



Webinar for African Parliaments

Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women in Parliaments

22 November 2023, 14:30-17:15 CET

organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the African Parliamentary Union (APU) on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and in follow up to the 2021 IPU-APU Issues Brief “Sexism, harassment, and violence against women in parliaments in Africa”

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

To achieve gender equality it is essential that women participate in political life on an equal footing with men, and that women have access to leadership and decision-making positions at all levels. However, one of the main obstacles which continue to block their path to parity in political life is violence against women in politics and in parliaments. Such abuse affects women's equal representation and full participation in decision-making and prevents them from enjoying freedom of opinion and expression, with negative effects on democratic processes and on society in general. It also has a chilling effect on young women entering or remaining in politics. For parliaments, when gender-based violence pervades, they miss out on their responsibility to be representative, efficient and effective, and fail in their duty to serve the population in all its diversity.

The IPU has uncovered this scourge through studies on sexism and gender-based violence in parliament, looking at both female MPs and female parliamentary staff. It defined forms of violence against women in parliament, collected evidence on its prevalence and provided good practices to combat it effectively. The latest [study](#) published in 2021 jointly with the APU revealed that sexism, harassment and violence against women are to be found everywhere in parliaments across the African continent. The findings are alarming and raise crucial questions about parliaments as workplaces.

Regarding women parliamentarians in Africa:

- 80% of those surveyed had experienced psychological violence during their term of office.
- 40% had been sexually harassed.
- 23% were survivors of physical violence.
- 29% had been exposed to economic violence.

Intersectionalities were also brought to light as incidents of violence were more prevalent among women parliamentarians living with disabilities, young women MPs, unmarried women and women from minority groups. The same is true for women parliamentarians who are members of the political opposition in their country, and for those who take a stand to defend women's rights and gender equality.

The study also looked into abuse faced by women parliamentary staff, and revealed the following prevalences:

- 67% of participants in the study had faced psychological violence.
- 45% had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

Such findings are comparable to those of the equivalent European regional study ([2018](#)), and the [2016](#) worldwide version.

On the threshold of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, **a webinar will be devoted to examining how parliaments in Africa have used the findings and recommendations of the African study to prevent and respond to sexism and violence against women in parliamentary workplaces and in political life.**

This will be an opportunity for African parliaments to meet virtually and focus on what needs to be done in parliament to create and apply a culture of equality and of zero tolerance to any form of violence against women parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. The webinar will encourage the sharing of insights between participants into how their institutions have used the 2021 IPU and APU study ([Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa](#)) as well as the exchange of experience on policies and mechanisms adopted by African parliaments to address these issues.

Participants will therefore be invited to present the initiatives and good practices that their parliaments have implemented to eliminate violence against women in parliament. The challenges and difficulties encountered will also be reflected in participants' presentations and deliberations.

Objectives

The webinar aims to:

- Provide parliamentarians in Africa with information on the prevalence and forms of violence against women in parliaments and in politics, as well as the consequences of the problem.
- Mobilize parliamentarians in Africa to rally around specific solutions to the problem of violence against women in parliaments.
- Identify effective measures to ensure a working environment within parliamentary institutions that is free from sexism, harassment and violence.

Date

22 November 2023 to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Participation

The webinar is open to members and staff of the following national parliaments in Africa: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Language

The working languages will be English, French, Arabic and Spanish. Channels can be made available on Zoom for interpretation into other languages if participants wish to provide their own interpreters.

Webinar platform

The event will be hosted on Zoom.

Registration

All interested parliamentarians and parliamentary staff can submit their registration **by 15 November 2023** through the link available [here](#).

Related documents

- IPU-APU, [Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa](#) (2021)
- [Press release](#)
- [Cartoons](#)
- [Video](#)
- IPU, [Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament](#) (2019)
- IPU-PACE, [Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe](#) (2018)
- IPU, [Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians](#) (2016)

Programme

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| 14:30–14:40 | Opening remarks |
| 14:40–14:50 | Keynote address on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa Presentation on the nature, forms, prevalence and consequences of violence against women in politics and in parliaments in Africa. |
| 14:50–15:40 | Sharing experiences among participants: Forms and impacts of violence against women in parliament in Africa The participants are invited to share experiences on the following key questions (each participant will be allocated up to 3 minutes): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you encountered sexism and gender-based violence in your political environment and in your parliament?• How does violence against women manifest itself in parliament and what forms does it take?• Would you say that some groups of women in parliament are more targeted by violence?• What are the consequences of violence against women in parliament for individuals, the institution itself and democracy at large? |
| 15:40–15:45 | Break |
| 15:45–16:00 | Keynote address on turning to solutions: Recommendations to parliaments Presentation of recommended actions to be taken by parliaments stemming from the IPU-APU study <i>Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa</i> and the IPU <i>Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament</i> . |
| 16:00–16:50 | Sharing experiences among participants: Actions taken by parliament to prevent and respond to violence against women in the institution Participants are invited to share experiences and views on the following key questions (each participant will be allocated up to 3 minutes): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was the 2021 IPU-APU study useful to shed light on sexism and violence against women in parliament?• What initiatives has your Parliament taken thus far to tackle sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians and female parliamentary staff? Examples of initiatives can be:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ a policy or code of conduct to combat violence against women in parliament,○ training sessions on the topic,○ a procedure for receiving and investigating complaints,○ disciplinary measures, etc. |
| 16:50–17:10 | Looking ahead: What is needed to reach zero tolerance of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament? Participants are invited to reflect and share their views on the following key questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What actions should your parliament take?• What challenges can your parliament face in its action?• What support is required?• How can the IPU help? |
| 17:10–17:15 | Concluding remarks |