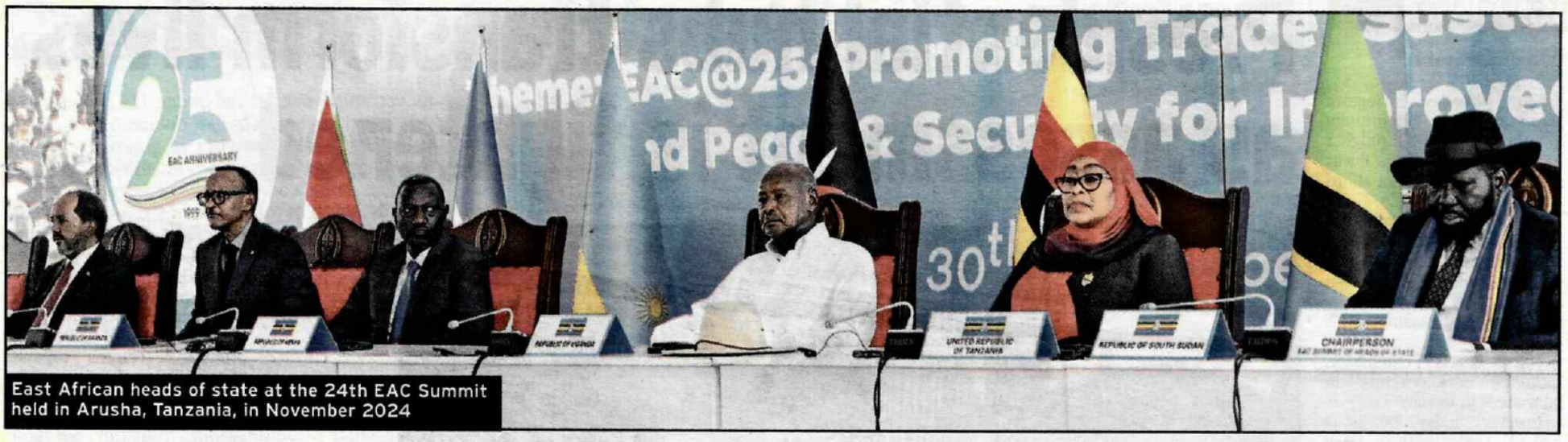


East African heads of state at the 24th EAC Summit held in Arusha, Tanzania, in November 2024

EAC PRESIDENTS TO LAUNCH NEW FIVE-YEAR PLAN

By Moses Mulondo

BETWEEN THE LINES

The summit will be held under the theme: Deepening Integration for Improved Livelihoods of EAC Citizens; a reaffirmation of the partner states' commitment to advancing regional integration and sustainable community development.

The 25th East African Community (EAC) Heads of State Summit will take place this coming Saturday on March 7, 2026 in Arusha, the tourism capital of Tanzania.

According to a statement issued by the EAC secretariat, the summit will among other activities mark the official launch of the 7th EAC Development Strategy (2026/27–2030/31), which sets the strategic direction for accelerating regional integration and socioeconomic transformation over the next five years. The strategy builds on achievements and lessons from the previous development cycle and aligns with EAC Vision 2050, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The 25th summit was supposed to have taken place last year in November, but it was called off.

The EAC Summit, which is the highest decision-making organ of the EAC, will bring together Heads of State from the eight partner states of Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, DR Congo, Kenya and Tanzania to deliberate on key matters shaping the future of the regional bloc. Discussions will include progress in implementation of regional programmes, institutional reports and strategic initiatives aimed at deepening integration and improving the livelihoods of East African citizens.

LAUNCH OF EAC CUSTOMS BOND

During the Summit, the Heads of State are expected to launch the EAC Customs Bond; a single regional customs' guarantee that replaces the current requirement for multiple national bonds along transit routes.

Under the new arrangement, traders and clearing agents will secure one bond recognised across all EAC partner states, instead of arranging separate guarantees in each country of transit.

The bond links customs administrations, insurers and financial institutions under a unified regional framework, reducing compliance costs, cutting border delays, protecting government revenue and facilitating faster and more secure movement of goods across the community.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, the EAC Secretary General, Veronica Nduva, emphasised the importance of the summit as a platform for collective leadership and regional decision-making.

