23RD SEPTEMBER, 2024

EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

HIGHLIGHTS

DEEPENING INTEGRATION, WIDENING COOPERATION

ON THE SPOTLIGHT

- ***EAC Secretary General meets the Chairperson of the Summit of the EAC Heads of State on advancing integration***
- ***EAC and IGAD to roll out digital integration project to boost connectivity, access and economic growth***
- **EAC Central Banks urged to adapt and embrace technology to facilitate cross-border financial transactions**

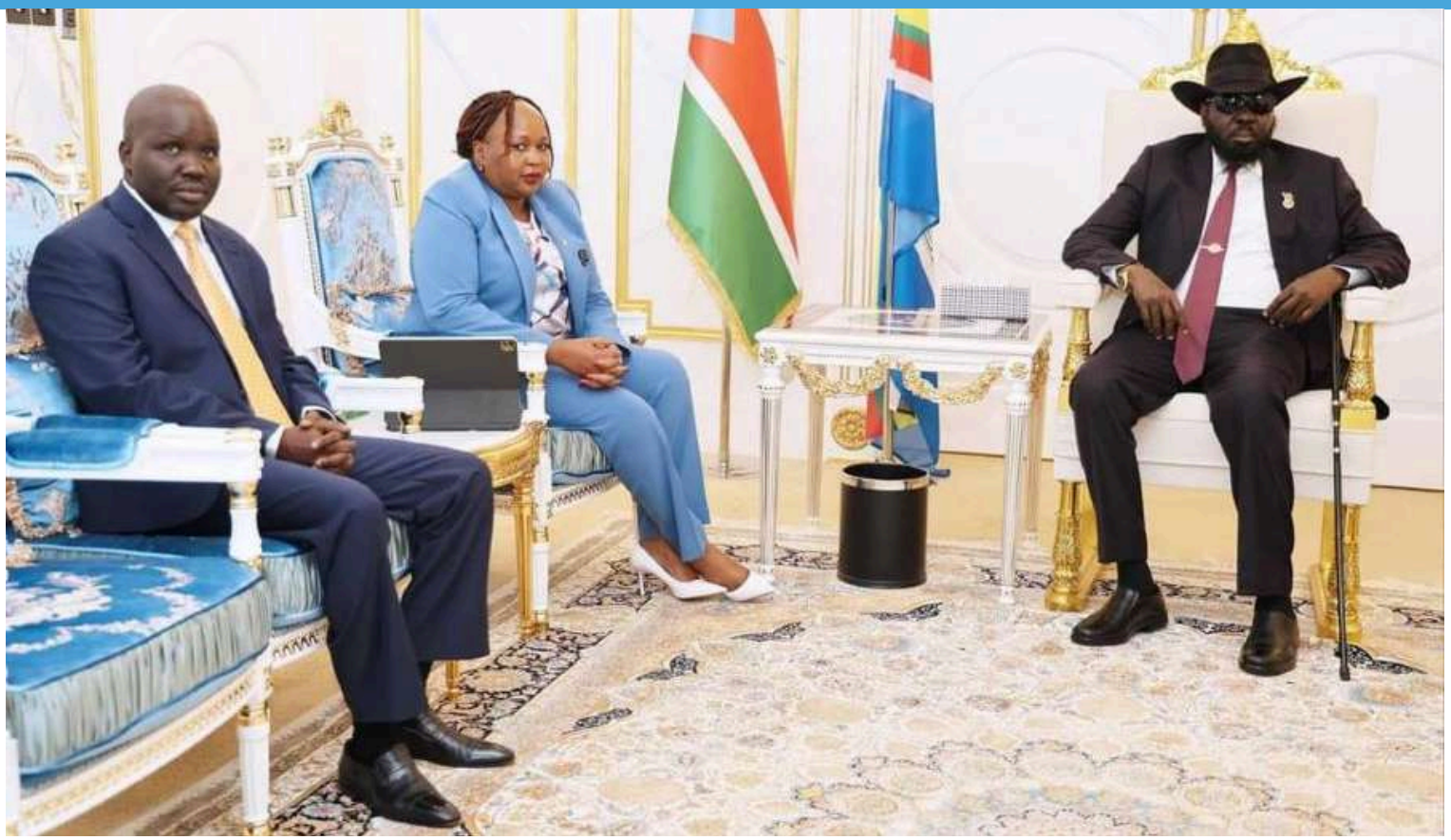
EAC SECRETARY GENERAL MEETS THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SUMMIT OF THE EAC HEADS OF STATE ON ADVANCING INTEGRATION

The EAC Secretary General, H.E. Veronica M. Nduva, held a meeting with the Chairperson of the Summit of the EAC Heads of State and President of the Republic of South Sudan, H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, at State House, Juba, South Sudan.

During the meeting, the Secretary General updated President Kiir on the preparations for the upcoming EAC Silver Jubilee celebrations, to commemorate the milestones made in the last 25 years and providing a platform to address issues hampering integration.

She updated the Chairperson on the proposed agenda items for the EAC Heads of State Ordinary Summit scheduled for November 2024.

They further discussed the necessity for a comprehensive review of the Treaty establishing the EAC to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all Partner States. The review aims to ensure that the Treaty addresses the evolving challenges and aspirations of EAC Partner states, thus enhancing regional cooperation and integration.



To enhance EAC's collaborative efforts, the Secretary General proposed the establishment of a regional Tripartite Forum on Peace and Security, which would provide a platform to address shared security challenges and promote regional stability.

On his part, President Kiir reaffirmed his commitment to the EAC integration and urged the Secretary General to strategically devise strategies that will further enhance the integration of South Sudan into the Community.

The President further directed the Secretary General to put in place mechanisms to increase South Sudan's level of participation in intra-regional trade in addition to initiatives that will enable the people of South Sudan to fully capitalize on the benefits of the Community.

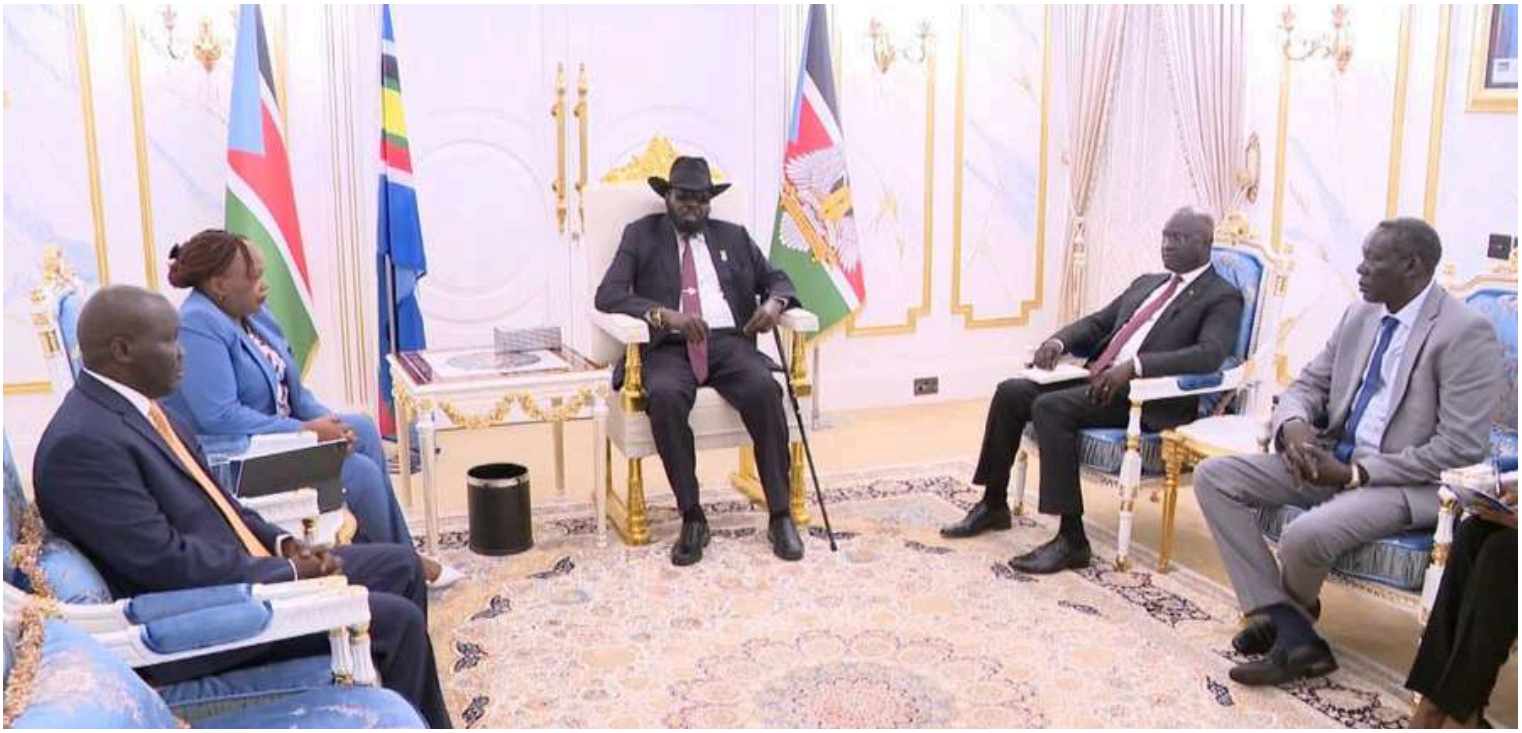
President Kiir commended the current close collaboration between EAC Organs and Institutions as a clear commitment towards achieving the objectives of the Community.

H.E. Nduva stressed the urgency of operationalising the Nimule-Elego border crossing with Uganda, a critical step for enhancing regional connectivity and trade, adding that fully operationalising this border would facilitate the movement of goods and people, thereby boosting South Sudan's economic engagement in the EAC.

Additionally, she urged South Sudan to prioritise the domestication of the EAC Customs Union Management Act to align its customs operations with EAC standards and improve trade relations with other Partner States.

They further discussed on the full operationalization of the One Network Area in South Sudan to lower communication costs and enhance connectivity among EAC nations.

They also discussed the need for South Sudan Parliament to pass legislation to domesticate the EAC Treaty Bill, ensuring that citizens can fully benefit from regional integration. This legislative action is critical for embedding the principles of the EAC within South Sudan's legal framework, enabling citizens to realize the benefits of integration.



The Secretary General conveyed her deepest condolences to the President following the loss of his elder sister and expressed her appreciation for His Excellency finding time to engage the EAC delegation during this difficult period.

A meeting between the EAC delegation and the Chairperson of the EAC Council of Ministers, and South Sudan's Minister of EAC Affairs, Hon. Deng Alor Kuol preceded the courtesy call on the Head of State. Hon. Alor was accompanied by the Chairperson of the Coordinating Committee and Undersecretary at the Ministry of EAC Affairs Hon. Beny Mabior.

H.E. Nduva was accompanied by the Deputy Secretary General in charge of Infrastructure, Productive, Social and Political Sectors, Hon. Andrea Aguer Ariik Malueth, and the Counsel to the Community, Dr. Anthony Kafumbe.

EAC SECRETARY GENERAL PAYS A COURTESY CALL ON THE PRESIDENT OF RWANDA

The EAC Secretary General H.E Veronica Nduva paid a courtesy call on the President of the Republic of Rwanda, H.E. Paul Kagame, in Kigali, Rwanda. Their discussion centered on advancing regional integration & other matters relating to the EAC.n in the region.

EAC AND IGAD TO ROLL OUT DIGITAL INTEGRATION PROJECT

The East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are set to commence implementation of the Eastern Africa Regional Digital Integration Project (EARDIP), a transformative initiative aimed at improving digital connectivity and integration across Eastern Africa.

Speaking during an EARDIP Regional Coordination and Implementation Workshop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Customs, Trade and Monetary Affairs, Ms. Annette Ssemuwemba, termed the project a game-changer for Eastern Africa.

“This project will create a more interconnected, inclusive, and prosperous region. We are laying the foundation for a thriving digital economy that will benefit businesses and citizens alike," said Ms. Ssemuwemba.

“With EARDIP, we are not just addressing the challenges of today, but we are building the digital infrastructure of tomorrow,’ she said.

The DSG-CTMA said that the project would unlock the region’s potential, creating opportunities for innovation, trade, and economic growth that will uplift millions.

On his part, the IGAD Director of Economic Cooperation and Regional Integration, Dr. Mohyeldeen Eltohami Taha, underscored the significance of regional collaboration in driving digital transformation.

“EARDIP represents a bold step towards a more connected and integrated Eastern Africa. By working together, we are setting the stage for a digital revolution that will boost economic resilience, improve service delivery, and enhance regional integration,’ said Dr. Taha.

Dr. Taha said that the project will empower the people of Eastern Africa with the tools they need to participate fully in the global digital economy.

