

Pass Affirmative Action Bill into law now

• Advocates demand

By Emelia Ennin Abbey and Bernice Nortey

THE Affirmative Action Bill Coalition has renewed its call for the passage of the Affirmative Action Gender Equality Bill into law.

They urged the current Parliament to pass the bill into law before rising in December.

"We want the Affirmative Action Bill passed now," members of the coalition said.

The bill, which has been pending in Parliament for several years, aims to promote gender equality and address systemic discrimination against women and marginalised groups.

The bill also seeks to ensure equal opportunities in education, employment and political representation.

Advocacy meeting

The Convenor of the Affirmative Action Bill Coalition, Sheila Minka-Premo, made the call during an advocacy meeting organised by Abantu Development, a non-governmental organisation, The Women's Manifesto Coalition

and the Affirmative Action Bill Coalition, with support from African Women's Development Fund yesterday.

The advocacy meeting was to enhance the efforts towards the passage of Ghana's Affirmative Action Bill into law.

Collective action

Ms Minka-Premo said the bill, which had undergone a number of revisions, was withdrawn from Parliament on June 14, and an updated version had since been laid, gone through the first reading and was currently before the Gender Committee in Parliament.

She emphasised the need for collective action to ensure the passage of the bill, which had been delayed due to various challenges.

Ms Minka-Premo highlighted six key justifications for the passage of the bill, including the marginalisation of women in leadership positions, constitutional requirements and international obligations.

She said Ghana's Constitution and international treaties required the government to ensure gender equality and equity but policies had not been effective in achieving that

goal.

The Affirmative Action Bill Coalition has been advocating the passage of the bill since 2011, and Ms Minka-Premo expressed optimism that the current Parliament would prioritise its passage.

She emphasised the need for sustained advocacy efforts, grass-roots mobilisation and strategic engagement with key stakeholders.

She called on the participants to join the Affirmative Action Bill Coalition and work together towards the common goal of achieving gender equality and social justice in Ghana.

Tortuous journey

A leading advocate for gender equality, Joana Opare, emphasised the need for collective action to push for the passage of the Affirmative Action Bill.

Ms Opare noted that the journey to the bill's passage had been "quite tortuous", recalling that in 2016, the bill went to Parliament at its final stages but elapsed.

Ms Opare urged the stakeholders to work together to demand equal opportunities and challenge the status quo.

"We must work together to ensure that the Affirmative Action Bill becomes a reality. It's time for us to demand equal opportunities and challenge the status quo."

The forum was attended by representatives from various sectors, including gender activists, representatives from civil society organisations, and women's rights groups to strategise and intensify efforts towards the bill's passage.

The participants expressed their support for the passage of the bill and committed to continue advocating gender equality and equity in the country.

They discussed strategies to build a broader movement, engage with policymakers and raise public awareness of the importance of the bill.

The discussion also touched on the need for sustained advocacy, grass-roots mobilisation and engagement with traditional and religious leaders to build support for the bill.

They indicated that the passage of the Affirmative Action Bill was a critical step towards addressing the systemic barriers that prevented women and marginalised groups from fully participating in Ghana's development.

With renewed momentum and collective action, the participants were hopeful that the bill would soon become a reality.

The meeting ended with a call to action, urging stakeholders to intensify their efforts and work towards the common goal of achieving gender equality and social justice in Ghana.