She further noted that the launch of the EAC Customs Bond and the 7th Development Strategy demonstrates the community's continued shift toward practical solutions that enhance regional competitiveness and economic resilience.

MORE ON THE 25TH SUMMIT AGENDA

On the agenda is the consideration of the Report of the Council to the Summit for the period November 30, 2024 to December 31, 2025; modality for implementing the resolutions of the 24th EAC Heads of State Summit on sustainable financing of the EAC budget based on 65% equal contribution and 35% assessed contribution formula and the status of integration of the new partner states admitted into the community between 2016 and 2024.

The Heads of State are also set to appoint a new EAC Secretary General; appoint Judges to the East African Court of Justice; renew appointments of Deputy Secretaries' General; appoint Commissioners to the EAC Competition Authority and assent to Bills Passed by the East African Legislative Assembly.

The summit has been preceded by an ongoing extra-ordinary meeting of the EAC Council of Ministers at the EAC Headquarters in Arusha that started on Monday and will be ending tomorrow (Thursday).


South Sudan President Kiir (standing, right) handing over instruments of power to Kenyan President Ruto (left) during the 24th EAC Summit held in Arusha, Tanzania, November 2024

PREVIOUS EAC SUMMIT

The 24th EAC Heads of State Summit that convened on November 29 and November 30, 2024 in Arusha, Tanzania, emphasised the need for partner states to strengthen collaborative efforts and political will at all levels in addressing man-made obstacles including Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), non-conforming measures, airspace restrictions, travel restrictions hindering integration and regional unity and work towards having a borderless EAC. NTBs are any policies and practices, other than taxes, which countries use to limit access to their markets by other countries.

The summit urged partner states to incentivise local production to reduce on imported goods into the region. It also involved celebrating the 25th anniversary since the revival of the EAC, voting Kenyan President Ruto as the new chairperson of the EAC Heads of State Summit, replacing South Sudan's President Kiir.

WHAT THE HEADS OF STATE SAID

During the previous (24th) Heads of State Summit, President Yoweri Museveni implored partner states to spare no efforts in ensuring all the remaining NTBs are resolved. Museveni expressed concern that some member states have continued tendencies of blocking goods from other partner states, yet the EAC created one regional market where there should be free movement of goods and services.

"For us as Uganda, even when we produce large quantities of maize or milk, we have not stopped other member countries from exporting the same products to Uganda. Some people wanted me to ban rice imported from Tanzania which is cheaper and I rejected it. I could not allow it to protect the inefficient rice producers in Uganda. But it also creates an opportunity for Ugandans to get cheaper rice from Tanzania. That is the beauty of our economic integration," President Museveni explained.

President Ruto said he would work tirelessly to enhance trading among East African Countries which is currently at 28%. He emphasised the need for all member countries to eliminate NTBs.

"With a population of 300 million people, the EAC is a very large market that creates many trade opportunities for our people," Ruto stated.

Tanzanian President Samia Suhulu Hassan, who opted to speak in Swahili, said Tanzania is committed to the integration of East Africa. She implored EAC member countries to intensify collaborative efforts aimed at addressing the social, political and economic challenges of their people.

President Suhulu echoed president Julius Nyerere's passion about uniting East Africa and she commended the three heads of state: Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Tanzania's Benjamin Mkapa and Kenya's Arap Moi; who revived the EAC in 1999.

In a speech he made shortly before he handed over the chairpersonship to Ruto, South Sudan President Salva Kiir said: "As I end my term, I want to emphasise the need to enhance regional peace and economi development of the region, enhancing trade within the EAC, fast-tracking of digital transformation capacities, advancing the Monetary Union agenda, mitigating the effects of climate change, empowering our youth and ensuring integration benefits reach all the East Africans."

FOREX RATES

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
US DOLLAR	3,585	3,655
EURO	4,150	4,320
POUND	4,750	4,950
KENYA SH	27.5	31
TZ SH	1.33	1.51
DHIRAM	900	1,000
S.A.RAND	212	260
JAPANESE YEN	17	35
RWANDESE FRANCS	2.1	3.8
DOLLAR OLDER & SMALLER	3,300	3,655

COMPILED BY MOSES KIGONGO

RATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE