 2025, https://www.unccd.int/our-work/ggwi/great-green-wall-accelerator.
[81] Food and Agriculture Organization, "The State of the World's Forests 2024," FAO, 2024, https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/ec487897-97b5-43ec-bc2e-5ddfc76c8e85.
[82] UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 2023: Investing in Sustainable Energy for All* (Geneva: UNCTAD, 2023), Africa chapter. https://unctad.org/publication/world-investment-report-2023.
[83] Alain Karsenty et al., "Regulating Industrial Forest Concessions in Central Africa and South America," *Forest Ecology and Management* 256, no. 7 (September 2008): 1498–1508, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2008.07.001.

Possible Solutions

Governance, Tenure, and Continental Accountability

The AU could establish a land restoration accountability mechanism linked to the GGW Observatory to standardize indicators, such as LDN, canopy change, and soil organic carbon.[84] The organization could also publish annual scorecards and work in tandem with the African Peer Review Mechanism to promote accountability and improvement. In addition, harmonizing the recognition of customary land rights and women's rights to land in law and practice could foster community stewardship and reduce conflict.[85] To mandate transparency in concessions, the AU could require maps, contracts, **environmental impact assessments**, and grievance logs, along with independent audits for forestry, mining, and agribusiness licenses, integrating penalties for non-compliance.

Finance at Scale and Market Alignment (Including Foreign Investment)

The AU could create a **restoration finance facility** to merge public budgets, AfDB and other international financing institutions, guarantees, and private funds. This might involve cooperative approaches outlined in **Article 6 of the Paris Climate Agreement** to monetize outcomes, including green bonds and **debt-for-nature swaps** tied to verified restoration and land

---

[84] African Union, "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want," African Union, accessed July 2025, https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview.

[85] United Nations Women Africa, "Women's Land Rights and Tenure Security in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals," UN Women, 2021, https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/infographic---womens-land-rights-and-tenure-security-in-the-context-of-the-sdgs.

tenure reforms.[86,87] Embedding restoration goals in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies could also expand access to climate and nature funding.[88] The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could be used to establish standards for timber legality and deforestation-free practices, as well as negotiate with key partners, including China, for Green BRI agreements that tie funding to zero-deforestation procurement, thorough environmental assessments, and local **benefit-sharing**.[89] The AU could align with **Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)** and enhance due diligence in markets across the EU, US, and China.[90]

Scalable, Community-Centered Landscape Practices and Risk Management

Additionally, the AU could focus on **farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR)**, assisted regeneration, and integrated agroforestry in the drylands of the Sahel and the **Congo Basin**. These methods have proven effective in increasing biomass, groundwater recharge, and incomes at low cost.[91] The organization could combine these with **climate-smart** practices, such as drought-resistant seed systems, rainwater harvesting, and corridors for pastoral mobility that help restore adaptive grazing.[92] Furthermore, early warning systems for drought and fire could be

---

[86] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "Article 6 of the Paris Agreement," United Nations Climate Change, accessed July 2025, https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/article6.

[87] African Development Bank, "Sustainable Bond Program," African Development Bank Group, accessed July 2025, https://www.afdb.org/en/financial-information/investor-resources/capital-markets/sustainable-bond-program.

[88] CBD Secretariat, *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (Montreal: CBD, 2022). https://www.cbd.int/gbf.

[89] Rainforest Foundation UK, "New Research Finds That Most Industrial Logging in the DRC Is Illegal," Rainforest Foundation UK, July 15, 2025, https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/new-research-finds-that-nearly-all-industrial-logging-in-the-drc-is-illegal/.

[90] Philip Hsiaopong Liu and Deborah Bräutigam, "The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa," *The China Quarterly* 202 (June 18, 2010): 444–46, https://doi.org/10.1017/s030574101000038x.

[91] African Union, "The African Continental Free Trade Area," African Union, accessed July 2025, https://au.int/en/african-continental-free-trade-area.

[92] Chris Reij and Dennis Garrity, "Scaling up Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration in Africa to Restore Degraded Landscapes," *Biotropica* 48, no. 6 (November 21, 2016): 834–43, https://doi.org/10.1111/btp.12390.

expanded, along with contingency funding to protect restoration efforts, using data from the World Meteorological Organization integrated into national disaster frameworks.[93] Finally, building regional research and extension networks would help consolidate best practices, assess co-benefits like carbon capture, agricultural yield, and nutrition, and support rapid replication in similar ecological areas.[94]

Sand fences to combat desertification in Morocco.[95]

---

[93] J. Recha, "Scaling Agroforestry as a Climate Resilience and Food Security Solution in Drylands of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2025, https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1741821/.

[94] WMO, *State of Climate Services 2021: Water* (Geneva: WMO, 2021). https://wmo.int/publication-series/2021-state-of-climate-services-water.

[95] Anderson Sady, *Anti Desertification Sand Fences South of the Town of Erfoud, Morocco*, June 11, 2010, Online image, *Wikimedia Commons*, June 11, 2010, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anti_desertification_sand_fences_south_of_the_town_of_Erfoud,_Moroc co.jpg.

Sahel and Horn of Africa: Climate Vulnerability and Security Nexus

Stretching from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa, this bloc experiences desertification as both ecological degradation and governance erosion. Rapid land exhaustion, erratic rainfall, and pastoral displacement destabilize fragile states and transform resource scarcity into insecurity. The bloc treats climate change as a threat multiplier that accelerates poverty, migration, and violent extremism, requiring that environmental resilience be integrated with peacebuilding and humanitarian strategy.

Policy priorities emphasize African ownership of adaptation efforts such as the **Great Green Wall**, with funding restructured through AU-controlled mechanisms rather than donor-conditional projects. The bloc advocates a shift toward community-based restoration, regional early warning systems, and sovereign climate security financing. Its diplomacy positions ecological stabilization as continental defense, arguing that restoring drylands safeguards both livelihoods and regional order.

Central African Forest: Resource Sovereignty and Carbon Justice

Home to Africa's largest rainforests, this bloc regards conservation as a question of economic justice. Deforestation stems less from local mismanagement than from unequal terms of global trade that undervalue ecosystem services. The bloc reframes forest preservation as a development right, asserting that **carbon sequestration** constitutes a global public good that must yield fair compensation.

Its policy agenda seeks an African-regulated carbon market platform to price credits transparently and retain revenue within the continent. Funds would support sustainable timber value chains, forest monitoring, and rural development. The bloc links conservation to industrial modernization—pairing ecological stewardship with value-added production—and insists that external financing should respect resource sovereignty and the principle of "the polluter pays."

Southern Africa: Industrial Pragmatism and Renewable Transition

This bloc balances industrial ambition with ecological constraint. Resource extraction underpins employment and infrastructure, yet climate imperatives demand diversification into renewable energy and circular-economy industries. The bloc's position is pragmatic: sustainability must advance growth, not restrict it.

Policy proposals stress a just transition emphasizing job retention, energy security, and technological self-reliance. Regional integration through shared power pools and green hydrogen corridors characterizes this approach. The bloc promotes domestic processing of minerals critical to clean energy and resists prohibitions that could stall modernization, framing climate action as an opportunity to redefine African industrial policy.

West African Coast: Community Governance and Ecological Democracy

Rooted in humid coastal ecosystems, this bloc links deforestation to inequitable land tenure and export agriculture. It foregrounds local participation, arguing that sustainable restoration depends on communities' capacity to manage resources directly. Forest policy thus becomes an instrument of democratic empowerment.

The bloc supports regional harmonization through frameworks aligned with the Economic Community of West African States that finance **community forestry** and women-led cooperatives. It views reforestation as both livelihood protection and social reform, emphasizing transparency, local accountability, and integration of traditional ecological knowledge. In diplomacy, it acts as a moral center of the African Union, advocating bottom-up climate governance.

North Africa: Water Sovereignty and Desert Innovation

Facing extreme aridity and demographic pressure, this bloc treats desertification as a water management crisis. It promotes irrigation reform, desalination, and green energy investment to secure agricultural resilience while maintaining state control over hydrological resources.

The bloc's strategic outlook extends beyond adaptation: it reimagines desert spaces as laboratories for solar agriculture and sustainable infrastructure. Cooperation with Mediterranean partners on technology transfer is welcomed, but only under fair conditions. This bloc positions itself as a bridge between sub-Saharan development agendas and Euro-Mediterranean climate initiatives, prioritizing autonomy and innovation.

Adaptation – Adjustments in natural or human systems to minimize harm or exploit beneficial opportunities arising from actual or expected climate change impacts.

Agenda 2063 – The African Union's 50-year strategic framework for socio-economic transformation, including commitments to environmental sustainability and land restoration.

Agroforestry – Land-use systems integrating trees with crops or livestock to enhance productivity, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

AFR100 – The African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, aiming to restore over 100 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

Afforestation – The establishment of new forests on land that was not forested in recent history.

Article 6 (Paris Agreement) – Provisions enabling cooperative approaches, including carbon markets, to meet climate goals.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – China's global infrastructure and investment program, with African projects that may impact land use and ecosystems.

Benefit-sharing mechanism – Arrangements ensuring that revenues or advantages from resource use are equitably distributed among stakeholders, including local communities.

Bonn Challenge – A global effort to restore 350 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

Carbon sequestration – The process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide in vegetation, soils, or geological formations.

Cash crop monoculture – Cultivation of a single crop for sale rather than subsistence, often associated with soil depletion and biodiversity loss.

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) – Farming approaches that increase productivity, enhance resilience, and reduce emissions.

Community forestry – Forest management by local communities under recognized rights and responsibilities.

Concession agreement – A legal contract granting rights to exploit resources within a specified area under agreed terms.

Congo Basin – The world's second-largest tropical rainforest, a critical carbon sink and biodiversity hotspot in Central Africa.

Customary land tenure – Traditional systems governing land ownership and use, often not formally recognized in statutory law.

Debt-for-nature swap – A financial mechanism exchanging debt relief for commitments to environmental conservation.

Deforestation – The permanent conversion of forested areas to non-forest land uses.

Desertification – Land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas due to climatic variations and human activities.

Ecosystem restoration – The process of assisting the recovery of degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystems.

Environmental Impact Assessment – A process evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed projects before decisions are made.

Evapotranspiration – The combined process by which water is transferred from land to the atmosphere through evaporation from soil and surfaces and transpiration from plants. It is a key part of the water cycle and influences climate, agriculture, and hydrology.

Exotic species – Non-native species introduced to an area, which can disrupt local ecosystems.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – An agency of the United Nations that provides technical support on forestry, agriculture, and land management.

Farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) – A low-cost land restoration method using existing root systems to regrow trees.

Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) – The European Union's action plan to promote legal timber trade.

Fuelwood – Wood collected for household energy needs, a major driver of deforestation in many African regions.

Great Green Wall (GGW) – An AU-led initiative to restore degraded land across the Sahel and improve livelihoods.

Green BRI – Chinese guidelines to make Belt and Road projects environmentally sustainable.

Illegal logging – Harvesting, transporting, or trading timber in violation of national laws.

Indigenous knowledge systems – Localized practices and understandings developed over generations to manage resources sustainably.

Integrated water resource management (IWRM) – Coordinated management of water, land, and related resources.

Land degradation neutrality (LDN) – United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) goal to balance land degradation with restoration by 2030.

Land tenure security – Assurance that land rights will be recognized and protected.

Mitigation – Efforts to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions or enhance carbon sinks.

Monocropping – An agricultural practice of growing a single crop on the same land year after year. While efficient in the short term, it often reduces biodiversity, depletes soil nutrients, and increases vulnerability to pests and diseases.

Natural capital – The world's stocks of natural assets, including soil, air, water, and biodiversity.

Pastoralism – Livelihood system based on the raising of livestock, often involving seasonal mobility.

Payment for ecosystem services (PES) – Financial incentives for landholders to manage land for ecosystem benefits.

Protected area – A clearly defined space that is managed to achieve long-term conservation of nature.

REDD+ – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) framework for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation while fostering sustainable development.

Regreening – Community-driven restoration of tree cover and vegetation on degraded lands.

Restoration finance facility – A proposed AU mechanism to pool resources for land and forest restoration.

Rural extension – A system of providing education, training, and advisory services to rural communities—especially farmers—to improve agricultural practices, resource management, and livelihoods. It often connects research institutions with local populations.

Sahel – Semi-arid region south of the Sahara facing acute land degradation challenges.

Sustainable forest management (SFM) – Stewardship of forests to maintain biodiversity, productivity, and ecological processes.

Tenure reform – Legal and policy changes to improve clarity, security, and equity of land rights.

Bibliography

AFR100 Secretariat. Pledge Update. Bonn: WRI, 2022.

African Development Bank. African Economic Outlook 2022.

    https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2022.

African Development Bank. Green Bonds in Africa: Unlocking Climate Finance. Abidjan:

    AfDB, 2020.

African Development Bank. Infrastructure and Land Use in Africa. Abidjan: AfDB, 2019.

African Union Commission. Agenda 2063 Implementation Framework. Addis Ababa: AUC,

    2020.

African Union Commission. The Great Green Wall Initiative: Implementation Status and Way

    Forward. Addis Ababa: AUC, 2021.

African Union. AfCFTA Sustainability Framework. Addis Ababa: AUC, 2022.

Anderson, David, and Douglas H. Johnson. The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from

    Northeast African History. London: Lester Crook, 1988.

Anderson, David, and Vigdis Broch-Due. The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in

    Eastern Africa. Oxford: James Currey, 1999.

Bassett, Thomas, and Donald Crummey. African Savannas: Global Narratives and Local

    Knowledge of Environmental Change. Oxford: James Currey, 2003.

Batterbury, B., and A. Warren. "The African Sahel 25 Years after the Great Drought." Applied

    Geography 21, no. 1 (2001): 1–12.

Berry, Sara. No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in

      Sub-Saharan Africa. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.

Bräutigam, Deborah. The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa. Oxford: Oxford

      University Press, 2009.

Burnett, David. "Two young boys: the Sahel drought, Niger." Photograph, 1974.

China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). Guidance on Promoting the

      Green Belt and Road. Beijing: NDRC, 2017/2022 updates.

CIFOR. The Politics of Forest Concessions in Africa. Bogor: CIFOR, 2019.

Clean Carbon Africa. Africa is Dying!. 2021. https://www.cleancarbonafrica.com/.

Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity

      Framework. Montreal: CBD, 2022.

European Commission. FLEGT Action Plan—Timber Legality Assurance in Africa. Brussels:

      EC, 2020.

FAO & UNCCD. Restoring Africa's Drylands. Rome: FAO, 2021.

      https://www.fao.org/3/cb6593en/cb6593en.pdf.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) & UNCCD. Restoring Africa's Drylands. Rome:

      FAO, 2021.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Aerial View of the Great Green Wall Corridor in the

      Sahel. FAO, 2022. http://www.fao.org/interactive/great-green-wall/en/.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Agroforestry for Climate Resilience in Drylands. Rome: FAO, 2021.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020. Rome: FAO, 2020.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). State of the World's Forests 2020. Rome: FAO, 2020.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). State of the World's Land and Water Resources. Rome: FAO, 2021. https://www.fao.org/3/cb9910en/cb9910en.pdf.

Geneva Academy. The Right to Land and Other Natural Resources. 2017. https://www.geneva-academy.ch.

Global Witness. Unsanctioned Logging and the DRC Timber Trade. London: Global Witness, 2018.

Hiernaux, Pierre, and Hermann Diarra. "Land Use Patterns and Trends in the West African Sahel." Revue Scientifique et Technique 22, no. 3 (2019): 515–529.

ICRAF. Indigenous Techniques for Land Restoration in the Sahel. 2021.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Sixth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2021. Geneva: IPCC. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/.

International Alert. "Turning up the Heat: Climate Change, Fragility and Conflict." International Alert, 2021. https://www.international-alert.org/blogs/turning-heat-climate-change-fragility-and-conflict/.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). "Drought in Africa: Causes, Impacts, and Solutions." IFAD, 2022. https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/drought-in-africa.

IUCN Bonn Challenge Secretariat. Restoration Barometer Report 2022. Gland: IUCN, 2022.

Massard-Guilbaud, Geneviève. Environmental Histories of Europe and Africa. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017.

Mortimore, Michael. Roots in the African Dust: Sustaining the Drylands. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

North Africa Post. "Farmer Walking on Cracked Sahel Soil." July 2018. https://northafricapost.com/24472-famine-threatens-over-6-million-people-in-sahel.html.

OCHA. Horn of Africa Drought Response Overview. March 2023. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/horn-africa-drought-situation-report-2023.

OECD Development Centre. BRI in Africa: Infrastructure, Debt and Governance. Paris: OECD, 2021.

Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall. Progress Review 2021. Nouakchott: PAA-GGW, 2021.

Pantuliano, Sara. "Land, Migration and Conflict in Africa: An Historical Overview." London: ODI, 2007.

Pantuliano, Sara. "Land, Migration and Conflict in Africa: An Historical Overview." Overseas Development Institute, 2007.

Reid, Robin S., et al. "Policy Shifts and the Global Ecology of Drylands." Science 320, no. 5882 (2008): 1032–1035.

Reij, Chris, Gray Tappan, and Melinda Smale. Scaling Up Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration in Africa. Washington, DC: WRI, 2009/2019 updates.

SAIS-CARI. Chinese Loans to Africa Database—Briefing Paper. Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins, 2022.

UN Women. Women's Land Rights and Tenure Security in Africa. New York: UN Women, 2021.

UNCTAD. World Investment Report 2023: Investing in Sustainable Energy for All. Geneva: UNCTAD, 2023.

UNDP. Human Development Report 2021/22. https://hdr.undp.org/.

UNEP. Water Scarcity and Land Degradation Nexus. 2021. https://www.unep.org/.

UNHCR. "Sahel Emergency: Climate Displacement and Security." 2022. https://www.unhcr.org/sahel-emergency.html.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Global Land Outlook 2. 2022.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Global Land Outlook 2. 2022. https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Global Land Outlook 2. Bonn: UNCCD, 2022.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. "Desertification." UNCCD.

> https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/desertification/overview.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Africa. "Climate Variability and

> Development." UNDP, 2023. https://www.africa.undp.org/.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Climate Change and Land Degradation in

> Sub-Saharan Africa. 2021.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of

> Natural Resources and the Environment. Nairobi: UNEP, 2009.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Global Land Outlook: Africa Chapter. 2022.

> https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-regional-reports.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Sahel Atlas of Changing Landscapes.

> Nairobi: UNEP, 2018.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). State of the Climate in Africa 2022. Nairobi:

> UNEP, 2023.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Water Scarcity and Land Degradation Nexus.

> 2021.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Article 6 Explainer.

> Bonn: UNFCCC, 2023.

United Nations. Desertification: Its Causes and Consequences. New York: Pergamon Press,

> 1977.

United Nations. Report of the United Nations Conference on Desertification. Nairobi, 1977.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Due Diligence in Forest and
Agricultural Supply Chains. Washington, DC: USAID, 2021.

World Bank. Strengthening Climate Information Systems in Africa. 2020.

World Bank. The Cost of Land Degradation. 2020. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/.

World Bank. The Role of Woodfuel in Africa: Outlooks and Policy Options. Washington, DC:
World Bank, 2017.

World Bank. "Drought Risk in Sub-Saharan Africa." World Bank, 2020.
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/climatechange/brief/drought-risk.

World Health Organization (WHO). "Somalia Crisis Health Update." April 2023.
https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/somalia.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO). State of Climate Services 2021: Water. Geneva:
WMO, 2021.

World Resources Institute (WRI). "Deforestation in Africa: Causes, Effects, and Solutions."
WRI, 2020.

TOPIC B: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

Statement of the Problem

Mind the Gap: The Political Representation of Women

The political representation of women refers to their presence and participation in all levels of government—from local to national—and their direct involvement in public decisions.[96] For proper political representation, women must be included in government in a way that allows them to express their views and contribute constructively to policies.

Panelists at the Justina Mutale Foundation for Leadership at Houses of Parliament, Westminster London discussing women's empowerment in 2018.[97]

---

[96] UN Women, "Political Participation of Women," UN Women | Asia and the Pacific, 2019, https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/governance/political-participation-of-women.

[97] photographer695, African Suffragettes a Journey of Africa's Hidden Figures. Justina Mutale Foundation for Leadership at Houses of Parliament Westminster London Dr Josephine Ojiambo as Deputy Secretary-General (Political) Commonwealth Secretariat, April 21, 2018, Online Image, Flickr, April 21, 2018, https://www.flickr.com/photos/41087279@N00/41554842072.

There are three main dimensions of representation: **descriptive representation**, **substantive representation**, and **symbolic representation**. Descriptive representation is when a representative shares characteristics with and is regarded as part of the group they represent.[98] Substantive representation, on the other hand, focuses more on how the viewpoint of the representative aligns with that of the people; they share interests and views, but not necessarily characteristics.[99] Symbolic representatives inspire their constituents, demonstrating that people of their gender, ethnicity, or background can be in positions of influence and make a meaningful difference for the group.

To properly represent women, all three dimensions of representation must be present. Today, there is mostly substantive representation for women in Africa, as men heavily dominate politics; progress is limited without the other two dimensions of representation because men may not fully understand the nuances of women's needs and priorities.

The Power of Balance: Why Gender Parity Matters

Women make up just over half of the continent's population, so they deserve to have their views and opinions adequately and equally represented in decision-making spheres. Achieving **gender parity** by ensuring women are properly represented in politics ensures that governments reflect the actual composition of society. This also allows women to raise awareness about their needs and priorities, which tend to be overlooked because of male domination of the political

[98] Jane Mansbridge, "What Does a Representative Do? Descriptive Representation in Communicative Settings of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically Denigrated Status," in Citizenship in Diverse Societies (2000; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 99–123, https://academic.oup.com/book/26927/chapter-abstract/196043117?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=true.
[99] Aliza Forman-Rabinovici and Itai Beeri, "Descriptive and Symbolic: The Connection between Political Representation and Citizen Satisfaction with Municipal Public Services," American Review of Public Administration 54, no. 1 (July 16, 2023): 3–18, https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740231187539.

sphere.[100] Men and women face different challenges and have different concerns; therefore, men's heavy political dominance leaves women at a disadvantage because they are unable to champion causes that uniquely affect them.

There is also evidence to suggest that proper representation of women in politics has a significant impact on a country's policies. Increasing the representation of women leads to greater allocation of funds towards the provision of education, health services, and other public goods which benefit entire nations and push societies to be more equitable and inclusive.[101] Having more women in government has been shown to improve the quality of institutions and reduce corruption, as women are less likely to accept bribes or engage in corrupt behaviour.[102] This benefits the population because citizens can be sure their representatives are not easily swayed and acting in self-interest.

Greater representation of women in politics also creates more opportunities for them to participate in and contribute to rapidly changing societies. This prevents women from feeling alienated and allows them to prove their worth and change their cultural perception.[103]

Furthermore, ensuring women are represented in politics is in line with international and regional commitments of the last few decades, and improving the representation of women in

[100] Annie Barbara Chikwanha and Theresa Moyo, "The Motivation for Women in Politics: The Contemporary Politics of Women's," International IDEA, December 30, 2024, https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/html/motivation-women-politics-contemporary-politics-womens-participation.
[101] Annie Barbara Chikwanha and Theresa Moyo, "The Motivation for Women in Politics: The Contemporary Politics of Women's," International IDEA, December 30, 2024, https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/html/motivation-women-politics-contemporary-politics-womens-participation.
[102] Zohal Hessami and Mariana Lopes da Fonseca, "Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies: A Literature Review," *European Journal of Political Economy* 63 (May 4, 2020), https://doi.org/101896.
[103] Ibid.

politics will benefit not only women, but Africa as a whole by elevating the continent's reputation on the global stage.

Where Are They Now? Women in the Current Political Landscape

Women make up just over half of the African population; however, as of 2024, they made up just under 25% of all parliamentarians in Africa (including both lower and upper houses).[104] Although this is a great improvement from the situation at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this figure is still well below the targets set as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 to achieve gender parity.[105,106]
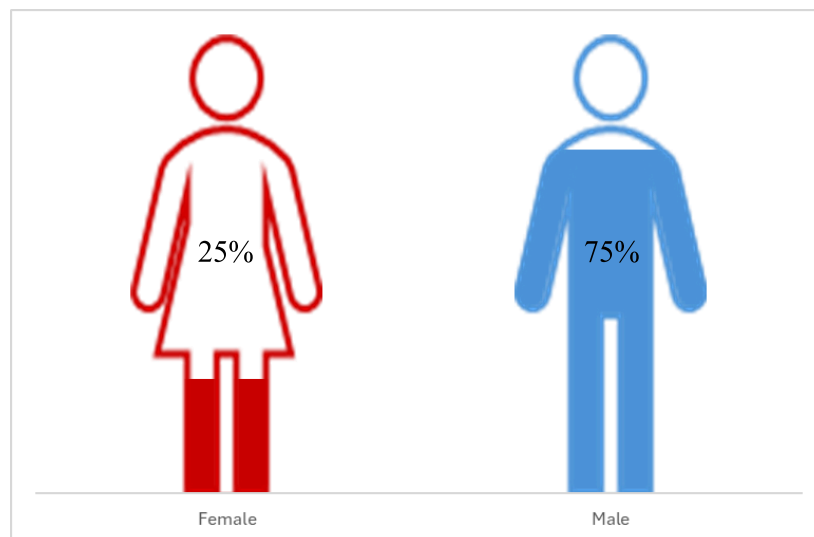
Proportion of female and male members of parliaments in Africa based on data from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.[107]

[104] "Women's Equality: 2024 IIAG Overview," Mo Ibrahim Foundation, March 7, 2025, https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2025/womens-equality-2024-iiag-overview.
[105] United Nations , "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (United Nations, 2015), https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.
[106] African Union, "Key Transformational Outcomes of Agenda 2063 | African Union," au.int (African Union), accessed June 13, 2025, https://au.int/agenda2063/outcomes.
[107] Graphic generated by Zoe Savala using Microsoft Excel.

