

Women in decision-making spheres in Africa

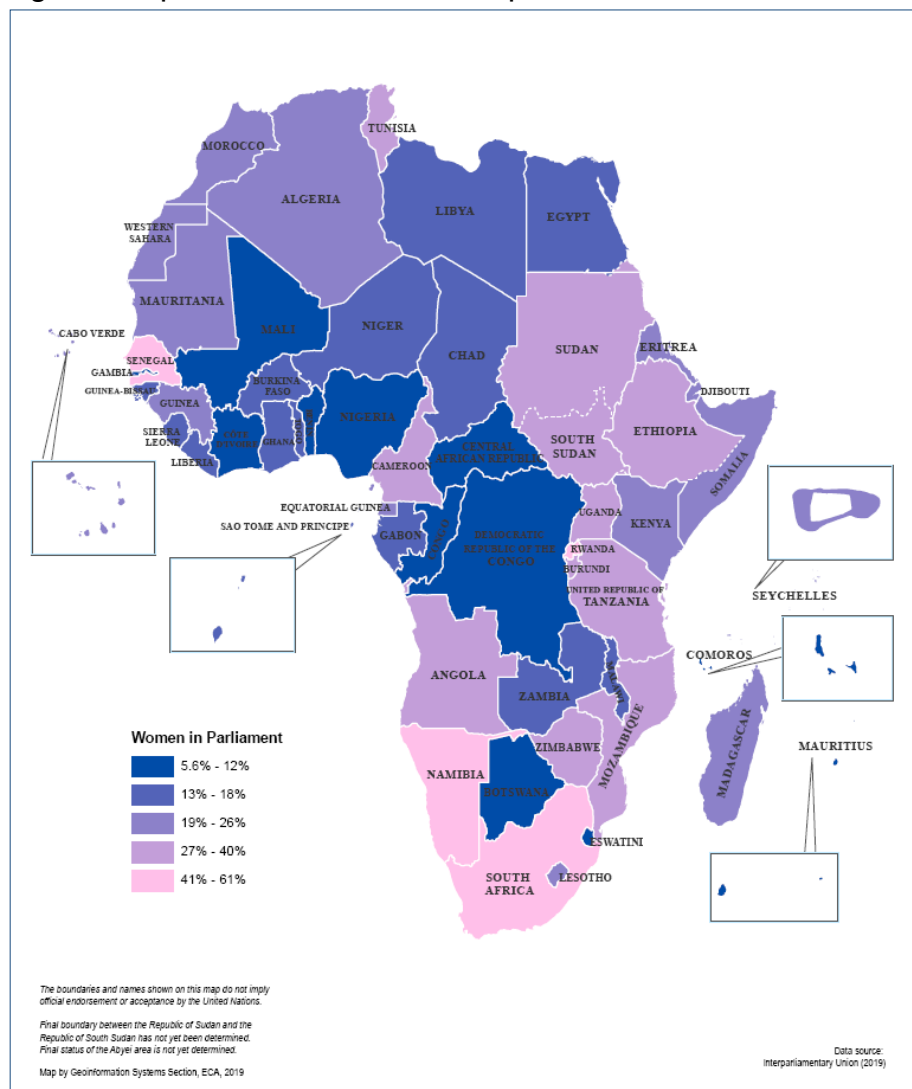
Women in parliaments

Ensuring the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities for female leadership at all levels of decision-making is one of the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to its intrinsic value, the participation of women is essential to the formulation of effective policies¹ that respond to the differential needs of men and women. Africa has made significant strides in the participation of women in decision-making spheres, surpassing Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East, however, the continental achievements hide national and subregional variations. The present Fact Sheet provides a comparative perspective on the status of women's representation in national parliaments. Information on the proportion of women in national parliaments in Africa is provided in figure 1.

As of January 2019, there were 2,622 women parliamentarians out of a total of 11,099, bringing the African average for the proportion of women in

parliament to 23.6 per cent. While this is commendable progress over time, it represents less than half the number needed to attain gender parity in national parliaments in Africa. Nonetheless, out of 35 countries with more than 33 per cent female representation in national parliaments across the world, nine are in Africa, including Rwanda

Figure 1: Proportion of women in national parliaments in Africa



Source: Statistical Archives of Interparliamentary Union, January 2019.

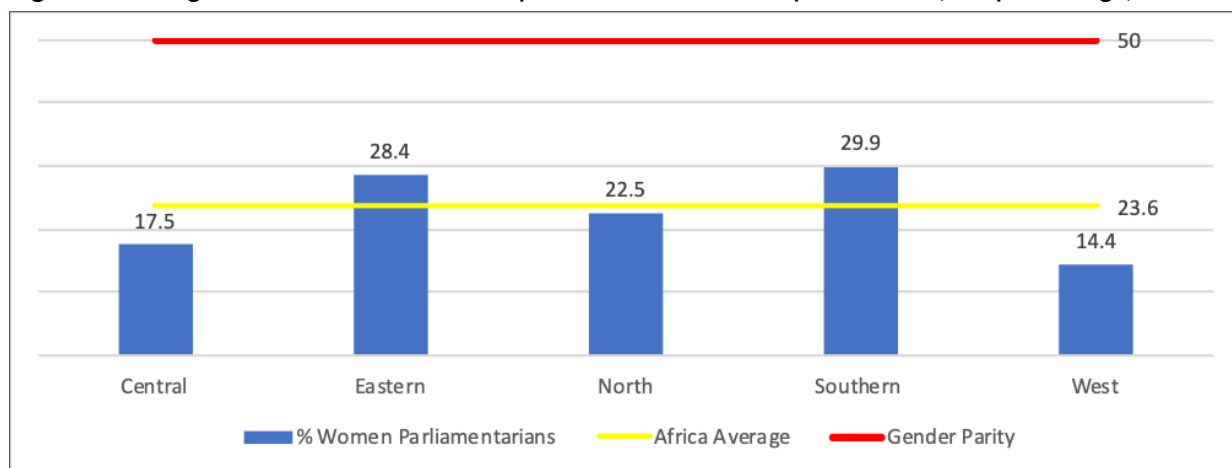
1 Dollar, D., R. Fisman and R. Gatti (1999), "Are women really the 'fairer' sex? Corruption and women in Government", *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, Vol. 46, 2001, pp. 423-429.

(61 per cent), Namibia (46 per cent), South Africa (43 per cent), Senegal (42 per cent), Mozambique (40 per cent), Ethiopia (39 per cent), United Republic of Tanzania (37 per cent), Burundi (36 per cent) and Uganda (35 per cent).

There is substantial variation across Africa, as shown in figure 2. While Southern Africa is close to attaining the

33 per cent representation threshold, West Africa on average lags substantially behind other subregions. Out of 15 countries in West Africa, only three have over 15 per cent female representation in parliament. Senegal leads the way with 42 per cent female representation in parliament, ranking fourth in Africa. In Southern Africa, Namibia and South Africa are within reach of

Figure 2: Subregional overview of female representation in African parliaments (as a percentage)



Source: *Statistical Archives of Interparliamentary Union, January 2019.*

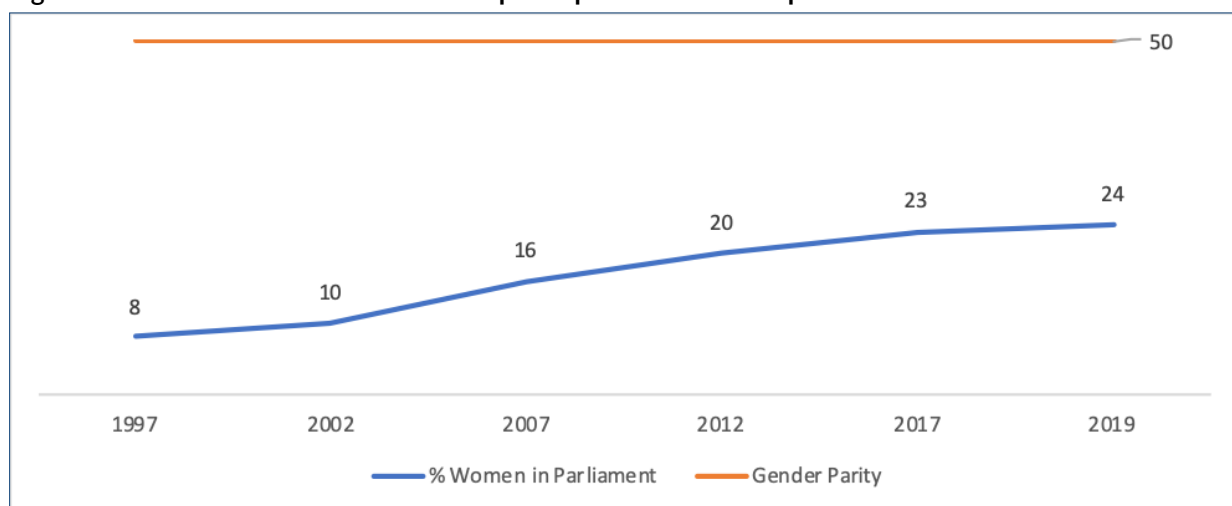
gender parity in parliament with 46 per cent and 43 per cent female representation, respectively. Mozambique is also close at 40 per cent.

