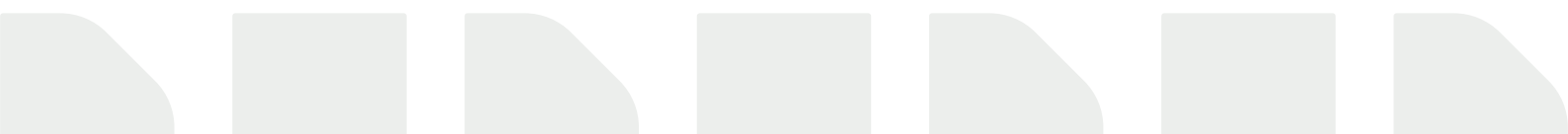


# **IPPF ARO Advocacy Engagements Highlights -African Union**

**January-May 2026**



# PURPOSE

The purpose of the Advocacy Engagements Highlights for IPPF ARO is to provide a concise and strategic overview of the region's key advocacy achievements, priorities, and impact. These highlights serve to strengthen visibility, inform partners and donors, support evidence-based engagement with policymakers, and demonstrate IPPF ARO's leadership in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights across the region. They ensure that critical progress, challenges, and opportunities are clearly communicated to guide ongoing advocacy efforts and mobilize continued support for the regional agenda.



# The African Union Summit

The African Union (AU) Summit is the highest decision-making gathering of the African Union, bringing together Heads of State and Government, senior policymakers, and regional leaders to deliberate on the continent's most pressing political, economic, and social issues. Held annually at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Summit serves as a platform for shaping Africa's collective agenda, strengthening regional integration, and advancing the AU's long-term vision under Agenda 2063.

Each year's Summit is organized around a specific theme reflecting emerging continental priorities, including peace and security, climate resilience, governance reforms, economic transformation, and inclusive development.

## Purpose of the Summit

The AU Summit provides a strategic forum for Member States to:

- Review continental progress on flagship programs and policy frameworks, including Agenda 2063 and its associated development goals.
- Address peace and security challenges, including conflicts in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sahel, and the Horn of Africa.
- Advance institutional reforms aimed at strengthening AU organs, enhancing financial self-reliance, and improving governance processes.
- Coordinate common positions on global issues such as climate justice, global financial reforms, and Africa's representation in multilateral institutions.
- Promote inclusive development, especially in areas such as youth empowerment, gender equality, health systems strengthening, and climate resilience.

## Structure of the Summit

The AU Summit typically includes a sequence of high-level meetings:

1. Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) – Reviews technical reports and prepares the agenda.
2. Executive Council (Ministerial Session) – Foreign affairs and other ministers refine policy recommendations.
3. Assembly of Heads of State and Government – The main Summit where leaders adopt decisions, declarations, and frameworks guiding continental action.

This structure ensures that policy decisions are grounded in both technical expertise and political consensus.

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## Latest Developments AU Summit February 2026

The 39th AU Summit, held in February 2026 in Addis Ababa, focused on the theme: *“Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063.”*

Key developments included:

- Election of the 2026 Chair of the Union (Burundi), signaling a renewed push for African solidarity, financial independence, and institutional reform.

- African Union appointed President Samia Suluhu Hassan as the AU Champion for reproductive, maternal, and child health. The primary goal is to promote and increase sustainable investments from AU member countries in the health sector, recognising that quality maternal and child health is essential for social and economic development and is a crucial pillar in implementing Africa's Agenda 2063
- Calls for stronger multilateralism and global governance reforms, including the push for permanent African seats on the UN Security Council, as emphasized by the UN Secretary-General.
- Heightened focus on youth expectations, responding to growing discontent across the continent about governance, economic hardship, and political representation.

These developments underscore the AU Summit's evolving role as both a continental and global platform for shaping Africa's future.



# IPPF Engagements (1)

- 8 Youth representatives from our IPPF MA, FGAE, were present at the 15th GIMAC Young Women’s Advocacy Training held prior to the 42nd GIMAC Network Pre-Summit. The aim was to train youth, especially young women, on the AU decision-making processes and negotiations, the 2026 AU water and sanitation theme, Africa Water Vision 2063, and the water, energy, food, and ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus, enabling them to meaningfully engage in the continental and national water governance spaces. It also aimed to develop youth skills in gender-responsive advocacy, including policy analysis, message development, and the integration of young women's rights, climate resilience, and economic justice, with youth-led advocacy strategies or messages feeding directly into the GIMAC Outcome Document and AU policy platforms.