Of the 55 countries in Africa, Rwanda has the best political representation of women, with approximately 61.2% of seats in parliament occupied by women, while Nigeria is ranked lowest, with just 4.4%.[108]

In cases where women are included in politics, they are often relegated to "soft" areas of policy-making, such as social affairs, family policy, and education, which are closely related to their cultural and societal roles of homemaking and child-rearing.[109] Thus, women's views are unlikely to be represented in other major areas of policy-making, including national defence, trade, and infrastructural development, despite the fact that these policies have a great impact on their day-to-day lives.

Many countries in Africa have turned to implementing **gender quotas** to ensure women are better represented in politics, with varying degrees of success. Some countries, like Rwanda and Libya, have implemented **legislated quotas**, which are instated by governments through national constitutions, electoral codes, and other election regulation laws. Others, including Algeria and Togo, have opted for **voluntary quotas** instead, which are usually chosen by political parties but not constitutionally enforced. Some countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, use a combination of the two types of quotas.

Although legislated and voluntary quotas work the same way in principle, their effects differ greatly. For example, legislated quotas worked especially well in Rwanda, contributing to

---

[108] Abdolrosheed Fadipe, "Nigeria Ranks Lowest among Sub-Saharan African Countries in Women's Representation in Parliament," Global Voices, November 20, 2024, https://globalvoices.org/2024/11/20/nigeria-ranks-lowest-among-sub-saharan-african-countries-in-womens-representation-in-parliament/.

[109] African Development Bank Group and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), "Africa Gender Index 2023 Analytical Report," African Development Bank Group, November 25, 2024, https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-2023-analytical-report.

the nation's status as a global leader in women's representation (61.2%).[110] In contrast, Algeria ranks among countries with the lowest percentage of women in government, having only 8% of political seats occupied by women despite establishing voluntary quotas.[111]

Roadblocks and Resistance: Challenges Keeping Women Out of Politics

Although progress has been made towards improving the political representation of women, there are still many challenges and barriers to achieving gender parity. Systemic discrimination in the form of laws, both written and unwritten, can prevent or deter women from entering the political sphere. Many African societies are also highly patriarchal: the belief that men are superior to women is deeply ingrained in cultural practices, which increases the number of hurdles women must clear to participate in politics. These beliefs contribute to the lack of education for women, making it harder for them to gain the necessary skills and resources to become active participants in the decision-making process. Furthermore, there is little support for women who do manage to overcome these hurdles because they oppose people's conditioned beliefs. Political parties have little to no will to advance female candidates because party leadership tends to be male dominated and believes that female candidates are more likely to lose.[112]

---

[110] International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, "Consolidated Response: Gender Quotas in African Countries," IKNOW Politics, accessed June 11, 2025,
https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/cr20gender20quotas20in20african20countries20en.pdf.
[111] "Algeria | Country Data | International IDEA," International IDEA, 2021,
https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/country?country=4.
[112] Annie Barbara Chikwanha and Theresa Moyo, "The Motivation for Women in Politics: The Contemporary Politics of Women's Participation and Representation in Africa | International IDEA," International IDEA (Strömsborg: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020),
https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/html/motivation-women-politics-contemporary-politics-womens-participation.

Access to funding also presents a major obstacle to women with political aspirations. Running political campaigns requires substantial time and money, which many women simply cannot provide. Women tend to face high unemployment and often lack assets to put up as collateral for loans because of discriminatory property ownership laws, reducing their ability to fund campaigns.[113]

High-level briefing on the African Women Leaders Network in 2017.[114]

Moreover, violence against women in the political sphere is a common occurrence, which deters women from entering the field. Female politicians experience disproportionately higher levels of cyberbullying, stalking, and in extreme cases, physical violence compared to their male counterparts.[115] Therefore, even if women are able to overcome all other barriers, concerns for their safety and that of their families may keep them out of politics.

---

[113] Ibid.
[114] UN Women/Ryan Brown, GA72 - High-Level Briefing on the African Women Leaders Network, September 27, 2021, Online Image, Flickr, September 27, 2021, https://www.flickr.com/photos/unwomen/23501735988.
[115] UN Women, "WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION EAST and SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION What's the Issue?," UN Women Africa (UN Women, September 2022), https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/BRIEFS_WPP_ESARO_A4_September%202022.pdf.

Although women make up approximately fifty percent of the population, their representation in politics remains disproportionately low. Great strides have been made over the course of the twenty-first century, in part due to the introduction of gender quotas, but their success has varied across countries and the proportion of women in government falls short of set thresholds. Additionally, most countries fail to incorporate all three dimensions of women's representation. Increased representation of women will not only ensure that governance better reflects the composition of society but will also have tangible net-positive impacts on societies. With this in mind, the next step is to find ways to identify and overcome the challenges and hurdles hindering women's full political participation.

Hidden Voices: Women's Leadership in Pre-Colonial Communities

In the pre-colonial era—before the second wave of colonization which started towards the end of the 19th century—communities in Africa were separated along ethnic lines. Each community had its own leadership structures and was a self-contained society.

Map of some of the pre-colonial societies in Africa between approximately 500 BCE to 1500 CE.[116]

---

[116] "Map of Pre-Colonial African Civilizations," Wikimedia.org, May 1, 2007, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African-civilizations-map-pre-colonial.svg.

Although these societies were often patriarchal, many considered women valuable members. More often than not, the value of members of the community was determined by their contributions and not their gender. Members who contributed meaningfully to the day-to-day survival of the community were viewed as more important and had higher social capital than those who did not. Tasks were often divided along gender lines because men and women were viewed as having different strengths and being more suited to some tasks than others.[117]

In many communities, women were revered because they were seen as the source of life. Child-rearing, homemaking, and management of the homestead were considered essential, as women were directly responsible for ensuring the most vulnerable members of the community (children, the sick, and the elderly) were taken care of. Furthermore, women were essential for food security because they were often entrusted with cultivating crops and managing food storage, they were the primary custodians of the community's oral history, and they served as spiritual leaders and healers.[118]

Although tasks were divided by gender, women were sometimes involved in activities that were considered "men's activities." For example, security and defense were generally considered tasks to be carried out by men because they were believed to be stronger than women; however, in the Maasai community (located in present-day Kenya and Tanzania) the task of guarding the home largely fell to the women. Trading was also another activity typically entrusted to men because it often required them to travel long distances and be away for long

---

[117] History Rise, "The Role of Women in Pre-Colonial Africa," History Rise, December 14, 2024,
https://historyrise.com/role-of-women-in-pre-colonial-africa/.
[118] Ibid.

periods of time, but among the Yoruba community (located in present-day Nigeria and Benin), women participated in both short- and long-distance trade.[119]

While most societies were largely organized around male-dominated social and political structures, there existed some societies where women held great power and responsibility, such as the **queen mothers** of the Ashanti Empire. Also known as the Asante Kingdom, this was a large pre-colonial society located in present-day Ghana and estimated to have existed between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The Ashanti Empire was a matrilineal society, where lineage was traced through the mother's bloodline. Ultimate political power lay in the hands of the Asantehene (king); however, the Asantehemaa (queen mother) was the central advisor to the Asantehene and provided guidance on all the decisions made. Both the Asantehene and the Asantehemaa occupied their own stools, which were symbols of power comparable to thrones, creating a dual-gender system of governance that existed at all levels of leadership in the community. The chiefs had their own versions of the queen mother acting as their chief advisors and occupying their own stools as well.[120] These queen mothers not only acted as counsel, but were also guides for their people, ensuring their spiritual wellbeing.[121]