In Eastern Africa, Rwanda leads the way with 61 per cent female representation in parliament, ranking first among all African countries and across the world. Ethiopia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi and Uganda follow suit with over 33 per cent female representation in parliament. In North Africa, Tunisia and Sudan are close to reaching the 33 per cent threshold, while Egypt records the subregional minimum at 15 per cent female representation. Central Africa has a slightly higher average for women in parliament compared to West Africa. Cameroon has reached a subregional

maximum of 31 per cent female representation in parliament.

Since the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, Africa has made steady progress on women's participation in parliaments. Figure 3 shows that the average proportion of women in parliament in Africa almost tripled over a period of 22 years. However, progress has slowed since early 2010. In many African countries, the proportion of women in parliament needs to more than double its current levels in order to reach the 50 per cent gender parity target as set by Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.5, indicator 5.5.1.

Figure 3: Historical evolution of women's participation in national parliaments in Africa



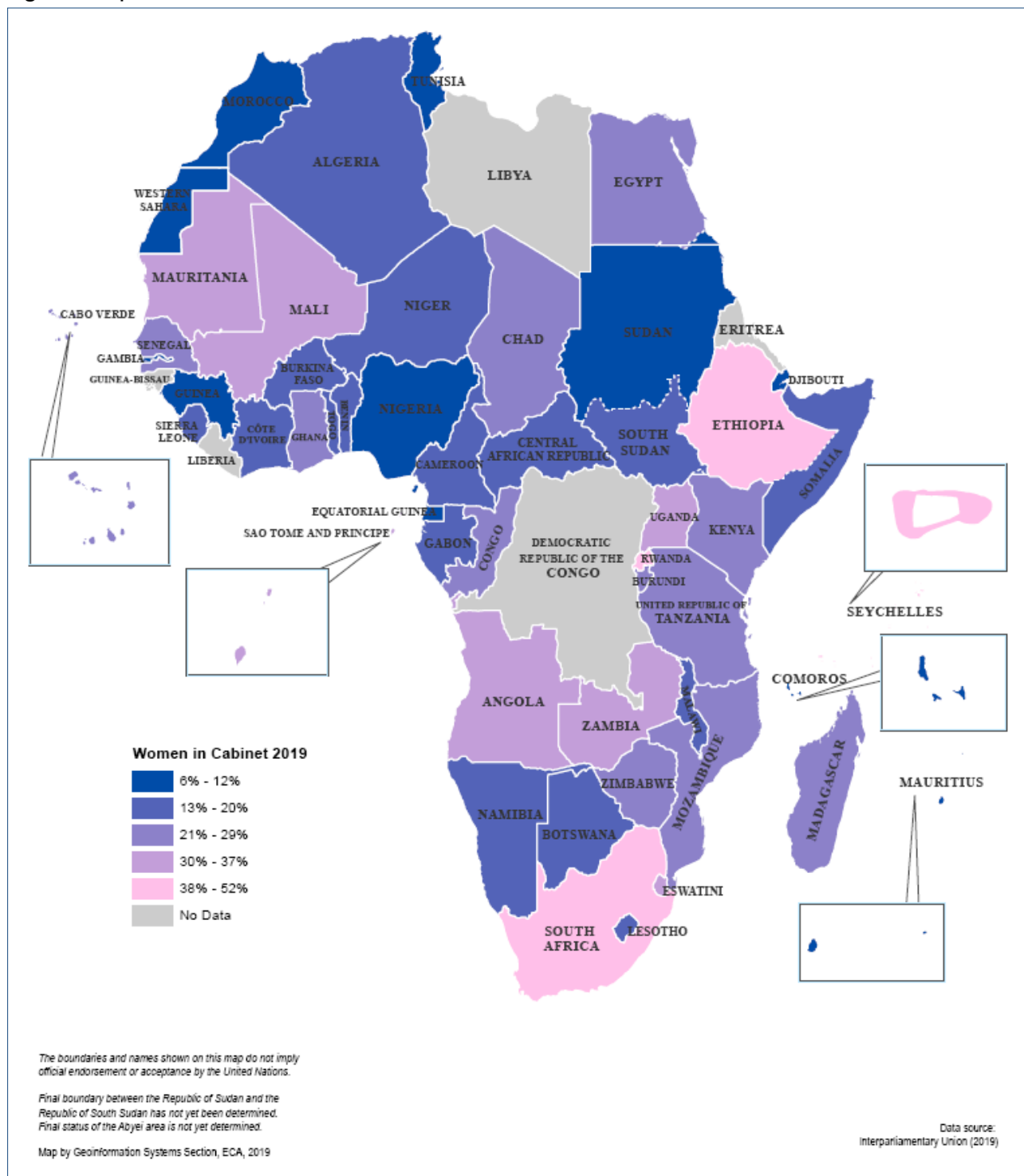
Source: *Statistical Archives of Interparliamentary Union, 1997–2019.*

Women in Cabinets

Recent increases in the proportion of women in cabinet positions in some African countries, notably the achievement of gender parity in the cabinets of Ethiopia, Rwanda and Seychelles, offer a unique opportunity for African women to demonstrate how gender parity can improve the quality of governance,² accelerate development and inspire the rest of the

continent and the world. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its specific target of ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making, acknowledges the instrumental role of women's participation in politics. This section provides a comparative perspective on the status of women's representation in the executive branch of Governments in African countries.

Figure 4: Representation of women in African cabinets



Source: Interparliamentary Union (1 January 2019).

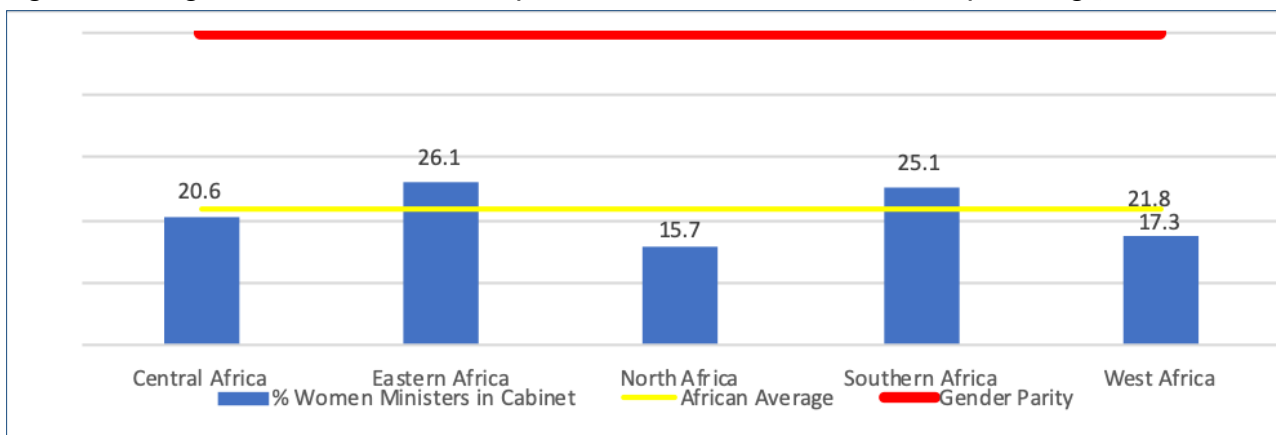
2 D. Dollar, R. Fisman and R. Gatti, (1999), "Are women really the 'fairer' sex? Corruption and women in government", *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, Vol. 46, 2001, pp. 423-429.