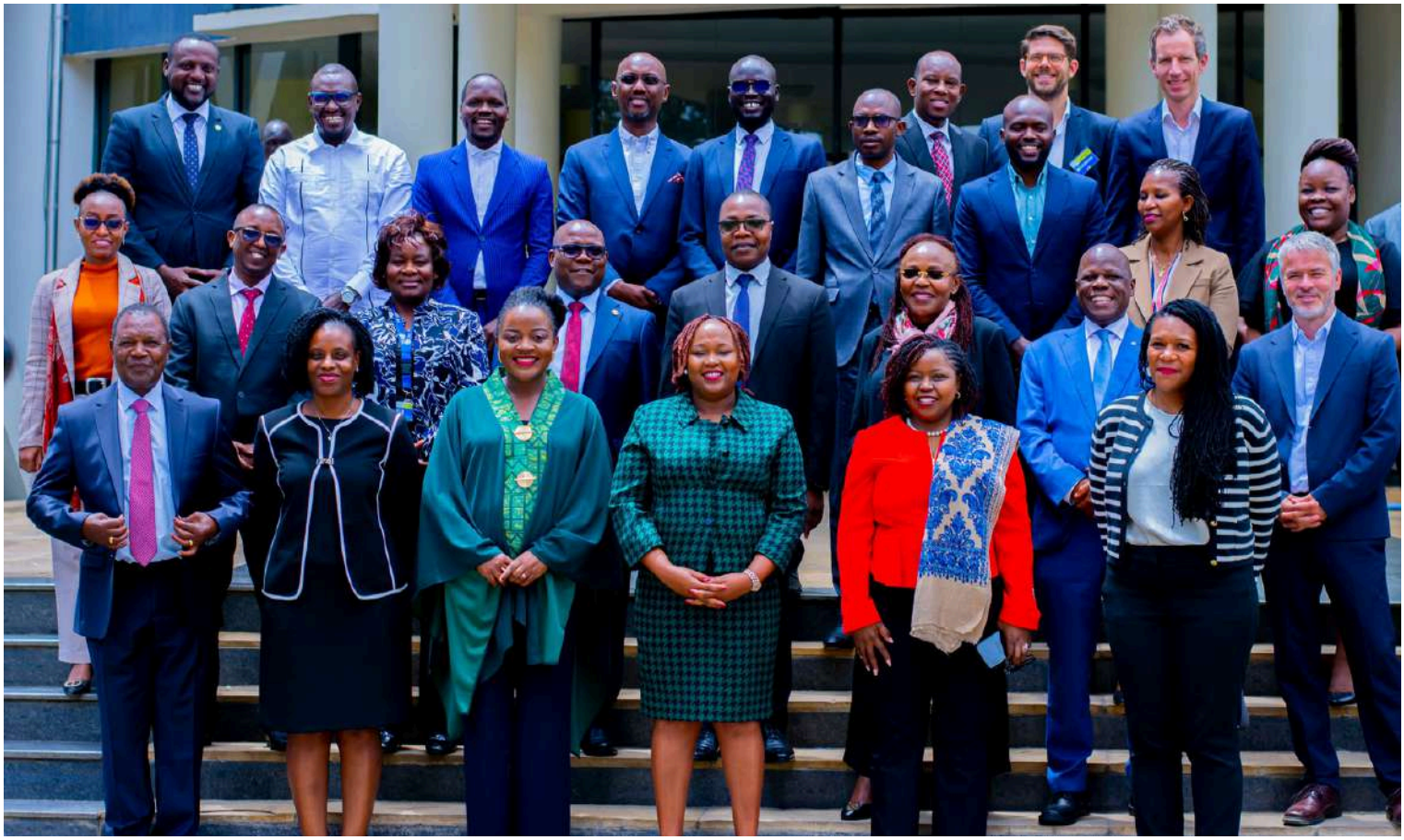
“Our collaboration with EAC through EARDIP underscores our commitment to ensuring that no country or community is left behind in the digital era,” he added.

Speaking during the workshop that brought together the EAC, IGAD and the World Bank, the World Bank Senior Digital Development Specialist, Ms. Cecilia Paradi-Guilford, emphasised the Bank’s commitment to supporting digital transformation in the region.

The World Bank-funded project is set to revolutionise the digital landscape in the region, addressing key challenges and providing immense benefits to Member States of both regional blocs. EARDIP has been specifically designed to overcome significant barriers currently affecting the digital economy in Eastern Africa, particularly connectivity, cybersecurity and access to online markets.

Through enhanced connectivity, streamlined policies, and secure digital environments, the project is set to create a more inclusive, competitive, and resilient marketplace. The project also provides a platform for continued collaboration between regional blocs and positioning Eastern Africa as a digital powerhouse in the global economy.

EAC CENTRAL BANKS URGED TO ADAPT AND EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY TO FACILITATE CROSS-BORDER FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS



East African Community (EAC) Partner States Central Banks have been called upon to embrace technology as part of efforts to facilitate cross-border payments within the EAC Common Market.

Making the appeal, EAC Secretary General Hon. Veronica Nduva said some of the challenges behind the low uptake of the East African Payments System (EAPS) include limited capacity, lack of inter-operability, communication gaps between central bank's and stakeholders, fear of online scams, protectionism by central banks and overlapping membership by Partner States to payment systems set up by various Regional Economic Communities.

Launched in 2014, EAPS is a secure, effective and efficient funds transfer system whose aim is to enhance efficiency and safety of payments and settlements within the EAC region.

Hon. Nduva underscored the role of Partner States Central Banks in putting in place an efficient payments and settlements system for the region, adding that unlike many markets in goods and services, financial markets and systems are trust-based markets – in which case, the role of central banks in building public confidence in the uptake of new technology-driven payment systems is vital.

Hon. Nduva said that enabling cross-border traders and investors to pay and receive payments for goods and services through a cost-effective payment system is likely to increase intra-regional system is likely to increase intra-regional trade and investment.

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Speaking at the forum, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Senior Programme Officer (East Africa), Ms. Amani M'Bale, said that payment systems enhance financial inclusion of all groups and were therefore key to addressing poverty and household resilience in the region.

Ms. M'bale said that cross-border payment systems were crucial for intra-regional trade, adding that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation would support such systems at the national and regional levels.

In remarks, Ms. Allen Assiimwe, TradeMark Africa (TMA) Chief of Programmes and Deputy CEO, said that cross-border traders lose large sums of money due to currency exchanges for payment purposes.

Ms. Asiimwe disclosed that financial transactions was another pillar that TMA is working on due to the informal nature of trade at the regional and continental levels.

Dr Joy Maria Kategekwa, Director for Regional Integration Coordination at the African Development Bank (AfDB), said that the multilateral lender was interested in building capacity in regional payment systems in addition to ensuring their inter-operability and functionality.

Dr. Kategekwa hailed the Pan-African Payment System (PAPSS) as a platform that had eased cross-border payments and transactions across the African continent.
PAPSS is a financial market infrastructure that enables instant, cross-border payments in local currencies within African markets. It is designed to revolutionise cross-border payments, making them faster, cheaper, and safer.

On his part, Bjoern Richter, Cluster Coordinator GIZ-EAC Project, emphasised the need for the EAC to put in place a digital market, build the required technical capacity and boost connectivity for purposes of enhancing intra-regional trade.

EAC ANNUAL PRE-BUDGET CONFERENCE

The EAC Pre-Budget Conference serves as a vital platform for translating the broad five-year global priorities outlined in the 6th EAC Development Strategy into focused sector- specific priorities and annual targets.

EAC ADVANCES STRATEGIC COOPERATION WITH CHINA AT THE FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION

The East African Community (EAC) Secretary General, H.E. Veronica Nduva, participated in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing, China, achieving significant strides in the EAC's partnership with the People's Republic of China.

The forum provided a valuable opportunity for the EAC to strengthen its longstanding relationship with China, focusing on strategic areas that promise to drive regional development and economic growth.

The EAC's engagement at FOCAC built upon the robust framework agreement signed with China in November 2011. This agreement has already fostered productive partnerships across key sectors, including infrastructure development, medical and health services, agriculture, industrialization, and digital innovation.

Infrastructure development remains a priority for the EAC, as it is essential for regional integration and economic growth. To ensure a high level of serviceability, the EAC, in collaboration with its Partner States, has established a platform with development partners to mobilize funds for the development of key corridors and networks. The Northern and Central Corridors, which are among the most vital in the region, form the backbone of the East African economy.

In support of these efforts, the EAC has instituted the Multinational Road Development Programme, which connects the different Partner States to facilitate trade and integration. The construction of these crucial roads is largely undertaken by Chinese contractors, with significant projects funded by the China Exim Bank. Notable examples include the Kampala-Entebbe Expressway and the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), which are pivotal in enhancing connectivity and boosting economic activity in the region.

EAC ADVANCES STRATEGIC COOPERATION WITH CHINA AT THE FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION

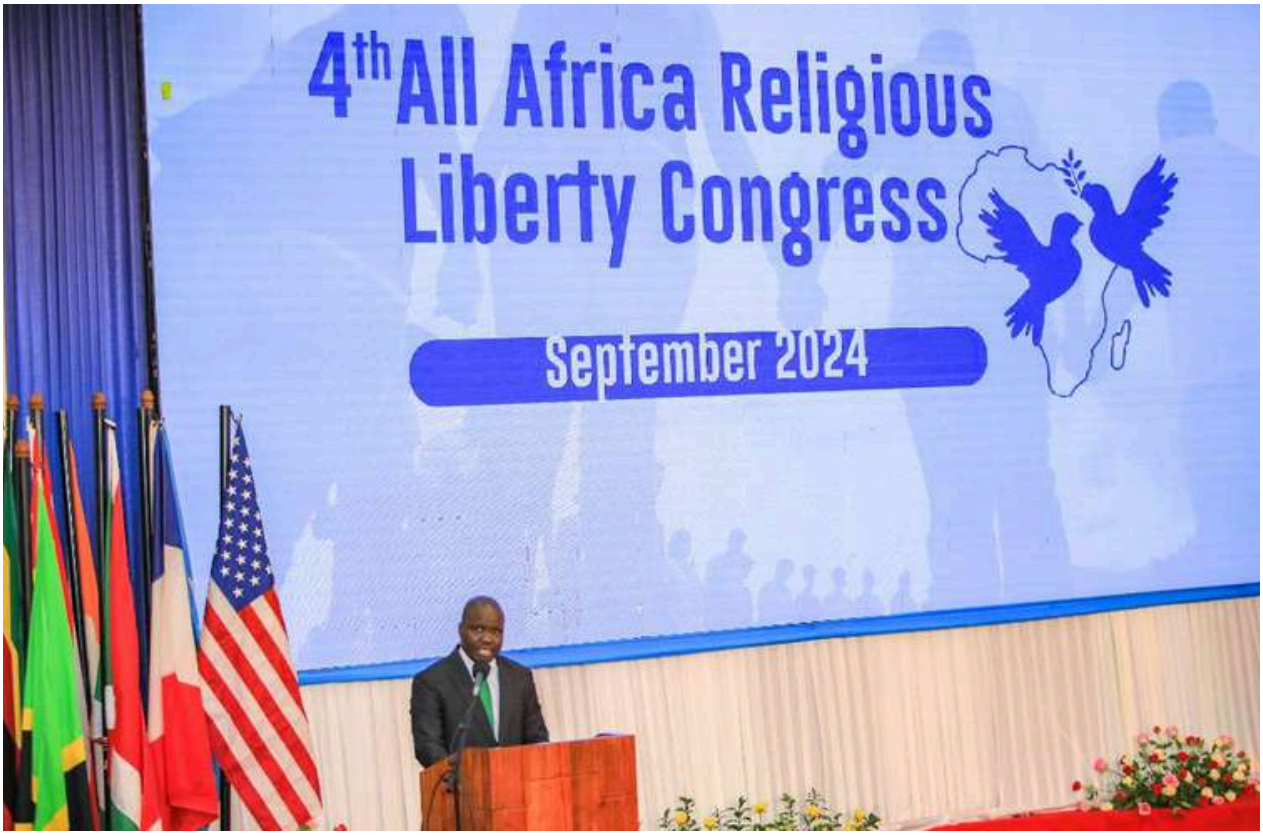
On the sidelines of the forum, Ms. Nduva and various heads of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) interacted with Kenya's candidate for the position of Chairperson of the Africa Union Commission (AUC), Rt. Hon Raila Amollo Odinga and deliberated on the support for his candidature. This follows a week after Kenya's President, H.E William Ruto officially launched the former Kenyan Prime Minister's campaign for the seat, who has since been endorsed by most EAC Heads of State.

The Secretary General also held a meeting with the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, H.E Huang Xia, on supporting EAC's peace and security initiatives and advancing cooperation with the EAC.

Speaking during a meeting on Industrialization and Agricultural Modernization, held on the sidelines of the Forum, Secretary General Nduva emphasized the importance of enhancing the EAC's cooperation with China to advance industrialization and agricultural modernization.

"By leveraging China's expertise in these fields, the EAC is set to significantly enhance production capabilities, improve infrastructure, equip the workforce with essential skills, and expand market opportunities while advancing our sustainable development goals," she stated.

Ms. Nduva also held productive discussions with various Chinese officials and African leaders, focusing on initiatives aligned with the EAC's regional development goals.



4TH ALL AFRICA RELIGIOUS LIBERTY CONGRESS

The EAC Deputy Secretary General, Infrastructure, Productive, Social and Political sectors, Hon. Andrea Ariik, opened the 4th All Africa Religious Liberty Congress in Arusha, Tanzania.

The main objective of the congress was to discuss how to reduce unnecessary conflict and enhance tolerance and peaceful co-existence in line with the African Union Vision 2063.
The Congress themed- “Peaceful coexistence in Africa: The Undeniable Value of Liberty of Conscience” attracted speakers of experience on matters of peace and conflict resolution at global, continental, regional, community and family levels.

EAC STRENGTHENS COOPERATION WITH INDONESIA AT THE 2ND INDONESIA-AFRICA FORUM

The 2nd Indonesia-Africa Forum (IAFII), gathered over 1,400 delegates from 29 countries, including seven heads of state from Asia and Africa, as well as ministers, entrepreneurs and scholars. The event focused on strengthening partnerships between Indonesia and African nations in the key sectors of energy, food security, health and minerals.

