



African Union
Reforms Engagements

CSO Strategy Consultation on **AU Reforms**

11-13
AUG
2025
Nairobi,
Kenya

Communique

Between 11–13 August 2025, ISLA and its co-conveners, the Centre for Human Rights (University of Pretoria), the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA), Synergia, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights (RFK), and African Renaissance, convened the CSO Strategy Consultation on AU Reforms in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting brought together representatives of civil society organisations, feminist movements, academic institutions, youth groups, sexual minority groups, member states, and AU organs, including the Office of the Legal Counsel, Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC), the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, alongside other partners, to deliberate on the ongoing African Union (AU) Reforms process and its implications for civil society and the African Human Rights System (AHRS).

The consultation took place in response to the ongoing AU Reforms process, which began in 2017 without any consultation with civil society organisations. These reforms may carry severe implications for the African Human Rights

System, particularly with regard to accountability, transparency, and accessibility for victims of human rights violations. At the same time, they present an important opportunity to engage, influence, and strengthen the AU human rights system to ensure that it remains robust, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of African peoples.

Since 2023, ISLA and its co-conveners have mobilised CSOs through the AU Reforms and Civil Society Engagement Campaign. This campaign adopted a four-pronged strategy to safeguard the African Human Rights System and ensure civic voices are not excluded from the reforms:

1. Knowledge production, through the development of multilingual and accessible advocacy tools and research on the implications of the reforms;
2. CSO mobilisation, convening diverse groups including feminist and grassroots actors across the continent to build solidarity;
3. Member state engagement, by fostering dialogue with AU member states to influence reform trajectories; and
4. Direct engagement with the AU reforms team, pressing for inclusive processes and accountability within institutional restructuring.

The consultation was convened with the following objectives:



To reflect critically on the CSOs led AU Reforms Campaign, assessing its successes, shortcomings, and political dynamics



To analyse institutional, political, and procedural barriers that limit civil society, youth, and sexual minority participation in AU reforms.



To reaffirm a shared vision for an accountable, rights-based, and transparent African Human Rights System.



To articulate a feminist and inclusive advocacy agenda for AU reforms.



To build solidarity among CSOs, AU organs, youth, and other stakeholders for sustained engagement.



To develop a shared roadmap for engagement with AU member states and regional advocacy.

Over three days, participants engaged in a series of thematic sessions. These included mapping the terrain of AU reforms and civil society's engagement; bridging gaps and identifying structural barriers to participation; examining disconnects between CSOs, member states, and AU organs; and assessing what has worked and what has not in civic engagement with mechanisms such as the Pan-African Parliament, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, ACERWC, and the African Court. The consultation culminated in co-creation sessions aimed at refining the AU Reforms CSOs Strategy, strengthening engagement with member states and AU institutions, and fostering longterm solidarity and collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

At the conclusion of the consultation, participants reaffirmed the importance of protecting the mandates of African human rights mechanisms and resisting reforms that risk diluting accountability and accessibility for victims. They called for greater transparency in AU decision-making processes, including timely access to documents and decisions. The need for a new ecosystem of

solidarity across civil society, AU organs, member states, and other actors was also emphasised, to address fragmentation and enhance coordination, advocacy, and resource mobilisation.

The consultation ended with an agreement to develop a Collective Framework for AU Reforms Engagement, which will be circulated to all participants for further input and subsequent endorsement. This framework reflects the shared vision of African civil society, AU organs, member states, youth, and sexual minority groups to safeguard the African Human Rights System, ensure CSOs meaningful participation in AU processes, including AU Reforms, and strengthen solidarity across the continent.

Please see a full breakdown of our activities in the Communiqué linked below.

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