

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION

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**Northern Corridor
Transit and Transport
Coordination Authority**

GREEN FREIGHT STRATEGY

The Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030, launched by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) with support from UNEP and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), aims to reduce emissions and improve air quality across a key East African trade route. It focuses on enhancing fuel efficiency, promoting electric vehicle (EV) adoption, and implementing sustainable freight practices to achieve a net-zero corridor by 2050.



Reduce Particulate Matter, Black Carbon, and Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x) by 12% by 2030 compared to 2024 levels.



Improve freight transport fuel efficiency by 10% by 2030 compared to 2024 levels.



Conduct eco-driving training for 1,000 heavy commercial truck drivers.



Reduce emissions intensity by 10% by 2030 compared to 2024 levels.



Enhance the climate resilience of at least 2,000 km of roads

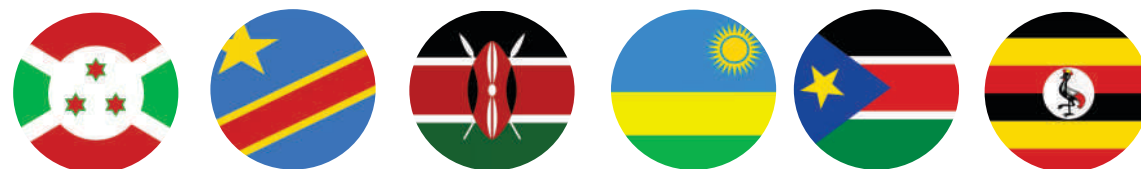


CLIMATE & CLEAN AIR COALITION
TO REDUCE SHORT-LIVED CLIMATE POLLUTANTS

UN
environment
programme

Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION



MEMBER STATES

NORTHERN CORRIDOR MEMBER STATES



BURUNDI:



Ministère des Infrastructures,
des Logements Sociaux,
des Transports et de
l'Équipement



DRC:



MINISTRE DES TRANSPORTS,
VOIES DE COMMUNICATION
ET DESENCLAVEMENT



KENYA:



MITI
Ministry of Investments,
Trade & Industry



**Kenya National
Highways Authority**
Quality Highways, Better Connections

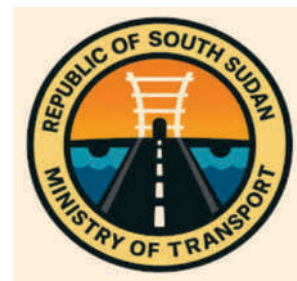


STAKEHOLDERS/PARTNERS

RWANDA:



SOUTH SUDAN:



UGANDA:



REGIONAL:



DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS:



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA	Africa Continental Free Trade Area	KAFFA	Kenya Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Authority	R-ECTS	Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System - EAC
AGL	Africa Great Lakes	KEBS	Kenya Bureau of Standards	RRR	Rwanda Revenue Authority
AROS	African Regional Organisation for Standardisation	KeNHA	Kenya National Highways Authority	RNP	Rwanda National Police
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data	KENTRADE	Kenya Trade Network Agency	RRU	Rapid Response Unit - KRA
AU	African Union	KEPSA	Kenya Private Sector Alliance	RSS	Road Side Station
BPM	Business Process Map	KGH	KGH Border Services	RTDA	Rwanda Transport Development Authority
CFS	Container Freight Station	KIFWA	Kenya International Freight and Warehousing Association	REC	Regional Economic Community
C&F	Clearing and Forwarding	KMA	Kenya Maritime Authority	RVR	Rift Valley Railway
CFS	Container Freight Station	KNCCI	Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry	SAD	Single Administrative Document
CFSA	Container Freight Stations Association	KNPS	Kenya National Police Service	SCEA	Shippers Council of East Africa
CSD	Customs Services Department	KOJ	Kisumu Oil Jetty	SCT	Single Customs Territory
COMESA	Common Market for East & Southern Africa	KPC	Kenya Pipeline Corporation	SGR	Standard Gauge Railway
DGDA	Direction Générale Des Douanes Et Accises (Democratic Republic of Congo Customs Authority)	KRA	Kenya Revenue Authority	SGS	Société Générale de Surveillance
DPC	Document Processing Centre	KTA	Kenya Transporters Association	SSRA	South Sudan Roads Authority
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo	KOT	Kipevu Oil Terminal	SSATP	Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program
EAC	East African Community	KPA	Kenya Ports Authority	SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats
ECTS	Electronic Cargo Tracking System	KRA	Kenya Revenue Authority	TGL	Transit Goods License
GDP	Gross Domestic product	LAPSSET	Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor	THC	Terminal Handling Charges
GHGs	Green House Gases	MCT	Mombasa Container Terminal	THEA	Trade Hub East Africa
GoK	Government of Kenya	NC	Northern Corridor	TEU	Twenty-foot Container Equivalent Unit
GOK	Government of Kenya	NCIP	Northern Corridor Integration Projects	TFA	Trade Facilitation (Bali) Agreement
GoR	Government of Rwanda	NCTA	Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement	TRS	Time Release Study
GoU	Government of Uganda	NCTTCA	Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Co-ordination Authority	TEUs	Twenty-foot Equivalent Units
GRT	Gross Registered Tonnage	NCTO	Northern Corridor Transport Observatory	TMEA	Trade Mark East Africa
HSWIM	High Speed Weigh In Motion Weighbridge	NCTTA	Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement	UCR	Unique Consignment Reference
HVO	Head Verification Officer	NEMA	National Environment Management Authority	UN	United Nations
IACC	International Anti-Corruption Conference	NTSA	National Transport Safety Authority	UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ICD	Inland Container Depot	OBR	Office Burundais des Recettes (Burundi Revenue Authority)	UNRA	Uganda National Roads Authority
IDF	Import Declaration Form	ODR	Office Des Routes - Burundi (Office of Roads – Burundi)	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ICD	Inland Container Depot	OGA	Other Government [Border Control] Agency	USD	United States Dollars
ICT	Information Communications Technology	OGEFREM	Office de Gestion du Fret Multimodal	URA	Uganda Revenue Authority
IPPF	Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility	OSBP	One Stop Border Post	VLC	Vehicle Load Control
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority for Development	OSC	One Stop Centre	VO	Verification Officer
ISCOS	Inter-governmental Standing Committee On Shipping	PMAESA	Port Management Association for Eastern and Southern Africa	WB	World Bank
ISO	International Standards Organization	PPIAF	Public Private Infrastructure Advisory Finance	WBCG	Walvis Bay Corridor Group
IT	Information Technology	PPP	Public-Private Partnership	WCO	World Customs Organization
IWT	Inland Waterways Transport	PPPs	Public Private Partnerships	WEF	World Economic Forum
		PSV	Passenger Service Vehicle	WTO	World Trade Organization
		PVoC	Pre-Verification of Conformity		

FOREWORD MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

It is with great pride and honour that I present this commemorative handbook marking 40 years of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA). This milestone provides an important moment to reflect on our shared journey, celebrate collective achievements, and reaffirm our commitment to a future of integrated, efficient, and sustainable regional transport and trade.

Since its establishment, the Northern Corridor framework has stood as a cornerstone of regional cooperation among its Member States. Born out of a shared vision to facilitate transit transport and trade, and economic integration, the Northern Corridor has evolved from a coordination mechanism focused on easing transit bottlenecks into a mature, integrated, and strategically governed multimodal transport and trade system that enables the efficient, reliable, and sustainable movement of goods and people across regions, underpinned by harmonised policies, a coordination institution - NCTTCA, robust infrastructure, and data-driven performance management. Over four decades, the Corridor has transformed into a lifeline for landlocked economies and a strategic artery for regional and continental trade.

The achievements documented in this handbook reflect the strength of political will, institutional cooperation, and partnership. Through coordinated policies, legal instruments, and joint programmes, NCTTCA has contributed to reduced transit times, improved infrastructure planning, enhanced port and border efficiency, and strengthened collaboration between public- and private-sector stakeholders. The Authority has played a pivotal role in advancing initiatives on customs modernisation, infrastructure development, trade facilitation, corridor performance monitoring, road safety, and, more recently, climate-responsive and green freight transport.

Equally important has been NCTTCA's ability to adapt to a changing regional and global context. As trade volumes expanded, supply chains became more complex, and sustainability emerged as a defining challenge of our time, the

Authority has continuously repositioned itself. The growing emphasis on data-driven decision-making, digitalisation of corridor systems, gender and inclusion, and decarbonisation of freight transport demonstrates an institution that is not only responsive but forward-looking.

This 40-year journey has not been without challenges. Infrastructure deficits, non-tariff barriers, evolving regulatory environments, and external shocks have tested the resilience of the Corridor. Yet, it is precisely through these challenges that the value of cooperation under the NCTTCA framework has been reaffirmed. The ability of Member States to engage in dialogue, agree on common solutions, and pursue shared priorities remains the Authority's greatest strength.

As we look to the future, the Northern Corridor stands at a defining crossroads. The next phase of development must be anchored in sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness. Accelerated regional integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area, the imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the need to harness technology, and the expectations of a growing and dynamic private sector call for renewed ambition. NCTTCA's strategic outlook must therefore continue to promote multimodal transport solutions, green logistics, smart corridor management, and inclusive growth that benefits all Member States.

On behalf of the Council of Ministers, I commend the NCTTCA, Member States, development partners, and private sector actors whose dedication and collaboration have shaped the Northern Corridor over the past forty years. This handbook is not only a record of what has been achieved; it is a statement of intent for what lies ahead.

As we celebrate this milestone, the Member States and, in specific the Council of Ministers reaffirm our collective resolve to strengthen cooperation, deepen integration, and position the Northern Corridor as a model of efficient, sustainable, and people-centred transport and trade facilitation in Africa.



Honorable Chantal Nijimbere,
Chairperson of the Council of Ministers &
Minister for Trade, Transport, Industry and Tourism
of the Republic of Burundi.



The 38th Meeting of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority Council of Ministers concluded with a group photo bringing together Hon. Ministers, senior officials, Secretariat staff, and Development Partners. / Nairobi, June 2026.



As of early 2026 the Port of Mombasa - the main anchor of the Northern Corridor - was experiencing a bustling, high-volume period with luxury cruise liners and cargo vessels calling at the port. This marked a significant revival in both tourism and maritime trade, according to the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) sources. In 2025, the Port of Mombasa experienced record activity, handling 2.11 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of container traffic, a 5.5% increase from 2024.



Dr. John Deng Diing, PhD
Executive Secretary, NCTTCA

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY NCTTCA

Celebrating 40 Years of Regional Integration, Connectivity and Shared Prosperity

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present this commemorative publication marking the 40th Anniversary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA).

Fourty years ago, the Governments of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda signed the Northern Corridor Transit Agreement, establishing a framework for cooperation aimed at facilitating trade, transport and economic development across the region. The Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan later joined, in 1987 and 2012 respectively, further strengthening the collective commitment to regional integration and shared prosperity.

Over the past four decades, the Northern Corridor has evolved from a transport route into a dynamic economic corridor connecting the Port of Mombasa to the vast hinterland of Eastern and Central Africa. Today, the Corridor serves as a vital gateway for international trade, supporting millions of people and businesses across our Member States and contributing significantly to regional economic growth, competitiveness and integration.

The achievements recorded over the last forty years are a testament to the unwavering commitment of our Member States, development partners, private sector stakeholders, transport operators and the many institutions that have contributed to the realization of the Northern Corridor vision. Through sustained collaboration, we have witnessed remarkable improvements in transport infrastructure, customs modernization, trade facilitation, transit efficiency, border management, road safety, corridor performance monitoring and institutional cooperation.

The establishment of One Stop Border Posts, development and harmonization of policies, implementation of the Single Customs Territory, deployment of the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System, development of the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, promotion of regional infrastructure projects, and advancement of trade facilitation reforms are among the many milestones that have transformed the movement of goods and people along the Corridor.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, we also recognize the

evolving opportunities and challenges facing our region. Global trade patterns, technological advancements, climate change, urbanization, energy transition, and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are reshaping the transport and logistics landscape. These developments require us to continuously innovate and strengthen regional cooperation to ensure that the Northern Corridor remains efficient, resilient, sustainable and globally competitive.

The future of the Northern Corridor lies in embracing digital transformation, green freight initiatives, climate-resilient infrastructure, multimodal transport systems, enhanced private sector participation, and data-driven decision-making. We remain committed to supporting our Member States in building an integrated transport and logistics ecosystem that promotes sustainable economic development and improves the livelihoods of our people.

This 40th Anniversary Commemorative Handbook not only reflects on our collective journey and achievements but also serves as a reminder of the enduring spirit of cooperation that has guided the Northern Corridor since its inception. It highlights the milestones, partnerships, innovations and success stories that have shaped our institution and contributed to the advancement of regional integration in Eastern and Central Africa.

On behalf of the Secretariat, I extend my sincere appreciation to the Governments of our Member States, development partners, regional institutions, private sector stakeholders, and all individuals who have contributed to the success of the Northern Corridor over the last four decades. Your dedication, partnership and support have been instrumental in making the Northern Corridor one of Africa's most successful regional integration initiatives.

As we commemorate this important milestone, we renew our commitment to building a smarter, greener, safer and more connected Corridor that continues to serve as a catalyst for trade, investment and sustainable development for generations to come.

Together, we celebrate forty years of progress and look forward with confidence to the opportunities that lie ahead.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR SRO- UNECA

On behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa, I convey our warmest congratulations to the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority as it marks its 40th Anniversary.

For our region's economy, the Northern Corridor is what the aorta is to the human body: a central, life-sustaining artery. It connects the Port of Mombasa—the largest port in Kenya and the gateway to global markets—to the landlocked economies of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda, as well as parts of northern Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Somalia. When this artery flows smoothly, the region thrives; when disruptions occur, economic activity is immediately affected.

Since its establishment in 1985, the Northern Corridor has evolved into East and Central Africa's busiest transport route, playing an indispensable role in facilitating regional trade and integration. Over the decades, the Corridor has made remarkable progress in reducing transit times through simplified and harmonized customs procedures and the introduction of One-Stop Border Posts and the Single Customs Territory regime. These reforms have dramatically reduced border-crossing time—from an average of 2.5 days in 2013 to around 6 hours today—significantly improving the movement of goods and lowering trade costs.

Infrastructure along the Corridor has improved substantially, even as the pressures on transport volumes have grown. Member States have invested in roads, pipelines, rail networks, and inland waterways to ensure that this vital multimodal corridor continues to support regional development and competitiveness.

The transformation from a simple transit corridor to a broader development corridor—as envisioned in successive revisions of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement, beginning in 1985 and expanded in 2007—speaks to the ambition and vision of its Member States.

For its part, ECA has been a proud partner of the Northern Corridor from its earliest days. Our collaboration has spanned trade facilitation, transport policy, and regional integration initiatives. Most recently, we were honoured to work with the Northern Corridor on the development of a regional Inland Waterway Transport Strategy, supporting efforts to enhance multimodal connectivity across the Great Lakes region.

The Northern Corridor's continuing agenda—to deepen integration, modernize infrastructure, digitalize systems, and strengthen sustainability—is both ambitious and essential for the next stage of the region's economic transformation. We applaud the organisation's forward-looking vision and its commitment to harmonization, efficiency, and innovation.

Allow me also to pay special tribute to Dr. John Deng and his team. Their technical competence, leadership, and dedication have cemented the Northern Corridor's reputation as one of Africa's most effective and respected corridor institutions. They can count on ECA's full and continued support as the Corridor enters its fifth decade.

As you celebrate this important milestone, we stand with you in reaffirming the Northern Corridor's central role in shaping a more integrated, prosperous, and resilient Eastern Africa. Warmest congratulations, and best wishes for the next 40 years of achievement.



Mr. Andrew Mold,
Director, Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa,
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa



Ms. Inger Andersen,
Executive Director & UN Under Secretary-General

GOODWILL MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) extends warm congratulations to the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) on 40 years of regional leadership, coordination, and innovation in transport and trade facilitation across Eastern and Central Africa.

UNEP proudly celebrates this milestone with you and acknowledges the longstanding partnership of action towards addressing pollution and emissions. This collaboration is part of our joint urgent effort to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Keeping the Paris Agreement temperature goal within reach requires bold and practical action in high-impact sectors such as transport, and the Northern Corridor stands as an ideal example of how cleaner, safer, and more efficient freight systems can deliver tangible benefits for rapidly growing economies.

Together, we have moved from vision to implementation, developing Africa's first Green Freight Strategy, rolling out eco-driving training, deploying an emissions tracker system, and advancing harmonized fuel and vehicle standards. These measures cut emissions while improving efficiency and safety and the quality of life for communities along the Corridor.

Looking ahead, the Northern Corridor's ambition to be EV-ready by 2030 and net-zero by 2050 sets a strong regional benchmark. Building on this progress, UNEP is working with partners to scale up its support of the green corridor model across other regions such as supporting the transition to ultra-low sulphur fuels, adoption of minimum Euro VI emission standards, and development and implementation of green freight strategies compatible with the climate targets.

As part of these 40 years of progress, the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030 is a roadmap for this next chapter. It charts the way forward in reducing freight emissions, improving livelihoods, making our roads safer, and opening opportunities for private sector investments in electric mobility and across the value chain.

UNEP commends NCTTCA's visionary leadership. We remain committed to deepening our collaboration and supporting your vision to elevate action on emission reduction, while ensuring the corridor's freight system remains robust, competitive and adaptable in the face of a changing planet.

Congratulations once again on your 40th anniversary! Warm regards, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) celebrates its 40th anniversary, marking four decades of facilitating regional trade and transport along the Northern Corridor.

This organization, with an illustrious history, was established in 1985. It focuses on enhancing the efficiency of the multimodal trade route connecting the Port of Mombasa to the landlocked countries in the Great Lakes region.

NCTTCA is involved in regional trade and the green economy. It has partnered with various strategic stakeholders on sustainable infrastructure development and supports member states, namely Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda, in enhancing road safety.

The transit transport corridor concept stems from the historical need to connect trade routes linking seaports with landlocked nations and economic hubs.

These corridors largely evolved from ancient footpaths into today's structured, modern multimodal networks designed to foster regional integration, economic growth, and efficient trade within and beyond their respective regions.

What readily comes to mind in this regard is perhaps the Trans-Saharan trade routes, a network of caravan trails across the Sahara Desert that connected West Africa, North Africa, and the Mediterranean world, flourishing from the 7th century through the 17th century.

Today's corridors, such as East Africa's Northern Corridor, combine the hard infrastructure of the Port of Mombasa, roads, and rail networks with institutional frameworks to overcome physical and non-physical barriers along the route, facilitating the seamless, rapid transport of transit goods.

The Northern Corridor is one of the most established and perhaps the best transport corridor authorities in Africa.

However, the Oldest Railway Transit Transport Corridor in Africa may be the Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway, which connects Addis Ababa to the Port of Djibouti and was built between 1897 and 1917. This corridor served as

the primary, and for a long time only, access to the sea for landlocked Ethiopia.

In Southern Africa, the Namibe Corridor runs through Angola. It is based on the Moçâmedes Railway and was constructed in 1905 to connect the port of Namibe, a fishing port, to the interior of the continent.

The Trans-Saharan trade routes, used for centuries, were the original "corridors" of commerce, though they later transitioned from camel caravans to modern infrastructure.

The Northern Corridor, without doubt, remains the busiest and most established modern, multi-modal (road, rail, pipeline, water) corridor in East and Central Africa.

The transit corridors in Africa have been highly beneficial, serving as critical, high-impact infrastructure that boost regional trade, integrate markets, and foster economic growth by connecting landlocked countries to ports. These corridors have reduced freight costs by 10–15% and significantly cut transit times.

Between 2016 and 2022, considerable improvements were registered along the Northern Corridor the main trade route linking the Port of Mombasa to Uganda resulting in substantially reduced cargo dwell and transit times.

For instance, the Mombasa-Kampala travel time has been shortened by 47% (2016–2022), fostering development and improving regional connectivity, according to the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory report.

The introduction of the One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) has considerably increased trade between the Member States and transformed cargo delivery to and from the Port of Mombasa into a truly seamless process, hailed by many port users.

Today, the Northern Corridor is focused on transforming the transport route into an integrated economic development zone (development corridor) that boosts the regional trade, digitize logistics, and embrace sustainability. This includes expanding rail networks, implementing green freight strategies, and leveraging AfCFTA to reduce transit costs.



George Sunguh,
Editor

EDITORIAL TEAM

PUBLISHER:
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CONTRIBUTORS:
NCTTCA
Media Concept Limited

EDITOR:
Media Concept Ltd

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WHO WE ARE:

The Northern Corridor is a multimodal trade route linking the landlocked countries of the Great Lakes Region with the Kenyan maritime sea port of Mombasa.

The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA) signed in 1985 and revised in 2007 for regional cooperation with a view of facilitating interstate and transit trade between the Member States of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. South Sudan acceded to the Agreement in 2012.

The NCTTA is a comprehensive agreement with defined 12 Protocols on strategic areas for regional cooperation relating to: Maritime Port Facilities, Routes and Facilities, Customs Controls and Operations, Documentation and Procedures, Transport of Goods by Rail, Transport of Goods by Road, Inland Waterways Transport of Goods, Transport by Pipeline, Multimodal Transport of Goods, Handling of Dangerous Goods, Measures of Facilitation for Transit Agencies, Traders and Employees and Environmental sustainability and Climate Change within the transportation activities of the Northern Corridor region.

The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) was established to oversee the implementation of the Agreement. The NCTTCA Secretariat is mandated to facilitate trade and movement of people, stimulate economic and social development, transform the Northern Corridor into a development corridor by stimulating investments, implement strategies for accelerating economic and social growth while ensuring environmental sustainability.



VISION:

To become a safe, sustainable, and competitive trade and transport corridor.

MISSION:

To coordinate and support implementation of activities in the Northern Corridor for efficient movement of goods and persons; and contribute to the socio-economic development of the region.

CORE VALUES:

- * Collaboration and Cooperation
- * Integrity
- * Responsibility
- * Mutual Respect and Trust



MANDATE & OBJECTIVES:

The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) was established under the NCTTA Treaty to oversee the implementation of the Agreement.

The NCTTCA was therefore mandated by its Member States to transform the Northern corridor into an economic development corridor through Spatial Development Programme and making the corridor a seamless, efficient and smart Corridor. More recently, the Northern Corridor Integration Summit had reiterated the Secretariat's mandate to monitor and report regularly on the performance of the Corridor.

The overall mandate of the NCTTCA therefore, is the removal of all obstacles to the flow of trade and services along the Northern Corridor. In fulfilling this mandate, the objectives of the NCTTCA are as specified in the 2007 Agreement namely:

To facilitate trade, the movement of persons, vehicles and goods in domestic, regional and international transport.

To stimulate economic and social development in the territories of the contracting parties.

To transform the corridor into a developmental corridor which in addition to offering safe, fast and competitive transport and transit services that secure regional trade, will stimulate investments, encourage sustainable development and poverty reduction and

To implement strategies for accelerating economic and social growth along the corridor while ensuring environmental sustainability.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the contracting states have agreed to undertake the following:

- Establish and manage transport and communication systems that are viable, reliable and efficient, with the private sector being eligible to operate and manage such systems.
- Implement a policy of non-discriminatory, reciprocity, equal treatment and fair competition towards operators and users of the transport and communications systems.
- Cooperate in investment planning, development of transport and transit facilities and to jointly seek financing for project execution.
- Harmonize their standards and procedures for design, construction, operation and maintenance of transport, transit facilities and equipment.
- Take measures necessary to promote the role of the corridor as a development corridor.
- Encourage the private sector to participate in the financing of construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure and facilities.
- Harmonize privatization policies relating to the management of transport facilities and services.
- Facilitate the smooth and rapid movement of persons and goods between their territories and in transit, through the simplification and harmonization of documentation and procedures relevant to the movement of persons and goods between their territories and in transit through their territories.
- Work towards eradication of customs fraud and tax evasion; and
- Carry out mutual consultations with other contracting parties, prior to effecting any changes in laws, regulations and procedures concerning the movement of persons, vehicles and goods, except in an emergency.



Wellness Program on the Transport Corridors (2025)

The aim of the HIV/AIDS Awareness programme is to empower and increase the awareness of participants of HIV/AIDS, its impact, management and availability of support systems. This is to encourage early testing and lifestyle changes that will thereby reduce and prevent further infection.

The centers proposed to be developed will provide the following services:

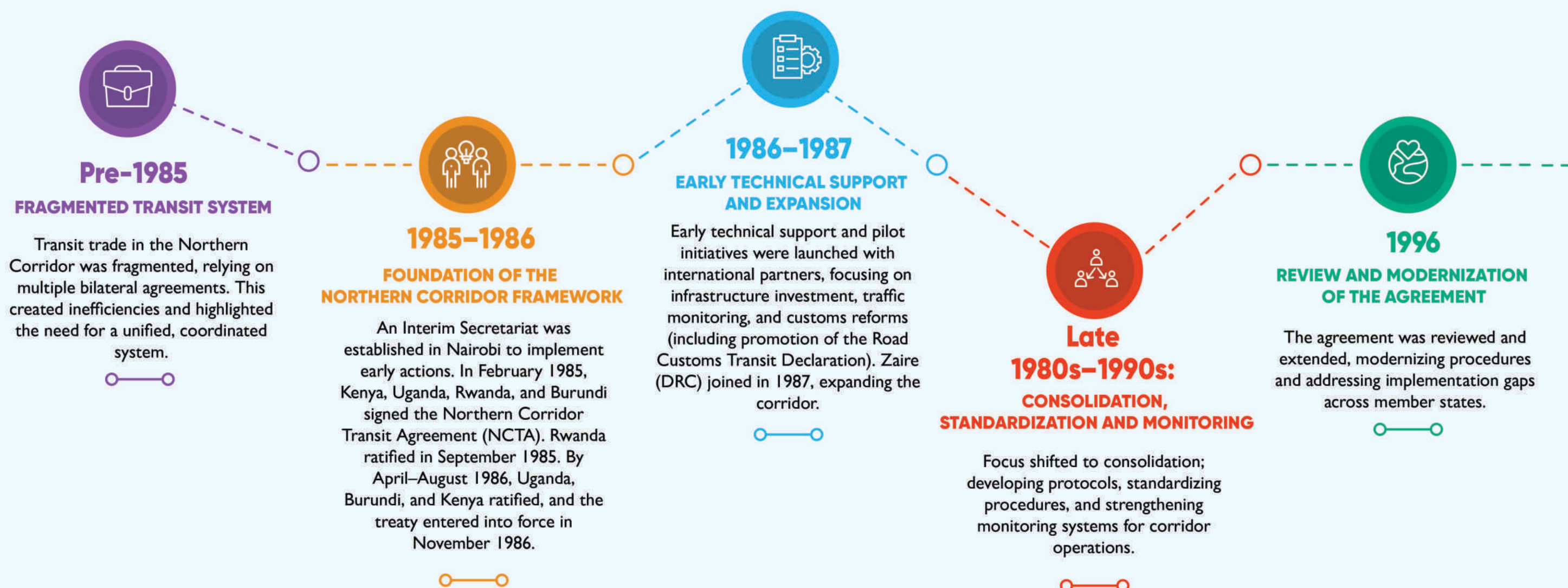
- Provision of psychological counselling, HIV testing and counselling, referral services for clients presenting psychiatric symptoms as well as those with substance dependence challenges for port the operators in the port and along the Northern corridor transit route.
- Sensitization of port operators, staffs and the operators along the Northern corridor transit route on healthy lifestyles, for example, the benefits of physical wellness including good nutrition and seeking health checks.
- Ensure psychological wellness for all the port operators, staffs and the operators along the Northern corridor transit route by providing counselling in intra and inter personal issues such as stress management, alcohol and substance abuse etc.
- Engage the prevention and management aspects of HIV/AIDS response, which include the sensitization talks that increase HIV knowledge among the staff and operators.
- Sensitization talks on stigma and discrimination.

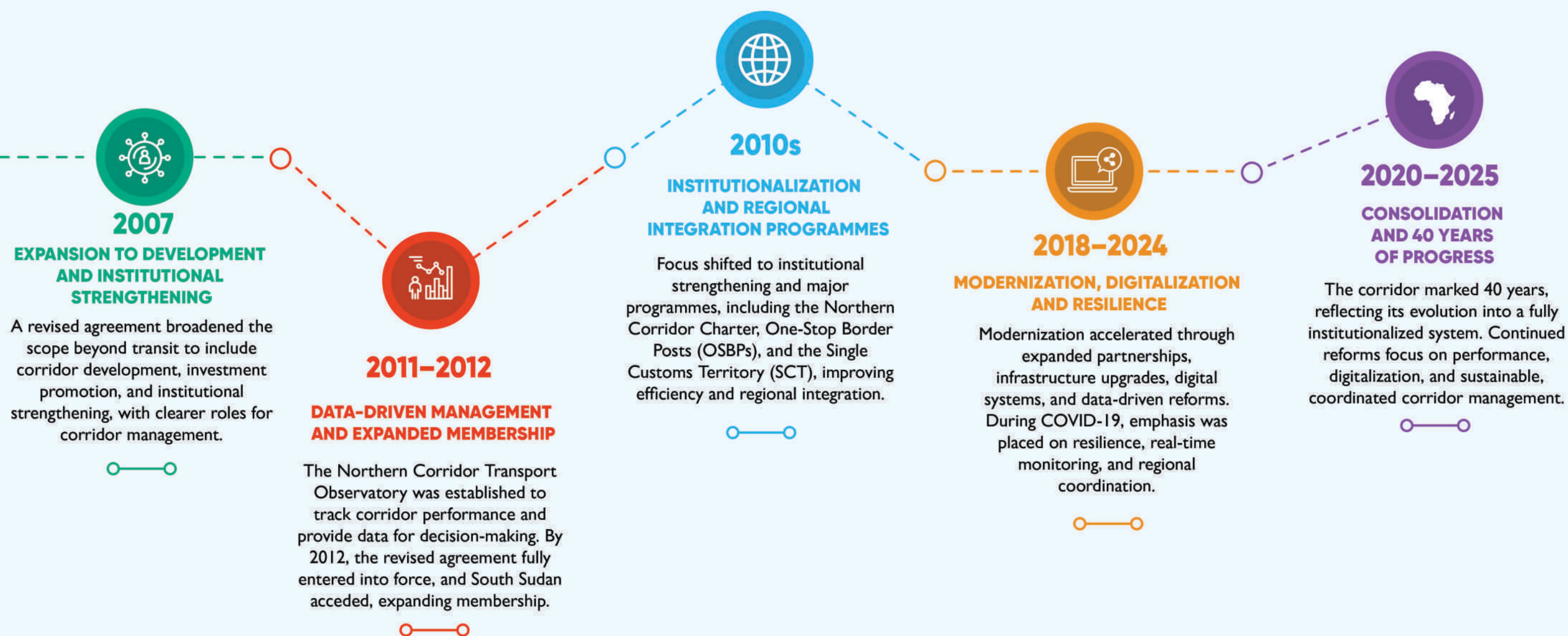
This is in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal 3, "Ensure Healthy Lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".

Proposed partners; Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA), Kenya Ports Authority, Kenya Maritime Authority and North Star Alliance.



HISTORICAL TIMELINES







CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION

For forty years, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) has been instrumental in anchoring regional integration and trade facilitation across Eastern and Central Africa.

Established in 1985 under the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA), the Authority transformed the Northern Corridor from a slow, fragmented, and high-cost route into a coordinated, performance-driven development corridor linking the Port of Mombasa to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

The impact is measurable: transit times from Mombasa to Kampala that once stretched to two or three weeks in the 1990s now average about four to six days; container dwell time at the Port of Mombasa has fallen from around eleven days in 2012 to three or four days today; and border clearance at Busia and Malaba has reduced from nearly two days in the early 2000s to often under six hours.

Road freight charges between Mombasa and Nairobi, which once cost approximately USD 1,300 for a 20-foot container, now typically range between USD 650 and USD 850, reflecting efficiency gains driven by reforms, infrastructure upgrades, and improved governance.

The Agreement's objectives were far-reaching: remove obstacles to trade and transport, promote efficient and cost-effective movement of goods and people, stimulate economic development, and safeguard environmental sustainability.

Over four decades, the Authority has stood at the center of regional integration, coordinating reforms, harmonizing standards, mobilizing investment, and institutionalizing cooperation across Eastern and Central Africa.

What began as a fragmented, paper-based transit route marked by delays and inefficiencies has evolved into a dynamic artery of commerce; faster, safer, more predictable, and increasingly digital.

Beyond statistics, NCTTCA's deeper contribution has been institutional: building trust among sovereign states, creating specialist implementing agencies, and establishing corridor-wide transparency and accountability through shared monitoring systems.

The NCTTA, signed in Mombasa on 19 February 1985, was born from a practical need: landlocked countries required predictable, efficient access to the sea, while Kenya's gateway role demanded a stable, rules-based transit regime.

The Agreement established the NCTTCA to coordinate Member State policies, harmonise procedures, and monitor corridor performance.

From its initial focus on transit facilitation, the treaty evolved in response to persistent bottlenecks and emerging demands.

A 1996 review strengthened harmonisation and simplification, and the 2007 revision expanded the vision from a transit route to a “Development Corridor” governed through eleven protocols spanning ports, customs, documentation, road and rail transport, inland waterways, pipelines, multimodal transport, handling of dangerous goods, and facilitation measures for traders and employees.

Recently, the Agreement has been reviewed again to accommodate new realities, including the Single Customs Territory, additional routes, AfCFTA-driven trade expansion, and a 12th protocol on environmental protection, reflecting a shift toward sustainability and resilience alongside efficiency.

South Sudan's accession in 2012 further demonstrated the corridor's role as a lifeline, extending connectivity to Africa's newest nation and underscoring the Northern Corridor's strategic importance in linking fragile and landlocked economies to regional and global markets.

Institutional and Policy Breakthroughs that Unlocked Corridor Efficiency

NCTTCA's most enduring achievement is the culture of structured cooperation it institutionalised through the Council of Ministers, the Executive Committee, and specialised technical mechanisms.

This cooperation enabled early reforms that removed chronic procedural burdens. In the 1980s and 1990s, traders faced multiple security bonds and customs declarations at each border, inflating costs and enabling rent-seeking.

NCTTCA's advocacy and technical coordination supported the introduction of a single regional bond mechanism through the Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG) and later the Single Customs Territory (SCT), enabling clearance at the first point of entry and reducing repetitive documentation inland.

The Authority also catalysed the creation of specialised national implementing institutions. These included the road authorities, road funds, revenue authorities, and transport agencies. It strengthened professionalism, dedicated maintenance financing, and regulatory compliance; examples include Uganda's UNRA (2006) and Rwanda's RTDA (2010).

On customs modernisation and cargo security, the launch of the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) in 2017, initially linking Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, introduced real-time tracking that reduced diversion risks, improved predictability, and lowered enforcement-related delays.

Through data-backed advocacy, NCTTCA also reduced the proliferation of checkpoints: where trucks once faced up to 30 roadblocks on the Mombasa–Kampala road, sustained monitoring and political engagement drove significant reductions, cutting delays, costs, and harassment while strengthening corridor credibility.

Infrastructure, Port Reforms, and Trade Facilitation at Scale

With institutional reforms underway, the Authority's agenda expanded to corridor infrastructure and operational efficiency. Axle-load control became a priority as overloading accelerated road deterioration and increased lifecycle maintenance costs.



COVER STORY

NCTTCA supported the introduction of weighbridges and later championed High-Speed Weigh-In-Motion (WIM) systems that enforce compliance without forcing all trucks to stop, improving both enforcement and throughput.

Complementing enforcement, the Self-Regulatory Charter promoted voluntary compliance through public-private commitment, reinforcing a shared responsibility for protecting corridor assets.

Today, most corridor roads achieve an International Roughness Index (IRI) score below 4, compared to 8–12 in the 1990s. At the maritime gateway, Mombasa Port decongestion was a defining reform outcome: through multi-agency collaboration under the Mombasa Port Community Charter (2014), customs automation, and the development of inland container depots (notably Nairobi and Naivasha), port dwell times dropped sharply, reducing costs and improving supply-chain reliability across the hinterland.

At borders, One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) became the corridor's most visible symbol of integration. Facilities such as Busia, Malaba, and Mirama Hills enabled joint clearance by agencies from both countries, compressing clearance times from up to 72 hours to often under six hours and converting borders from chokepoints into facilitation hubs.

Recognising financing constraints, NCTTCA advanced public-private partnerships for infrastructure and logistics platforms, while also mobilising donor and development finance for highway rehabilitation and corridor upgrades, contributing to improved road quality indicators, shorter transit times, and lower freight costs along major trunk routes.

Evidence-Based Governance: Transport Observatory, Research, and Accountability

A distinguishing feature of the Northern Corridor's transformation has been its shift toward evidence-based governance. The launch of the Transport Observatory in 2012 institutionalised performance monitoring across more than 45 indicators spanning ports, borders, road conditions, freight costs, and corridor reliability.

This transparency exposed inefficiencies, such as excessive roadblocks and systemic delays, and provided a shared factual basis for reform decisions, investment priorities, and policy negotiations.

Beyond monitoring, NCTTCA's research agenda has shaped strategic planning and innovation, including thematic studies and feasibility work that informed OSBP development, roadside stations planning, axle-load policy harmonisation, and the introduction of sustainability and emissions-reduction frameworks.

This combination of monitoring, research, and policy coordination has turned corridor governance into a continuous improvement system, measuring performance, identifying constraints, and implementing corrective actions in a structured regional framework.

Recent Strategic Priorities: Sustainability, Digitalisation, and Resilience

As the corridor's role expanded under AfCFTA and growing regional trade, NCTTCA also broadened its agenda from efficiency to sustainability and resilience.

The introduction of the environmental protection protocol and the subsequent green freight programming represent a strategic pivot: decarbonisation, cleaner fuels, improved fleet efficiency, and climate-resilient infrastructure are increasingly treated as competitiveness requirements rather than optional add-ons.

Digital trade facilitation through interoperable customs systems, paperless processes, and electronic cargo monitoring remains central to the next phase of integration, supporting faster clearance, better risk management, and reduced transaction costs.

Infrastructure modernisation continues through flagship investments such as rail upgrades and port capacity expansion, while corridor institutions are strengthening multi-agency coordination to address emerging challenges, including road safety, supply-chain shocks, and cross-border enforcement consistency.

Persistent Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite significant progress, structural challenges remain. Non-tariff barriers such as uneven enforcement, corruption risks, and administrative inefficiencies continue to affect predictability in some segments.

Infrastructure gaps persist, particularly in parts of South Sudan and the DRC, where road conditions, security contexts, and limited modal alternatives constrain corridor performance. Rail and inland waterways

remain underutilised relative to their potential, keeping pressure on roads and limiting system-wide resilience.

Differences in road user charges, procedural requirements, and institutional capacity across Member States still create friction points that require ongoing harmonisation.

A Corridor of Cooperation, Not Just Commerce

The Northern Corridor's story is ultimately a story of regional cooperation turned into practical results: faster transit, lower costs, stronger institutions, safer and more predictable trade, and a shared platform for problem-solving across borders.

NCTTCA's legacy is not only the infrastructure improved or the hours saved; it is the governance architecture built over four decades that enables sovereign states to coordinate policies, mobilise investment, and pursue shared prosperity.

As the Authority marks 40 years, it faces the future with a clear mandate: deepen integration under AfCFTA, accelerate digital and green transformation, build climate resilience, and extend performance improvements to the corridor's most challenging segments.

If the last four decades are a guide, the Northern Corridor will remain not merely a route for moving goods, but a durable instrument for integration, competitiveness, and regional stability in Eastern and Central Africa.



From left Mr. Niyonkuru Omer, of Burundi the Chairperson of the NCTTCA Executive Committee, Dr. Diar Deng, the Executive Secretary and Mr. Roger Tel Biasu of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Vice-Chairman.



BLUEPRINT FOR A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT: THE 1986 REPORT THAT GAVE THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR ITS INSTITUTIONAL BACKBONE

On 1 October 1986, in Nairobi, the Interim Secretariat of the Northern Corridor presented its first formal report to the Executive Board. Retrieved from the World Bank Group Archives under authorised public disclosure documents, the report did far more than account for early activities. It laid down the practical logic, institutional architecture, and operational requirements that would ultimately justify, and shape, the creation of a fully-fledged Permanent Secretariat for the Northern Corridor. In effect, it was the blueprint that moved the Northern Corridor from an agreement on paper to a functioning regional mechanism with continuity, technical capability, and long-term coordination power.

The report covered the period from 1 March to 15 October 1986, a foundational phase that began shortly after the Interim Secretariat was established. During these first months, the Interim Secretariat attempted to fulfil responsibilities entrusted to it by the Member States: monitoring implementation of the Agreement, creating administrative procedures, building communications with organisations involved in transit operations, and mobilising technical assistance. The report was explicit about the

complexity of these tasks, and equally candid about the constraints: limited resources meant that only an initial study of Kenya had been completed. Even so, the Secretariat signalled its intention to visit each Member State immediately after the Executive Board meeting to collect data, obtain publications, and develop an integrated synthesis of transport development requirements along the Northern Corridor.

Crucially, the report documented the early organisation of the Interim Secretariat itself, capturing an institutional moment that would later become part of the Authority's historical identity. The founding chairman was Mr. W. P. Wambura, Permanent Secretary in Kenya's Ministry of Transport and Communications. The position of Head of the Interim Secretariat was left vacant, while the Deputy Head, Mr. N. P. W. Ings, Senior Superintending Engineer at the same ministry, carried the day-to-day responsibility of running the Secretariat and overseeing engineering-related work on corridor infrastructure. Supporting staff included Ms. W. H. Muhato as Administrative Officer and an Assistant Secretary from the Ministry. Of particular significance was the secondment of Dr. C. E. Surano,

a Transport Economist posted to the Interim Secretariat in July 1986 through European Economic Community (EEC) technical assistance. This early partnership underscored a pattern that would define the corridor's development trajectory over decades: sustained external support aligned to corridor priorities, including planning, facilitation, and performance improvement, and continued today through European Union cooperation frameworks.

