

## **The Gambia: ICJ and partners advocate for progress on the human rights of persons with disabilities**

24 October 2025

**During the ongoing [85<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session](#) of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), in Banjul, The Gambia, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and its partners are undertaking a range of activities to convince African States to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities in line with their legal obligations under various international human rights law treaties, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa ([African Disability Protocol](#)).**

In this context, today, the ICJ and the African Disability Forum ([ADF](#)) have delivered their [joint statement](#) at an open session of the ACHPR. The statement calls for continent-wide ratification of the African Disability Protocol and urges the ACHPR to accelerate the implementation of the Protocol, and to establish robust mechanisms to ensure State accountability.

"In 2026, African States will commence reporting to the Commission on their legal obligations under the Africa Disability Protocol. It is critical that the Commission fast track the elaboration of reporting guidelines to ensure that States report comprehensively on their legal obligations towards persons with disabilities", said Petronella Mukaindo, ICJ's Associate Legal Adviser.

Earlier this week, the ICJ co-hosted a [side event](#) alongside the Commission's session to engage with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), civil society organizations, persons with disabilities, the Commission's [Working Group on the Rights of Older Persons and People with Disabilities \(WGROPPD\)](#), and African State representatives to chart a path towards the implementation of the Africa Disability Protocol.

At the event, Commissioner Marie Louise Abomo, the chairperson of the [WGROPPD](#), delivered a keynote address acknowledging States' progress in addressing disability rights. She noted that – while disability rights had been entrenched in constitutional provisions in at least 40 States, and no fewer than 46 States had enacted legislation giving effect to these rights – there remains a need to raise awareness about the Protocol. Another member of the same Working Group, Rigbe Gebrehawaria Hagos, called for collaboration between National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and OPDs towards universal ratification and implementation of the African Disability Protocol. She emphasized that, "NHRIs are uniquely positioned to monitor, promote and protect human rights at the national level, including the rights of persons with disabilities", and that OPDs, who represent persons with disabilities, "bring in lived experience, expertise, and grassroots legitimacy".

During the side event, the ICJ also launched the [Nairobi Declaration on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities 2025](#). The ICJ, in partnership with African OPDs,

elaborated the Declaration drawing on consultations held at a conference [in Nairobi](#), Kenya, in May 2025. A range of OPDs, including the ADF, have now endorsed the text. The Declaration identifies systemic legal, institutional and attitudinal barriers that continue to impede access to justice for persons with disabilities across the continent and calls for specific measures to address them.

“The Nairobi Declaration provides a clear, practical reminder to States on why implementation of the Africa Disability Protocol is critical. As the Protocol promises, persons with disabilities should enjoy improved access to justice, which requires States to take a wide range of steps to remove barriers impeding such access”, said Wilson Macharia, ICJ’s Legal Adviser.

On the margins of the ACHPR session, the ICJ also consulted OPDs and other stakeholders on a handbook the human rights organization is developing in consultation with the ADF. The handbook is intended to provide guidance to OPDs on how to engage with African human rights mechanisms, including the ACHPR, the [African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#) and the [African Court on Human and People’s Rights](#). During this consultation, presenters outlined how OPDs could best access these mechanisms.

**Resources:**

- Read ICJ and ADF’s statement to the African Commission during its 85<sup>th</sup> ordinary session, [here](#).
- Read the Nairobi Declaration on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities, [here](#).
- Watch the ICJ and ADF’s side event at the African Commission, [here](#).
- Find the African Disability Protocol, [here](#).
- Find the ACHPR’s Resolution on the entry into force of the Africa Disability Protocol, [here](#).