Figure 4 maps the proportion of women ministers in African cabinets. As of October 2018, there were 302 women ministers in Africa out of a total of 1,348 ministers. Consequently, women's representation in African cabinets remain on average at 22 per cent, which is less than half of the 50 per cent needed to attain gender parity.

Figure 5 breaks down the African average into five subregions. Notably, Southern Africa at 28 per cent and East Africa at 27 per cent are doing much better than West Africa (18 per cent) and North Africa (17 per cent). However, there is still a long way to go before there is gender parity in cabinets, even in the

top-performing subregions. For instance, Mauritius and Lesotho are lagging behind the average of Southern Africa with 9 per cent and 14 per cent female representation in their cabinets, respectively. In East Africa, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti and Somalia have less than 15 per cent female representation in their cabinets. In North Africa, Mauritania leads the way with 30 per cent female representation in the cabinet, while in Morocco only one female minister is present in the cabinet of 19 ministers. In West Africa, Mali leads the way with over 33 per cent female representation followed by Senegal with 26 per cent female representation.

Figure 5: Subregional overview of female representation in cabinets in Africa (as a percentage)

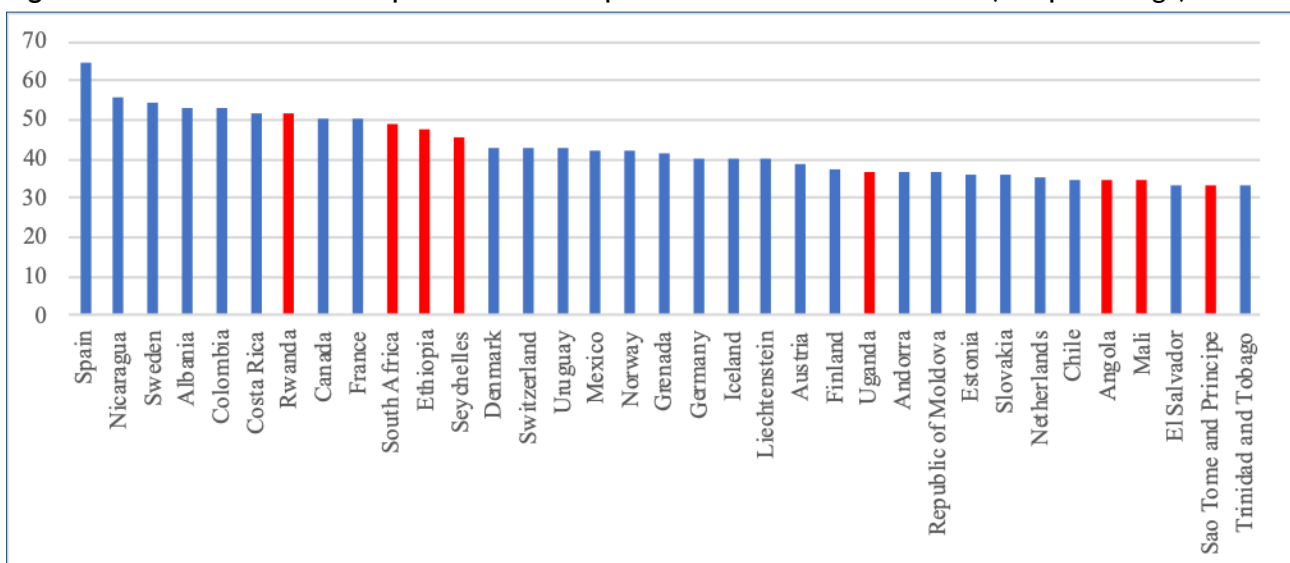


Source: *Interparliamentary Union (January 2019)*.

Globally, recent developments have increased the number of African countries attaining over 33 per cent female representation in their cabinets, as shown in figure 6. There are currently seven African countries in the list of countries with over 33 per cent

representation across the world. Consequently, Africa leads the developing world in female representation in cabinets, surpassing Latin America and the Caribbean.

Figure 6: Countries with over 33 per cent female representation in cabinets in 2019 (as a percentage)



Source: *Interparliamentary Union (1 January 2019)*.