The EAC delegation was led by the Deputy Secretary General in charge of Infrastructure, Planning, Social and Political Sectors (IPS&PS), Hon. Andrea Ariik, who represented the EAC Secretary General.

Hon. Ariik represented the EAC at one of the panel discussions themed “Development Cooperation”. The Deputy Secretary General was keen to impress upon EAC’s interest in advancing development cooperation within the region to maximize the potential benefits of its natural resources including its vast and strategically positioned coastline to increase investments by ensuring policy coherence and capacity building to increase local industrial production.

On the margins of IAFII, Hon. Ariik met with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia; H.E. Pahala Nugraha Mansury. In their bilateral discussions, the Vice Minister was keen to engage on how EAC and Indonesia could strengthen economic ties through an Economic Partnership Trade Agreement and further explore potential commodities for trading within the region.

On his part, Hon. Ariik stated that EAC is eager to engage in an economic trade partnership agreement with Indonesia, considering that East Africa is the third-ranked region within Africa trading. Outlining some of the key benefits of forging economic partnership, the Deputy Secretary General emphasized that the cooperation with EAC as a regional economic bloc would translate to greater economic gains for Indonesia.

The Vice Minister and the Deputy Secretary General agreed to constitute a Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of experts from Indonesia and the EAC to kick-start the development of a cooperation framework based on key priority areas of mutual interest including agriculture and food security, health (pharmaceuticals), capacity building (peer-peer learning among others.

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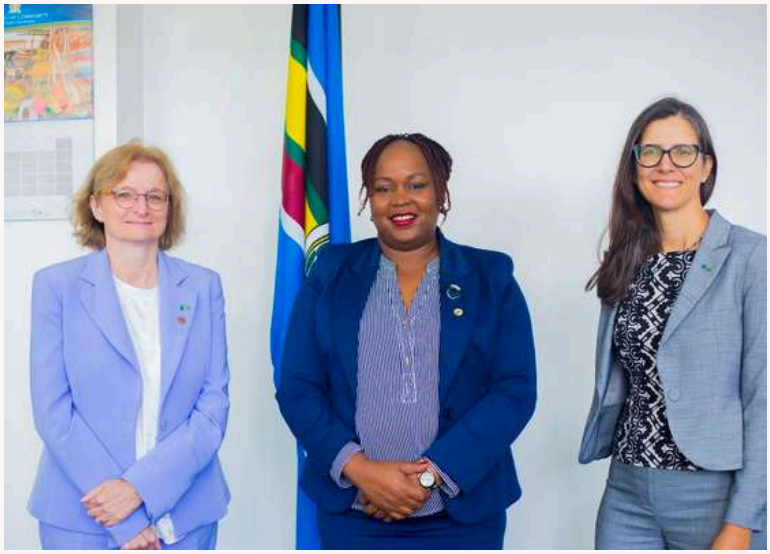
Hon. Ariik also met the Assistant Deputy for Maritime Sovereignty and Resilience under Deputy for Maritime Sovereignty and Energy Affairs-coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Investment, Republic of Indonesia; Dr. Adriani Kusumawardani on the sidelines of the Forum.

The Assistant Deputy for Maritime confirmed the Indonesian government's commitment to build synergies at regional level through formulation of a development cooperation framework geared towards building capacity of African countries in the abovementioned key areas of sustainable investment.
Hon. Ariik reaffirmed EAC's commitment towards strengthening Indonesia-Africa relations, outlining EAC's massive coastline spanning 4,600 kilometres, holding immense potential for blue economy-driven growth. He pointed out the key ports withi the region (Mombasa and Dar es Salaam) which handle over 30 million tons of cargo annually, adding that maritime and blue economy contribute 5-8% of the GDP of EAC Partner States. Dr. Kusumawardani was keen to further engage with EAC experts in energy, blue economy, environment and natural resources to pioneer sustainable practices and develop capacity building programmes as well as develop sustainable maritime and blue economy investment initiatives towards strengthening ties between Indonesia and EAC for attainment of commonly shared objectives.

Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi underscored the Forum's success during a press briefing . She noted that business deals amounting to 3.5 billion U.S. dollars were recorded at the forum, a significant increase from the 586.6 million U.S. dollars recorded during the first IAF in 2018. She also announced that Indonesia will host the Platinum Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference in 2025, celebrating the 70th anniversary of the historic event.

COURTESY CALLS

A delegation from the KCB Group led by the CEO Mr. Paul Rosso, paid a courtesy call on the EAC Secretary General. Their discussions centered on leveraging technology to enhance cross-border payments.



