

EPREUVE ORALE D'ANGLAIS

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2. African Women in Politics: Miles to Go before Parity is Achieved

Women's empowerment advocates in Africa are making their voices heard, with the full backing of international organizations such as the United Nations and the African Union. Many obstacles and benefits in women's way are identified. In the fight for gender equality, women around the world have advanced in small and large ways. Yet for women in Africa, progress is measured in micro steps, and the struggle has a long way to go.

The good news is that women's representation in political decision making has been on the rise globally. The not-so-good news is that the increase has been stubbornly slow, barely 1% in 2018 compared with the previous year. In 2018 the number of women ministers worldwide reached an all-time high at 20.7%. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of women seated in parliament grew in 2018, with a regional average share at 23.7%, according to the just-released 2019 edition of the biennial Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Map of Women in Politics.

On ministerial positions, the report highlights another striking gain – more women in Africa are now in charge of portfolios traditionally held by men than in 2017. There are 30% more women ministers of defense, 52.9% more women ministers of finance, and 13.6% more women ministers of foreign affairs. The usual practice is to appoint women to “soft issue” portfolios, such as social affairs, children and family. More women in politics leads to more inclusive decisions and can change people's image of what a leader looks like, added Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, formerly a minister and Deputy President in South Africa.

Two main obstacles prevent women from participating fully in political life, according to UN Women. These are structural barriers, whereby discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women's ability to run for office, and capacity gaps, which occur when women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders.