



EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

For Immediate Release

EAC CONCLUDES 2ND WOMEN'S INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE, ADOPTS THE ARUSHA STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INTO THE DIGITAL FUTURE

Arusha, Tanzania — June 26, 2026 — The East African Community (EAC) today brought the historic 2nd Women's Intergenerational Dialogue to a successful conclusion at the EAC Headquarters in Arusha, adopting the landmark **Arusha Statement of Commitment** on Women's Leadership into the Future alongside a comprehensive 2026 to 2028 EAC Women's Leadership Roadmap. Over two days of intensive deliberation, EALA women parliamentarians, civil society leaders, technology experts, youth representatives, and policymakers from across the region converged to declare the digital frontier the next decisive arena for women's leadership in the Community.

The Dialogue was convened by the EALA Women's Caucus in partnership with the EAC Secretariat, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Tengeru Institute for Community Development, the National Women's Research and Documentation Centre, World Speech Day Women, Women LEAD South Africa, and the EAC apex bodies. Building on the foundational work of the inaugural Dialogue held in July 2024, whose thirty-two commitments and ten general recommendations laid the groundwork for regional action, this second convening confronted the accelerating pace of technological change with a singular resolve: that women must be architects, not merely beneficiaries, of East Africa's digital transformation.

A Declaration of Treaty-Grounded Purpose

The Arusha Statement of Commitment affirms that gender equality, the empowerment of women, and women's leadership in the digital era are not peripheral to the East African Community but sit at the heart of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC, the Vision 2050, the Common Market Protocol, and the institutional mandate of every Organ and Institution of the Community. The Dialogue committed to ensuring that the outcomes of this gathering are transmitted through the Sectoral Council on Gender, Youth, Children, Persons with Disabilities and Community Development to the Council of Ministers, and where the substance warrants it, to the Summit of Heads of State, with full integration into the budgets, work programmes, and reporting cycles of the Community. Crucially, participants resolved that gender responsiveness must be embedded

from the outset in the developing EAC Artificial Intelligence Strategy and the EAC Digital Transformation Strategy, so that existing biases are not hardcoded into the laws, policies, systems, and technologies of the shared digital future.

Forging a Regional Protocol on Digital Governance and Safety

In a landmark decision, the Dialogue called upon the EAC Secretariat and the East African Legislative Assembly to pursue the development of a regional Protocol on Digital Governance, Digital Safety and Technology-Facilitated Harm. This Protocol would establish shared values, principles, standards, and obligations across the Community, and shall include clear obligations for Partner States, domestication requirements, budgetary commitments, institutional responsibilities, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, implementation timelines, and explicit grassroots dissemination obligations. As a first operational step, the EAC Secretariat and EALA will commission a coordinated regional audit of existing laws, policies, court decisions, and institutional frameworks across Partner States on cybercrime, data protection, online abuse, and digital harm, to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and opportunities for harmonisation. The Statement further affirms that law on the digital frontier should not be punitive only: regional and national frameworks must balance protection with innovation, facilitating trade, education, entrepreneurship, service delivery, and regional integration alongside safety and accountability.

Confronting Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

Recognising that digital harm has become a pervasive barrier to women's participation and leadership, the Dialogue committed to the establishment of a Regional Digital Safety Observatory within the EAC framework, mandated to document cases, collect regional data, monitor trends, identify early-warning patterns of coordinated online attack, and inform evidence-based policy and legislation. The EALA, working with Partner State parliaments, the East Africa Law Society, civil society, and the private sector technology community, is called upon to initiate within twelve months the development of harmonised regional standards on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, including common definitions, reporting mechanisms, evidence preservation procedures, and platform accountability. A survivor-centred response is central to this commitment, ensuring that women and girls who experience digital harm have access to counselling, psychosocial support, legal aid, safe reporting channels, and clear guidance on evidence preservation, with healing, mediation, and rehabilitation recognised as part of the institutional response — not afterthoughts to it. The cross-border dimensions of digital harm receive particular attention, with commitments to protecting women entrepreneurs, content creators, and public figures whose work and digital presence span Partner State borders through harmonised legal protection, mutual legal assistance, and accessible regional reporting mechanisms. Technology platforms and mobile network operators operating in the region are called upon to publish transparent policies and reporting mechanisms on online harassment, impersonation, scams, fraud, AI-generated abuse, and gendered disinformation, and to establish accessible local survivor support arrangements.

Championing Women in STEM, Artificial Intelligence, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The Dialogue committed to building deliberate mentorship and leadership pipelines that extend from girls in STEM through to women in artificial intelligence, law, policy, regulation, and technology leadership. Partner States, the Inter-University Council for East Africa, and the East African Science and Technology Commission are called upon to support the establishment of regional STEM and AI innovation centres for women and girls, ensuring that AI solutions developed in the region are relevant, affordable, and useful to rural and underserved communities. Participants recognised that women do not lack ideas; what they often lack is access, mentorship, capital, markets, and enabling systems. To address this, the Dialogue committed to strengthening the financing, market access, and digital capability of women-led Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across the Common Market through the coordinated use of the Council of Women and Youth Associations (COYWA), the Pan-African e-Commerce Initiative, the 50 Million African Women Speak Platform, and the Simplified Trade Regime.

Advancing Women's Political Leadership in the Digital Era

The Dialogue reaffirmed the Treaty requirement that not less than one third of the elected Members of the East African Legislative Assembly from each Partner State shall be women, and committed to working with Partner State parliaments to deliver demonstrable progress toward this requirement and, beyond it, toward genuine parity. Through Partner State governments, electoral commissions, and political parties, the Dialogue committed to the adoption of gender-responsive frameworks for digital campaigning, electoral integrity in the age of artificial intelligence, and the protection of women candidates and women in public life from online attack, including deepfakes and coordinated disinformation. Affirming the principle of equity over formal equality, participants recognised that women begin from different starting points and that women's leadership therefore requires intentional, programmatic measures with clear targets, mechanisms, resources, and accountability. The Dialogue further endorsed the EALA Youth Caucus, established by resolution of the East African Legislative Assembly in March 2024, as a permanent intergenerational interface within the legislative architecture of the Community.

Mentorship, Mental Health and Digital Well-Being

In a holistic approach to leadership development, the Dialogue endorsed the EAC Women's Intergenerational Dialogue Mentorship Framework and launched the Mentorship E-Book, featuring the reflections of thirty women leaders across the region. The Dialogue affirmed that digital literacy must include not only technical skills but also emotional well-being, stress management, resilience, self-awareness, and healthy digital habits, committing to partnerships with wellness and mental health organisations to support women, young people, and communities affected by digital harm and digital fatigue. Participants further committed to ensuring that young women are represented as observers at meetings of the Sectoral Council on Gender, Youth, Children, Persons with Disabilities and Community Development, and that young women's representation features in EAC consultation and policy formulation processes as a matter of institutional practice.

Data Governance, Sovereignty and Digital Infrastructure

Recognising that data has become a geopolitical instrument and that those who control data increasingly control economic, political, and security power, the Dialogue committed to strengthening data governance, data protection, and data sovereignty in the East African Community. Data sovereignty, however, must be pursued in sequence with foundational investment, and the Dialogue committed to working with Partner States to expand reliable electricity generation, affordable high-speed internet connectivity, and digital infrastructure into rural and underserved areas. The Statement further commits to ensuring that digital service delivery — particularly in health, education, social protection, and the services women and communities rely on most — is prioritised in national and regional budgets, with affirmative measures taken to extend digital systems to the most marginalised constituencies.

Grassroots Localisation, Sustainability and Institutional Accountability

The Dialogue adopted a deliberate strategy of grassroots localisation, committing that the regional commitments contained in the Statement, and any subsequent Protocol or instrument, shall be disseminated to the grassroots through local leaders, civil society organisations, women's groups, youth groups, schools, universities, professional bodies, bar associations, faith institutions, and the media, in simple and accessible language and in local languages. The Dialogue called upon academia, research institutions, and the National Women's Research and Documentation Centre to generate gender-disaggregated evidence necessary to inform laws, policies, and programmes, and to localise regional commitments to Partner State and community realities.

With immediate effect, the Dialogue established the EAC Women's Intergenerational Dialogue Steering Committee, comprising representatives of the EALA Women's Caucus, the EAC Secretariat, the Tengeru Institute for Community Development, and one civil society representative selected through a transparent and inclusive process, mandated to meet at least twice per year to oversee the implementation of the Statement and the accompanying Roadmap. The Dialogue committed to a biennial reporting cycle, with outcomes integrated into the EAC Gender Progress Report and aligned with the Beijing Platform for Action, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring that future dialogues are maintained as a standing biennial event.

Voices of Leadership

Speaking at the conclusion of the Dialogue, **Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga**, Chairperson of the EAC Council of Ministers, declared: *"Time is moving fast. Technology is advancing rapidly. If women lag behind, they will be excluded from the opportunities of the future. We must therefore act with urgency. As leaders, we shall do our part to support the recommendations of this Dialogue where necessary, and to review and strengthen the policies and laws that are already in place."*

H.E. Amb. Stephen P. Mbundi, Secretary General of the East African Community, affirmed: *"Gender equality, the empowerment of women, and women's leadership in the digital era sit at the heart of the Treaty, the Vision 2050, the Common Market Protocol, and the institutional mandate of every Organ and Institution of the Community."*

Hon. Amb. Fatuma Ndangiza, Chairperson of the EALA Women's Caucus, added: *"Inclusion in the digital economy does not happen on its own; it has to be designed. The Common Market of the future will be built on payment systems, on platforms, on artificial intelligence, and on data, and the question of who builds it, who owns it, who is protected by it, and who is paid by it, is being settled in this decade."*

The Arusha Statement of Commitment on Women's Leadership into the Future, the 2026 to 2028 EAC Women's Leadership Roadmap comprising thirty-one specific actions with designated lead institutions, the Concept Note of the Dialogue, the Mentorship E-Book, and high-resolution photographs are available on request from the Office of the Clerk of EALA.

— ENDS —

ABOUT:

The EAC Women's Intergenerational Dialogue was established as a regional convening to advance the leadership of women across generations in the work of regional integration. The 1st EAC Women's Intergenerational Dialogue was held in Arusha on 2 and 3 July 2024 and produced thirty-two commitments and ten general recommendations. The 2nd Dialogue, building on that record, deliberately addressed the digital frontier as the next decisive arena for women's leadership in the Community.

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) Women Caucus is an institutional platform dedicated to advancing gender equality, women's empowerment, and inclusive governance across the East African Community (EAC). The caucus actively integrates gender perspectives into regional integration, advocates for transformative policies, and spearheads intergenerational dialogues to mentor young women in leadership

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