From the start, the report organised the Interim Secretariat's work around a set of operational themes that revealed both the scope of the corridor agenda and the need for an institutional body with permanence.

These themes included technical assistance, inland waterway (lake) services, customs procedures, secretariat support services, insurance arrangements, treaty ratification, and a suite of recommendations.

Taken together, they made an implicit argument: a corridor of this complexity could not be governed by ad hoc coordination. It required a professional, resourced, and enduring secretariat able to coordinate multiple sovereign administrations and multiple transport modes over time.

One of the strongest threads in the report was the early focus on technical assistance as the engine for credible planning. The report traced this to a preliminary ministerial meeting held in November 1985, where an earlier appeal to the Director-General of the European Economic Commission was recalled: the EEC was urged to support the Interim Secretariat in identifying priority development investments along the corridor.

The Interim Secretariat had already forwarded a proposal in December 1985. Its acceptance led to the July 1986 deployment of Dr. Surano, whose Terms of Reference included preparation of an investment project schedule and assistance with functions within the Interim Secretariat's mandate, especially forecasting future traffic demand and corridor utilisation. The report's reasoning was strategically mature for its time: landlocked states had multiple port options, and corridor development had to consider competitive access routes. In other words, performance and investment planning would determine whether the Northern Corridor could retain and grow its traffic.

Equally notable was the report's treatment of inland water transport as a strategic multimodal supplement rather than a marginal mode. It identified Lake Victoria as the primary inland waterway associated with the corridor, along with the Great Lakes of the Rift Valley region: Kivu, Albert, Edward, and Tanganyika. The Interim Secretariat documented support obtained through a UNCTAD/UNDP initiative under project RAF 78.015, which tested lake wagon ferries as roll-on/roll-off vessels to enhance transit connectivity.

Trials between Kisumu (Kenya) and Kemono Bay/Bukoba (Tanzania) conclusively established the operational and technical viability of wagon-ferry-based transit services. Yet the report also identified the practical constraints that limited immediate scalability: weak road links in Tanzania's Kagera region and challenges at the Lusahunga–Kobero border crossing, as well as the inability at the time to secure satisfactory commercial agreements among railway operators (Kenya Railways, Tanzania Railways, and Uganda Railways) and the limited prospects for road transport operators. Even so, the Interim Secretariat insisted the link remained valuable, encouraging Tanzanian authorities to prepare donor proposals to address the road constraints.

The report went further: following bilateral Kenya–Uganda engagements in June 1986, an operational agreement between Uganda Railways and Kenya Railways was expanded to enable wagon ferries to carry rail traffic between Kisumu and Jinja, reportedly operating with some success at roughly three trainloads per week. On that basis, the Interim Secretariat recommended drafting a dedicated protocol on lake transport and aligning related protocols accordingly, an early sign of how the corridor's legal architecture would expand to reflect multimodal realities.

If inland water transport illustrated the corridor's multimodal ambition, customs reform illustrated its day-to-day operational urgency. The report placed major emphasis on the Road Customs Transit Declaration (RCTD), designed by the Agreement as a single “through” document for goods moving under customs control from an office of departure to final destination, enabling temporary suspension of duties and taxes until arrival. The Interim Secretariat concluded that adopting Protocols 3 and 4, particularly the RCTD, would yield major operational benefits at relatively low cost.

Yet it also observed a serious implementation gap: Member States had adopted the RCTD internally to varying degrees, but there was little evidence it was being used as intended, especially for proving re-exportation needed for bond cancellation. In some cases, the Interim Secretariat recorded, with clear disappointment, that the RCTD was being used alongside older documents, increasing paperwork instead of reducing it. This diagnosis was important because it shifted the corridor's approach from assuming that legal instruments automatically translate into practice, to recognising that implementation requires sustained effort, monitoring, and technical support.

To unpack these issues, the Interim Secretariat convened and documented a sequence of engagements in Kenya: meetings with customs officials in Mombasa and Nairobi, joint discussions involving the Kenya Police, field visits to Malaba and Busia, and consultations at the Port of Mombasa with port authorities, customs, clearing agents, and other stakeholders. The conclusion was blunt: proper implementation of the RCTD would require a long-term intervention supported by targeted technical assistance.

The report also highlighted broader customs-related constraints, including slow operational performance at both the Port of Mombasa and border crossings, suggesting similar conditions likely existed elsewhere along the corridor. As a practical response, it proposed a short-term mission under the EEC technical assistance framework to evaluate operational requirements, particularly at Mombasa, with special attention to clearing sealed containers carrying transit goods. Notably, it recommended that the mission include a senior customs official from one of the francophone contracting states: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Rwanda, reflecting a deliberate attempt to build inclusive, cross-linguistic capacity within corridor reforms.

Beyond mode and procedure, the report made a pivotal institutional argument: the corridor needed a way to measure whether the treaty was actually delivering economic benefits. It warned that simply monitoring freight tariffs would not give an accurate picture, because tariffs were distorted by multiple factors, including weak cost accounting by transporters themselves. Instead, the report advanced a more rigorous performance logic: costs are largely related to time.

Therefore, by monitoring transit operation timings across modes, covering port processes, inland movements, and border crossings, Member States could obtain an objective indication of whether facilitation was succeeding. This reasoning is strikingly modern. It anticipated the later development of corridor performance observatories and dashboards by insisting that measurable time-based indicators are the most reliable proxy for cost and competitiveness in a complex logistics chain.

To operationalise that logic, the Interim Secretariat proposed a comprehensive data capture system to sample movements of transit cargo across all available transport modes, including movements within and from the Port of Mombasa and cross-border travel.

A proposal was developed, amended, and resubmitted as a technical assistance project, and it was expected to complement the ongoing UNCTAD/UNDP RAF 78.015 initiative.



Mr.W.P. Wambura, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communications (in the early 1980s) and Chairman of the Interim Secretariat of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority.



Executive Committee (seated) with staff: A commemorative group photo of NCTTCA Executive Committee Members and Secretariat staff at the 61st Executive Committee Meeting. / Nairobi, June 2026.

ESTABLISHMENT - PERMANENT SECRETARIATE

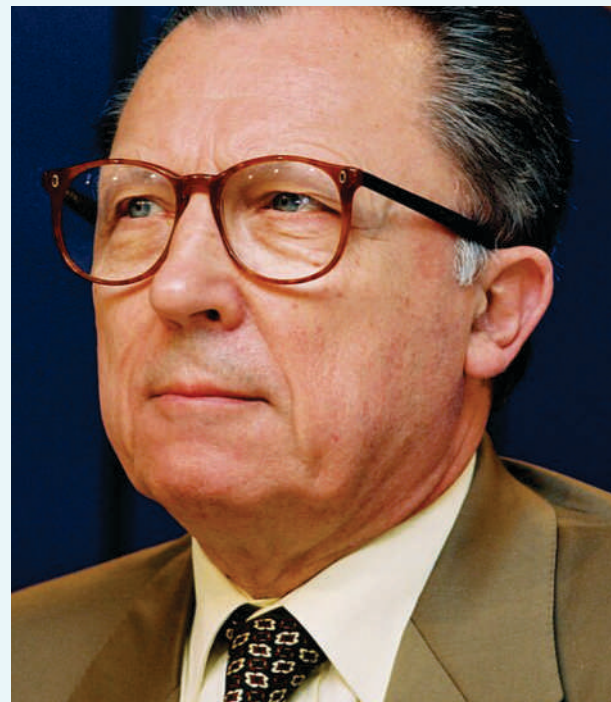
In parallel, the report identified practical needs that a Permanent Secretariat would inherit: translation capacity between English and French (especially urgent given the Interim Secretariat was hosted in an anglophone country), and improved administrative tools such as word processing capabilities, small details that nonetheless determine whether a regional body can produce timely documents, convene meetings, and maintain accountability across diverse Member States.

The report also documented progress and gaps in other treaty-linked areas, such as third-party motor vehicle insurance. It noted that Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda had signed an Inter-Bureaux Agreement in Bujumbura in April 1986, with Mr. Joseph Sibomana of SONARWA Rwanda elected President of the Council of Bureaux. Kenya's absence from that meeting was flagged as a concern, and the Interim Secretariat indicated it had taken steps to ensure Kenya's full participation in future meetings in line with the relevant protocol, an early example of the Secretariat acting as both coordinator and compliance catalyst.

Equally important was the status of ratification. The report recorded Rwanda as the first Member State to ratify the Agreement in September 1985, followed by Uganda in April 1986. Kenya and Burundi ratified in August 1986, with instruments deposited with the UNECA Secretariat in Addis Ababa. Zaire's accession was noted as being in de facto status, with de jure formalities to be completed once the treaty came into force. By documenting these legal milestones alongside operational realities, the report anchored corridor work in both law and implementation, reinforcing the case for a permanent institution able to steward both domains.

The culminating section of the report dealt directly with the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat. While UNCTAD had initially undertaken to advise on workload, composition, and financial requirements at the Nairobi ministerial meeting of November 1985, subsequent discussions among UNCTAD, the Interim Secretariat, and the EEC led to a practical decision: the Interim Secretariat itself would develop the proposal, supported by short-term technical assistance under the EEC contract. The intention was to have a robust submission ready for the plenary TTCA meeting scheduled to take place in Kigali.

The report made clear that establishing and financing a permanent body required handling both specific technical needs, customs operations, RCTD implementation, port clearance of sealed containers, and broader coordination questions such as multimodal planning, donor alignment, and performance measurement. To that end, the report invited the Executive Board to confirm continuation of Interim Secretariat facilities provided by the Government of Kenya so that several deliverables could be completed and later handed over to the Permanent Secretariat. These included finalising the transport infrastructure investment study and priority project schedule; completing a proposal for the Permanent Secretariat covering workload, staffing, facilities, costs, and financing; procuring technical assistance to undertake sustained monitoring of customs operations and establish formal reporting systems; setting up a corridor-wide data capture system covering port-to-destination movements; creating long-term multimodal development coordination capacity to translate corridor priorities into funded projects; strengthening daily secretariat operations through translation and administrative tools; and providing full secretariat services for the upcoming plenary meeting in Kigali, including any



Mr Jacques Delors was the European Economic Commission President in 1985 when the preliminary Ministerial Meeting of the NCTTCA approached the EEC to consider assisting Interim Secretariat to help with the study to identify desirable priority development investments along the Northern Corridor.

additional tasks directed by the Executive Board, such as drafting a protocol on lake transport.

In hindsight, the importance of the 1986 report lies in how comprehensively it framed the Northern Corridor challenge. It identified that infrastructure alone would not deliver efficiency without harmonised procedures, sustained monitoring, reliable data, and institutional capacity. It recognised that time is the real currency of corridor competitiveness. It saw multimodality, roads, rail, and inland waterways, not as separate national projects but as a single regional system requiring coordinated investment and governance. And it understood that donor support, while essential, had to be aligned to an agreed corridor programme anchored in Member State ownership.

This is why the report can be remembered as the document that created the Permanent Secretariat; not because it issued a legal decree, but because it provided the hard evidence, practical design, and operational logic that made a permanent institution unavoidable. It transformed a young corridor agreement into an implementable programme, and it set the foundation for an enduring regional body capable of turning coordination into results.



A ship being worked at a conventional cargo berth at the Port of Mombasa in the 1980s. Photo courtesy Kenya Ports Authority.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES CURRENT AND PAST



Dr. John Deng Diar Diing, PhD
(3 Sept. 2024 - to Date)

Dr. John Deng Diar Diing, PhD



Dr John Deng is the current Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA), having been appointed on 3rd September 2024.

Dr. Deng comes to the Secretariat as an infrastructure development expert and leader with a diverse background in project management, public policy, and environmental assessment. He holds a PhD in Project Planning and Management from the University of Nairobi, a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University, where he was a distinguished Edward S. Mason Fellow, and an MSc in Management of Projects (Construction) from the University of Manchester.

He took the steering wheel in the middle of the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, which focuses on transforming the corridor into a "Smart, Sustainable, and Competitive" route.

The main items on his "In Tray" remain the removal of the non-tariff barriers, harmonising customs procedures, and simplifying documentation to lower the cost of doing business across member states.

Prior to ascending to the helm of the NCTTCA, Dr. Deng was the Deputy Director of Infrastructure Development and Management at the Northern Corridor Transit & Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) Secretariat in Mombasa, Kenya.

He also served as Director of Projects at the South Sudan Roads Authority, where he was instrumental in managing strategic

road development projects. He additionally served as Managing Director of Horizon Real Estate Construction Company Ltd, overseeing significant construction projects in South Sudan.

Just like his predecessors, his key responsibility will be to monitor the implementation of decisions taken by the Northern Corridor Policy Organs, ensuring that the overall functions and operations of the NCTTCA, strategic planning, and resource mobilisation, among others, are meticulously carried out.

He wishes to eliminate trade barriers along the Northern Corridor to increase throughput at the Port of Mombasa from 36 million metric tonnes in 2024, when he joined the Secretariat, to over 50 million metric tonnes when he leaves.

It is equally his wish that the NCTTCA be allowed to manage the transit trade from the two ports of Mombasa and Lamu. The Secretariat is in the process of redesigning the One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) in Malaba and Busia to embed scanners in the 'Drive Through' sections, further reducing transit time along the corridor.

Under his watch, the Secretariat is currently preparing Member States for the electrification of their respective automobile fleets by mapping the availability of energy sources and power distribution within the region, the availability of charging stations, and the number of electric vehicles within the region.

Equally close to his heart is improving cross-border trade between Member States, especially between Kenya and South Sudan.

PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES



CPA Omae Nyarandi
(3 Sept. 2018 - 2 Sept. 2024)



CPA Omae Nyarandi served as the Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) between 3rd September 2018 and 2nd September 2024.

CPA Nyarandi came into this position with over 24 years accumulated experience in areas of Port Management, Procurement and Finance/Commercial aspects. He is a holder of an MBA (Strategic Management) from the University of Nairobi, Certified Public Accountant (CPAK), Certified Secretary (CSK) and a Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (MCIPS).

Prior to joining NCTTCA, he worked with Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) in various positions for twelve years, with five years as General Manager Corporate Services in charge of Strategy, Corporate Communications, Research and IT. Before his new appointment, he was working at the Managing Partner of Maritime Business and Economic Consultants, involved in consultancy in Maritime, transport Logistics, Strategy, Legal and Finance.

As the Executive Secretary NCTTCA he is credited with bringing back the Secretariat to financial stability and his leadership role during the challenging period of COVID-19 by bringing all stakeholders to work virtually in ensuring smooth flow of cargo in the region.

During Omae Nyarandi's tenure as Executive Secretary, NCTTCA underwent a period of significant institutional consolidation and strategic repositioning. Corridor governance was strengthened through more effective coordination of the

Council of Ministers, Executive Board, and Technical Committees, enhancing Member State ownership and accountability in corridor performance management. Trade and transport facilitation reforms advanced through the harmonisation of policies and procedures, reduction of non-tariff barriers, and improved border and transit operations, including support to One-Stop Border Posts and coordinated border management. The Secretariat also institutionalised data-driven decision-making, strengthening the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, undertaking logistics performance surveys, and using corridor diagnostics to guide reforms and investment prioritisation.

Under his leadership, NCTTCA broadened its focus beyond traditional facilitation to embrace multimodal development, digitalisation, sustainability, and inclusion. Coordination of road, rail, pipeline, and inland waterway initiatives was enhanced, alongside axle load control and road safety compliance. The Authority supported interoperability of digital trade and transport systems, promoted transparency and real-time monitoring, and deepened structured public-private dialogue. Notably, this period positioned NCTTCA as a regional leader in green freight and climate action, with the development of the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030 and the first comprehensive GHG emissions baseline for road freight. Gender and social inclusion were mainstreamed across programmes, partnerships with development partners were strengthened, and corridor readiness for AfCFTA was advanced—collectively improving efficiency, resilience, and sustainability of the Northern Corridor and laying a strong foundation for its future development.

PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

Mr. Fred Tumwebaze, a Ugandan national, served as the acting Executive Secretary of the NCTTCA between January 19, 2017, and 2nd September 2018. He took over from Mr. Donat Bagula of the DR Congo and handed over to Kenya's Mr. Omae Nyarandi.

Prior to being promoted to the acting ES position, Mr. Tumwebaze served the NCTTCA Secretariat as the Director, Private Sector Investment Promotion Program.

Article 8 (d) of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement provides for a Public Private Partnership Committee (PPPC) composed of public and private sector stakeholders dealing with matters of trade and transport along the Northern Corridor.

The PPPC is the Northern Corridor Stakeholders Consultative Forum to resolve the challenges being faced by Stakeholders at the Port of Mombasa and along the Kenya Northern Corridor transit section.

The functions of the Committee include identifying challenges being faced by stakeholders in their areas of operations along the Northern Corridor and proposing solutions to these

challenges. The NCTTCA Secretariat, on its part, consolidates the views of the PPPC for onward submission to the NCTTCA Executive Committee for review and consideration by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Tumwebaze, an expert in regional transport planning and logistics, intra-regional trade, and Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), will be remembered for having concluded negotiations with the then TradeMark East Africa (now Trademark Africa) for a three-year period (2018-2021) grant extension agreement worth US\$ 1.05 million for Strengthening and Enhancing the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory.

TMEA has been supporting the Transport Observatory project, a vital monitoring system for the East African Northern Corridor (Port of Mombasa to landlocked nations), tracking performance indicators like transit times, costs, and safety using data from stakeholders to identify bottlenecks, improve efficiency, and facilitate regional trade since 2012.

With the new financing, NCTTCA improved monitoring of the Northern Corridor performance with regard to the movement of people and goods.



**Mr. Fred Tumwebaze,
Ag Executive Secretary
(19 Jan. 2017 - 2 Sept. 2018)**



PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES



Mr. Donat Bagula
(1 March 2012 - 18 Jan. 2017)



Mr. Donat Bagula, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was the Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) between March 1, 2012, and January 18, 2017.

Mr. Bagula graduated with a Master's Degree in Economics Sciences in Applied Sciences Option Financial Management in 1988 from the University of Kinshasa.

He had graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from the same University.

Prior to joining the NCTTCA Secretariat, he had worked as the Director and head of Department for Studies and Planning in the Ministry of Transport and Communication in DRC, Kinshasa, where he also served as the Chief of Staff.

He was also the Coordinator for the follow-up of regional issues and relations with Sub-Regional and regional organisations.

Mr. Bagula presided over a number of NCTTCA programmes and activities during his tenure.

South Sudan acceded to the Northern Corridor Agreement on December 6, 2012 during his term in office.

Under his watch, the Multiple Security Bonds and Customs Declarations were eliminated from the Northern Corridor through the implementation of the Single Customs Territory (SCT).

The process began around 2014, with some EAC partner states adopting the Single Customs Declaration for goods destined for other member countries.

Other reforms, including the rollout of Electronic Cargo Tracking and the establishment of a regional single bond system, supported the elimination of multiple bonds.

The Secretariat conducted the feasibility study for the Roadside Stations Programme along the Northern Corridor during its tenure in 2014.

The study identified 141 potential locations for the stations, with 67 deemed high priority.

It was under this regime that the Northern Corridor Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) was officially launched in Kampala, Uganda, on February 24, 2017.

The Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy was launched in 2017, giving rise to the Sustainable Green Freight Transport Programme.

The Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor Community Charter (MPNCCC), a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at enhancing the efficiency, transparency, and global competitiveness of the Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor, was launched in June 2014.

Signed by 53 stakeholders from public, private, and regional entities, the Charter seeks to streamline port and corridor operations, reduce cargo transit times, and foster collaboration to support trade facilitation across East Africa and beyond.

In Kenya, a Commercial Contract was signed on March 24, 2016, for the New Kisumu Port (600,000 tonnes). The Commercial Contract signed for the Expansion and modernisation of ICD in Nairobi (405,000 TEUs) was also signed on the same date.

PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

Mr. Philip Mwanthi, a Kenyan national, served as the acting Executive Secretary of the NCTTCA between January 26, 2011, and February 29, 2012, taking over from DR Congo's Lisumbu Eliombo, who also held the same position in an acting capacity.

He held the position for slightly over one year before handing over to Mr. Donat Bagula, also from the DRC, on March 1, 2012.

Before being promoted to the acting ES position, Mr. Mwanthi served as the Director of Finance and Administration at the Northern Corridor Secretariat.

During 2011-2012, key Northern Corridor projects focused on road rehabilitation (World Bank's Northern Corridor Transport Improvement Project, enhancing port efficiency (Mombasa Roads Improvement Initiative, linking port to hinterland), improving road safety and HIV/AIDS mitigation, and promoting railway development, alongside initiatives for policy harmonization (Kenya & Uganda for rail/water transport) and research into logistics and spatial development, aiming to boost regional trade.

This was the time of the Northern Corridor Transport Improvement Project (NCTIP) - a major World Bank-funded initiative focused on road rehabilitation, socioeconomic development, private-sector participation, road safety, and support for Kenya Airports Authority.

Mombasa Roads Improvement Initiative - a partnership with TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) to decongest roads around the Port of Mombasa (like Kipevu, Port Reitz) to improve access and efficiency.

Trade Facilitation & Customs Modernization - an effort to automate border posts (DRC), implement Single Window Systems, and cooperate on Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs.

The era of the Logistics & Spatial Development. Studies by JICA and the Northern Corridor Secretariat (NCSDP) to create master plans for logistics and explore linkages for oil, mining, and new industries.

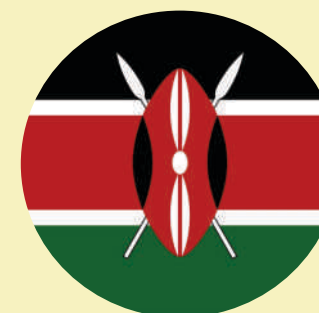
It was the time of Technology & Monitoring when GPS devices were deployed through the support of TradeMark EA to monitor truck movements and gather data for transport efficiency, managed by the Kenya Transporters Association (KTA).

Another key project undertaken during the period was the Policy & Rail Connectivity. Reviews were done by the Northern Corridor Secretariat to harmonize policies, particularly between Kenya and Uganda, to improve rail and inland water transport.

These efforts aimed to address infrastructure bottlenecks, reduce trade costs, and improve the overall competitiveness of the Northern Corridor as a vital trade route for landlocked East and Central African countries.



**Mr. Philip Mwanthi,
Ag Executive Secretary
(26 Jan. 2011 - 29 Feb. 2012)**



PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES



**Mr. Lisumbu Eliombo,
Ag Executive Secretary
(10 Jan. 2010 to 25 Jan. 2011)**



Mr. Lisumbu Eliombo, a DR Congo national, initially served at the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) Secretariat as a Customs Officer before being elevated to the position of acting Executive Secretary.

He oversaw operations, strategic planning, resource mobilization, and the projection of the authority's image, essentially driving the mandate to improve transit and transport in East Africa.

It was during his tenure in 2011 that the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory was established and hosted by the NCTTCA with support from development partners.

The Transport Observatory formalized systematic data collection along the corridor, produced regular reports (TOP reports), and became a central evidence base used by member States and donors.

It was during Lisumbu's tenure in 2010s that the NCTTCA and partners advanced practical initiatives informed by Observatory evidence to drive initiatives like improving road safety (mapping black spots, awareness campaigns),

enhancing trade facilitation (customs system to drive initiatives like integration, border posts), promoting private investment (PPP frameworks for roadside stations), and developing policy harmonization across member states, all aimed at boosting efficiency and development along the Northern Corridor.

Talks to establish the Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor Community Charter (MPNCCC) began earlier, but the formal agreement was launched and signed on June 30, 2014, by public and private stakeholders, creating a framework for collaboration to improve port efficiency and regional logistics. The initiative grew from efforts to address coordination issues, with the initial charter revised into the current MPNCCC in 2018.

Lisumbu a career customs officer played key role in data exchange and customs interoperability projects in the East African Northern Corridor evolved under the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIP), formally established around 2013, with key initiatives like the Single Customs Territory (SCT) rolling out to integrate systems, leading to significant customs data exchange efforts by the mid-2010s to streamline trade and reduce transit times.

PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

Mr. Godfrey Onyango-Matata, of Uganda, served as the Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA) from January 9, 2001, to January 9, 2010.

He joined the Secretariat as an experienced Transport Specialist with a demonstrated history of working in transport and infrastructure.

Skilled in Sustainable Development, Regional Integration, Planning, Proposal Writing, and Economic Development. Strong consulting professional with an MSc. Engineering focused on Transportation from the University of New Brunswick, Canada.

He is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Transport with extensive working experience spanning over a period of 20 years in transportation at both national and regional levels.

Prior to joining NCTTCA, Mr. Matata was the Regional Coordinator and Project Manager for the Advance Cargo Information System (ACIS) project for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

During his tenure at the NCTTCA, which spanned ten years, from 2001 to 2010, Mr. Matata presided over some key activities.

The Northern Corridor was transformed into an economic development corridor with the 2007 revision of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA) during his time.

This revision updated the original 1985 agreement to reflect the new vision of transforming the trade route into an economic development corridor.

During the period of 2001 to 2010, the Northern Corridor focused on infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and improving transit times for member states.

Mr. Matata oversaw the survey of inland waterway transport along the Northern Corridor. This survey was conducted as part of the Northern Corridor Infrastructure Master Plan study, completed in 2010, and included in subsequent annual Transport Observatory reports.

Through sustained advocacy, NCTTCA encouraged Member States to establish specialized institutions such as road authorities, road funds, and revenue authorities.

For instance, Uganda established the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) in 2006, while Rwanda formed the Rwanda Transport Development Agency (RTDA) in 2010.

These bodies improved road management, safety, and revenue collection, aligning national priorities with corridor standards.

The NCTTCA worked to harmonize standards and procedures for all transport and transit facilities; efforts were made to simplify and harmonize documentation to promote the rapid movement of goods.

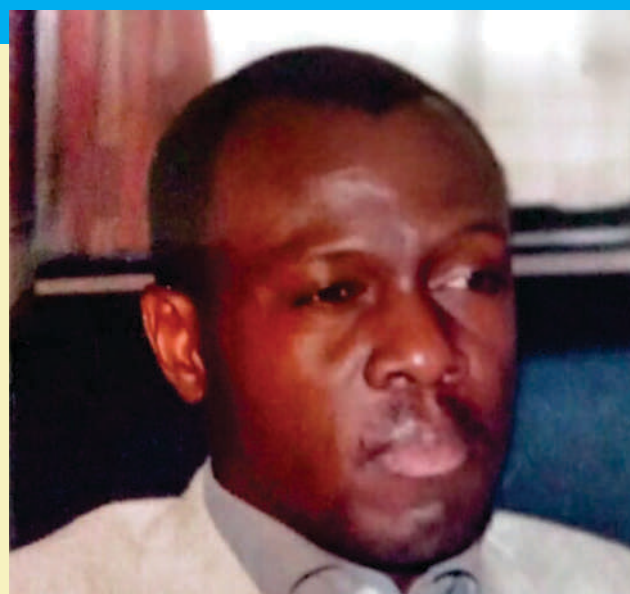
By the end of his tenure, studies were being conducted to assess and reduce the unnecessary time spent at border posts.



Mr. Godfrey Onyango-Matata
(9 Jan. 2001 - 9 Jan. 2010)



PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES



**Mr. Silas Kanamugire,
Ag Executive Secretary
(3 Sept. 1997 - 30 April 1998
1 Feb. 1999 - 8 Jan. 2001)**



Mr. Silas Kanamugire from Rwanda was appointed acting Executive Secretary for the first time on September 3, 1997, upon the departure of Mr. Jean Berchmans Nsabiyumva of Burundi. He held this position for 14 months until the time Uganda's Anthony Ngororano arrived at the Secretariat on 1 May 1998.

Mr. Kanamugire had to take the mantle again from Mr. Ngororano exactly 14 months after Mr. Ngororano left the secretariat for greener pastures.

He is the NCTTCA Staffer, who, until the time of going to press, had the opportunity to serve twice as Acting Executive Secretary.

Mr. Kanamugire later worked as a specialist at TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), now TradeMark Africa, focusing on regional integration and transport and trade facilitation within the corridor, and as a senior specialist in regional integration, focusing on infrastructure, trade, and transport development for East Africa.

During his tenure between 1997-2001, main Northern Corridor projects focused on trade facilitation through infrastructure upgrades, especially roads and border posts, with key efforts including institutional strengthening via the NCTTCA for better coordination, and initial studies for key links like the Mombasa-Kisangani (DRC) extension and the Eldoret-Kampala Pipeline, aiming to reduce costs and improve transit for landlocked nations like Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and DRC.

The period between 1997 and 2001 saw a rail performance along the Northern Corridor (Kenya-Uganda) characterized by severely reduced capacity, inefficiency, and declining market share due to chronic lack of investment in track and rolling stock.

Despite high demand, poor infrastructure led to long delays and slow transit times, making road transport the dominant, more reliable, and faster alternative for cargo.

While productivity and cargo volume increased at the Port of Mombasa, returns to scale decreased. The port struggled with inadequate infrastructure, which restricted its ability to efficiently handle increasing traffic, often relegating it to "regional feeder port" status rather than a major hub.

The Northern Corridor's performance was heavily constrained by inefficient upstream logistics, including poor road networks and challenges with customs clearance, which kept forcing Mr. Kanamugire and the Secretariat staff to burn the midnight oil.

The Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) lacked a consistent strategic direction, and its overall performance was largely affected by factors beyond the port's direct control, such as the state of the inland transport infrastructure.

During this period, NCTTCA focused on Policy Harmonization. The staff reviewed and aligned policies to streamline transport and trade, especially for rail and inland waterways.

The Secretariat also focused on upgrading key road sections, adding weighbridges, and planning for future roadside stations (RSS) for truckers. There were efforts to improve efficiency and capacity on the main rail line connecting Mombasa to the hinterlands.

It will be remembered that this was also the period when the Kenya Pipeline system was first extended to Western Kenya with the commissioning of the 1994 Western Kenya Pipeline Extension, a 446km line from Nairobi to Nakuru, Eldoret, and Kisumu.

In essence, the late 90s and early 2000s were about consolidating the multimodal network and laying the groundwork for future, larger-scale investments (like the Standard Gauge Railway, which came later) by improving the fundamental infrastructure and regulatory environment.

PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

Dr Anthony Ngororano, a Ugandan national, was the third substantive Executive Secretary of the NCTTCA. He was appointed to this position on May 1, 1998, and concluded his tour of duty on July 7, 1999.

He graduated in Economics at the University of Hamburg, Germany, in 1967, after which he obtained a Doctorate Degree in Development Economics at the University of Kiel, also in Germany, in 1970.

Mr Ngororano worked for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) before joining the NCTTCA Secretariat in Mombasa. At UNCTAD, he first joined the research division, then moved to the Land-Locked and Islands Developing Countries section. He played a pioneering role in developing and implementing technical assistance projects on behalf of the landlocked and transit developing countries in the African and Asian regions.

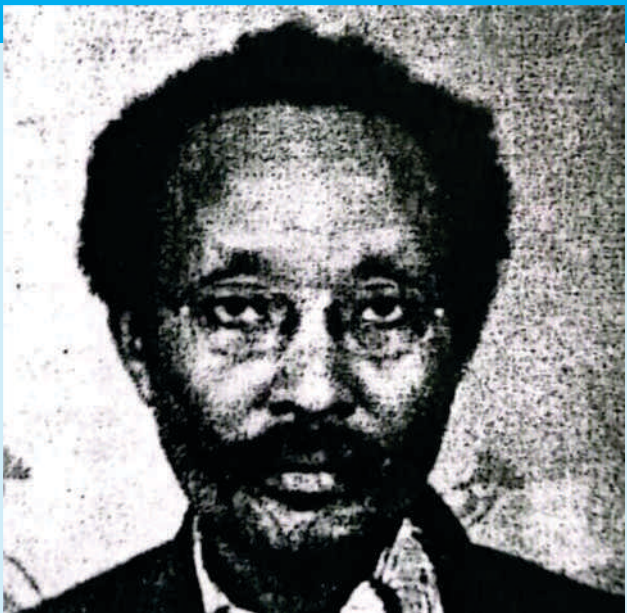
He also played an important role before joining the NCTTCA by providing crucial substantive support to the negotiations between Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and DRC (then Zaire) on the Northern Corridor Agreement, which was ratified by the member states in 1985.

He is, however, remembered as the shortest-serving Executive Secretary, having been at the Secretariat just for one year and two months.

During his tenure, one of the central activities of the Secretariat was removing barriers to trade and transit, including eliminating multiple customs declarations and multiple security bonds. Dr Ngororano worked on harmonizing customs laws and interfacing customs systems for more efficient and streamlined procedures.

Having been instrumental as a consultant in working with the Member States on the ratification and subsequent implementation of the Agreement, DR. Ngororano found it easy to enhance cooperation among member states (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo) to achieve uniformity in transit and transport policies.

This involved regular consultations with contracting parties on matters concerning the movement of goods and people.



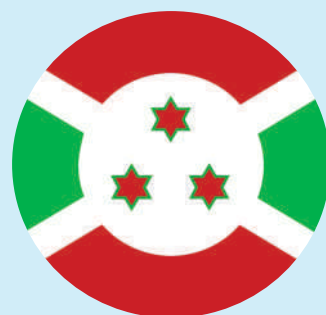
Dr. Anthony Ngororano
(1 May 1998 - 7 July 1999)



PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES



Mr. Jean Nsabiyumva
(15 Feb. 1993 - 2 Sept. 1997)



Mr. Jean Berchmans Nsabiyumva, from Burundi, was the Second Executive Secretary at the Northern Corridor Secretariat in Mombasa.

He took over from the reigns of Mr. Faustin Munyeshuli, the founding Executive Secretary.

He roped in the Secretariat's support list of donor agencies, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development UNCTAD, the European Union, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), among others.

He was able to forge a closer working relationship with Regional Economic Commissions like the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), and the East Africa Community (EAC).

Like his predecessor, he had the responsibility of Coordinating and monitoring the Permanent Secretariat - Administrative and financial management.

He was equally instrumental in enforcing the Agreement that binds the six member states today, leading to an array of achievements.

Some of the achievements are included, but not limited to, those listed below:

- Enhanced Cooperation among the Member States, which remains one of the major achievements as witnessed in the regular Council of Ministers meetings since 1985.
- The elimination of Multiple Security Bonds and Customs Declarations, which has brought major relief to traders in the Member States. In the 1980s, goods moving inland faced multiple security bonds and customs declarations at each border.
- Implementing Institutions in Member States, such as the revenue authorities, road authorities, and others.
- The eventual joint interfacing of customs systems and joint verification within the member states is seen as another major feat for NCTTCA.

Before NCTTCA, the numerous roadblocks and checkpoints were a constant nightmare for transit traffic operators along the Northern Corridor route.

These were drastically scaled down through incisive advocacy by the Authority.

The NCTTCA secretariat, through a cordial working relationship, significantly contributed to the decongestion of Mombasa Port.

PAST EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

Mr. Faustin Munyeshuli, a Rwandan infrastructure and transit expert, was the pioneer Executive Secretary for the Northern Corridor Transit Transport Coordination Authority between May 1988 and February 1993.

He came into the Secretariat three years after the founding members of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement had signed in 1985 and took the monumental task of facilitating the interstate trade and cargo transit between the Port of Mombasa and the landlocked countries of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Before coming to the NCTTCA, Mr. Munyeshuli held positions as a Private Secretary and Advisor to the Minister of Public Works, Transport and Communications, and as a Transit Expert within the Ministry of Infrastructure in Rwanda.

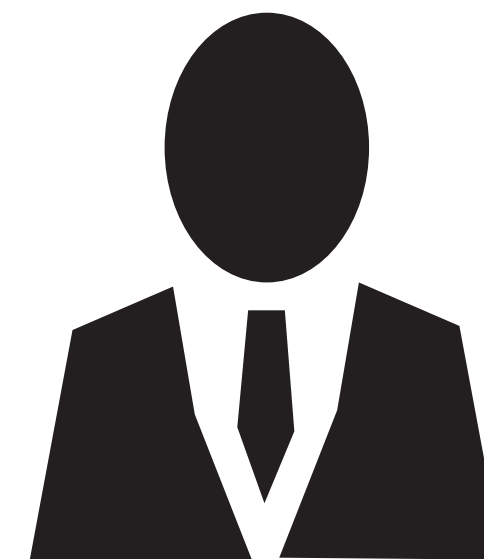
The Secretariat, under his together with the initial partners tackled a range of technical priorities identified by the Interim Secretariat: such as the customs procedure adoption of the Regional Customs Transit Document (RCTD) (RCTD), promotion of lake/alternative transport links, standardisation of documents, and development of proposals for a permanent secretariat and an investment programme.

His key deliverables as a pioneer Executive Secretary were outlined in Article 4 of the Agreement, in which he found the contracting parties agreed on establishing and manage

transport and communication systems that are viable, reliable, and efficient; the implementation of a policy of non-discriminatory, equal treatment and fair competition towards operators and users of the transport and communication systems; cooperation in investment planning, development of transport and transit facilities, and to jointly seek financing for project execution and the harmonization of their standards and procedures for designs, construction, operation, and maintenance of transport and transit facilities and equipment.

The Member states had also agree on the promotion of the role of the corridor as a development corridor; encouragement of the private sector to participate in the financing of the construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure and facilities and the facilitation of the smooth and rapid movement of persons and goods between their territories and in transit, through the simplification and harmonization of documentation and procedures relevant to the movement of persons and goods between their territories and in transit through their territories.

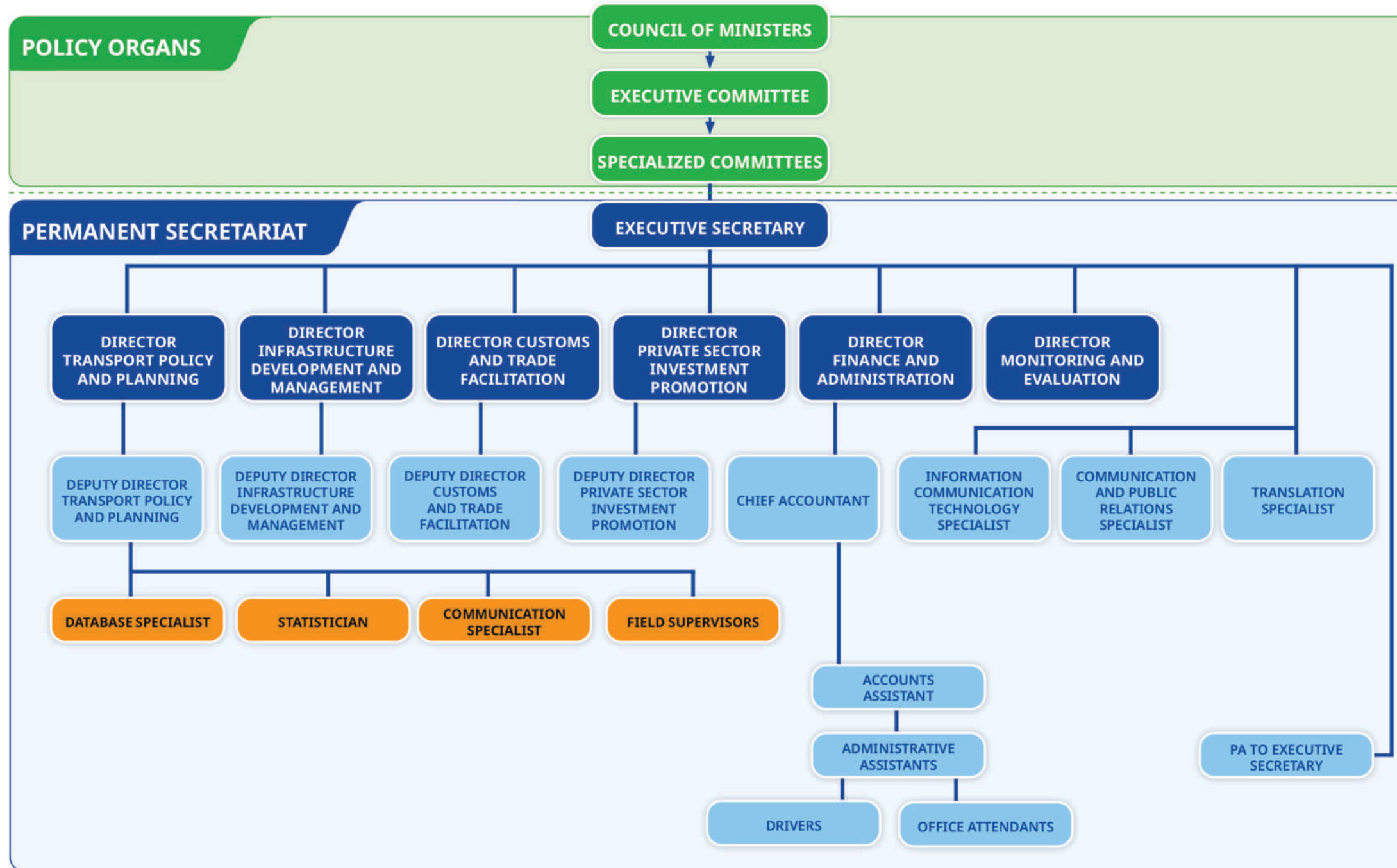
Also in the in tray was the need to work towards the eradication of Customs fraud and tax evasion and to carry out mutual consultations with other contracting parties, prior to effecting any changes in the laws, regulations, and procedures concerning the movement of persons, vehicles, and goods, except in an emergency.



Mr. Faustin Munyeshuli
(1 May 1988 - 14 Feb. 1993)



NCTTCA ORGANOGRAM





Delegates drawn from the Northern Corridor member states and their development partners captured here after actively harmonizing transport, customs, and trade policies to boost efficiency, reduce transit times, and eliminate non-tariff barriers (NTBs).

NORTHERN CORRIDOR MEMBER STATES HARMONISE POLICIES TO ENHANCE TRADE EFFICIENCY

The Northern Corridor member states, namely Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda, have harmonized policies focused on reducing transit costs and enhancing trade efficiency.

Key harmonized areas include customs laws, One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs), vehicle load controls (axle load), transportation standards, and electronic cargo tracking.

The member states initiated the harmonization of policies on customs

and trade procedures with the signing of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA) in 1985, marking the founding of the agreement.

The Harmonized national customs laws, joint verification of documents, and implementation of a Single Customs Territory (SCT) considerably reduced delays on the Northern Corridor road route from the Port of Mombasa to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) - approximately 1,700 km.

In 1986, soon after signing the agreement, the Northern Corridor member states began adopting uniform vehicle axle load controls, following the introduction of these controls. These measures were further strengthened through the revised Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA), with ongoing efforts to harmonize with East African Community (EAC) vehicle load control bills on the Transport and Infrastructure.

POLICY HARMONIZATION

Between 2010 and 2016, the member states began establishing One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) to streamline clearance processes for goods and people.

This would be part of a regional trade facilitation strategy. While pilot projects started earlier elsewhere, key Northern Corridor areas, such as Holili/Taveta (2016) and Nimule-Elegu (2018/2020), became operational throughout this period to improve transit efficiency.

This was followed closely by the harmonization of the Border Management policies between neighbouring states. It saw the establishment of OSBPs Information Systems. The Integration of Customs Systems and the use of the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory portal for data sharing.

Through the policy harmonization system, the Northern Corridor has witnessed a considerable reduction in the types of documentation required for transit, moving from over 15 to less than 8.

On the Inland Waterway Transport front, the Member States have harmonized a regional policy framework for safety and environmental compliance on lakes.

The Northern Corridor member states harmonized axle load limits primarily through the EAC Vehicle Load Control Bill of 2012. This set a maximum gross vehicle weight of 56 tonnes. The full adoption and enforcement of these harmonized standards (e.g., 56 tonnes for Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi) was completed by 2015, following the signing of the agreement.

The Member States began implementing the harmonized Single Customs Territory (SCT) framework with the full rollout of Phase I, focusing on imports through Mombasa, aimed for completion by December 2014. This was part of a continuous process of harmonizing trade procedures under the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement.

The customs procedures were harmonized by the Member States through the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA), upon appending their signatures on the document in 1985.

Later, the adoption of a Single Customs Territory (SCT) approach, which further harmonized procedures, was established in July 2014. These measures aim to facilitate seamless, cost-effective, and safe trade across the region.

Initially, the Northern Corridor Member States faced significant challenges in harmonizing policies, primarily due to inconsistent implementation of trade agreements, varying national priorities, and slow domestication of regional protocols. Key challenges included persistent non-tariff barriers, inadequate infrastructure/low automation, and slow regional integration.

Varying levels of commitment and adoption of agreed-upon trade facilitation instruments and policies by different member states and contrasting national interests, such as divergent priorities, laws, and regulations between countries, took precedence over regional harmonization efforts.

The harmonised policies among Northern Corridor Member States primarily aim to reduce transit costs and time by streamlining customs, documentation, and border procedures. Key benefits include faster cargo movement, reduced transport logistics expenses, enhanced regional trade, improved road safety, and strengthened competitiveness. To further enhance efficiency and reduce transit costs, more Northern Corridor policies still need urgent harmonization.

These include policies on the Inland Waterway Transport regulations, vehicle axle load limits, cross-border axle load enforcement, and road safety standards. Further synchronization is required for transit documentation, electronic cargo tracking, and insurance schemes.

Speaking on the importance of policy harmonization for regional integration during the December 2025 Validation Workshop in Kampala, Uganda, Mr. Andrew Mold, Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Eastern Africa, stressed that “Harmonization of inland waterway transport policies is not a bureaucratic exercise—it really underpins all our efforts at regional integration.

The harmonization of policy in this area, he said, will help incentivize regional trade, reduce logistics costs, and achieve the goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Above all, it will give member states and the private sector greater choice in terms of transport linkages.

This was during a Regional Experts Validation Workshop on Inland Waterway Transport Policy Harmonization in December 2025. The workshop aimed at unlocking the potential of Eastern Africa's vast network of lakes and rivers to support sustainable trade and regional integration.

The meeting revealed that Eastern Africa's inland waterways—including Lakes Victoria, Tanganyika, Kivu, Albert, and Malawi—cover thousands of square kilometers and connect multiple countries. Yet, less than 5% of regional freight currently moves via waterways, compared to over 70% by road, contributing to high transport costs and congestion. Studies show that Inland Waterway Transport can reduce logistics costs by up to 40% for bulk cargo and cut carbon emissions by 50–70% compared to road transport.

Speaking at the same meeting Dr John Deng Diar Diing, Executive Secretary of Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority, mentioned the need to improve safety and connectivity across waterways. He stressed the critical role of harmonized standards in transforming the sector:

“Our commitment goes beyond policy discussions—we are actively working to enhance safety measures such as mandatory life jackets, modern communication systems, and standardized navigation protocols across all member states. Connectivity is equally vital; by linking inland waterways with road and rail networks, we can create a truly multimodal transport system. Harmonized policies will enable this integration, reduce delays, and strengthen the region's competitiveness in global trade.”

Before the harmonization of the Northern Corridor policies, transit trade

was hindered by fragmented, bilateral agreements that lacked a cohesive, standardized framework across member states. This resulted in high transport costs, inefficient border procedures, and slow cargo movement, with limited infrastructure to manage growing trade volumes.

According to the Mombasa Port Northern Corridor Community Charter report titled: “Advancing Trade through the Northern Corridor,” it states that:

“In the most efficient trade corridors, transport costs make up only 4% of the cost of goods. But constraints at the Port of Mombasa and along the Northern Corridor drive transport costs to an estimated 30% of the cost of goods.”

Prior to the harmonization of policies by the Member States, transit trade operated under disjointed, bilateral agreements rather than a unified regional framework. Inefficiencies at the borders were abundant through inconsistent procedures, long delays, and multiple, non-standardized Customs documents were common.

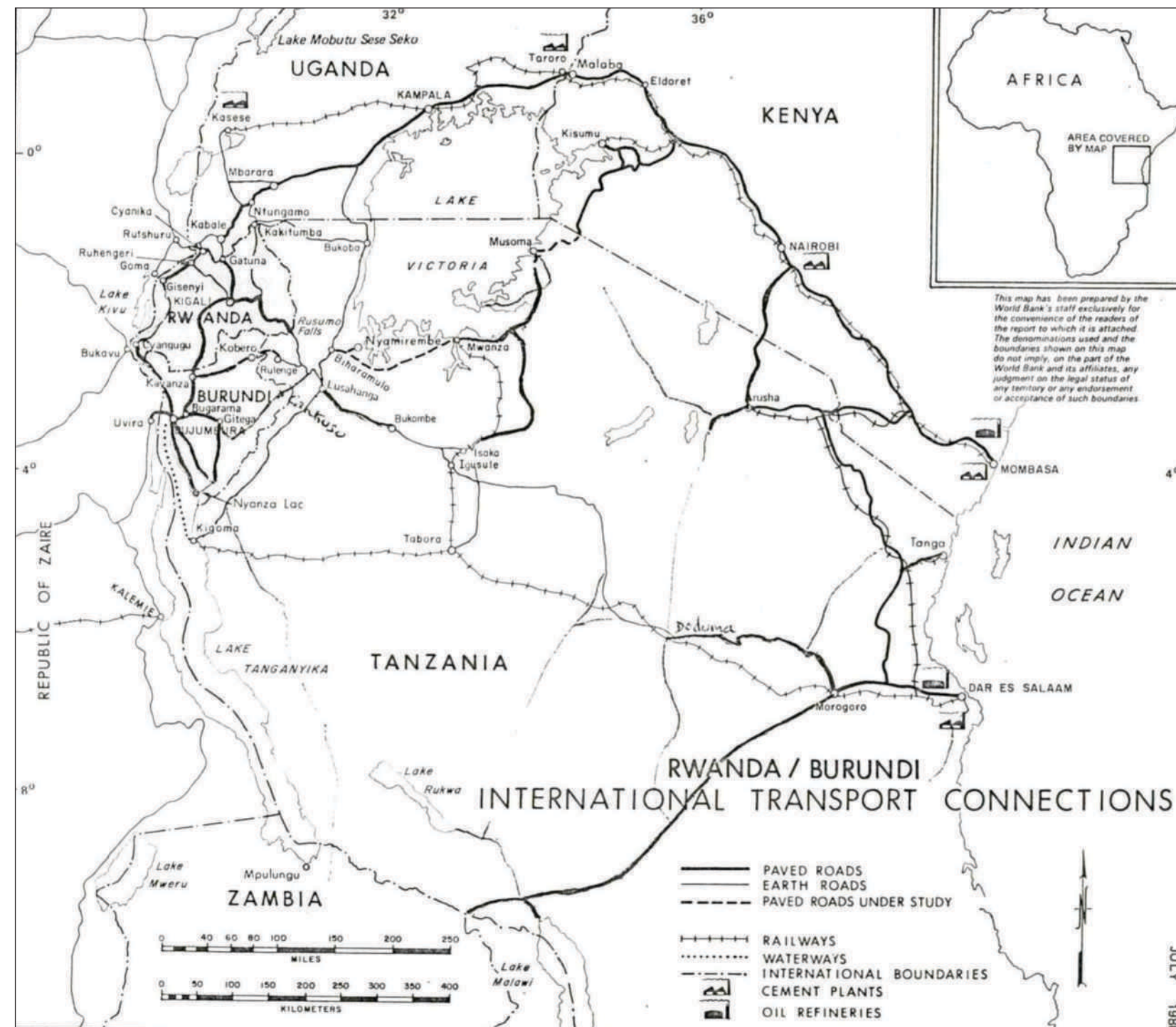
Significant bottlenecks existed at the Port of Mombasa, with lagging investment in capacity, equipment, and road maintenance, while the lack of streamlined, standardized services led to higher transport costs for businesses. As a result, the lack of coordinated, standardized, and harmonized procedures made it difficult for landlocked countries to efficiently access the port of Mombasa.





NCTTCA joins UNECA (Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa) and Central Corridor for the Validation Workshop on Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) Policy Harmonization for Seamless Multimodal Transport and Trade Facilitation in Eastern Africa.

TRANSPORT CORRIDORS IN THE 1980s

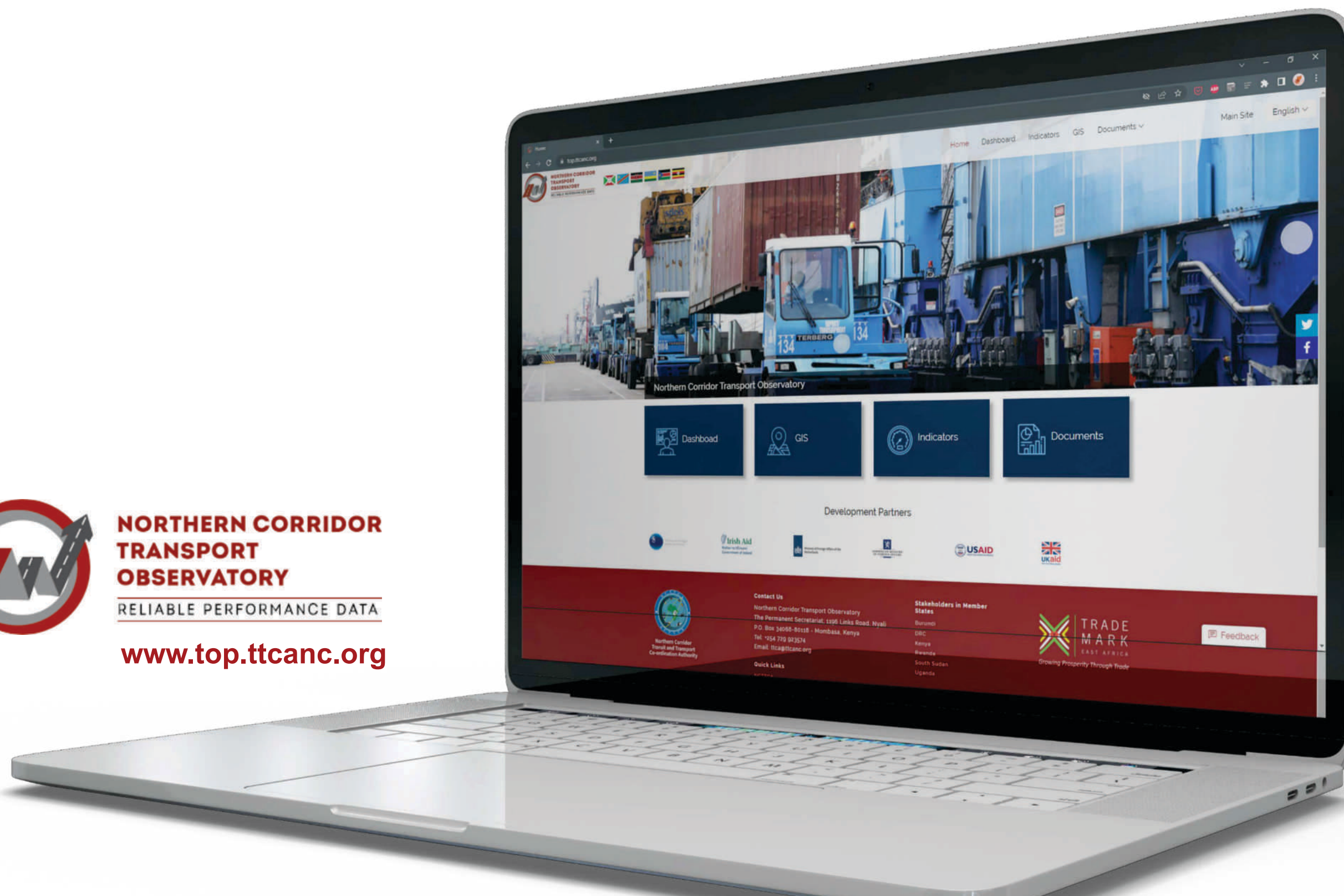




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PORT OF MOMBASA: A LIFELINE TO THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR

The Port of Mombasa has long been more than just a maritime gateway but the economic lifeline for the five landlocked nations in the region, namely, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, and South Sudan.

Over the past forty years, transit traffic through Mombasa has evolved dramatically, shrinking journey times, boosting trade volumes, and transforming regional economies.

In 1985, Mombasa's container traffic was a modest 45,000 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units). Transit was cumbersome as customs processes were manual, road conditions were poor, and security concerns were great. Uganda, recovering from years of internal conflict, relied heavily on the port. Trucks carrying goods from Mombasa to Kampala faced delays of 18 to 25 days.

Rwanda and Burundi used the Dar es Salaam corridor more frequently due to Mombasa's limited infrastructure, while DRC's traffic was erratic, reflecting internal instability. South Sudan, not yet a sovereign nation, had no commercial presence in the corridor.

Road transport dominated, as rail infrastructure across the region was either non-existent or deteriorating. Uganda's metre-gauge lines functioned sporadically, while Rwanda and Burundi had no rail. In DRC, rail lines were extensive but limited by conflict, and South Sudan's narrow-gauge line operated intermittently. Trucks were slower and more expensive but flexible enough to reach inland destinations unreachable by rail.

By 1995, the region had weathered the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and unrest in Burundi and eastern DRC. Transit volumes increased slightly to around 65,000 TEUs, reflecting marginal growth amid conflict. Uganda continued as the corridor's main beneficiary, but political instability slowed economic recovery.

Transit times to Kampala averaged 15 to 20 days, while Rwanda and Burundi gradually increased their reliance on Mombasa, balancing it against the Central Corridor via Dar es Salaam. DRC's eastern provinces remained difficult to access, limiting trade volumes. South Sudan's territory was largely inaccessible for commercial traffic.

Despite these challenges, road infrastructure saw incremental improvements, and small private-sector logistics efforts began easing bottlenecks. However, trucks still strained the fragile highways, and heavy loads accelerated road deterioration. Transit costs were high,



sometimes inflating goods prices by 30 per cent or more.

The re-establishment of the East African Community in 2000 marked a turning point. By 2005, Mombasa had begun integrating technology into its operations. The Simba Customs System enabled digital declarations, significantly reducing paperwork and cutting transit times from 18–25 days to 10–14 days.

Transit volumes more than doubled to an estimated 150,000 TEUs. Uganda remained the dominant recipient, while Rwanda and Burundi's cargo flows became more consistent. DRC's traffic grew modestly as political stability returned to parts of the country. South Sudan, approaching independence, saw increasing pre-2011 freight for humanitarian and reconstruction supplies.

Infrastructure upgrades under the EAC framework, supported by donor funding, began repairing roads along the Northern Corridor. While these

improvements shortened delays, truck dependency remained high, and the cost of overland freight continued to be a challenge.

By 2015, Mombasa's logistical landscape had shifted dramatically. The Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) from Mombasa to Nairobi allowed freight to move efficiently on rail for the first 500 km, reducing pressure on highways. One-Stop Border Posts at Malaba and Busia streamlined customs, eliminating dual inspections and long waits. Transit times from Mombasa to Kampala fell to 7–10 days, and annual throughput surged to 320,000 TEUs.

Uganda continued to handle the bulk of cargo, while Rwanda and Burundi benefited from quicker, more predictable deliveries. South Sudan, now independent, became a key destination for fuel, aid, and construction materials. DRC traffic increased as eastern regions stabilised, creating demand for imported goods.

Highway maintenance remained critical. Overloaded trucks continued to accelerate road wear, and delays from weighbridges and bottlenecks persisted, highlighting the limitations of a road-heavy transport system.

Yet, the corridor's improved infrastructure offered a glimpse of what coordinated regional investment could achieve.

By 2024, the Port of Mombasa processed 2,005,076 TEUs — a 23.5 per cent increase from 1,623,080 TEUs in 2023. Transit cargo destined for landlocked neighbours rose 17.4 per cent to 13.4 million tonnes. Uganda accounted for 65.7 per cent of this total, roughly 8.81 million tonnes, followed by South Sudan (12.7%), DRC (11.8%), Rwanda (5.1%), and Tanzania (3.4%). The Northern Corridor remained the region's backbone.

Transit times had stabilised at four to five days from Mombasa to Kampala thanks to integrated rail and road systems.

However, the surge in cargo placed unprecedented pressure on highways, inland container depots, and border facilities. Logistics costs remained high, reflecting persistent overreliance on trucks.

By 2025, the SGR was fully operational to Naivasha Inland Container Depot, allowing rail to handle the first 500 km of inland transit. Port automation and advanced cargo handling systems further streamlined operations, supporting an estimated 580,000 TEUs in annual transit volume.

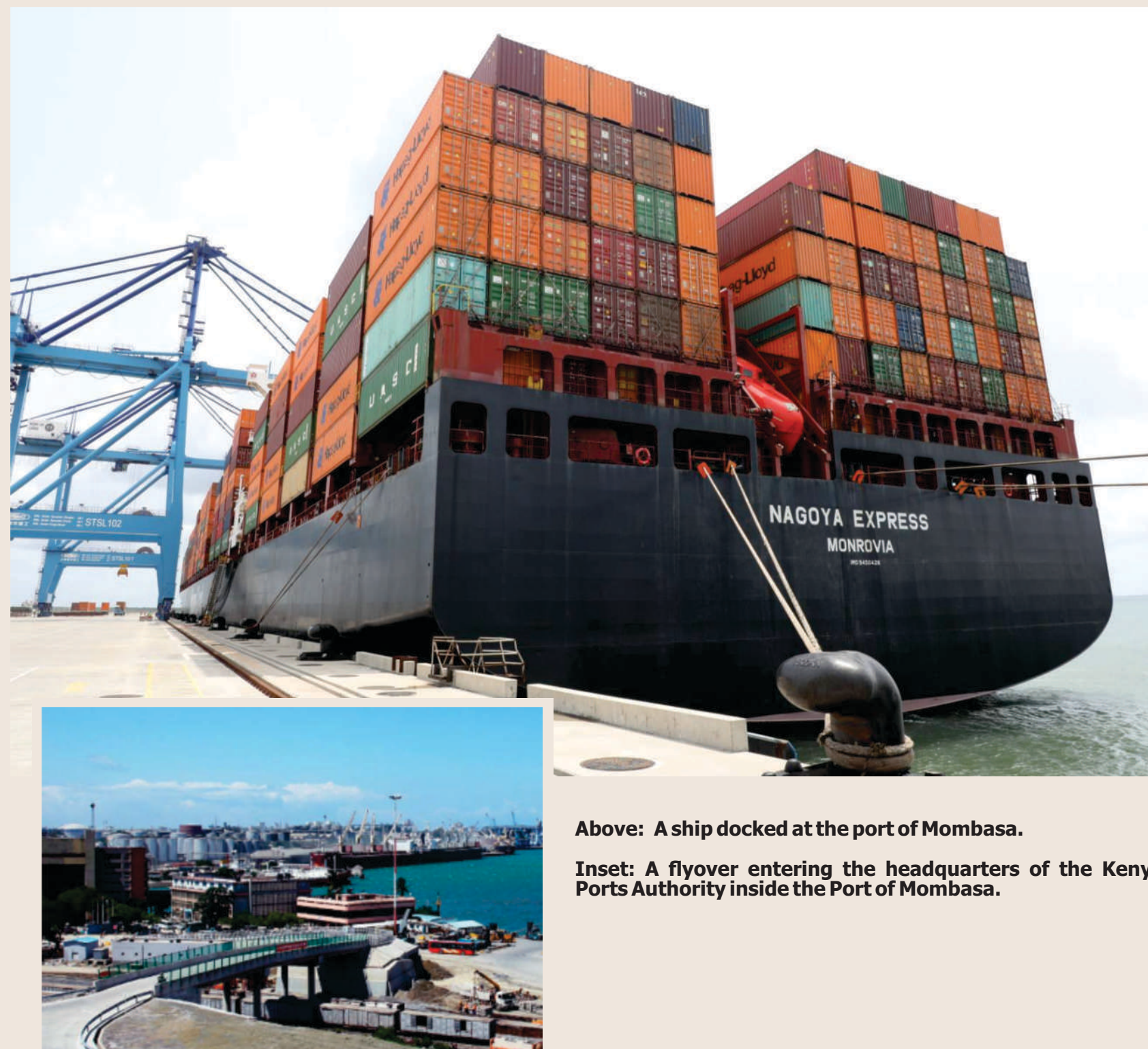
Uganda retained its position as the largest corridor user, while Rwanda optimised its smaller volumes through logistics technology. DRC increasingly looked to the Northern Corridor for stable and efficient access to the coast. South Sudan's trade flows continued to expand, driven by reconstruction and fuel imports.

