

Thank you Mr President,

I make this statement on behalf of AWID, the Coalition of African Lesbians, the Association for Progressive Communications, and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

Despite The Vienna Declaration, women defenders face increasingly repressive environments and threats to their legitimacy and security. States violate the rights of feminist activists through a number of measures, including: criminalization; restrictions on rights to freedom of assembly and expression, and funding; administrative barriers; and anti-rights actors colluding in intimidation, attacks and reprisals against civil society.

States opportunistically use terms like ‘national sovereignty’, ‘traditional values’ and ‘family’ to undermine the universality of human rights. We require an urgent response to the growing global trend of pushback and reprisals against feminist activists and defenders which undermine our human rights systems.

The recent African Union decision requiring the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to revise its criteria for granting observer status and the subsequent withdrawal of the Coalition of African Lesbians’ observer status are clear illustrations of threats enacted by states to civil society participation and defenders’ work to advance and defend human rights on the continent.

We call upon States to speak out and counter anti-rights propaganda and the dismantling of the global and regional human rights mechanisms.