---

[119] Abidemi Abiola Isola and Bukola A. Alao, "African Women and Leadership Role," IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) 24, no. 9 (September 14, 2019), https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2409050508.
[120] Beverly J. Stoeltje, "Asante Queen Mothers in Ghana," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, March 25, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.796.
[121] Beverly J. Stoeltje, "Asante Queen Mothers in Ghana," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, March 21, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.796.
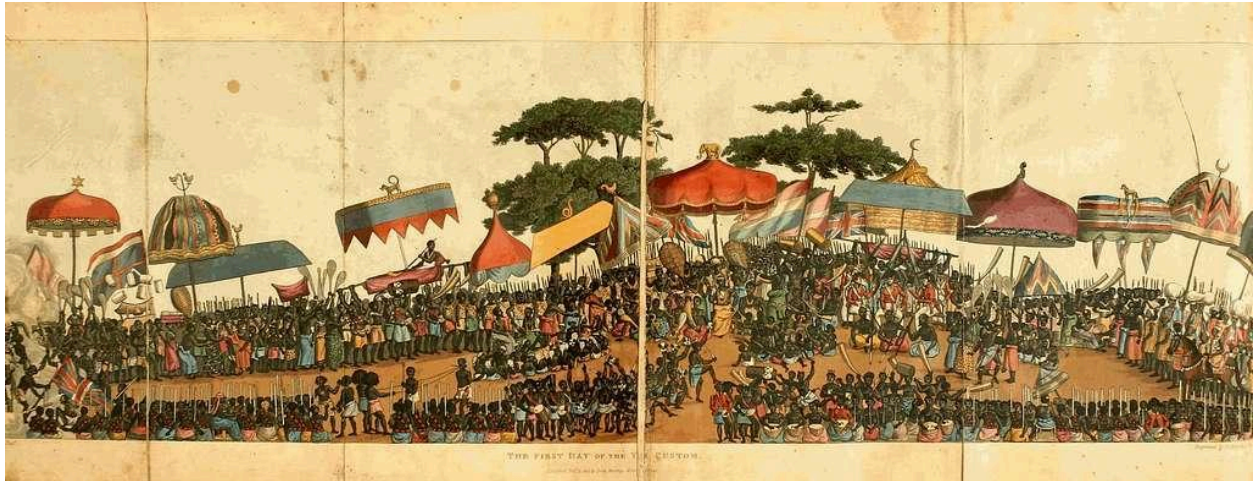
Painting of a crowded market place in the Ashanti empire, 1819.[122]

Other communities with queen mothers similar to the Ashanti did exist, such as the Kingdom of Kongo (located in present-day Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo), but during the pre-colonial period, they were not the norm.[123] For the most part, social and leadership structures were centered around men.

Colonial Disruption: How Colonization Reshaped Women's Political Influence

Towards the end of the 19th century, the focus of European **imperialism** shifted from the Americas to Africa and Asia. Colonial expansion by European powers in Africa dramatically altered the social and political structures that had been established by communities on the continent.

---

[122] Sarah Wallis, *Ashanti Yam Ceremony*, 1819, Online image, *Wikimedia Commons*, 1819, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bodwich,1819,Ashantee.jpg.
[123] Christine Saidi, "Kongo, Kingdom Of," in The Encyclopedia of Empire (Wiley, January 11, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118455074.wbeoe066.

Colonization led to women becoming more economically dependent on men. In particular, women were cut off from their usual economic activities, with which they used to sustain themselves and their households. Most people lost their land to imperial powers, who set up large plantations for cash crops like cotton, cocoa, and tea or settled on large swathes of land, displacing the communities that already lived there and pushing them into denser settlements. Household farms dramatically decreased in size, which meant that women—who were previously largely responsible for managing household farms—were no longer able to sustain their families on the little land communities were able to keep.[124]

Although colonial farmers used local labor on the farms and plantations, they mostly hired men as workers and paid them little to no money. Furthermore, many imperial powers introduced "hut taxes," which were charged for every hut on a piece of land, or "head taxes," levied based on the number of people living in a household.[125] Other economic activities women could have participated in became heavily restricted. For instance, trade was almost completely taken over by imperial traders, and it became almost impossible with the travel restrictions introduced after colonial powers drew up territorial boundaries. If they were lucky, women could find paid jobs as nannies and cooks in the homes of wealthy settlers. However, what they earned would likely not have been enough to support themselves. With very few ways to earn money of their own, women became almost completely reliant on their husbands for economic support.[126]

[124] Toni Shoola, "The Effect of the Sub-Saharan African Gender Divide on the Rights and Status of Women in a Globalized World," *International ResearchScape Journal International ResearchScape Journal* 1, no. 7 (February 2014), https://doi.org/10.25035/irj.01.01.07.
[125] Abel Gwaindepi, "Taxation in Africa since Colonial Times," in The History of African Development: An Online Textbook for a New Generation of African Students and Teachers, ed. Ewout Frankema et al. (African Economic History Network, 2023), https://www.aehnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Abel-Gwaindepi-Taxation-in-colonial-Africa-1.pdf.
[126] Toni Shoola, "Gender Divide."

Demonstration of German weapons to the Ngoni people as a show of German military

superiority in 1897.[127]

Additionally, colonization led to the installation of new political and social structures for the communities already existing on the continent. When the imperial powers drew up boundaries and set up administrative structures for their territories, they did not consider existing community dynamics or ethnic divisions. This led to many communities being split up, causing collapses in community leadership and social structures. For example, the Maasai was a nomadic community that was split across present-day Kenya and Tanzania. An overwhelming majority of the newly chosen community leaders were men—either European colonialists or local men who submitted to colonial rule—likely a reflection of the male-dominant European political sphere. Queen mothers lost their status, and women who had held important leadership positions in the

---

[127] Downluke, *Demonstration of German Weapons in Front of Ngoni Warriors in 1897*, August 9, 2014, Online Image, *Wikimedia.org*, August 9, 2014, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Demonstration_of_German_Colonial_Power_in_Africa.jpg.

community were either stripped of their power or, as was the case with Mekatilili wa Menza of the Giriama people in present-day Kenya, were imprisoned or killed for resisting colonial rule.[128]

Male dominance of political and social spheres was not a new concept introduced as a result of colonization. However, colonization dislodged women from positions of power and negatively impacted what social capital they did have in their communities.

Fighters to Phantoms: Political Marginalization of Women Post-Independence

The late 1950s saw the start of African nations gaining independence from their colonial administrators. Ghana was the first country to attain independence in 1957, with many other African countries to follow.[129] In the wake of independence, social and political structures of communities in the continent were once again upended as the new nations had to decide how they would govern themselves.

---

[128] Neil Carrier and Celia Nyamweru, "Reinventing Africa's National Heroes: The Case of Mekatilili, a Kenyan Popular Heroine," African Affairs 115, no. 461 (September 1, 2016): 599–620, https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adw051.

[129] University of Portsmouth, "University of Portsmouth Library - First African Country to Ever Gain Independence," University of Portsmouth Library, 2025, https://library.port.ac.uk/w1074.html.

A stamp commemorating the independence of Ghana from British colonial rule in 1957.[130]

During the colonial period, missionary schools upheld the status quo that politics, business, and other related fields were men's work, which left women with child-rearing, homemaking, and other domestic activities. This gave men an advantage over women in matters of governance, as even women who were lucky enough to receive any education at all were not adequately equipped for the demands of modernized politics.[131]

Moreover, in many countries, the first post-colonial governments were largely composed of those who had contributed to the fight for independence. In Uganda, for example, the first government formed after they gained independence in 1962 contained many of the key figures involved in the struggle for independence, such as Milton Obote (the first Prime Minister) and a significant number of members of the Uganda People's Congress.[132]

[130] Gold Coast Postage Stamp Featuring Christiansborg Castle with Overprint "Ghana Independence 6th March 1957", 1d, issued 1957. Ghana Post and Telecommunications Corporation. Image accessed from Picryl, https://itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/gha-1957-minr0006-pm-b002-430ce0.
[131] Human Rights Watch, "Hostile to Democracy: The Movement System and Political Repression in Uganda," Human Rights Watch, October 1, 1999, https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/uganda/Uganweb-06.htm.
[132] Ibid.

Although women played important roles for independence movements in many countries, their contributions were usually behind the scenes and were often undervalued, resulting in women receiving less recognition. This also translated to their notable absence from many of the first governments formed after independence. In Kenya, Priscilla Abwao was the only woman to attend the Lancaster House talks in 1963, where the arrangements for an independent Kenya were made and the first constitution was finalized.[133] In the immediate post-independence period, a vast majority of the women who were included in politics were either **First Ladies** or close kin of men already in government or who had played key roles in the fight for independence.[134]

---

[133] Dorothy Nyakwaka , review of Women Participation in Kenyan Politics: 1963-2017 , by Millicent Mokua, Kenya Scholars & Studies Association, 2020,
https://kessa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Dorothy-Nyakwakwa-Mokua.pdf.
[134] Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué, "First Ladies of Africa-beyond Femocracy or Wifeism?: An Introduction," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 57, no. 3 (2024): 255–63,
https://africa.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1645/2025/02/255-263-Intro-Mougoue%CC%81-Final-1.pdf.