While efficiency gains are impressive, trucks still carry the bulk of cargo beyond rail termini. Congestion, fuel price fluctuations, and infrastructure wear remain ongoing challenges. Experts note that future gains will depend on continued rail expansion, multimodal logistics hubs, and political commitment to harmonised customs procedures.

From 1985's 45,000 TEUs and three-week transit delays to 2025's 580,000 TEUs and four-day delivery, Mombasa's evolution reflects decades of sustained investment, regional cooperation, and technological adoption.

For Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, and South Sudan, the port has transformed from a slow, costly bottleneck into a lifeline that enables trade, fuels economic growth, and strengthens regional integration.

The leap from three-week delays to four-day deliveries is not just a logistical victory; it is an economic and social one — a tangible reflection of the continent's ambition and resilience.



Above: A ship docked at the port of Mombasa.

Inset: A flyover entering the headquarters of the Kenya Ports Authority inside the Port of Mombasa.

THE LUNATIC EXPRESS THAT TRANSFORMED THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Port of Mombasa became the staging ground for one of the most consequential infrastructure projects in African history: a railway stretching from the Indian Ocean to the shores of Lake Victoria. What began as a fiercely contested imperial venture would ultimately redefine trade, settlement patterns, and regional integration across East and Central Africa. The line would earn a derisive nickname in Britain, the “Lunatic Express”, yet over time it proved to be the steel spine upon which the Northern Corridor was built.

In 1896, debate over the proposed Uganda Railway tore through the British House of Commons. Critics questioned its cost, its purpose, and even its destination. Among the most vocal opponents was Member of Parliament Henry Labouchere, who famously ridiculed the scheme in verse, dismissing it as a “lunatic line.” To many British taxpayers, the idea of financing a railway across disease-ridden hinterlands seemed reckless. Supporters, however, including influential figures such as Sir Winston Churchill and Lord Curzon, argued that strategic, commercial, and political imperatives justified the investment. The decision was ultimately made: the railway would be built.

To lead the project, the British government appointed Sir George Whitehouse, an accomplished civil engineer with railway experience in England, South Africa, India, and South America. On 11 December 1895, he arrived in Mombasa to oversee what would become one of the most ambitious engineering undertakings of its time. He encountered immediate logistical challenges. The existing Old Port near Fort Jesus, long suited to dhows and small vessels, could not handle the scale of materials required for railway construction. The solution was transformative: port operations shifted westward to Kilindini Harbour.

Kilindini, derived from the Kiswahili word kilindi, meaning “deep channel” or “big hole”, offered natural deep-water advantages. Its sheltered basin allowed modern steamships such as the SS Ethiopia to dock and discharge rails, locomotives, sleepers, and construction equipment.



Kenya's "Mean Gauge Railway line" is better known as the Metre Gauge Railway (MGR), the older network of the Kenya Railways Corporation that uses 1,000 mm (3 ft 3 3/8 in) track. This colonial-era line runs from Mombasa to Kisumu and beyond, providing direct last-mile delivery for cargo to clients, and complements the newer, higher-capacity Standard Gauge Railway (SGR). The MGR is still operational, transporting goods and integrating with the SGR to facilitate seamless cargo transit to neighboring countries.

RAIL TRANSPORT

The relocation of port activity from the Old Harbour to Kilindini marked a decisive moment in the maritime evolution of Mombasa. Without this shift, large-scale railway construction would have been logistically impossible.

The challenges that followed were formidable. Approximately 32,000 labourers were recruited from India to construct the line. Workers confronted tropical diseases, harsh terrain, supply shortages, and the now-legendary man-eating lions of Tsavo. Despite these trials, progress continued. By December 1901, just three years after full-scale construction intensified, the railway had advanced over 930 kilometres from the Indian Ocean to Lake Victoria. It terminated at what was then called Port Florence, today's Kisumu, named after Sir George Whitehouse's wife, Florence. A commemorative image from the time captures Mrs. Florence Whitehouse laying the final peg at the lakeshore, symbolising the completion of a project many had believed impossible.

The railway did more than link two bodies of water. It connected maritime and inland ecosystems into a single economic corridor. Ships were transported in sections by rail to Lake Victoria, assembled on its shores, and launched to facilitate waterborne trade between Kenya and Uganda. Ports such as Kisumu, Port Bell, Jinja, Musoma, and Mwanza became integrated nodes in a multimodal network. The railway

catalysed urbanisation along its route, giving rise to settlements that would later become major cities, including Nairobi, which replaced Mombasa as Kenya's capital due to its central inland location along the line.

For decades, the ports and railway operated under unified management through the East African Railways and Harbours administration. The system coordinated maritime operations at Kilindini with inland rail and lake services, forming a seamless logistical chain across British East Africa.

Following independence, regional cooperation continued under the East African Community (EAC), established in 1967 by Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The East African Railways and Harbours Corporation became a shared regional asset, reflecting aspirations for collective economic development.

However, political tensions and economic disparities led to the collapse of the first EAC in 1977. The integrated rail and harbour system was dismantled, and individual states nationalised their infrastructure. Despite this fragmentation, the physical legacy of the Lunatic Express endured. The railway corridor remained the backbone of inland connectivity, linking the Port of Mombasa to the hinterland and

sustaining trade flows even during periods of institutional instability.

In Uganda, Lake Victoria ports such as Port Bell continued to play strategic roles. Named after Sir Henry Hesketh Bell, Port Bell connected Kampala to Kisumu, Mwanza, and Musoma through wagon ferries and cargo vessels. Although activity fluctuated over the decades, recent revitalisation efforts have reaffirmed the importance of inland water transport. In July 2017, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance cooperation on Lake Victoria ports, inland waterways, and railway transport services. The objective was to reduce road congestion, lower transport costs, and strengthen multimodal trade along both the Northern and Central Corridors.

Uganda subsequently rehabilitated the railway link between Kampala and Port Bell and revived vessels such as MV Kaawa, MV Umoja, and the once-grounded MV Pamba. The latter, rehabilitated at a cost of approximately UGX 12 billion, returned to service in November 2021 after 16 years of inactivity. By February 2022, the wagon ferry was operational again, projected to undertake up to twelve voyages per month and transport over 21,000 tonnes of cargo monthly across Lake Victoria. These efforts underscored a renewed commitment to integrating rail and water transport to complement road networks.

The influence of the Lunatic Express extends beyond physical infrastructure. The white administrative building constructed at the entrance of Kilindini Harbour to serve as Uganda Railways headquarters, aptly named the "White House" after Sir George Whitehouse, would later house the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA). This intergovernmental organisation now oversees the implementation of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement, working to remove trade barriers, harmonise transit procedures, and transform the corridor into a development axis spanning six countries.

Thus, the railway once mocked in Parliament became the foundational artery of East-Central African trade. Without the shift to Kilindini Harbour, there would have been no efficient maritime gateway. Without the railway to Kisumu and the shores of Lake Victoria, there would have been no integrated inland port system. Without that multimodal connection, the modern Northern Corridor would not exist in its current form.

The Lunatic Express was not merely a colonial railway. It was the structural beginning of a corridor economy. It enabled maritime expansion, urban growth, cross-border commerce, and regional integration. More than a century later, as the Northern Corridor advances into an era of digital customs systems, Standard Gauge Railways, inland container depots, and revitalised lake transport, the steel tracks laid between 1896 and 1901 remain the symbolic and physical origins of that journey.

What was once dismissed as folly became a catalyst. The "lunatic line" transformed into the logistical spine of East Africa, proving that infrastructure, even when born of controversy, can redefine the destiny of nations.



This is a Meter Gauge Railway (MGR) train used to transport passengers in Kenya and Uganda. This service has since been replaced by the new high-powered diesel engine Standard Gauge Railways.



THE EAST AFRICAN SGR MASTER PLAN IS ON COURSE

President Uhuru Kenyatta officially flagged off the first Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) train in Kenya, known as the Madaraka Express, on May 31, 2017, at the Mombasa Terminus in Miritini, marking a historic shift in the country's transport infrastructure. Picture Courtesy State House Facebook account

The East African Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) Master Plan is advancing, with the groundbreaking for the 369 km Naivasha-Kisumu-Malaba extension presided over by Presidents William Ruto of Kenya and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda on March 21, 2026. The project aims to boost regional trade by linking Mombasa to the Ugandan border. This project facilitates trade with Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC, with over \$3.8 billion already invested.

The project is expected to be completed by 2028. Once completed, the modern rail line will reduce travel time between Nairobi and Kampala from approximately 14 hours to just 4 hours, thereby boosting trade and making travel easier across East Africa.

The flagging off of the construction of the Kisumu-Malaba SGR line in Kisumu also marked a significant step toward strengthening regional transport and trade connectivity.

President Ruto, in his speech, said the Kenya-Uganda Railway, a colonial infrastructure traversing Kenya from the Coast to the Western region and

into Uganda, profoundly shaped the geography and economic trajectory of our region.

It laid the foundation upon which towns emerged, grew, and evolved into thriving urban centres and cities. By catalyzing trade and unlocking economic potential, the railway determined which centres flourished into vibrant metropolises, becoming lifelines of commerce and connectivity across East Africa.

As he launched the Kisumu-Malaba section of the SGR, alongside Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, he said they are confident that this modern infrastructure will replicate and surpass that legacy by igniting new growth corridors.

The planned extension of the SGR from Uganda to DR Congo, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, and beyond will further unlock regional opportunities, stimulating fresh waves of economic activity and deepening integration in our region. The event was attended by the

Prime Cabinet Secretary Dr. Musalia Mudavadi, Cabinet Secretary for Roads and Transport Mr. Davis Chirchir, Governor Kisumu Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, Principal Secretary State Department for Transport, Mohamed Daghar, alongside other national and local leaders.

In June 2013, the first infrastructure Summit of the Presidents of Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda held in Uganda put in place mechanisms for fast tracking the development of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) system linking Rwanda and Uganda to the port of Mombasa to enable faster socio-economic transformation of the East and Central Africa Economies.

These led to the signing of the Tripartite Agreement for the development and operation of a Standard Gauge Railway between Mombasa, Kampala, and Kigali with a branch line to Kisumu (Kenya) and Pakwach/Gul-Nimule (Uganda) between the Republics of Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda in August 2013.



On March 19, 2026, Kenyan President William Ruto, alongside his Ugandan counterpart President Yoweri Museveni, officially presided over the groundbreaking ceremony for the Naivasha–Kisumu–Malaba Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) expansion in Narok County.

SGR MASTER PLAN

In June 2013, the first infrastructure Summit of the Presidents of Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda held in Uganda put in place mechanisms for fast tracking the development of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) system linking Rwanda and Uganda to the port of Mombasa to enable faster socio-economic transformation of the East and Central Africa Economies.

The Republic of South Sudan acceded to the agreement in May 2014, extending the line to Juba.

To enable development and operationalisation of a Seamless Railway network from Mombasa to Kigali and Juba, the Summit of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects vide the 3rd Joint Communiqué directed the Partner States to develop a Standard Gauge Railway Protocol for the development and operations of the Standard Gauge Railways.

The Protocol was signed by Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, and Rwanda in May 2014.

The overall objective is to jointly develop and operate a modern, fast, reliable, efficient, and high-capacity railway transport system as a seamless single railway operation among the Parties with the specific objectives of:

Expediting economic growth and development of the Parties by reducing the cost of doing business and increasing the region's competitiveness; Enhancing spatial development along the SGR corridor; Enhancing efficient and cost-effective movement of freight and passengers in the region to accelerate trade and services; and Sustaining development of other transport infrastructure and adopting new technologies to enhance economic development.

The provisions of the Protocol apply to any activity undertaken in cooperation by the parties to achieve the objectives and therefore, the parties agreed to;

Ensure harmonization of policy, legal and institutional framework for SGR.

Adopt a common logical framework of project management; Adopt agreed common SGR standards.

Cooperate and coordinate in human resource capacity building strategies; Cooperate and coordinate in joint mobilization of financial resources;

Ensure sufficient budgetary allocations and funding mechanisms, including exploring the establishment of a Railway development fund; Undertake joint implementation of any matter related to SGR inter parties, and Undertake joint monitoring and evaluation meetings.



Workers captured busy with the construction work on a Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) line, installing rails onto concrete sleepers to progress the East African SGR Rail Network.

RECDTS PROVIDES EASY, SECURE INFORMATION ON THE CORRIDOR

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, with the assistance of Trademark East Africa (TMEA) developed the EAC Regional Electronic Cargo and Driver Tracking System (RECDTS) as mandated by the Joint Ministerial Meeting of Ministers responsible for Health, Trade, and EAC Affairs.

The RECDTS was launched in August 2020 at five key border points—Rusumo, Mutukula, Malaba, Namanga, and Kabanga/Kobero—to facilitate electronic sharing of COVID-19 certificates, reducing truck driver testing delays and easing regional trade.

The system, supported by TradeMark Africa, connected national laboratories to a secure platform for real-time, cross-border digital verification of drivers' COVID-19 results.

During the then weekly online meeting of the Northern Corridor stakeholder, the EAC clarified that the RECDTS was not just a COVID-19 tracker but rather a cargo and drivers tracking system. Before the launch, the EAC added that stakeholders would be requested to complete a questionnaire through the consultant enlisted by the EAC Secretariat to undertake a study on transport safety in the region.

The tracking system rides on the existing systems used by the national revenue and health authorities in the region. After installation, the system provides an easy and secure information exchange platform along the Central and Northern Corridors where users are to share COVID-19 test results.

Hon. Christophe Bazivamo, the Minister of Lands, Environment, Forestry, Water, and Mines in Rwanda, informed the EARCC meeting that in



preparation for the launching of the application, the EAC Secretariat had distributed special terminals (tablets) procured with the support from TMEA to support the operationalisation of the system. He added that all selected borders would be equipped with the necessary terminals to allow smooth movement of the truck drivers.

Besides, the RECDTS was directly linked to the national Laboratory repository for all COVID-19 results for each Partner State. Only the negative results were automatically linked to the application, and information is shared across all transport corridors through a secure mechanism. This helped in sharing the EAC COVID-19 Test certificate for cross border truck drivers/crews electronically, and facilitate easy

information exchange along transport corridors within the EAC and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The EAC also assured stakeholders that the tracking system will be used optimally.

The system is a culmination of the joint resolution by the EAC Ministers responsible for Health, Trade, and EAC Affairs to facilitate the free movement of goods and services in the region during a Joint Ministerial meeting on COVID -19 responses by Video Conference on 25th March 2020. By this decision, the EAC Secretariat was directed to develop an electronic surveillance system to facilitate the implementation of the decision.

EAST AFRICAN RAIL SECTOR ENTERS A NEW PHASE

East Africa's railway network is entering a new phase. The region is pushing for revival of its rail networks after almost four decades of decline. Regional governments are heavily investing again. And transit traffic, long dominated by trucks, is slowly shifting back to the rails.

The story begins in 1985. The region then had more than 10,000 kilometres of railway track on paper. But much of it suffered from neglect. Uganda's metre-gauge system, about 1,250 kilometres long, was still operational but aging fast. Kenya depended heavily on the old Mombasa Kampala route.

DRC had a vast network of more than 5,000 kilometres, but most of it faced maintenance challenges. Rwanda and Burundi had no national railway at all. South Sudan operated one narrow-gauge line, roughly 248 kilometres long, running from Babanosa to Wau.

Transit traffic was modest. Rail still handled an estimated 40 percent of Uganda's cargo imports from Kenya. But signs of decline were already visible. By 1995, conditions worsened sharply. The region's railway efficiency dropped. Freight speeds slowed to about 15 km/h on many sections. Cargo turnaround became unpredictable.

In Uganda, only about 40 percent of the metre-gauge network remained reliably usable. Kenya Railways reported falling freight volumes, dropping from more than 2.5 million tonnes in the 1970s to under 1 million tonnes in the early 1990s.

Rwanda and Burundi still depended fully on long-distance trucking. DRC's eastern rail lines faced disruptions due to conflict and mechanical failure. South Sudan's single line operated intermittently.

Road transport took over. By the late 1990s, rail carried less than 10 percent of regional transit freight. The shift strained roads, increased fuel consumption and drove up transport costs for landlocked economies. Rwanda and Burundi, still without railways, saw their transport costs remain among the highest in Africa in some cases accounting for nearly 40 percent of the final retail cost of imported



The introduction of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) has propelled East Africa's rail network into a modern, high-capacity era replacing colonial-era metre-gauge lines.

goods. South Sudan's rail line had been heavily damaged by war, limiting any economic use. Across the region, trucks moved more than 90 percent of freight.

Overloaded lorries contributed to rapid road degradation. Some Northern Corridor highways needed major repairs every five years instead of the expected 10 to 12. The region began to understand the economic cost of a failing railway sector.

By 2015, the conversation had shifted toward rebuilding. The East African Railway Master Plan emerged as the region's most ambitious transport blueprint. It proposed more than 6,000 kilometres of standard-gauge track. It aimed to link every major capital. It targeted extensions into Rwanda, Burundi, eastern DRC and South Sudan.

Kenya completed the first major step: the Mombasa–Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, a 472-kilometre line. Uganda confirmed plans for a 1,724-kilometre standard-gauge network. For Kenya Railways

Corporation (KRC), in October 2025 the newly operational Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) reportedly moved 640,000 tonnes of cargo, the highest monthly haul so far.

Since the SGR launch in 2017 through early 2025, KRC reports that the SGR has moved a total of 38.47 million tonnes of cargo. For the older metre-gauge network (MGR) in Kenya, during the 2024–2025 financial year, reports indicate that the MGR moved 1.029 million tonnes, showing that the older lines remain active alongside the new SGR.

Rwanda and Burundi accelerated feasibility studies. Tanzania began constructing a modern electric SGR, targeting more than 1,600 kilometres of new track.

Despite these moves, rail still carried less than 5 percent of total regional transit traffic by the mid-2010s. But optimism rose. Regional trade was growing at 8 percent annually.

In 2025, the tone across East Africa is different. Governments are acting rather than planning. Uganda signed a major construction contract for a 272-kilometre Standard Gauge Railway from Malaba to Kampala. Once complete, the line will cut transit time between Kenya and Uganda from days to hours. Uganda's metre-gauge rehabilitation gained momentum too.

The Tororo–Gulu line, roughly 375 kilometres, is under renewal. The Mukono–Kampala line has already been repaired. Kenya is modernising its metre-gauge link between Naivasha and Malaba, strengthening the connection between the SGR and Uganda.

Tanzania's SGR now operates test runs on some sections, with freight speeds above 120 km/h. Rwanda and Burundi remain without rail, but both governments have recommitted to SGR participation. Rwanda estimates that a rail link could cut transport costs by up to 40 percent.

Burundi projects similar savings. DRC has become a key partner in the renewed momentum. Its eastern region relies heavily on cross-border markets in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

Rail connections could shift tens of thousands of tonnes of cargo away from long-distance roads. Transit through Uganda alone now exceeds 650,000 tonnes annually, according to recent government projections.

That figure is expected to triple if new rail lines become operational. Logistics hubs are emerging. The Gulu Logistics Hub, designed to handle more than 500,000 tonnes of cargo per year, sits strategically on the potential corridor toward South Sudan and eastern DRC.

In Kenya, the Naivasha ICD manages growing volumes of SGR cargo headed inland. Tanzania's port of Dar es Salaam expects its SGR-linked cargo throughput to rise by at least 30 percent within the next five years.

South Sudan is watching closely. The country depends heavily on imports via Uganda and Kenya. Fuel, cement, food and humanitarian supplies all move long distances by road.

A Ugandan rail connection to the border could shift thousands of truckloads to wagons. South Sudanese officials estimate that rail access could shave up to 25 percent off import costs.

The benefits for humanitarian logistics would be even higher. Peace and stability remain essential for such a link, but planning continues.

