



Pan African Women's Association (PAWA) welcomes the third session of the United Nations Human Rights Council Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, under the title:

III. "Making justice truly accessible to all"

As an NGO dedicated to promoting justice, recognition and development of Pan African Women in Africa and the Diaspora, Pawa has done significant work on this field. This work intensified this year in Switzerland as it marks the 50th anniversary of women's federal right to vote in Switzerland which was only granted in 1971. At that time, twelve women were voted into the federal national parliament, one at the upper chamber and eleven into the national council. Two of these women represented minorities groups in terms of religion and ethnic minorities. Fifty years later, Switzerland national parliament shows an increase of wom*n at the national parliament, with the upper chamber having twenty six percent and the national council having forty-one-point five percent female members and a decline in the representation of the minority wom*n, at one known member from the queer minority.

To mark the celebration of the 50th anniversary an NGO, Alliance F organised the second, women's only mock parliamentary session, with elected representatives from the twenty-six cantons of Switzerland. During the two days of the session, some members of the minorities, gave dramatic personal testimonies describing the hurdles minorities wom*n face when trying to contribute to the political landscape of Switzerland. The participants detailed covert and overt examples of how their race, religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity were used against them to deny them access to political spaces. Finally, the minorities also mentioned their reluctance to turn to the justice system for assistance when their rights have been violation because of the constant "victim blaming" and increased police violence against black and brown bodies.

The Swiss government needs to have a regulatory framework that will implement concrete measures to ensure that minority groups can exercise their political rights to run for office and get a fair chance to be elected at every instant of the government, provided they fulfil the basic requirements.

By granting minority wom*n easier access to active political participation, the Swiss government would pave way to a more holistic democracy, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies according to the SDG 5 and 16 respectively. With minority wom*n represented at the national federal level the Swiss would be including a large part of its population who have so far been excluded from political participation and stabilizing the democratic order in the long term.