Over the years, actions have been taken to address the lack of representation of women in politics. Although these actions were taken in good faith, they have not always been successful. Previous attempts have also had varying levels of coordination—with some actions spanning across the continent while others remained localized to individual countries—and addressed the matter with varying levels of completeness.

The Maputo Protocol

In July 2003, the African Union officially adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, more commonly referred to as the Maputo Protocol. Article IX of the Maputo Protocol, in particular, deals with women's "right to participation in the political and decision-making process," encouraging member states to ensure that women are adequately represented in government and are active participants in politics. As of July 2025, it has been signed by 49 countries, 46 of whom have also ratified it.[135] While signing only indicates an intention to implement the Maputo Protocol, ratification is what makes the Protocol legally binding, meaning that countries have officially agreed to uphold its obligations.

---

[135] Solidarity for African Women's Rights, "Botswana Has Ratified the Maputo Protocol! – SOAWR," soawr.org, December 1, 2023, https://soawr.org/2023/12/01/botswana-has-ratified-the-maputo-protocol/.
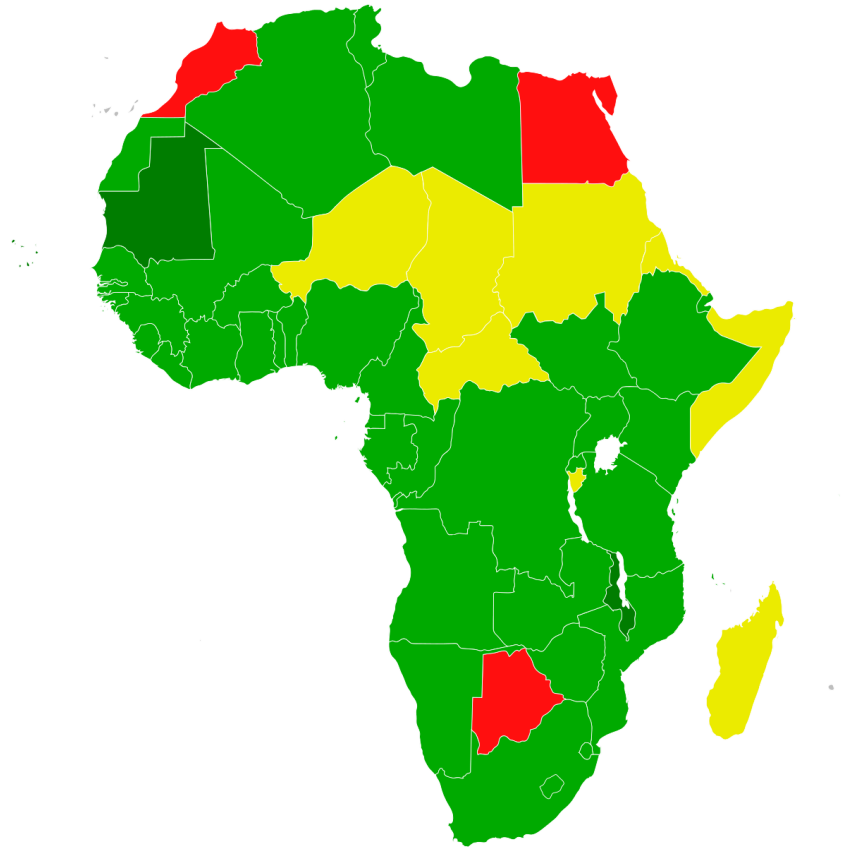
Map of Africa showing countries that have signed and ratified (green), signed but not ratified (yellow), and neither signed nor ratified (red) the Maputo Protocol.[136]

Beyond politics, the Maputo Protocol more broadly was meant to improve the lives of women on the continent overall. It aimed to deal with many of the factors contributing to the challenges and barriers women face in politics, such as discrimination (Article II), lack of education and training (Article XII), and negative societal and cultural context (Article XVII).[137] The Protocol is considered a monumental step forward, not only in Africa but across the world,

---

[136] Nederlandse Leeuw, *Maputo Protocol Participation Map*, April 6, 2020, Online image, *Wikimedia Commons*, April 6, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maputo_Protocol_participation_map.svg.
[137] African Union, "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa," July 11, 2003,
https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter_on_rights_of_women_in_africa.pdf.

because it attempted to address the problem as a whole, making it one of the world's most comprehensive and progressive human rights instruments.[138]

Despite its global recognition, the Maputo Protocol has several shortcomings. Its wording is vague, leaving it up to the signatories to decide how each of the stipulations should be achieved. This lack of a clear framework or guidelines to follow has led to minimal adherence by many signatories. Furthermore, although the Maputo Protocol contains a section on implementation and monitoring (Article XXVI), there are no consequences outlined for countries that fail to adhere to the Protocol's implementation and no explanation of how it will be monitored in signatory nations. Implementation has also been hindered by the lack of political will from leaders, judicial reluctance to apply the Protocol, conflicting national interests, and weak national institutions.[139]

Structural Reform

As mentioned previously, many African countries have adopted gender quotas to address the lack of representation of women in politics. In many countries, implementing these measures required **structural reforms** which made long-term changes to political and legal frameworks.

In Kenya, for instance, a two-thirds rule was included in the new constitution passed in 2010 as part of efforts to implement the Maputo Protocol. This rule is meant to ensure that no more than two-thirds of available seats in government are occupied by members of the same

---

[138] Solidarity for African Women's Rights, "Why the Maputo Protocol Benefits Everyone: #MaputoProtocolAt19 ," soawr.org (Solidarity for African Women's Rights, 2022), https://www.soawr.org/2022/07/11/why-the-maputo-protocol-benefits-everyone-maputoat19/.

[139] African Law Matters, "The Future of the Maputo Protocol: Prospects and Challenges," African Law Matters, August 31, 2023, https://www.africanlawmatters.com/blog/the-future-of-the-maputo-protocol.

gender.[140] However, like the Maputo Protocol, there is no specific framework specifying how this would be achieved.

Former President of Kenya, Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, at the "Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action" conference stating his government's commitment to formulating and implementing policies to achieve the two-thirds rule.[141]

To date, despite this structural reform, Kenya has not yet achieved gender parity in politics. As recently as August 2024, there were calls for the dissolution of the Kenyan parliament because the two-thirds rule had been violated by the sitting government. At the time, only 23.5% of leaders (both elected and nominated) were women.[142] According to Article 27,

---

[140] The Constitution of Kenya, Article 27(8).
https://www.parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2017-05/The_Constitution_of_Kenya_2010.pdf.
[141] UN Women/Ryan Brown, *Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action, Kenya: President Uhuru Kenyatta*, October 1, 2015, Online Image, *Flickr*, October 1, 2015, https://www.flickr.com/photos/unwomen/21858975591/in/photostream/.
[142] EndFemicideKE (@EndFemicideKE) "STATEMENT: The CJ must do her duty under Article 261(7) &, within 7 days, advise the President to dissolve parliament for failing to pass laws to implement the 2/3 gender rule. The

Clause 8 of the 2010 Kenyan constitution, "the State" is free to decide which measures, legislative or otherwise, are necessary to achieve the two-thirds rule. However, in the 14 years after the new constitution was adopted, during which there were three sitting governments and three court cases concerning the matter, no laws or measures were enacted to comply with the rule.[143,144]

Though a noble reform, Kenya's two-thirds rule shallowly deals with the problem of underrepresentation of women because it does not directly tackle many of the underlying problems preventing women from being active participants in politics and the decision-making process. Making the provision for women to occupy at least one third of seats in government does not necessarily dissolve the hurdles women face to get to those positions, especially if no steps are ever taken to enact the rule.

President must dissolve parliament within 7 days of receiving this advisory! #DissolveParliamentKE," X, Aug 8, 2024, https://x.com/Endfemicideke/status/1821518786320605608.

[143] EndFemicideKE (@EndFemicideKE) "STATEMENT: The CJ must do her duty under Article 261(7) &, within 7 days, advise the President to dissolve parliament for failing to pass laws to implement the 2/3 gender rule. The President must dissolve parliament within 7 days of receiving this advisory! #DissolveParliamentKE," X, Aug 8, 2024, https://x.com/Endfemicideke/status/1821518786320605608.

[144] The Constitution of Kenya, Article 27(8). https://www.parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2017-05/The_Constitution_of_Kenya_2010.pdf.

Possible Solutions

Improving Enforcement and Execution Frameworks

One possible way to ensure women are adequately represented in politics is to improve the enforcement and execution frameworks of policies that are already in place. Existing protocols like the Maputo Protocol and structural changes such as those made in Kenya in 2010 already exist on paper and provide good starting points. Finding ways to fill the gaps between agreement on paper and tangible change will make great progress towards ensuring women are adequately represented.