Even with progress, challenges remain. Funding gaps slow major projects. Regional coordination sometimes lags. Gauge differences between new and old lines complicate rolling-stock compatibility. Some SGR segments require land compensation and environmental approvals. But political will is stronger than before. East African governments

increasingly view rail not as an optional investment, but as a necessity for trade competitiveness.

By 2030, regional planners expect rail to handle at least 15 to 20 percent of transit freight up from less than 5 percent today. If all planned SGR sections are completed, the share could exceed 30 percent.

The transformation will not happen overnight. But the direction is clear. After decades of decline, East Africa's railway network is regaining momentum.

A region once defined by crumbling tracks, slow freight and abandoned stations is shifting toward modern corridors, faster trains and coordinated planning. The stakes are high. Better railways mean cheaper goods, safer roads, lower emissions and stronger regional integration.

The next decade will reveal whether the region can sustain the political will, financing and cooperation needed to complete the revival.

Kenya has invested hundreds of billions of shillings in rail infrastructure in recent years, with the multi-phase Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) project being the centerpiece. The total debt for the SGR alone is estimated to exceed KSh 845 billion (approximately \$5.7 billion) once all phases are completed.





The 95m long oil loading jetty in Kisumu has considerably improved the movement of products and is expected to help Kenya regain it's market share of East africa's regional oil exports. The jetty built by Southern Engineering Co. Ltd (SECO) in 2018 can accommodate vessels of up to 90 m in length and with fuel carrying capacity of 3000 T.



FROM A SINGLE LINE TO A REGIONAL GIANT: THE EVOLUTION OF NORTHERN CORRIDOR'S OIL PIPELINE

Kenya's pipeline network: the backbone of regional fuel logistics

Kenya's Northern Corridor oil pipeline system stands among the region's most consequential pieces of economic infrastructure, quietly powering industry, mobility, and trade across East and Central Africa. What began as a single coastal-to-inland pipeline in the late 1970s has expanded into a high-capacity network managed by the Kenya Pipeline Company (KPC), forming the backbone of petroleum logistics for Kenya and its hinterland markets. Over the decades, the system has steadily evolved in response to rising demand, safety imperatives, and the growing integration of regional economies under the Northern Corridor framework.

Today, the pipeline is not only an instrument of national energy security, but also a strategic regional asset underpinning the stability and competitiveness of multiple land-linked economies. The story of the Northern Corridor pipeline begins in February 1978, when the original Mombasa–Nairobi Pipeline (Line 1) commenced operations.

At 14 inches in diameter, it was designed to replace a hazardous and costly fuel transport model that depended heavily on road tankers moving petroleum products from the coast to inland markets. KPC, established in 1973, was mandated to deliver a safer, more reliable, and more cost-efficient method of moving refined products across Kenya and eventually supporting supply into regional markets such as Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

The commissioning of Line 1 immediately improved delivery times and reduced transit losses, demonstrating how infrastructure investment could translate directly into economic efficiency. However, it also revealed a new reality: regional demand for petroleum products was rising faster than a single pipeline could handle. The 1990s marked the first major phase of expansion as KPC extended the pipeline system beyond Nairobi to meet rising demand in western Kenya and to strengthen export routing to neighbouring economies. In 1994, KPC

completed the Western Kenya Pipeline System, extending from Nairobi to Eldoret via Line 2 and adding a key spur from Sinendet to Kisumu through Line 3. These expansions consolidated Kenya's position as the primary fuel gateway for the Great Lakes Region, enabling supply chains that could serve inland markets more efficiently than road-only routes.

Continued growth in the 2000s led to further investment, culminating in the commissioning of Line 4 in 2011, an additional Nairobi–Eldoret pipeline designed to stabilise supply, reduce congestion on the existing network, and strengthen resilience for western Kenya and regional transit supply corridors.

The most transformative upgrade came in 2018 with the commissioning of Line 5, a modern 20-inch Mombasa–Nairobi pipeline designed to replace the ageing Line 1. This new line more than doubled transfer capacity, improved operational safety, and signalled the pipeline's shift into a modern, high-throughput era.

PIPELINES

After 42 years of service, Line 1 was fully decommissioned in 2020 due to integrity concerns; an important milestone demonstrating the system's evolution from early generation infrastructure to contemporary standards of safety and efficiency. By 2025, with heavy investment under KPC's "Vision 2025" strategy and the integration of the former Kenya Petroleum Refineries Limited (KPRL) facilities, the pipeline and storage system positioned Kenya as both a petroleum logistics leader and an emerging multi-utility infrastructure operator.

The pipeline's economic role extends far beyond fuel movement; it is a stabiliser of prices, an enabler of industrial productivity, and a critical pillar of energy security. Petroleum accounts for a significant share of Kenya's imports, making efficient inland distribution essential to economic stability. Transporting fuel by pipeline is up to 60 percent cheaper than road haulage, lowering the cost base for transport operators, manufacturers, aviation, agriculture, and households, while reducing exposure to road congestion, accidents, and transit losses. KPC earns substantial revenue from pipeline tariffs and storage fees, contributing to national income while sustaining reinvestment in network growth. Strategically, the pipeline reinforces Kenya's economic influence by anchoring supply chains that support neighbouring economies, strengthening Kenya's position in regional trade integration and infrastructure diplomacy.

Regional dependency on the Northern Corridor pipeline system remains substantial. Uganda is the largest external customer, relying heavily on pipeline-fed depots in Eldoret and Kisumu for the majority of its fuel imports. Rwanda and Burundi receive supplies routed through Kisumu, including through lake-based logistics on Lake Victoria, while the eastern DRC depends significantly on supplies routed through western Kenya. South Sudan also draws supplies through a combined pipeline and road distribution system originating in Eldoret. This multi-country supply web illustrates how the pipeline has become a regional lifeline: a system whose reliability shapes national transport costs, business confidence, and the continuity of essential services.

Beyond pipelines, storage capacity is central to energy resilience. The integration of KPRL expanded national storage capacity significantly, with Kenya now managing over one million cubic metres of petroleum storage, strengthening strategic reserves and improving the ability to withstand global supply disruptions, shipping delays, or volatility in international markets. The KPRL tank farm alone contributes over 484,000 cubic metres, reinforcing the storage network alongside major depots in Nairobi, Eldoret, Nakuru, and Kisumu. This expanded infrastructure enhances stability not only for Kenya but for neighbouring economies that rely on Kenya's corridor-based supply chain, particularly during periods of international disruption.

Looking beyond 2025, KPC is preparing for a new wave of innovation and competitiveness-focused projects. Plans are underway to fully digitalise pipeline operations through advanced SCADA systems capable of real-time monitoring, rapid leak detection, and automated flow management. The company is also exploring reverse-flow pumping capabilities that would allow products to move from inland depots back to the coast, an option that could support future refining, alternative

import pathways, and long-term supply flexibility. Discussions on a potential Eldoret–Kampala pipeline continue to progress, with the prospect of reducing regional reliance on large volumes of road tanker traffic and strengthening supply stability for Uganda. KPC is also assessing expanded infrastructure for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and jet fuel to meet rising demand for cleaner cooking energy and growing aviation fuel needs across the region.

Despite its strengths, the system faces notable challenges. Parts of the Western Kenya network, Lines 2, 3, and 4, require continued rehabilitation to address age-related wear. Fuel theft and vandalism remain persistent risks, particularly along isolated segments. Regionally, competition is growing from Tanzania's Central Corridor, where upgrading of ports and road systems at Dar es Salaam and Tanga is increasingly attracting interest from oil marketers seeking alternative supply pathways. Financing large-scale upgrades also remains a constraint, as new pipelines and storage projects require substantial capital investment. Nevertheless, the Northern Corridor maintains a competitive advantage through its scale, connectivity, mature supply chains, and the proven performance of its infrastructure.

The pipeline's transformation has been powered by major long-term capital investment. Line 5 alone costs approximately KSh 49 billion,

financed through a combination of internal resources and external borrowing. Western Kenya expansions implemented over decades have collectively exceeded KSh 20 billion, while rehabilitation and integration works at KPRL required an estimated KSh 17–20 billion. These investments underscore an essential principle of corridor development: stability and competitiveness require sustained financing and continuous renewal. Despite high capital costs, KPC has remained profitable and continues to contribute to national revenue, reflecting the strength of regional demand and the strategic value of efficient petroleum logistics.

Nearly five decades after the first barrels flowed through Line 1, the Northern Corridor oil pipeline stands as both a symbol and a driver of regional growth. It reduces transport costs, improves supply reliability, strengthens energy security, and anchors regional economies in a sector where fuel availability affects virtually every productive activity. As new competitors emerge and demand patterns evolve, Kenya's ability to maintain leadership in petroleum logistics will depend on continued modernisation, expanded capacity, strengthened security, and deeper integration with regional infrastructure plans. Ultimately, the Northern Corridor pipeline demonstrates how sustained vision and strategic investment can build infrastructure that transforms economies, strengthens regional ties, and secures long-term development outcomes across East and Central Africa.

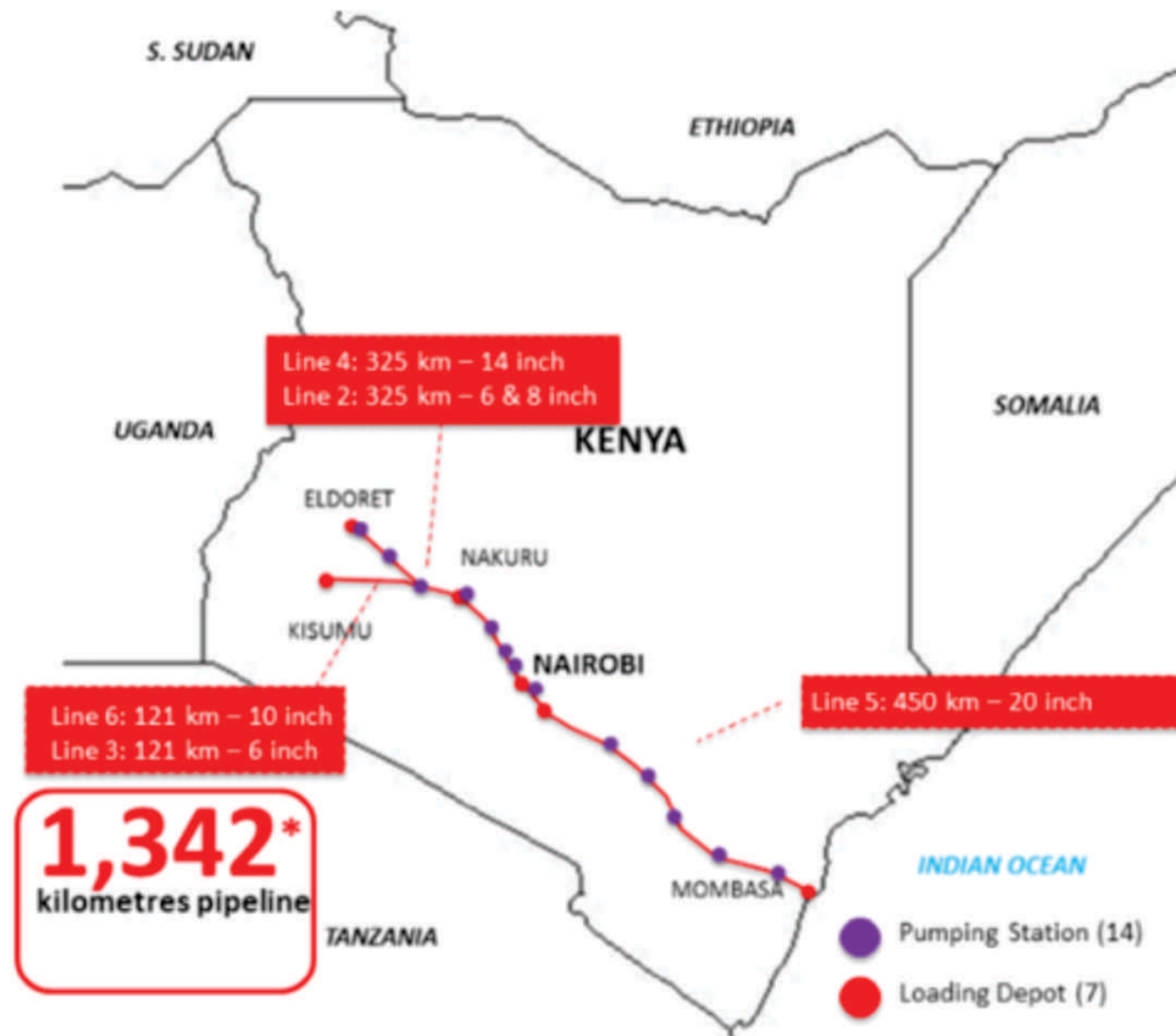


This is an aerial view picture of the new Kipevu Oil Terminal (KOT II) at the Port of Mombasa. The terminal built at a cost of Sh40 billion is a modern offshore facility commissioned in August 2022.



Figure 2: Main Transportation Routes in East Africa (Nugent, 2020)

PIPELINE ROUTE MAP SHOWING MOMBASA–NAIROBI–ELDORET–KISUMU



Source: Kenya Pipeline Company

PIPELINES



KENYA PIPELINE COMPANY: MILESTONE

1973

KPC established

1978

Line 1 commissioned
(Mombasa–Nairobi)

1994

Western Kenya system
(Line 2 Nairobi–Eldoret;
Line 3 Sinendet–Kisumu)

2011

Line 4 Nairobi–Eldoret

2018

Line 5 commissioned
(20-inch Mombasa–Nairobi)

2020

Line 1 decommissioned

EAST - CENTRAL AFRICA'S ROAD TRANSIT TRAFFIC OVER FOUR DECADES

For four decades, the movement of goods across East and Central Africa has largely depended on roads. While the Northern Corridor is conceived as a multimodal system linking the Port of Mombasa to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda through road, rail, pipeline, and inland waterways, in practice, it has been trucks, rather than trains or barges, that have carried the overwhelming share of regional cargo. From the mid-1980s to 2025, road transport evolved from a complementary option to the dominant backbone of trade, shaping infrastructure investment, border reforms, and corridor performance management.

In 1985, road transport's rise was less a strategic choice than a structural necessity. Rail networks inherited from the colonial era were operational but deteriorating. Uganda's metre-gauge railway functioned intermittently under maintenance constraints; Rwanda and Burundi had no rail systems; eastern DRC's extensive lines were undermined by conflict and neglect; and South Sudan's narrow-gauge line operated sporadically. In this context, trucks offered flexibility and geographic reach, accessing inland markets and fragile post-conflict economies that rail could not reliably serve.

However, this flexibility came at a high cost. Poorly maintained highways, limited axle-load enforcement, manual customs systems, and weak inter-agency coordination meant that transit from Mombasa to Kampala often stretched between 18 and 25 days, with additional uncertainty along secondary routes.

By the mid-1990s, political turbulence in the Great Lakes region, particularly the Rwandan Genocide and instability in Burundi and eastern DRC, further disrupted rail systems and entrenched reliance on roads. Container volumes through Mombasa rose gradually, but freight continued to move predominantly by truck. Long-haul routes from Mombasa and Dar es Salaam became lifelines for landlocked economies. Yet the expansion of trucking placed enormous strain on fragile pavements. Seasonal rains rendered sections impassable, axle overloading accelerated deterioration, and logistics costs escalated sharply. Transport premiums were frequently embedded into consumer prices, in some cases, inflating the final cost of goods by over 30 percent.

The re-establishment of the East African Community (EAC) in 2000 marked a structural turning point. Corridor states began harmonising axle-load controls and investing in highway rehabilitation. By 2005, road freight had become the undisputed default mode for regional trade. Uganda's rail system was largely inoperative, and Rwanda, Burundi, parts of DRC, and



Trucks captured lining up at the Malaba border between Kenya and Uganda freighting transit cargo from the Port of Mombasa into the Great Lakes hinterland. The One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) framework has been a transformative tool for trade facilitation, significantly reducing waiting times at border crossings by consolidating procedures from two stops into a single, joint location.

South Sudan depended almost entirely on trucks for imports and exports. Freight from Mombasa to Kampala or Kigali involved multiple weighbridge stops, extended customs procedures, and inconsistent border practices. The absence of integrated ICT systems compounded delays. Nevertheless, this period laid the foundation for reform: the adoption of the EAC Vehicle Load Control Act and the strengthening of weighbridge enforcement began addressing overloading, while donor-supported road upgrades improved pavement quality along key trunk sections.

Between 2010 and 2015, regional trade accelerated significantly, driven by rising consumer demand, infrastructure projects, fuel imports, and reconstruction activity in South Sudan and eastern DRC. Roads continued to carry the majority of cargo along the Northern Corridor linking Mombasa to Malaba, Busia, Gatuna, Nimule, and beyond. However, the growing volumes exposed systemic weaknesses. Border delays, frequent weighbridge inspections, and inconsistent transit procedures prolonged delivery times.

Although the theoretical transit from Mombasa to Kampala could be completed within two to three days, practical averages often ranged between four and five days due to procedural and operational constraints. In

several economies, logistics costs represented up to 40 percent of total goods value, far above global benchmarks.

Institutional reforms gradually improved performance. The introduction of One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs), supported by the EAC One Stop Border Posts Act (2016), enabled joint border processing and eliminated duplicate exit and entry formalities. By 2025, major OSBPs such as Malaba, Busia, Katuna/Gatuna, Mirama Hills/Kagitumba, Nimule/Elegu, and Rubavu/Goma were operational, substantially reducing border crossing times. Simultaneously, the deployment of High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) systems in Kenya modernised axle-load compliance monitoring, reducing discretionary stoppages while improving enforcement integrity.

Infrastructure quality has improved markedly over the past decade. The Northern Corridor road network now spans approximately 12,800 kilometres across member states. According to the 21st Edition of the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory Report (2025), 82 percent of Kenya's corridor roads are in good or very good condition, 94 percent in Rwanda, 82 percent in Uganda, and 97 percent in Burundi, though critical bottlenecks remain in eastern DRC and sections of South Sudan.

Kenya has undertaken major capacity enhancements, including dualling the Rironi–Nakuru–Mau Summit section, upgrading the Kwa Jomvu–Mariakani segment near Mombasa, and advancing plans for the Kisumu–Busia and Malaba expressway connections. These projects incorporate intelligent transport systems, climbing lanes, pedestrian bridges, improved drainage, and truck lay-bys, reflecting a shift toward performance-based highway design.

Uganda has rehabilitated key segments such as Kampala–Lugazi, Mbarara–Ntungamo, and Karuma–Olwiyo–Pakwach, while Rwanda has prioritised widening and rehabilitation of Kigali–Muhanga and Cyanika–Musanze corridors. Burundi has invested in drainage and slope stabilisation works and is aligning its network to EAC standards. In contrast, much of the eastern DRC's Northern Corridor network remains unpaved or in poor condition, constraining integration and increasing vehicle operating costs.

South Sudan, on the other hand, is working to improve the critical 11-km road link between South Sudan and Kenya at the Nadapal–Nakodok border point, crucial for connecting Juba to the Mombasa port via Eldoret. The country has also focused on upgrading the road linking Juba to Nimule (the border with Uganda) to all-weather standards.

The DRC is actively working on upgrading ports on Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika to improve multi-modal transport. This includes upgrading ports at Goma, Bukavu, Kalundu, and Kavimvira to facilitate better connectivity with neighboring Rwanda and Burundi.

The DRC, in conjunction with its neighbors, is focusing on enhancing vital trade routes.

This includes improvements to the Mbarara–Kisangani Corridor (linking to Uganda) to upgrade this 940km, vital trade route.

Approximately 93% of Rwanda's roads along the corridor are in good condition, with ongoing projects focusing on rehabilitating, widening lanes, and upgrading earth roads to paved surfaces.

Rwanda has implemented the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) to monitor transit cargo in real-time, which has improved efficiency, reduced transit times, and decreased unnecessary stops.

The country has worked on enhancing infrastructure at key border points, such as the Gikondo–Rubavu/La Corniche route, to facilitate smoother transit towards the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Burundi is also busy with the rehabilitation of the Port of Bujumbura. Major efforts have been made to modernize the Port of Bujumbura, which is the main entry point for 80% of Burundi's external trade via Lake Tanganyika, connecting to the Northern and Central Corridors.

The government is working to improve the 567 km of Northern Corridor road networks within its territory, with a focus on enhancing road conditions.

Despite rail revival efforts, including Kenya's 592 km Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) from Mombasa to Naivasha, road transport continues to dominate cargo movement beyond rail termini. The SGR has significantly improved inland evacuation to Nairobi and Naivasha ICDs, but cargo destined for Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, and DRC must still rely heavily on trucking. Modal share data indicate that road remains the primary evacuation mode for transit cargo, underscoring structural dependence on highway infrastructure.



A section of the 32 mile Kampala–Entebbe Expressway. It is a four-lane toll highway in Uganda connecting Kampala to Entebbe International Airport.

The scale of road transit is reflected in recent port statistics. In 2025, the Port of Mombasa handled 45.45 million metric tonnes of cargo, up 10.87 percent from 2024, and processed 2,114,480 TEUs, an increase of 5.48 percent year-on-year. Transit cargo rose to 15.88 million metric tonnes, an 18.49 percent increase from 2024. Uganda accounted for 68.74 percent of total transit volume, followed by DRC (11.49 percent), South Sudan (10.02 percent), and Rwanda (5.29 percent). The vast majority of this cargo moved onward by road.

