

**EAST AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' FORUM**

*Strengthening Civil Society in the Integration Process*



**PROPOSED  
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS  
AND  
EAST AFRICA LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY (EALA)  
COLLABORATION  
FRAMEWORK**

**MAY, 2015**

## **1.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

The revival of the East African Community (EAC) sought to build on historical ties between the Partner States of the Community, avoid past pitfalls and promote greater socio-economic, cultural, political and technological ties thereby realizing fast, balanced and sustainable development. One of the reasons captured in the EAC Treaty for the collapse of the original EAC in 1977 was the lack of strong participation of the private sector and civil society in the activities of the community. Consequently, when the EAC was re-established, the Treaty sought to secure the place of private sector and civil society in its activities.

At its 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council of Ministers directed the EAC secretariat to “formalize the forum provided for under Article 127(4) of the Treaty with a proposal on rules of procedure to guide the participation of the private sector and civil society and other interest groups.” This formed the commencement of efforts to develop a structured framework for dialogue with civil society and private sector. This effort led to the development of the Consultative Dialogue Framework (CDF), and its adoption by the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers (EAC/CM26/Decision 06). The CDF is a structured guide which is aimed at ensuring consultative participation and inclusiveness of Civil Society, Private Sector and other interest groups towards realizing the Community objectives and promoting a people centered integration process.

The East African Civil Society Organizations’ Forum (EACCSOF) is recognized as the apex body for civil society under the CDF. It has, in this role, participated in the organization of the annual Secretary General’s fora that have been organized as part of the CDF process. Members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) have taken part in the Annual Secretary General’s fora. However, the CDF does not provide details on the collaboration between CSOs and EALA.

The EALA Rules of Procedure call for involvement and input from the citizens. Enhanced engagements with civil society provide an avenue for realizing improved involvement. It is against this background that this document proposes a structured mechanism for collaboration between EALA and civil society.

The proposed collaboration framework is based on the following;

1. The need to contribute to the realization of EALA’s vision of an efficient, effective and people centered regional legislature.
2. The need to uphold the principle of a people-centered integration process as enshrined in the EAC Treaty.
3. EALA is the legislative assembly and its linkages with civil society are necessary as they significantly strengthen popular participation to ensure that legislation is responsive to peoples needs.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The overall objective of the collaboration between the civil society and EALA under the proposed framework shall be to allow CSOs and EALA to consultatively work towards realizing the Community Objectives and promote a people-centered integration process.

The specific objectives under the proposed framework are the following;

1. To provide a structured framework for consultation and dialogue between EALA, its National Chapters and Civil Society on EA integration process.
2. To establish clear and effective communication and feedback mechanisms between EALA and CSOs on matters of regional integration
3. To enhance coordination of CSO positions in their relationships and engagements with EALA.
4. To enable EALA draw on the CSO expertise and knowledge base in discharging their mandate through representation, legislation and oversight.

The guiding principles of the proposed collaboration are follows;

1. Mutual respect: Both parties will respect the independence, mandate and contribution of each other. Each Party commits to relate to one another on this basis, considering the unique and distinct role that each plays in society.
2. Value addition: engagement shall be based on the desire to add value to the EAC regional integration process.
3. Utmost good faith: every party commits to this principle, which requires honesty and trust. As such the parties will desist from trying to take advantage of each other, and ensure candor and transparency in the conduct of their mutual relations.
4. Accountability for actions: parties will be responsible and held to account for their actions in the EAC integration agenda and in dealings with each other.
5. Service to the people of East Africa: Through their diverse backgrounds and approaches, actions must be geared towards delivering the greatest benefit to the citizens of East Africa.
6. Unity in diversity: appreciating that the mandates, backgrounds and styles of operations of the parties are different. This diversity should be harnessed to ensure deepening and widening of the integration process and increasing its dividends to East Africans.

## **3.0 PROPOSED FRAMEWORK**

The proposed collaboration framework envisages the following;

1. The creation of an institutionalized structure with clear linkages at national and regional levels.
2. The designation of a focal point/office within EALA for ease of communication.
3. The establishment of fora for continuous dialogue between the parties.

## PROPOSED STRUCTURE