Improving enforcement and execution frameworks could include amending the Maputo Protocol to include timelines for countries to work towards, establishing clearer explanations of how to achieve gender parity in politics, providing metrics to measure success, and giving material consequences to countries that have ratified the protocol but failed to meet the deadlines. This could also involve bringing in other bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, UN Women, or the United Nations Development Program, to act as **watchdogs** for programs meant to tackle this issue. On the local level, working toward greater transparency in both goal-setting and progress achieved, determining measurable criteria for success, and clearly outlining the steps needed to achieve ideal outcomes may also help.

Building and Maintaining Support Systems

Given the many barriers and challenges women face in the political sphere, building and maintaining support systems can play a crucial role in both their entry into and their sustained participation in politics. Such networks can provide essential resources, mentorship, and advocacy, which can help women navigate the obstacles they face. Knowing that there is a

community committed to their success can provide women in politics the emotional support necessary to weather criticism and social pressure. Support systems can also encourage collaboration and strategic coordination, giving women the opportunity to align their efforts, amplify their voices, and better advance their agendas.

Although informal support systems formed spontaneously can be beneficial, they may collapse just as spontaneously because of disorganized decision-making. Some methods of ensuring that these systems last may include integrating them into political party structures or parliamentary bodies, which would provide legal frameworks and backing, or finding other ways to make them last beyond a single election cycle and expand to welcome new entrants.

Social and Cultural Reform

Many of the factors keeping women out of politics in Africa stem from social and cultural beliefs in their societies. It is insufficient to give women the tools they need to succeed if their constituents believe they are unfit to do so. Lasting change will require confronting deeply rooted social and cultural beliefs that affect many aspects of everyday life. Including lessons on the harms of patriarchal norms and the value of inclusive governance—as well as expansion of programs that teach about electoral processes, rights, and responsibilities at the primary, secondary and adult levels—can help make people more accepting of women's political participation. Additionally, developing media campaigns that highlight the costs of women's underrepresentation and the benefits of balanced decision-making could positively influence social and cultural perceptions of women's participation in politics. Making the idea of women's leadership more tangible through media that features female protagonists navigating challenges and succeeding in public office can also open people's eyes to the problem. Such media would

challenge them to reflect not only on how they contribute to the problem, but also on how they can contribute to the solution.

Countries That Have Ratified the Maputo Protocol

Of the 55 member nations of the African Union, only 46 have ratified the Maputo Protocol. However, 9 of these countries have expressed reservations concerning the protocol, which means they have officially opted out of or outright rejected certain clauses for various reasons, including conflict with national interests or beliefs.[145] Generally, countries that have ratified the Maputo Protocol are likely to have similar views on the importance of the representation of women in politics and agree that it is a shared continental goal. Ratification of the Maputo Protocol puts these countries under the same legally binding framework, so they are likely to come to agreements more easily. They are likely to support, or even encourage, initiatives and collective action coordinated across the continent. Since these countries are bound by the protocol, they might also find it easier to agree on standardized implementation frameworks, common timelines, and reporting tools.

Countries That Have Not Ratified the Maputo Protocol

The countries that have not ratified the Maputo Protocol generally cite similar concerns revolving around the areas of legality, sovereignty, and socio-cultural infringement.[146] These countries are likely to favour more flexible and less universally binding solutions that allow them to retain as much of their own independence as possible. Countries in this group are likely to push for non-binding solutions, pilot programs implemented in a select few states, or voluntary

---

[145] African Union, "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa," July 11, 2003, https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter_on_rights_of_women_in_africa.pdf.
[146] Deborah Nyokabi and Gicuku Karugu, "Our Rights Are Non-Negotiable: How Reservations to the Maputo Protocol Are Holding Back Women's Rights in Africa," Equality Now, July 11, 2025, https://equalitynow.org/news/press-releases/our-rights-are-non-negotiable-how-reservations-to-the-maputo-protocol-are-holding-back-womens-rights-in-africa/.

implementation of policies. They are also more likely to be sensitive to domestic concerns and prioritize the national implications of possible solutions over their wider continental impact.

Divisions by Trading Bloc

The continent is also divided into several regional and sub-regional **trading blocs**, such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS). These trading blocs are generally formed according to geographical relationships between countries, and in many cases, countries belong to more than one trading bloc.[147] Primarily, these trading blocs are meant to increase economic integration and promote economic growth and development among member states.

However, it is not uncommon for members of the same trading bloc to align on non-economic matters. Because trading blocs generally tend to form along geographic lines, member states experience similar challenges, which means that trading blocs can also act as platforms to develop coordinated strategies. Thus, states and their leaders may share ideologies and agendas.[148] Furthermore, each trading bloc may have its own set of regional goals which may shape stances on policies regarding a range of issues, including gender equality and representation.

Conservative Nations vs. Progressive Nations

Another significant factor influencing how countries may align is the ideological divide between **conservative nations** and **progressive nations**. Countries with more conservative

---

[147] United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "Regional Economic Communities | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa," archive.uneca.org (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa), accessed July 21, 2025, https://archive.uneca.org/oria/pages/regional-economic-communities.
[148] Lucy Luo, "African Continental Integration: Lessons from East Africa," Growth Lab (Harvard University, October 6, 2022), http://growthlab.hks.harvard.edu/blog/african-continental-integration-lessons-east-africa.

views and laws may resist attempts to achieve gender parity, especially if they are seen to conflict with traditional values or religious doctrines.[149] These countries may choose to prioritize social stability over increasing the representation of women because reforms may negatively impact cultural cohesion.

More progressive countries, on the other hand, may embrace gender parity in politics. These countries tend to view the political empowerment of women as a necessity for national development, and they consider equal representation a human right. Although the line between conservative and progressive is not always clear, countries tend to align with those that share similar values and outlooks.

---

[149] Blossom Ukoha, "Strategies and Obstacles in the Pursuit of Gender Parity in African Politics - African Leadership Magazine," African Leadership Magazine, September 18, 2024, https://www.africanleadershipmagazine.co.uk/strategies-and-obstacles-in-the-pursuit-of-gender-parity-in-african-politics/.

Glossary

Descriptive representation - The individual that represents the views and interests of a group is themselves a member of that group.

Substantive representation - The individual that represents the views and interests of a group shares the views of the group but is not necessarily a member.

Symbolic representation - The individual that represents the views and interests of a group has some significant meaning to the group being represented.

Gender parity - The equal participation or representation of genders in some context.

Gender quota - A measure put in place to ensure that a certain number of members of a body or organization are of a particular gender.

Legislated quota - A legally mandated minimum or maximum number of members from a specific gender allowed in a body or organization. This measure is compulsory.

Voluntary quota - A minimum or maximum number of members from a specific gender allowed in a body or organization. This number may be chosen by the body or organization itself and is not compulsory.

Queen mother - A woman who holds a significant political or ceremonial position in the community.

Imperialism - A policy or ideology whereby a country extends its power and control over other territories, often by political and economic domination or force.

First Lady - The wife or female partner of a head of state.

Structural reform - A long-term change to the political or legal framework of a country, often intended to correct inefficiencies or systemic inequalities.

Watchdog - An individual or group that watches the activities of a particular entity on behalf of the public to prevent illegal or unethical behavior.

Trading bloc - A group of countries, often located within the same geographical region, that come together and agree to reduce or eliminate trade barriers to create opportunities for economic development among members.

Conservative nation - A nation where the government and society at large prioritizes the preservation of traditional customs and values while opposing sudden, radical change.

Progressive nation - A nation where the government and society at large prioritizes improving the lives of people through social reform. These countries tend to be open to new ideas and technologies.

Bibliography

African Development Bank Group, and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

(ECA). "Africa Gender Index 2023 Analytical Report." *African Development Bank*

Group, November 25, 2024.

https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-2023-analytical-report.

African Law Matters. "The Future of the Maputo Protocol: Prospects and Challenges."

African Law Matters, August 31, 2023.

https://www.africanlawmatters.com/blog/the-future-of-the-maputo-protocol.

African Union. "About the African Union." au.int. African Union, 2019.

https://au.int/en/overview.

African Union. "Agricultural Development | African Union." au.int. African Union. Accessed

June 5, 2025. https://au.int/en/agricultural-development.

African Union. "Gender Equality & Development | African Union." au.int. African Union.

Accessed June 7, 2025. https://au.int/en/gender-equality-development.

African Union. "Key Transformational Outcomes of Agenda 2063 | African Union." au.int.

African Union. Accessed June 13, 2025. https://au.int/agenda2063/outcomes.

African Union. "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights

of Women in Africa," July 11, 2003.

https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter_on_rights_of_women_in_

africa.pdf.

