



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. WILLIAM
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REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF
THE DEFENCE FORCES AND OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON
OF THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY SUMMIT OF HEADS
OF STATE, DURING THE 25TH ORDINARY SUMMIT OF
THE EAC HEADS OF STATE**

MARCH 7, 2026

ARUSHA, TANZANIA



**Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I welcome you all to this 25th Ordinary Summit of EAC Heads of State.
2. Let me begin by thanking you for entrusting me with the privilege of presiding over the affairs of our beloved Community and serving as your chairperson since 30th November, 2024. I am grateful to Your Excellencies for the diligent and gracious support extended to me during my tenure.
3. When I assumed this role, I committed to prioritise key deliverables to drive our integration agenda. These include enhancing peace, security, stability, and economic development in the region; increasing intra-EAC trade and investments; strengthening private sector engagement and the involvement of MSMEs in driving economic transformation; and accelerating the conclusion of the EAC-European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).
4. Additionally, I committed to address non-tariff barriers to trade by enhancing infrastructure connectivity and regulatory harmonisation, and progressing our shared aspirations for a political confederation.



5. I am delighted to report that we have made significant progress on these key areas and, as a result, our community is marching forward towards an even more integrated and prosperous future.
6. On our commitment to enhance peace, stability and economic development in the region, the Community partnered with other stakeholders to address some of the peace and security challenges affecting our region, especially in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.
7. You may recall that under the EAC-led Nairobi Process on the restoration of peace and security in Eastern DRC, we agreed to adopt a coordinated approach and merge the Luanda and EAC-led Nairobi processes.
8. Subsequently, His Excellency Emmerson Mnangagwa, the then Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community, and I engaged several times on this matter, and I wish to confirm that the African process towards restoring peace and security in Eastern DRC is now fully under the leadership of the African Union.
9. A panel of African Facilitators was appointed to support the peace process, and the AU appointed a mediator, who presented a progress report on the peace process to the just-concluded 39th Session of the AU General Assembly in February 2026.



10. On our commitment to increase intra-EAC trade and investments, I am pleased to report that trade among Partner States has continued to register positive growth, with the value of trade within the region rising by nearly 22%, from \$33 billion in 2024 to \$40.3 billion in 2025.
11. Exports from the region grew significantly by 32% to \$19.6 billion, while imports rose more moderately by 13% to \$20.6 billion. This narrowed the region's trade deficit from \$3.4 billion to \$1.0 billion during the same period.

Excellencies,

12. A key highlight of our meeting today will be the launch of the EAC Customs Bond under the Single Customs Territory. The Customs Bond was rolled out by Partner States in January 2025 after a successful pilot in the Republic of Uganda.
13. This trade facilitation instrument will enhance Customs security to ensure payment of duties and taxes if goods placed under Customs control are not properly delivered or accounted for. The launch of the bond is therefore a key milestone in strengthening the implementation of the Single Customs Territory and facilitating the movement of goods across our region.
14. The region also recognises the central role of the private sector and small and medium enterprises as key drivers of economic transformation.



In this connection, I wish to report that in November 2025, I presided over the opening ceremony of the 25th East African Community Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Trade Fair, also known as the Jua Kali-Nguvu Kazi Exhibition, in Nairobi, which attracted over 2,000 participants from all the Partner States. The event showcased our diversity in creativity and innovation while providing an opportunity for peer learning and job creation among our people.

15. Our engagement with the private sector also focused on our shared objective to promote a culture of quality production across all sectors of the economy while enhancing the role of women in regional trade. In 2025, I awarded 14 firms from the Partner States, dealing in agro-processing, logistical services and steel products, with the EAC Regional Quality Award and recognised 16 EAC Women Champions in Trade.

Excellencies,

16. Our region remains a key part of the global trading ecosystem, and accessing international markets is key to the economic transformation of our community. Our efforts to conclude an EPA with the European Union and other trade agreements are therefore essential to ensure fair access to markets for our products.
17. Since our last meeting, the Secretariat conducted a study among Partner States between July and October 2025 to facilitate an in-depth analysis of the implications of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union.



18. I am happy to report that one of the key recommendations from the study is that there is a strong consensus among all Partner States to complete the EAC-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. The conclusion of this process will be a key milestone for export performance and supply capacity for the bloc.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. A key obstacle to trade in our region is the ever-evolving non-tariff barriers (NTBs) that continue to hinder effective trade between and among Partner States. Eliminating NTBs, enhancing infrastructure connectivity and regulatory harmonisation remained a key priority during my stewardship of the Community.
20. I am therefore pleased to inform you that our concerted efforts to eliminate non-tariff barriers have yielded results, with the number of reported barriers declining by about 56%, from 61 in 2024 to 27 in 2025.
21. Further, it is encouraging to note that the Community continues to harmonise regulatory frameworks to facilitate implementation of commitments under the Customs Union and the Common Market to support and enhance trade among Partner States.



