

Semi-Annual Newsletter



Citizen Empowerment | Policy engagement | Institutional Development

East African Civil Society
Organizations Forum



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the first half of 2026, the East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSOF) strengthened its role as a regional platform for civil society engagement, advancing democratic governance, human rights, and people-centred regional integration. EACSOF deepened collaboration with the EAC Secretariat, regional institutions, development partners, and civil society through high-level policy dialogues, advocacy initiatives, and strategic engagements.

The Forum contributed to discussions on governance, trade, women's leadership, agroecology, and regional accountability while promoting inclusive citizen participation. EACSOF also issued strategic statements on constitutionalism, civic space, media freedom, and the rule of law, reaffirming its commitment to democratic values and fundamental freedoms.

Through these interventions, EACSOF reinforced its position as a trusted regional voice, fostering partnerships that strengthen accountability, inclusive governance, and sustainable East African integration.

Regional Engagements and Strategic Partnerships



EACSO and EAC Secretariat Deepen Strategic Collaboration to Advance Regional Integration

The East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSO), led by Chief Executive Officer Ms. Lilian Alex, 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. The meeting reaffirmed a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration between the EAC Secretariat and organised civil society in advancing an inclusive, people-centred, and accountable East African integration process.



The discussions focused on enhancing structured engagement between the EAC Secretariat and civil society, promoting citizen participation in regional integration, and exploring opportunities for sustained technical collaboration, joint initiatives, and policy dialogue. Both parties expressed their commitment to strengthening partnerships that contribute to effective implementation of the East African Community's objectives and improve outcomes for East African citizens.

[READ MORE](#)





EACSOF Champions Women's Digital Leadership at the 2nd EAC Women's Intergenerational Dialogue

The East African Civil Society Organizations' Forum (EACSOF) participated in the 2nd EAC Women's Intergenerational Dialogue, held at the East African Community (EAC) Headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania, under the theme **"Women Leading the Digital Future: Harnessing Technology, Innovation and Emerging Opportunities for Mentorship and Transformative Leadership in East Africa."**

The two-day dialogue convened women leaders, policymakers, civil society organizations, academia, private sector representatives, and young women from across the East African Community to discuss strategies for advancing women's leadership, digital inclusion, mentorship, and participation in technology-driven development.



During the dialogue, EACSOF Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Lilian Alex, facilitated a panel discussion on **"Women in Digital Leadership and Governance."** The session highlighted the importance of strengthening women's participation in digital leadership and decision-making while addressing challenges such as limited digital skills, unequal access to technology, gender stereotypes, and underrepresentation in STEM and ICT sectors.

Participants called for greater investment in digital skills, mentorship, inclusive ICT policies, and leadership opportunities to advance women's role in East Africa's digital transformation.

EACSOF reaffirmed its commitment to promoting inclusive governance and empowering women and girls to lead in the digital era.



Regional Stakeholders Advance Citizen-Centered Integration at the EAC Secretary General Convening 2026

The inaugural EAC Secretary-General Convening 2026 brought together regional institutions, policymakers, civil society, and private sector actors in Arusha, Tanzania, to review progress, address implementation challenges, and strengthen collaboration within the East African Community.



As a member and former Chair of the Regional Dialogue Committee (RDC), EACSOF participated in discussions on inclusive governance and citizen engagement. EACSOF CEO, Ms. Lilian Alex, emphasized the importance of the Consultative Dialogue Framework in ensuring citizens' voices shape regional decision-making, while calling for stronger institutional support and coordinated implementation.

The Convening concluded with the adoption of a Communique outlining recommendations to strengthen accountability, stakeholder participation, and citizen-centered regional integration. EACSOF reaffirmed its commitment to advancing inclusive dialogue and ensuring civil society remains a key partner in East African integration.



Strengthening Agroecological Trade and Market Access in East Africa

EACSOF participated in the EAC Capacity Building Meeting on Identification, Certification & Trade of Agroecological Products held in Arusha, organized by SEATINI Uganda in collaboration with TABIO, representatives from the Government of Tanzania, and other agricultural stakeholders.

The meeting convened regional actors to examine opportunities and persistent challenges related to agroecological product certification, cross-border trade facilitation, and increased awareness of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Discussions focused on strengthening market access for agricultural producers, improving certification mechanisms, and addressing barriers that continue to limit the participation of small-scale traders within regional trade systems.

Representing EACSOF, CEO Ms. Lilian Alex contributed to the dialogue by emphasizing the need for stronger grassroots awareness, enhanced political commitment, and simplified certification procedures. She further highlighted the importance of expanding digital trade systems that can reduce bureaucratic barriers and enable farmers and small-scale traders to access regional markets more efficiently.

The engagement reinforced the importance of inclusive trade frameworks that support local producers, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and strengthen regional integration through accessible and equitable market opportunities across East Africa.



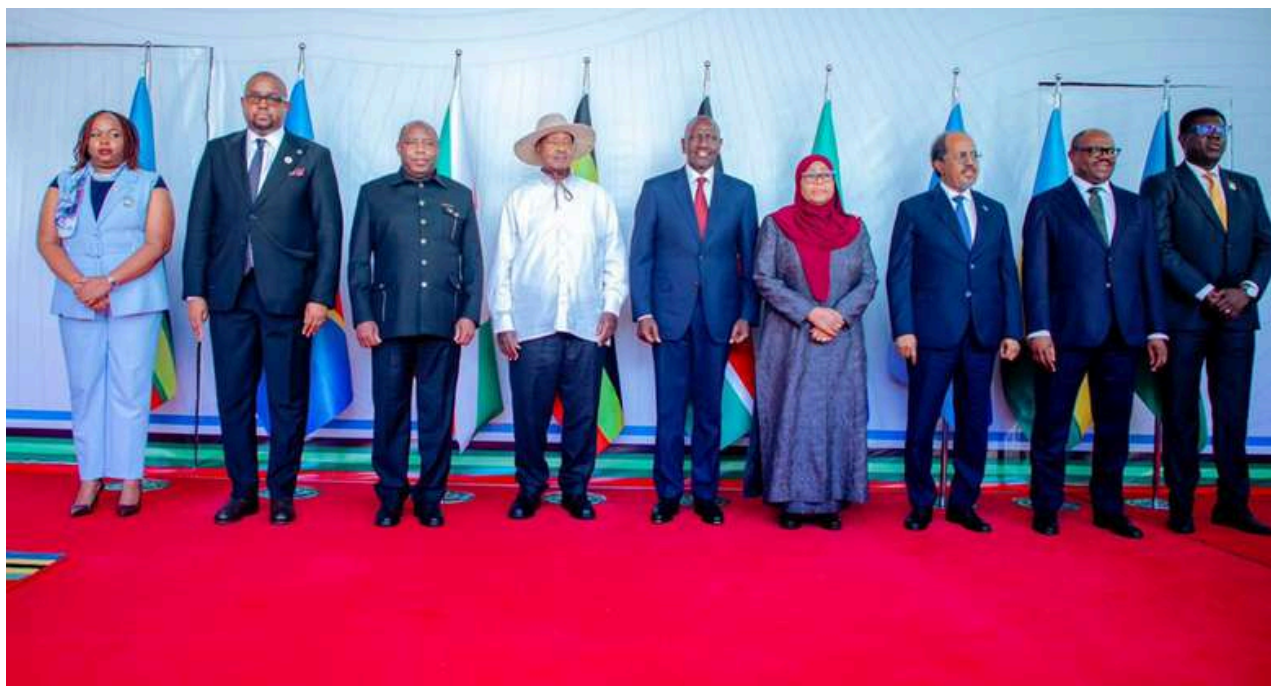
EACSOF Witnesses Leadership Transition at the EAC Secretariat

During the 2026 EAC Secretary General Convening, stakeholders witnessed the official leadership transition at the EAC Secretariat. Outgoing Secretary General Veronica M. Nduva was recognized for her distinguished service, including reviving the Secretary General's Forum after a six-year hiatus and strengthening regional dialogue.

EACSOF joined regional partners in acknowledging her contribution and welcomed incoming Secretary General Stephen Patrick Mbundi, expressing confidence in his leadership and commitment to stronger institutional coordination, civil society engagement, and citizen-centered regional integration.



EACSOF also emphasized the importance of sustaining the Secretary General's Forum as a key platform for inclusive dialogue, accountability, and collaboration across the East African Community.



Participation in the EAC Heads of State Summit

The EAC Heads of State Summit serves as the highest decision-making organ of the East African Community, bringing together regional leaders to review progress and set the strategic direction of the integration agenda.

The 25th Ordinary Summit, held on 7th March 2026 in Arusha, was convened under the theme “Deepening Integration for Improved Livelihoods of EAC Citizens.” Discussions focused on accelerating regional integration, strengthening cooperation, and addressing emerging economic and governance priorities across Partner States.

A key outcome of the summit was a leadership transition, with Ms. Veronica M. Nduva concluding her tenure as secretary general of the East African Community and Ambassador Stephen Patrick Mbundi sworn in to serve for the 2026–2031 term. Additionally, H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda assumed the role of Chairperson of the EAC Heads of State Summit, succeeding H.E. President William Samoei Ruto of Kenya.

Leaders also addressed financial sustainability challenges within the Community, agreeing to revise the contribution framework from a 65% equal and 35% GDP-based model to a 50:50 structure. Partner States with outstanding arrears were granted a two-year period to settle their arrears, along with a partial waiver to strengthen the operational capacity of EAC institutions.

EACSO participated in the Summit, continuing its civil society presence and engagement on this high-level regional platform.



EACSOF Engages in EACJ Proceedings on Financial Compliance

The East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSOF) has continued to participate in legal proceedings before the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) in Reference No. 33 of 2020, a case concerning the compliance of Partner States with their financial obligations to the East African Community (EAC).

The case filed by EACSOF addresses the obligation of Partner States to fulfill their financial commitments to the EAC, including the remittance of assessed contributions in accordance with the provisions of the EAC Treaty.

In line with the directives of the Court, the matter has now formally proceeded to the mediation stage, where the parties involved are expected to engage in discussions aimed at reaching an amicable resolution on the issues raised in the case.

This development comes alongside other recent regional engagements, including the 25th Ordinary Summit of the EAC Heads of State held on 7 March 2026 in Arusha, where leaders also discussed the financial challenges facing the Community, partly resulting from delays by some Partner States in remitting their contributions. During the Summit, leaders agreed to review the contribution framework of Partner States to strengthen the financial sustainability of EAC institutions.

EACSOF will continue to engage in the court process in full compliance with the procedures and requirements of the Court, while reiterating the importance of accountability and the fulfillment of financial obligations by Partner States in accordance with the EAC Treaty.



EACSOE Participates in Policy Dialogue on Simplified Cross-Border Trade

A Policy Dialogue Forum bringing together stakeholders from COMESA, EAC, and SADC was held on 18–19 February 2026 in Nairobi, focusing on strengthening the implementation of the Tripartite Simplified Trade Regime (TSTR) as a key driver of cross-border trade and regional integration.

The meeting convened civil society, trade stakeholders, and regional institutions to explore how simplified trade frameworks (STRs) can be implemented more effectively, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration between Regional Economic Communities and non-state actors.

Participants highlighted that such collaboration is essential to ensure trade policies directly benefit small-scale cross-border traders, particularly women and youth, as well as the private sector across the COMESA–EAC–SADC region. The discussions also provided a platform to examine the role of civil society in advancing inclusive trade policies and to identify strategies for increasing the participation of youth and women in cross-border trade.

EACSOE was part of the engagement, reinforcing its commitment to promoting inclusive and participatory trade policies across the region.





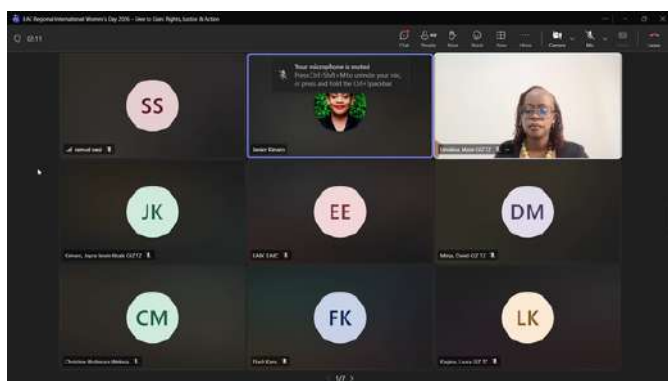
EACSOF Advances Regional Advocacy to End Gender-Based Violence

EACSOF participated in the Reshaping an African Feminist Agenda to End Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Convening, organized by the Feminist Network for Gender Transformative Development (FEMNET). The convening brought together women's rights organizations and feminist leaders from across Africa to strengthen collaboration and advocacy on GBV prevention, survivor-centred approaches, digital safety, and movement building. A key outcome was the validation of the Shared African Feminist GBV Action Agenda, which provides a common framework for coordinated action across the continent. Building on these outcomes, EACSOF will integrate the Action Agenda into its regional advocacy to promote stronger policies, greater accountability, and collaborative efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence across the East African Community.



EACSOF Contributes to the O3 Regional Advisory Group Meeting in Livingstone, Zambia

EACSOF participated in the Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Regional Advisory Group (RAG) Meeting held in Livingstone, Zambia, bringing together representatives from governments, civil society, regional economic communities, youth networks, and development partners. The meeting reviewed the O3 Programme's implementation progress, assessed key challenges and emerging opportunities, and explored strategies to strengthen programme outcomes for adolescents and young people. As a Regional Advisory Group member, EACSOF contributed to discussions on improving programme effectiveness, enhancing multi-stakeholder collaboration, and increasing the visibility of the O3 Programme. Moving forward, EACSOF will continue supporting regional efforts that promote the rights, health, education, and meaningful participation of adolescents and young people while advocating for coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable interventions across the East African Community.



Women Shaping East Africa's Digital Future

Through participation in a regional virtual forum, EACSOF highlighted the importance of addressing gender disparities in digital access and promoting inclusive digital ecosystems across the region.



World NGO Day

EACSOF joined the global community in commemorating World NGO Day, recognizing the critical role of civil society organizations in advancing democratic governance, accountability, and sustainable development.

The Forum reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening civic engagement and fostering partnerships that amplify the impact of civil society across East Africa.

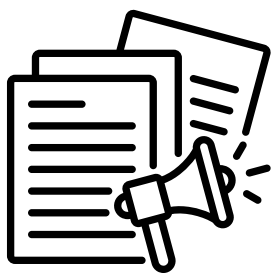
[Read More](#)



EACSOF Participates in LIFTED Project Engagement Meeting

EACSOF, as a beneficiary of the LIFTED Project, participated in a meeting to review progress, assess achievements, and plan 2026 operations and budgets.

The discussions examined emerging policy shifts and their implications for effective implementation across the region.



REGIONAL STATEMENTS AND ADVOCACY

CALLING FOR THE PROTECTION OF CIVIC SPACE AND THE RULE OF LAW

EACSOF expressed concern over the remand of its President, Dr. Sarah Bireete, urging respect for due process, the right to liberty, and regional treaty obligations. The statement called for the protection of civic space, judicial independence, and democratic participation across the East African Community.

[READ MORE](#)

CALLING FOR THE PROTECTION OF CIVIC SPACE AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

EACSOF expressed concern over the suspension of key civil society organizations in Uganda, warning of its impact on civic space, democratic participation, and electoral integrity. The statement called for the immediate restoration of civic freedoms and adherence to regional and continental democratic standards.

[READ MORE](#)

DEFENDING CONSTITUTIONALISM, MEDIA FREEDOM, AND THE RULE OF LAW IN UGANDA

EACSOF joined regional legal and human rights institutions in calling for the protection of constitutional governance, media freedom, personal liberty, and the rule of law in Uganda, while urging respect for due process and fundamental human rights.

[READ MORE](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS



Join EACSOFF and connect with a vibrant network of civil society organizations across East Africa. Gain access to advocacy platforms, capacity-building, and policy influence to strengthen communities across the EAC. Together, we amplify civil society's impact on governance, human rights, and social justice. Join us and be part of the change.

Become a Member

✉ eacsof@gmail.com

☎ +255 762 950 179

www.eacsof.net