African Union. "The Assembly | African Union." au.int. African Union. Accessed June 6,

2025. https://au.int/en/assembly.

African Union. "WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION EAST and SOUTHERN

    AFRICA REGION What's the Issue?" *UN Women Africa*. UN Women, September

    2022.

    https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/BRIEFS_WPP_ESARO_A4_Se

    ptember%202022.pdf.

Carrier, Neil, and Celia Nyamweru. "Reinventing Africa's National Heroes: The Case of

    Mekatilili, a Kenyan Popular Heroine." *African Affairs* 115, no. 461 (September 1,

    2016): 599–620. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adw051.

Chikwanha , Annie Barbara, and Theresa Moyo. "The Motivation for Women in Politics: The

    Contemporary Politics of Women's." *International IDEA*, December 30, 2024.

    https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/html/motivation-women-politics-contemp

    orary-politics-womens-participation.

Chikwanha , Annie Barbara, and Theresa Moyo. "The Motivation for Women in Politics: The

    Contemporary Politics of Women's Participation and Representation in Africa |

    International IDEA." *International IDEA*. Strömsborg: International Institute for

    Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020.

    https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/html/motivation-women-politics-contemp

    orary-politics-womens-participation.

CL8~enwiki . *Map of Africa Showing the Status of the Maputo Protocol in AU Member

    States*. December 11, 2009. Online Image. *Wikimedia.org*.

    https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maputo-Protocol.png

Donkor, Godfreid. *The First Day of the Yam Custom*. 1819. Online Image. *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of That Kingdom, and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa*. https://garystockbridge617.getarchive.net/amp/media/bodwich1819ashantee-021e2c.

Downluke. *Demonstration of German Weapons in Front of Ngoni Warriors in 1897*. August 9, 2014. Online Image. *Wikimedia.org*. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Demonstration_of_German_Colonial_Power_in_Africa.jpg.

EndFemicideKE (@EndFemicideKE) "STATEMENT: The CJ must do her duty under Article 261(7) &, within 7 days, advise the President to dissolve parliament for failing to pass laws to implement the 2/3 gender rule. The President must dissolve parliament within 7 days of receiving this advisory! #DissolveParliamentKE," X, Aug 8, 2024, https://x.com/Endfemicideke/status/1821518786320605608

Fadipe, Abdolrosheed. "Nigeria Ranks Lowest among Sub-Saharan African Countries in Women's Representation in Parliament." Global Voices, November 20, 2024. https://globalvoices.org/2024/11/20/nigeria-ranks-lowest-among-sub-saharan-african-countries-in-womens-representation-in-parliament/.

Forman-Rabinovici, Aliza, and Itai Beeri. "Descriptive and Symbolic: The Connection between Political Representation and Citizen Satisfaction with Municipal Public Services." *American Review of Public Administration* 54, no. 1 (July 16, 2023): 3–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740231187539.

Ghana Post and Telecommunications Corporation. *Ghana Post and Telecommunications Corporation. Gold Coast Postage Stamp Featuring Christiansborg Castle with Overprint "Ghana Independence 6th March 1957."* 1957. Online Image. *Picryl*. https://itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/gha-1957-minr0006-pm-b002-430ce0.

Gwaindepi, Abel. "Taxation in Africa since Colonial Times." In *The History of African Development: An Online Textbook for a New Generation of African Students and Teachers*, edited by Ewout Frankema, Ellen Hillbom, Ushehwedu Kufakurinani , and Felix Meier zu Selhausen. African Economic History Network, 2023. https://www.aehnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Abel-Gwaindepi-Taxation-in-colonial-Africa-1.pdf.

Hessami, Zohal, and Mariana Lopes da Fonseca. "Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies: A Literature Review." *European Journal of Political Economy* 63 (May 4, 2020). https://doi.org/101896.

History Rise. "The Role of Women in Pre-Colonial Africa." History Rise, December 14, 2024. https://historyrise.com/role-of-women-in-pre-colonial-africa/.

Hodgson, Lutjens. "Pioneering Women in Postcolonial African Governments: Soft Portfolios and Lasting Impact," Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 34 (2011), p. 49

Human Rights Watch. "Hostile to Democracy: The Movement System and Political Repression in Uganda." Human Rights Watch, October 1, 1999. https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/uganda/Uganweb-06.htm.

International IDEA. "Algeria | Country Data | International IDEA," 2021. https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/country?country=4.

International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics. "Consolidated Response: Gender

Quotas in African Countries." *IKNOW Politics*. Accessed June 11, 2025.

https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/cr20gender20quotas20in20african20countri

es20en.pdf.

Isola, Abidemi Abiola, and Bukola A Alao. "African Women and Leadership Role." *IOSR

Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 24, no. 9 (September 14,

2019). https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2409050508.

Luo, Lucy. "African Continental Integration: Lessons from East Africa." Growth Lab.

Harvard University, October 6, 2022.

http://growthlab.hks.harvard.edu/blog/african-continental-integration-lessons-east-afri

ca.

Luursema, Ilias. "The African Union: Achievements, Challenges, & the Future of Africa."

The Collector, February 19, 2023. https://www.thecollector.com/african-union/.

Mansbridge, Jane. "What Does a Representative Do? Descriptive Representation in

Communicative Settings of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically

Denigrated Status." In *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, 99–123. 2000. Reprint,

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

https://academic.oup.com/book/26927/chapter-abstract/196043117?redirectedFrom=fu

lltext&login=true.

Mo Ibrahim Foundation. "Women's Equality: 2024 IIAG Overview," March 7, 2025.

https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2025/womens-equality-2024-iiag-overview.

Nyakwaka , Dorothy . Review of *Women Participation in Kenyan Politics: 1963-2017* , by

    Millicent Mokua. *Kenya Scholars & Studies Association*, 2020.

    https://kessa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Dorothy-Nyakwakwa-Mokua.pdf.

Nyokabi , Deborah , and Gicuku Karugu. "Our Rights Are Non-Negotiable: How

    Reservations to the Maputo Protocol Are Holding Back Women's Rights in Africa."

    Equality Now, July 11, 2025.

    https://equalitynow.org/news/press-releases/our-rights-are-non-negotiable-how-reserva

    tions-to-the-maputo-protocol-are-holding-back-womens-rights-in-africa/.

photographer695. *African Suffragettes a Journey of Africa's Hidden Figures. Justina Mutale*

    Foundation for Leadership at Houses of Parliament Westminster London Dr

    Josephine Ojiambo as Deputy Secretary-General (Political) Commonwealth

    Secretariat. April 21, 2018. Online Image. *Flickr*.

    https://www.flickr.com/photos/41087279@N00/41554842072

Saidi, Christine. "Kongo, Kingdom Of." In *The Encyclopedia of Empire*. Vol. II. Wiley,

    January 11, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118455074.wbeoe066.

Solidarity for African Women's Rights . "The Central African Republic Has Officially

    Ratified the Maputo Protocol! – SOAWR." soawr.org, July 29, 2025.

    https://soawr.org/2025/08/04/the-central-african-republic-has-officially-ratified-the-ma

    puto-protocol/.

Solidarity for African Women's Rights. "Why the Maputo Protocol Benefits Everyone:

    #MaputoProtocolAt19 ." soawr.org. Solidarity for African Women's Rights, 2022.

https://www.soawr.org/2022/07/11/why-the-maputo-protocol-benefits-everyone-maput
oat19/.

Stoeltje, Beverly J. "Asante Queen Mothers in Ghana." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of
African History*, March 21, 2021.
https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.796.

The Constitution of Kenya, Article 27(8)

UN Women. "Political Participation of Women." UN Women | Asia and the Pacific, 2019.
https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/governance/political-participation-of-
women.

UN Women/Ryan Brown. *GA72 - High-Level Briefing on the African Women Leaders
Network*. September 27, 2021. Online Image. *Flickr*.
https://www.flickr.com/photos/unwomen/23501735988.

UN Women/Ryan Brown. *Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's
Empowerment: A Commitment to Action, Kenya: President Uhuru Kenyatta*. October
1, 2015. Online Image. *Flickr*.
https://www.flickr.com/photos/unwomen/21858975591/in/photostream/.

United Nations . "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."
United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs. United Nations, 2015.
https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. "Regional Economic Communities |
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa." archive.uneca.org. United Nations

Economic Commission for Africa. Accessed July 21, 2025.

https://archive.uneca.org/oria/pages/regional-economic-communities.

University of Portsmouth. "University of Portsmouth Library - First African Country to Ever

Gain Independence." University of Portsmouth Library, 2025.

https://library.port.ac.uk/w1074.html.

Wikimedia.org. "Map of Pre-Colonial African Civilizations," May 1, 2007.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African-civilizations-map-pre-colonial.svg.