22. As a result, Partner States have developed procedures in sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, compilation and dissemination of statistics, and common procedures for notification among Partner States on national regulatory measures introduced by Partner States. I am confident that once these procedures are adopted by the Council, they will further facilitate the fulfilment of our commitments.
23. On infrastructure development, the Community is actively enhancing the capacity of its major transport corridors through the development of high-speed expressways and Standard Gauge Railways. This is aimed at accommodating surging intra-regional traffic and bolstering economic efficiency.
24. Significant implementation milestones have been achieved on key arteries, including feasibility studies for the Nairobi-Nakuru-Mau Summit highway in Kenya, the Kampala-Jinja and Jinja-Malaba/Busia-Kisumu Road corridors in Uganda, and the Morogoro-Chalinze section in Tanzania. A market-sounding conference for the Jinja-Malaba-Busia-Kisumu section was held in November 2025.
25. The construction of the Mombasa-Tanga-Bagamoyo coastal road has progressed to 62% completion, with 460km of the 720km stretch already operational, opening new economic corridors and reducing transit time for cargo by 40%.



26. In a similar trajectory, the rail transportation sector has witnessed a remarkable transformation. The Kenya-Uganda Standard Gauge Railway agreement, signed in March 2025, commits both nations to completing the Nairobi-Kampala link by 2028, cutting travel time from 14 hours to 4 hours and freight costs by 35%. The Tanzanian SGR services, which started on 14th June, 2024, move an average of 10,000 passengers a day from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma, while freight services from Pugu Station to Ihumwa ICF started on 27th June, 2025.
27. On inland lake transportation, the Lake Victoria transport corridor has been revitalised through the commissioning of six locally constructed cargo vessels in the past three years, with a combined capacity of 3,500 tonnes, increasing cargo movement across the lake to 890,000 tonnes annually.

Excellencies,

28. In the service sectors, regional tourism has experienced growth through our unified approach. The EAC's participation in the Berlin International Tourism Bourse in March 2025, as a single destination, showcased our collective tourism potential to 10,000 international exhibitors and 160,000 visitors.
29. In terms of people-to-people and intergovernmental cooperation, three Partner States (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) successfully hosted the African Nations Championship (CHAN), registering a very remarkable performance.



30. I am confident that we have set the tone, and with the investments we are making in sporting infrastructure, we are moving beyond our traditional athletics to competitive and commercialised sports and sporting value chains that will create jobs for our people. Our commitment to value chains in sports remains steadfast as we prepare to jointly host the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) tournament in 2027.

Your Excellencies,

31. The Community continues to make progress in advancing regional digital integration as a critical pillar of our economic transformation and the realisation of the EAC Single Digital Market. In September 2025, the EAC adopted the United Nations Global Digital Compact, which promotes an open, safe, and secure digital future for all.
32. In July 2025, the EAC joined the Artificial Intelligence for Good Impact Initiative, which seeks to drive meaningful change using AI technologies and telecommunications, advance global AI capacity, and provide a platform to democratise AI education and foster global capacity building.
33. These steps are building blocks for a trusted, inter-operable and inclusive digital economy that supports trade, financial integration, innovation, and service delivery across our borders.



Excellencies,

34. Looking ahead, there is a need to explore new frontiers of cooperation that address the growing needs of our people. The Community has an opportunity to leverage emerging technologies to drive economic transformation for its youthful population.
35. A deliberate and strategic focus on the development of integrated digital infrastructure, harmonisation of ICT policies and promotion of digital literacy across the region can leapfrog the development of our region by connecting businesses and governments while creating immense opportunities for our people.
36. Consolidating value addition in textiles also presents immediate opportunities. The EAC must harmonise textile standards, provide resources for ginning and spinning factories, and jointly market EAC textiles to global buyers. The European, Asian, and African markets offer combined opportunities worth \$6.8 billion annually if we position ourselves strategically.

Ladies and gentlemen,

37. The achievements we have recorded over the past year demonstrate that the EAC is capable of delivering transformative change when we work together with unity of purpose and clarity of vision.



38. While we celebrate these achievements, we must acknowledge persistent challenges that require our collective resolve and action. Delayed and non-remittance of statutory contributions to the EAC budget continue to hamper our ability to implement development projects and fulfil our collective commitments.
39. This challenge heavily undermines our financial sustainability, viability, and credibility as a regional organisation capable of delivering on our promises to our citizens.
40. It is therefore our noble duty to honour our respective financial obligations to the Community promptly, to build a resilient, credible, and fully equipped Community capable of delivering on the aspirations of our people.
41. As I hand over the chairmanship of the EAC Summit, I take this opportunity to register my sincere appreciation to all members of the Summit of the EAC Heads of State for the goodwill and cooperation extended to me and to the Republic of Kenya since 30th November 2024, when I assumed the position as Chair of the EAC.
42. I also wish to commend the Council of Ministers for their dedication and the excellent work they have done in furthering the integration process.
43. I also express my appreciation to the staff of the Community for the role they continue to play in steering the EAC to greater heights.



44. In particular, I congratulate Secretary-General Veronica Nduva for successfully steering and realigning the Community over the past 20 months. In the same vein, I wish to congratulate the newly appointed Secretary-General. As you take up the mantle, we are counting on you to build on the efforts of your predecessors and take the Community to the next level.
45. Finally, I wish the incoming Chair great success as they steer the Community towards the realisation of our common vision of a prosperous East African region.

I thank you.

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