



EAST AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' FORUM

Strengthening Civil Society in the Integration Processes

Plot N0. Taso 155 286, Nane Nane, Njiro, P.O. Box 12583, Arusha, Tanzania

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EACSOFF and EAC Secretariat Deepen Strategic Collaboration to Advance the East African Integration Agenda

Arusha, Tanzania | 26 June 2026

The East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSOFF) today paid a courtesy visit to the Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC), **H.E. Ambassador Stephen Patrick Mbundi**, at the EAC Headquarters in Arusha, reaffirming a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration in advancing an inclusive, people-centred and accountable East African integration process.

The high-level engagement provided an opportunity for EACSOFF to congratulate the Secretary General on his appointment and to discuss practical mechanisms for institutionalising collaboration between the EAC Secretariat and organised civil society across the eight EAC Partner States. The discussions centred on strengthening citizen participation in regional integration, enhancing policy implementation, promoting sustainable financing of the Community, and establishing structured mechanisms for continuous engagement.

The meeting brought together senior officials from the EAC Secretariat, including representatives from the Legal Affairs, Infrastructure, Social Sectors, Agriculture and Food Security, Planning, Resource Mobilisation, Communications and Youth departments.

The EACSOFF delegation was led by Ms. Lilian Alex, Chief Executive Officer of EACSOFF, and comprised representatives from SEATINI Uganda, Transparency International Kenya, the Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU), the EACSOFF Tanzania Chapter, Voice of Youth Tanzania, and other regional civil society organisations.

Background of the Courtesy Visit

As the apex regional platform for civil society organisations in the East African Community, EACSOFF continues to promote meaningful citizen participation in regional integration in accordance with the EAC Treaty. The courtesy visit underscored the Forum's commitment to fostering constructive institutional partnerships with the EAC Secretariat to support democratic governance, regional cooperation, sustainable development, and effective implementation of the Community's objectives.

The engagement also reflected EACSOFF's continued efforts to strengthen collaboration between regional institutions and citizens, recognising civil society as a strategic partner in delivering a more responsive and people-centred East African Community.



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Four Strategic Issues Presented

During the meeting, EACSO presented four strategic priorities intended to strengthen structured collaboration between the EAC Secretariat and organised civil society.

1. Official Observer Status for EACSO

EACSO requested the Secretary General's support in advancing the Forum's application for Official Observer Status within the EAC institutional framework. The Forum noted that observer status would strengthen structured citizen participation, improve policy dialogue, support implementation monitoring, and enhance accountability while complementing the mandates of the EAC organs.

2. Formation of Civil Society Technical Working Groups

The Forum proposed the establishment of thematic Technical Working Groups linking EAC Secretariat departments with civil society experts. The proposed mechanism would provide a structured platform for continuous technical collaboration, policy support, knowledge sharing, implementation monitoring, coordinated resource mobilisation, and joint programme development across priority sectors.

3. Sustainable Community Financing and Partner State Compliance

EACSO reaffirmed its commitment to supporting sustainable financing of the East African Community through constructive policy dialogue, public finance accountability, citizen engagement, and collaboration with Partner States to strengthen compliance with Community financial obligations and ensure effective implementation of regional programmes.

4. National Consultations Towards the Regional Civil Society Summit and the Secretary General's Forum

The Forum proposed coordinated national consultations across all eight EAC Partner States to generate evidence-based recommendations that will inform the forthcoming Regional Civil Society Summit and enrich discussions during the Secretary General's

Forum. The consultations are intended to strengthen citizen participation by consolidating national perspectives into regional policy recommendations.



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Secretary General's Response and Areas of Collaboration

The Secretary General welcomed EACSO's courtesy visit and recognised the important contribution of organised civil society in advancing the East African integration agenda. He reaffirmed the EAC Secretariat's commitment to maintaining open and constructive engagement with civil society organisations and encouraged continued collaboration through practical, solution-oriented partnerships.

He further encouraged EACSO to work closely with the relevant directorates and departments of the EAC Secretariat in developing thematic areas of cooperation and implementing joint initiatives. The Secretary General noted that while formal institutional mechanisms may require due process, the Secretariat remains open to continuous technical engagement with civil society across its various departments.

The discussions also explored opportunities for strengthened collaboration in resource mobilisation, policy dialogue, knowledge sharing, and joint implementation of programmes that contribute to the objectives of the East African Community. Both parties acknowledged the importance of building stronger partnerships among the EAC Secretariat, civil society organisations, the private sector and other stakeholders to accelerate delivery of the regional integration agenda.

Way Forward

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to deepen institutional collaboration through structured dialogue and sustained technical engagement. EACSO and the EAC Secretariat agreed to continue consultations on the proposed areas of cooperation, strengthen coordination between EACSO and relevant Secretariat departments, and explore opportunities for joint initiatives that promote citizen participation, accountability, policy implementation and sustainable regional development.

EACSO also reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the preparation of the Regional Civil Society Summit and contributing meaningfully to the Secretary General's Forum, ensuring that the voices of East African citizens continue to inform regional decision-making and integration processes.



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Quote from the Chief Executive Officer of EACSOFF

"Regional integration can only succeed when citizens and their organisations are recognised as strategic partners in implementation. EACSOFF remains committed to working constructively with the EAC Secretariat to institutionalise structured engagement, strengthen accountability, and ensure that the voices of East Africans continue to shape the regional integration agenda. We appreciate the Secretary General's openness and commitment to building this partnership."

– Ms. Lilian Alex

Chief Executive Officer, EACSOFF

Quote from the Secretary General of the EAC

"The East African Community remains open to constructive engagement with civil society organisations. Our doors are open for collaboration with EACSOFF and other stakeholders through the relevant departments of the Secretariat. We encourage civil society to bring practical proposals and solutions that advance the objectives of the Community and deliver tangible benefits to the people of East Africa."

– H.E. Ambassador Stephen Patrick Mbundi

Secretary General, East African Community

About EACSOFF

The East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSOFF) is the apex regional platform for civil society organisations in the East African Community. Guided by the EAC Treaty, EACSOFF works to promote an inclusive, people-centred and accountable regional integration process through policy engagement, research, advocacy, dialogue and strategic partnerships.

With over **300 member organisations** and national chapters across all **eight EAC Partner States**, EACSOFF provides a platform for civil society to contribute to democratic governance, sustainable development, peace and security, trade and investment, social inclusion, climate action, technology and digital policy, and other regional priorities that improve the wellbeing of East African citizens.



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