- IPPF ARO was a panel member in a discussion on Advancing Gender-Responsive WASH Integration into SRHR by Strengthening Advocacy and Accountability in Africa, where the following key advocacy message was shared: safe, gender responsive WASH is a prerequisite for effective SRHR services, gender-responsive WASH reduces SGBV risks and enhances dignity, WASH must be integrated into protection, SRHR, and humanitarian preparedness and investing in WASH is investing in gender equality.
- IPPF ARO took the floor during the 42nd GIMAC Network Pre-Summit plenary to highlight that ensuring gender-responsive WASH within SRHR policies and programs is not just a development priority, it is a fundamental rights imperative. Across Africa, women, girls, and marginalized communities continue to face preventable health risks, violence, and inequities because WASH remains insufficiently integrated into SRHR frameworks. We cannot achieve the Maputo Plan of Action, universal health coverage, or SDG commitments without placing water, sanitation, and hygiene at the center of sexual and reproductive health.
- IPPF ARO was also present at the 42nd GIMAC partners' meeting, where insights from the training and the pre-summit were shared. GIMAC Network Secretariat highlighted that the GIMAC Network 5-Year Strategic Plan will be shared with partners for feedback.
- Ensured that SRHR, women's empowerment in governance, and gender-responsive WASH were included in the Outcome Document of the 42nd GIMAC Pre-Summit.

## IPPF Engagements (2)



- On the margins of the 39th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit, the African Union Commission convened a High-Level Side Event to spotlight the transformative role of digital health technologies in accelerating progress toward improved Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) outcomes in Africa. IPPF ARO participated in the High-level Event and the official Launch of the CARMMA Plus website: <https://carmmaplus.org/>. This is a continental digital hub designed to enhance visibility, coordination, and accountability in efforts to end preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths in Africa.

- IPPF ARO participated in the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN). Established in 2017 in partnership with the African Union and the United Nations, and supported by Germany through UN Women, the African Women Leaders Network, is a continent-wide movement dedicated to advancing women's leadership and participation in decision-making. AWLN empowers women to shape a gender-balanced future by convening, mobilizing, advocating, and enhancing their leadership roles across all levels of society. It was highlighted that AWLN provides support and promotes cohesion, partnership, and resources for African women and existing women's organizations, through the National Chapters and the Secretariat, so that they may strategically and directly empower themselves at all levels and build a peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous Africa.
- IPPF ARO joined the Side Event on “A High-Level Dialogue on the Launch of the 2025 AU Champion’s Report on Ending Child Marriage and the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme 2.0: convened to formally launch the 2025 AU Champions’ Report on Ending Child Marriage in Africa and SIARP 2.0 as a coordinated continental delivery platform. The report marked a step forward in accelerating Africa’s collective efforts to end child marriage. The event aimed to elevate political attention to the scale, persistence, and uneven decline of child marriage across Africa, where prevalence remains high, and progress is insufficient to meet continental and global targets. It sought to mobilise high-level leadership to accelerate implementation, strengthen enforcement of legal and policy frameworks, and scale investments in prevention, protection, and response services for women and girls, including children at risk of child marriage, as part of broader efforts to address gender inequality, eliminate violence against women and girls and harmful practices, and advance sexual and reproductive health and rights across Africa.

- IPPF AR0, attended the 30th Organization of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD) General Assembly, alongside our MA, Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia (FGAE), which convened African First Ladies, their advisors, and different partners and stakeholders to deliberate on climate change and conflict as critical challenges facing women and girls in Africa, and to strategize on advocacy efforts that promote women’s protection, inclusion, and participation in decision-making processes.



## IPPF Engagements (3)

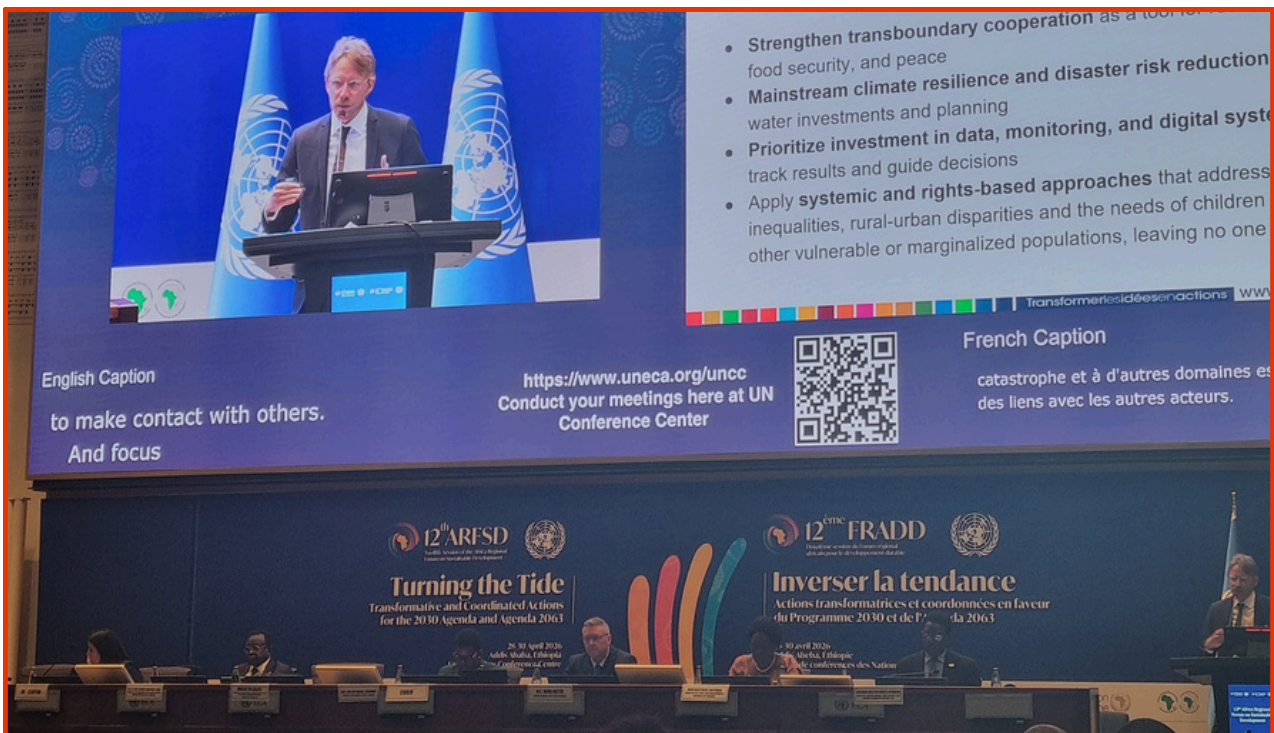
- The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) is an annual intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform mandated by the UN General Assembly. Following our participation, based on technical leadership and advocacy, in close collaboration with UNFPA, during the 12th session of the ARFSD, our work has been reflected in the Addis Ababa Declaration on Turning the Tide: Transformative and Coordinated Actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

The inclusion of key language marks an important milestone for our collective work on gender equality, explicitly linking gender responsive approaches to the African Union theme on Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063. The agreed language includes the following commitments:

- (vii) To design gender responsive interventions in the area of water, sanitation and hygiene that are led by women and young people, grounded in lived experience, and tailored to the needs of young people, women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups;

- (viii) To embed gender responsive water, sanitation and hygiene interventions within holistic health policies, budgets and standards to guarantee safe, accessible and dignified water and sanitation services for women, young people, adolescents and persons with disabilities.

This outcome reflects IPPF ARO's sustained advocacy to elevate gender, youth leadership, and rights-based approaches within continental policy processes.



- On the margins of the 87th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) during the NGO Forum in May 2026, advocates, policymakers, and human rights leaders came together to confront a shared reality: while Africa has made significant gains in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and women’s rights, these gains are increasingly under threat. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) and IPPF ARO organized a panel, through the financial support of the Packard Foundation and the Government of Luxembourg, on “Defending Rights in Hostile Contexts: Attacks on Human Rights actors advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Context of Shrinking Civic Space and Gender Backlash”. The panelists, including our MA, the Executive Director of the Reproductive Health Network Kenya (RHNK), examined both the nature of the current backlash and the strategies that have proven effective in defending hard-won rights: <https://africa.ippf.org/blogs/standing-firm-srhr-and-womens-rights-amid-growing-backlash-87th-achpr>

