



CONCEPT NOTE

2ND EACARNRI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Prepared by EACARNRI in partnership with the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA)

THEME

“Harnessing Regional Integration for Sustainable Development in East Africa: Opportunities, Challenges, and Innovations”

Venue: University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya

Dates: 4–5 November 2026

About EACARNRI

The East African Community Academic and Research Network for Regional Integration (EACARNRI) was launched on 23 June 2023 in Kigali, Rwanda, through the efforts of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) and the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence (JMCE). The launch of the Network marked a new milestone in tapping the expertise of academics and researchers to accelerate the East African regional integration process and socio-economic development — premised on the understanding that academics and researchers can play an instrumental role in accelerating integration by informing policy decisions through cutting-edge research and by training the human resources with the skills the region needs.

EACARNRI was established to contribute to the success of the EAC integration process, to increase the EAC’s influence at continental and international levels, and to provide a forum for higher education institutions and individuals to play their rightful role in shaping the EAC integration agenda.

The objectives of EACARNRI, as set out in its constitution, include:

- To promote research on EAC regional integration for purposes of improving the socio-economic development of Eastern Africa.
- To provide policymakers with evidence-based advice on matters related to EAC regional integration through regular policy briefs.
- To plan and host conferences, symposia, and workshops for sharing ideas on EAC integration and for the dissemination of research findings and best practices.

About the Conference

Building on the success of the inaugural edition, the 2nd EACARNRI International Conference is jointly organized by EACARNRI and IUCEA, with the University of Nairobi joining as host and partner institution for the 2026 edition. The Conference brings together academics, policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders committed to advancing regional integration in East Africa, and provides a platform for dialogue, the exchange of research findings, and the shaping of the EAC integration agenda.

Conference Theme and Sub-themes

The Conference theme allows for a comprehensive discussion on the multidimensional aspects of regional integration — from economic cooperation to social cohesion and technological advancement — while addressing sustainability. Papers and presentations are invited under the following sub-themes:

1. **Economic Integration in the Context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**

Maximizing the benefits of AfCFTA for intra-regional trade; the role of infrastructure and logistics in economic integration; aligning national policies with regional integration objectives.

2. **Digital Transformation and the Future of Regional Integration**

Science, technology and innovation in deepening regional cooperation; cybersecurity, digital infrastructure and data governance; digital trade and e-commerce as tools for integration.

3. **Regional Integration and Environmental Sustainability**

Integrating environmental sustainability into regional development policies; regional cooperation on climate change and biodiversity loss; sustainable infrastructure and green energy.

4. **Political and Institutional Challenges to Regional Integration**

Strengthening regional governance and political will; sovereignty concerns and national versus regional interests; conflict resolution mechanisms; democracy, human rights and elections in East Africa.

5. **Human Development and Social Cohesion in a Regionally Integrated East Africa**

Education, health and social security policies for cross-border cooperation; labor mobility; inclusivity in regional integration (gender, youth, marginalized groups).

6. **Trade and Investment: Unlocking the Potential of the East African Single Market**

Challenges and opportunities of a single market for goods, services and people; intra-regional investment and regional value chains; trade facilitation, customs and border policies.

7. **Infrastructure Development for Regional Integration: Bridging the Gap**

Transport, energy and communication infrastructure as enablers of integration; regional infrastructure financing models and partnerships; connecting rural and urban areas.

8. **The Role of Collaborative Research and Innovation Initiatives in Advancing Regional Integration**

Strengthening research collaboration across East African universities and think tanks; innovation hubs; capacity building and knowledge-sharing.

Conference Format

The Conference will run over two days and will combine plenary and breakout sessions, as follows:

Day	Time	Session
Day 1 – 4 November 2026	Morning	Opening Plenary: welcome and opening remarks, and keynote address
Day 1 – 4 November 2026	Afternoon	Breakout Sessions (3 parallel sessions)
Day 2 – 5 November 2026	Morning	Breakout Sessions (3 parallel sessions, continued)
Day 2 – 5 November 2026	Afternoon	Closing Plenary: closing remarks

Breakout sessions will be organized around the Conference sub-themes, allowing for focused discussion and exchange among presenters and participants.

Objectives of the Conference

The 2nd EACARNRI International Conference intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the operationalization of the AfCFTA within East Africa.
2. To examine the challenges and opportunities towards a sustainable East Africa.
3. To explore innovations towards sustainable regional integration in East Africa.
4. To design a draft proposal for the way forward, leading to a policy paper on Sustainable Regional Integration in East Africa, to be delivered to the EAC Secretariat.

Expected Outcomes of the Conference

The Conference intends to accomplish the following:

- The EACARNRI Secretariat to issue a compiled proceedings of the Conference to participants.
- The EACARNRI Secretariat to prepare a report of the Conference and issue it to all participants.
- The EACARNRI Secretariat to select papers from the Conference for publication in the East African Community Journal on Regional Integration (EACARNRI Journal).
- The EACARNRI Secretariat to prepare a policy brief on the main theme of the Conference.
- The EACARNRI Executive Committee to submit a draft recommendation report to the EAC Secretary General on Sustainable Regional Integration in East Africa.
- The Conference to serve as a forum for dialogue between policymakers, researchers, academia, and decision-makers on matters of Sustainable Regional Integration in East Africa.

Organizers of the Conference

The Conference is organized by EACARNRI, IUCEA, JMCE, and the University of Nairobi. Other stakeholders will also be engaged in the Conference.

Participants of the Conference

The Conference is expected to bring together at least 70 participants from the East African Community and beyond.

Call for Papers

Interested researchers, policymakers, EAC officials, academics, security and regional integration experts, and diplomats are invited to submit abstracts and papers in line with the Conference theme and sub-themes. Full details, including sub-theme descriptions and submission guidelines, are provided in the separate Call for Papers, and submissions are made online through the official Conference Google Form.

Important Dates

Étape	Date
Ouverture de l'appel à communications	11 août 2026
Webinaire	19 août 2026
Date limite de soumission des résumés	08 septembre 2026
Notification d'acceptation	22 septembre 2026
Soumission des articles complets	22 octobre 2026
Dates de la Conférence	4–5 novembre 2026

Enquiries

For questions regarding the Conference, please contact: eacanri@iucea.org