H.E. Christine Grau, the European Union Ambassador to the EAC and Tanzania, paid a courtesy call on EAC Secretary General. They discussed strengthening cooperation on key priority areas aligned with the EAC's 6th Development Strategy.

A delegation from the East Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities, led by their President, Hon. Beti Turwomwe, paid a courtesy call on EAC SG. They discussed on advancing efforts to combat corruption in the region.

COURTESY CALLS

The Rwandan High Commissioner to Tanzania, Amb. Gen. Patrick Nyamvumba paid a courtesy call on the EAC Secretary General. The two leaders held discussions on the state of the EAC integration.

EAC DSG, Hon. Ariik Aguer, flagged off modern laboratory equipment to EAC Partner States to strengthen rapid detection & identification of pathogens that cause disease outbreaks in the region .

EAC Management Team led by the EAC Secretary General, bid farewell to Dr. Irene Isaka, the outgoing Director of Social Sectors at the EAC Secretariat, who was recently appointed as the CEO, NHIF Tanzania.

TOP REGIONAL NEWS

- **President Kiir, EAC Secretary General Discuss Ways to Promote Regional Stability**

The East African Community (EAC) Secretary General, Veronica M. Nduva, held a meeting with the Chairperson of the Summit of the EAC Heads of State and President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, at State House, Juba, South Sudan, on Thursday, September 19, according to a related statement. MORE

- **EAC boss Veronica Nduva pushes bloc to open skies to ease travel costs**

The push to reduce the cost of air transport within East Africa has gained momentum with the East African Community submitting regulations to support liberalisation of air transport.The regulations highlighting how to leverage airfare, packing fees and other levies charged by airlines are to be submitted to the 19th Meeting of the Sectoral Council on Transport, Communication and Meteorology (TCM) for adoption next month. MORE

- **S.Sudan limits cash withdrawals to encourage electronic transactions**

South Sudan has restricted cash withdrawals by individuals and public and private sector entities in a push to promote cashless transactions, lower the cost of printing currency.The limits mean cash withdrawals will be capped at SSP10 million ($3,730.58) per day per person, according to the South Sudan central bank. MORE

- **A closer look at Rwanda's new Bioeconomy hub**

At the sidelines of the just-concluded East Africa Pharma & Biotech Conference, an innovative facility offering "world-class" laboratories and training programs was launched in Kigali. The move, officials say will redefine Rwanda's Bioeconomy landscape and drive transformative growth. MORE

- **Peacekeepers won't leave DRC in December, says UN official**

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Monusco, will not exit the country by December 2024. UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, who visited the Congo this weekend, said that December 31, 2024, which was supposed to be the date for the total withdrawal of Monusco troops, has never formally been agreed on by all the parties. MORE

GLOBAL NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

- **AU allocates $7m to peace efforts in the Sudans, DRC, Sahel**

  Peace efforts in Africa received a boost this week, with $7 million worth of support that the African Union has allocated to regions that are most impacted by conflict and instability. The unds will be disbursed towards several critical initiatives in Sudan and South Sudan, including backing the transition process in Juba and supporting Khartoum's peace process. MORE

- **Sudan army, RSF open to peaceful processes amid long-raging war**

  Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) said they are open for peaceful solutions to a war that has been ongoing for more than 17 months, in response to US President Joe Biden's call on warring parties to re-engage in talks. Sudan Army Chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan said on Wednesday the Sudanese government remains open to all constructive efforts aimed at ending the war, before RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Daglo followed suit. MORE

- **Japan promises Africa 'sustainable development'**

  Japan says it is committed to more 'sustainable development' with Africa as it pursues to make itself a relevant and different partner from other world powers seeking a slice of the continent.Last week, Japan hosted foreign ministers from around the continent for the 9th ministerial meeting under the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (Ticad-9). MORE

- **US presidential candidate Trump pledges to deport Haitians from Ohio if elected**

  US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump pledged on Friday to conduct mass deportations of Haitian immigrants from the Ohio city of Springfield, even though the majority of them are in the United States legally. The city for days has found itself at the center of a social media maelstrom after right-wing agitators latched onto false claims that Haitian arrivals were eating household pets. MORE

- **UN aims 'to bring multilateralism back' as it adopts Pact for the Future**

  The United Nations General Assembly has adopted a "Pact for the Future", which UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described as a landmark agreement that is a "step-change towards more effective, inclusive, networked multilateralism". The pact, which also includes an annex on working towards a responsible and sustainable digital future, was adopted without a vote on Sunday at the start of a two-day Summit of the Future. MORE

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