Transport rates remain elevated by global standards. Corridor freight charges from Mombasa to Kampala and Kigali reflect persistent inefficiencies, imbalances in container flows, and infrastructure gaps. In 2025, 37.5 percent of total containers handled at Mombasa were empty repositionings, highlighting structural trade imbalances that increase logistics costs and road utilisation. Additionally, frequent driver stops, weighbridge interactions, and border checks, although reduced compared to earlier decades, continue to contribute to cumulative delays.

The economic implications are substantial. Across many Northern Corridor economies, logistics costs account for between 35 and 42 percent of production costs, compared to 8–10 percent in advanced economies. Heavy truck traffic accelerates pavement deterioration, necessitating frequent resurfacing financed through Road Maintenance Levy Funds and national budgets. Overloading, though increasingly regulated under the EAC Vehicle Load Control Act, remains a risk to infrastructure longevity. Road safety has

also emerged as a critical concern, with corridor fatalities requiring sustained enforcement and engineering interventions.

From 1985 to 2025, East–Central Africa's road transit traffic has expanded exponentially, both in volume and strategic importance. What began as a pragmatic response to failing rail systems evolved into a structurally entrenched transport model. Roads have enabled trade for a region of over 258 million people across 3.7 million square kilometres, supporting economic recovery, reconstruction, and integration. Yet the very success of road-based transit now presents a policy dilemma. Without deeper multimodal integration, through rail extensions, inland water transport, pipeline optimisation, and digital corridor management, highway networks risk saturation.

The four-decade trajectory demonstrates remarkable progress: transit times from Mombasa to Kampala have fallen from three weeks in the 1980s to roughly four to five days under integrated systems today. However, the future of regional competitiveness depends on transitioning from road dominance to balanced multimodality. Roads will remain indispensable, but their sustainability requires complementary investments in rail expansion, inland waterways, smart border systems, and green freight technologies.

East and Central Africa's trade has indeed moved on wheels for forty years. The next forty will determine whether it can move faster, cheaper, and more sustainably, without the road network carrying the entire weight of the region's economic ambition.

INDICATIVE ROAD DISTANCES IN KILOMETERS BETWEEN THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR TRANSIT SECTIONS

	Bujumbura	Bukavu	Busia	Eldoret	Gasenyi	Goma	Gulu	Juba	Kampala	Kanyaru Haut	Katuna	Kaya	Kigali	Kisangani	Kisumu	Lasu	Mahagi	Malaba	Mariakani	Mbarara	Mombasa	Mpondwe	Nadapal	Nairobi	Nimule	Yambio	Yei
Bujumbura		165	990	1149	252	435	1134	1445	792	128	360	1373	279	864	1105	1496	1059	1028	1925	525	1961	700	1740	1480	1249	1761	1451
Bukavu	165		991	1150	349	184	1135	1446	793	157	361	1163	280	699	1170	1286	894	1029	1926	526	1962	701	1770	1481	1250	1551	1241
Busia	990	991		148	780	867	409	720	198	862	630	686	711	1495	119	809	585	33	905	465	941	640	768	460	524	1074	764
Eldoret	1149	1150	148		939	1026	503	963	357	1021	789	780	870	1654	158	903	519	121	776	624	812	799	620	331	618	1168	858
Gasenyi	252	349	780	939		225	924	1235	582	172	150	1163	69	1345	899	1286	1062	818	1715	315	1751	490	1559	1270	1039	1551	1241
Goma	435	184	867	1026	225		1011	1322	669	307	237	979	156	1114	986	1102	710	905	1802	402	1838	419	1617	1357	1126	1367	1057
Gulu	1134	1135	409	503	924	1011		311	342	1006	774	367	855	1162	528	490	266	382	1279	609	1315	784	606	834	115	755	445
Juba	1445	1446	720	963	1235	1322	311		653	1317	1085	234	1166	1399	839	201	577	693	1626	920	1662	1095	343	1145	196	466	156
Kampala	792	793	198	357	582	669	342	653		664	432	581	513	1297	317	704	480	236	1133	267	1169	442	948	688	457	969	659
Kanyaru Haut	128	157	862	1021	172	307	1006	1317	664		232	1245	151	1427	987	1368	1023	900	1797	397	1833	572	1612	1352	1121	1633	1323
Katuna	360	361	630	789	150	237	774	1085	432	232		1013	81	1195	749	1136	791	668	1565	165	1601	340	1380	1120	889	1401	1091
Kaya	1373	1163	686	780	1163	979	367	234	581	1245	1013		1094	1165	805	123	269	659	1556	848	1592	1023	577	1111	430	388	78
Kigali	279	280	711	870	69	156	855	1166	513	151	81	1094		1276	830	1217	872	749	1646	246	1682	421	1461	1201	970	1482	1172
Kisangani	864	699	1495	1654	1345	1114	1162	1399	1297	1427	1195	1165	1276		1608	1288	896	1533	2430	1030	2466	855	2245	1985	1277	1553	1243
Kisumu	1105	1170	119	158	899	986	528	839	317	987	749	805	830	1608		928	704	134	792	584	828	759	778	347	643	1193	883
Lasu	1496	1286	809	903	1286	1102	490	201	704	1368	1136	123	1217	1288	928		392	782	1679	971	1715	843	544	1234	397	355	45
Mahagi	1059	894	585	519	1062	710	266	577	480	1023	791	269	872	896	704	392		558	1455	747	1491	451	872	1010	381	657	347
Malaba	1028	1029	33	121	818	905	382	693	236	900	668	659	749	1533	134	782	558		897	503	933	678	741	452	497	1047	737
Mariakani	1925	1926	905	776	1715	1802	1279	1626	1133	1797	1565	1556	1646	2430	792	1679	1455	897		1400	36	1575	1396	445	1394	1944	1634
Mbarara	525	526	465	624	315	402	609	920	267	397	165	848	246	1030	584	971	747	503	1400		1436	175	1215	955	724	1236	926
Mombasa	1961	1962	941	812	1751	1838	1315	1662	1169	1833	1601	1592	1682	2466	828	1715	1491	933	36	1436		1611	1432	481	1430	1980	1670
Mpondwe	700	701	640	799	490	419	784	1095	442	572	340	1023	421	855	759	843	451	678	1575	175	1611		1390	1130	899	1108	798
Nadapal	1740	1770	768	620	1559	1617	606	343	948	1612	1380	577	1461	2245	778	544	872	741	1396	1215	1432	1390		951	491	809	499
Nairobi	1480	1481	460	331	1270	1357	834	1145	688	1352	1120	1111	1201	1985	347	1234	1010	452	445	955	481	1130	951		949	1499	1189
Nimule	1249	1250	524	618	1039	1126	115	196	457	1121	889	430	970	1277	643	397	381	497	1394	724	1430	899	491	949		662	352
Yambio	1761	1551	1074	1168	1551	1367	755	466	969	1633	1401	388	1482	1553	1193	355	657	1047	1944	1236	1980	1108	809	1499	662		310
Yei	1451	1241	764	858	1241	1057	445	156	659	1323	1091	78	1172	1243	883	45	347	737	1634	926	1670	798	499	1189	352	310	

The Northern Corridor road network spans over 12,700 km, connecting Mombasa port to landlocked East African nations. This chart is the Key transit transport routes are from Mombasa to Bujumbura (the South-West terminus) covering about 2,000 km of road distance, and the Mombasa - Kisangani route which stretches for about 3,000 km. The bulk of imports and exports destined to and from countries in the Corridor are transported through either of these transit routes.

From Kenya to Uganda, the Mombasa - Malaba - Kampala road (1170 km) is preferred due to the relative good quality of the network and availability of social amenities en route. The alternative route is Mombasa - Kisumu - Busia - Kampala. Average Transit time from Mombasa to Kampala in 2016 was 5 days.

From Uganda to Rwanda, the principal routes are Kampala - Kagitumba - Kigali and Kampala - Gatuna - Kigali; Bujumbura in Burundi is reached from Kampala through Rwanda. Bukavu, Goma and Kisangani are reached from Rwanda and Uganda as well. The Northern Corridor Secretariat is advocating for a much shorter route from Mombasa to Kigali and Bujumbura via Voi-Taveta/Holili-Arusha-Siginda Road; 1,650Km to Kigali & 1,957 Km to Bujumbura.



The Port of Mombasa officially achieved a major milestone by handling its one-millionth Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit (TEU) container on December 31, 2014. This accomplishment marked a significant turning point for the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA), positioning Mombasa among the top-performing container ports in Africa

6 COUNTRIES

67 PROPOSED ROADSIDE STATIONS

SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGE SIZE STATIONS

Benefits of the Roadside Stations include:

- Enhancing reliable cargo transport chain along the corridor.
- Providing dedicated spots for truck drivers to rest along the Northern Corridor.
- Creating employment opportunities and boost local economies along the transit route by providing facilities for small businesses and services for drivers.
- Supporting mandatory rest periods for truck drivers, reducing the spread of diseases and boosting driver health.

OVER 141 POTENTIAL SITES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED ALONG THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR



NORTHERN CORRIDOR INITIATES ROADSIDE STATIONS

In April 2015, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) organized an Investor Conference on Roadside Stations (RSS) with an aim to attract private sector investment to enhance road safety, improve truck driver welfare, and provide logistics services.

The conference aimed to attract investment for 141 identified locations, with 67 considered high priority, modern rest areas across Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC. The NCTTCA champions a development model based on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), which are being prioritized to build, operate, and manage these facilities.

This project, which is supported by the NCTTCA will rely on the expertise from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). These stations feature parking yards, sanitary facilities, food services, and secure resting areas.

The initiative aims to modernize the transport corridor, reducing transit times and enhancing safety.

Road safety and security have been a major concern for drivers, passengers, and cargo plying the Northern Corridor route. Over the years, traffic accidents caused by Heavy Commercial Vehicles and long-distance passenger buses have been on the rise. Long distances, driver fatigue, and mechanical breakdown have been reported as some of the major causes of road accidents along the corridor.

The lack of adequate facilities for rest and medical care, maintenance, parking, and sanitation has had a serious effect on drivers using the Northern Corridor route. The situation has also resulted in incidences of diseases such as HIV/AIDs, Ebola, and Covid-19 spreading across borders.

The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) is promoting the implementation of Roadside Stations (RSS) in its bid to promote road safety and security under the Private Sector Investment and Promotion (PSIP) program.

Roadside Stations (RSS) are meant to perform a critical role in ensuring secure 24-hour parking yards, health facilities, local rejuvenation facilities (rest stops for truck drivers, accommodation, restaurants, washrooms, among others), and other amenities are available along the corridor.

The RSS program started in 2014 following a feasibility study of the entire Northern Corridor by the Northern Corridor Secretariat aimed at providing road users with safe and comfortable road travel conditions and contributing to local economies.

The study identified 141 locations for RSS, out of which 67 were considered as priority locations. Out of the 67 priority locations identified along the Northern Corridor, 22 are in Kenya, 27 are in Uganda, seven (7)

are located in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), seven (7) Road Side Stations (RSS) are planned for development in Rwanda, two in South Sudan, and two (2) are located in Burundi.

The 67 stations are aimed at providing safety and rest facilities for drivers along the 2,000 km key route connecting the member states.

From 7th to 14th March 2022, a multi-agency team comprised of public and private sector representatives undertook a Roadside Stations (RSS) survey along the Northern Corridor in the northern part of the Member State of Uganda.

The team included participants from the Ministry of Works and Transport (MoWT), Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), the Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU), Uganda National Police, and the Uganda National Transporters Alliance (UNTA).

The objective of the RSS survey was to evaluate the status of identified private sector facilities similar to RSS designs along the corridor in Uganda with a view to piloting those that comply at a certain level with the RSS requirements. The activity was also to update information on potential locations previously identified and assess the land availability on those locations to boost the implementation process of RSS in Uganda.

Due to the complexity of the road network in Uganda, the RSS survey was planned in two phases. The first phase entailed surveying the Northern part of Uganda, while the second phase would cover the South-West of Uganda.

Out of 27 locations planned in the first phase of the survey, the survey team identified three facilities with enough amenities that can be considered for upgrade into RSS status. These facilities are Northern Corridor Heavy Trucks Parking located at Odokomit near Soroti, BLD Parking yard located at the border with South Sudan in Elegu, and ATS (Angels Truck Stop) located at Yagupino/Wi-anaka village in Purongo.

According to the findings of the multidisciplinary stakeholder survey team, most locations surveyed had local Government-owned land that can be used to develop RSSs. In other locations, the local Governments had already provided dedicated parking areas for heavy trucks. The provided parking yards are tendered for a short period (six to 12 months) to private operators.

Other parking yards leased out by local Governments and with potential land for developing RSS include Bua Parking in Naluwerere, Numa Ground parking in Lira city, Pakwach trucks parking, Migeera City Council parking, and Lugazi City Council parking.

However, in various towns, drivers prefer parking on the road shoulders. With the development of RSS facilities, the National government and the local governments ought to enforce legislation barring trucks from



Private sector and County Governments ready to invest in Road Side Stations along the Northern Corridor to ease the pressure of trucks parking on road shoulders.

parking along the roads except in case of emergencies, to reduce the safety and security risk for the drivers, cargo, and the community in the case of dangerous goods.

With the first phase complete, the Ministry of Works and Transport, Uganda National Roads Authority, Uganda Revenue Authority, the Private Sector Foundation Uganda, and the Uganda National Transporters Alliance are committed to joining efforts in supporting the development of RSS by both the private and public sectors.

In Kenya, the proposed Roadside Stations (RSS) on the Northern Corridor include the upgrading of existing facilities like Shell and Premium Energy Bonje, Maungu Lorry Park, Sparkle Centre, Darussalam Hotel, Delamere, Shell Salgaa, and the Uasin Gishu Lorry Park, as well as proposed new sites such as Shell and Premium Energy in Mai Mahiu, the KENHA land in Sultan Hamud, and the Mundika and Malaba trailer parks. The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) is actively involved in these developments to improve road safety and economic activity along the route.



The then Kenya's Deputy President William Ruto (5th from Left) and Mr. Donut Bagula, the then Executive Secretary NCTTCA (3rd from left) pose for a picture with other leaders during the investors conference on Roadside Stations along the Northern Corridor in Nairobi on 28th April 2015. The conference resolutions focused on promoting private sector investment by creating a supportive policy and regulatory framework, with a commitment from member states to develop the stations as part of the transport infrastructure. Key resolutions included the adoption of a standard design, ensuring stations serve as crucial rest and safety points, and acting as hubs for local economic activity by providing markets for goods and services, as well as creating employment opportunities



Charles Tanui
Charles Tanui
KENYA PIPELINE COMPANY LIMITED
Managing Director

Alex Kabuga
Alex Kabuga
KENYA TRADE NETWORK AGENCY
Chief Executive Officer

Nancy Karigithu
Nancy Karigithu
KENYA MARITIME AUTHORITY
Director General

Joel Kamande
Joel Kamande
RADIATION PROTECTION BOARD
Secretary/Chief Radiation Protection Officer

Donat M. Bagula
Donat M. Bagula
THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR TRANSIT
TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION AUTHORITY
Executive Secretary

Frank M...
Frank M...
TRADEMARK EAST AFRICA
Chief Executive Officer

On June 30, 2014, President Uhuru Kenyatta signed the Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor Community Charter to improve operational efficiency and reduce cargo turnaround times.



His Excellency the president Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H and Commander-in-Chief of the defence forces of the Republic of Kenya pose in this group photo with the stakeholders of the Mombasa Port Community Charter group members when he launched the Port Community Charter Electronic Dashboard & KPA Strategic Plan (30th June 2014)

The Mombasa Port Northern Corridor Community Charter (MPNCCC) has significantly transformed cargo clearance at East Africa's premier port by establishing a collaborative framework with specific targets, leading to significant improvements in automation and efficiency, and a reduction in cargo dwell and transit times.

The Port of Mombasa, long regarded as the logistical heartbeat of East Africa, had historically been characterised by cargo clearance delays, with reports indicating that the issues persisted and often extended clearance times beyond the ideal 3-7 day range. These delays were a major concern for stakeholders across the East African region, as they increased operational costs and reduced the port's competitiveness.

The Port has since undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decade and today stands as a regional benchmark for efficiency and collaboration. At the centre of this turnaround is the Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor Community Charter (MPNCCC), a groundbreaking

multi-stakeholder framework launched in 2014 and renewed for the 2018–2024 period.

The Charter has been the guiding force behind the reforms that have reshaped port operations, boosted regional trade, and strengthened Kenya's competitiveness as a gateway to the Eastern and Central African hinterland.

The MPNCCC brought together government agencies, private sector operators, logistics players, and regional actors in a shared commitment to overhaul the systems that had long impeded smooth trade flows.

Before the Charter's introduction, the Northern Corridor was severely constrained by a "silo mentality," in which critical institutions operated independently, often with conflicting priorities and minimal coordination.

This disjointed system created layers of inefficiency that increased the cost of doing business and hindered the region's economic potential.

Freight costs along the corridor consumed between 35% and 40% of import values, a stark contrast to the 8% seen in more efficient global corridors such as those in Europe and China.

The Charter sought to change this narrative by creating a unified mechanism for collaboration. Its early focus was on cutting down cargo clearance times, lowering vessel turnaround, reducing logistical costs, and bringing container dwell time below the international best-practice benchmark of 72 hours.

These goals were supported by clear performance indicators and strict timelines, making stakeholders accountable not only to their institutions but also to the broader economic aspirations of the region.

Ten years later, the impact of the Charter is both profound and measurable. A comprehensive assessment conducted between 2024 and early 2025 revealed that 72% of stakeholders believe the Charter has been effective in transforming the port and corridor.

The most notable achievements have been in areas of public-private collaboration, customs harmonisation, and operational streamlining. These improvements are reflected in the numbers. Cargo throughput has nearly doubled, rising from 22.3 million tonnes in 2014 to 41.1 million tonnes in 2024, signalling both increased confidence in the port and improved processing capacity.

Container traffic has also surged dramatically. In 2024, Mombasa surpassed the 2 million TEU mark for the first time, doubling its 2014 performance and surpassing a Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) milestone initially set for 2028.

Operational efficiency has been a central pillar of the transformation. A decade ago, cargo could linger in the port for more than a week, with container dwell times ranging from 7 to 10 days.

Today, that figure has been slashed to 3-4 days, with the port recording its best performance of 3.5 days in 2023, a 10% improvement over the previous year.

Similarly, the turnaround time for container vessels decreased from 3 days in 2022 to 2 days in 2023. These gains are not only indicators of improved internal operations but also reflect a broader shift toward efficiency-driven service delivery, earning KPA national commendation, including recognition from the Head of State.

Behind these achievements lies a combination of strategic investments and systemic reforms. One of the most significant contributors has been the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), which began freight operations to reduce reliance on road transport.

With a haulage capacity of 22 million tonnes annually, the SGR has helped decongest the port and speed up cargo evacuation.

The increased use of rail has also reduced road wear and improved turnaround times for importers and exporters across the region.

Infrastructure expansion within the port has further strengthened its capacity. The completion of the second container terminal, including the much-needed Phase Two, and the commissioning of Berth 22 have pushed Mombasa's total handling capacity to 2.1 million TEUs annually.

This expansion has enabled the port to handle larger vessels, improve loading and unloading efficiency, and better manage peak-season cargo surges. The investments have been complemented by a strong push for digital transformation.

The Kenya National Electronic Single Window System (KNSWS) has revolutionised cargo documentation by integrating processes and enabling faster, more transparent inter-agency coordination.

The system has been particularly instrumental in customs clearance, which has historically been one of the most time-consuming stages of the cargo-handling chain. The Charter's success has also been evident in the expanding circle of its signatories. Starting with just 25 institutions in 2014, the Charter now has 53 official signatories across public agencies, private-sector operators, and regional institutions.

This wide participation has created a shared sense of ownership and accountability, critical ingredients for sustaining improvements in such a complex, multi-layered trade environment.

However, the journey has not been without new challenges. Ironically, much of the port's success has created its own pressure points.

The steady rise in throughput, combined with unexpected surges caused by global disruptions such as the Red Sea crisis, has strained the port's capacity at peak moments.

Increased vessel calls and higher transshipment demand partly contributed to Mombasa's lower ranking in the 2024 World Bank Container Port Performance Index.

While the decline does not reflect deterioration in operational standards, it underscores the need to expand capacity and maintain efficiency as volumes increase.

On the landside, overstretched road infrastructure remains a persistent hurdle. The Mombasa–Malaba corridor handles up to 2,000 trucks daily, a volume that often leads to bottlenecks and delays, especially at border crossings.

While rail has eased some of this pressure, road transport still accounts for the majority of cargo movement, and delays along the corridor undermine gains made at the port.

As the 2018–2024 Charter cycles come to a close, the focus is shifting toward aligning the next phase of reforms with national and continental priorities.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents a major opportunity for Kenya to expand its export base and strengthen its regional market presence.

The Charter's future evolution will therefore place greater emphasis on export competitiveness, capital clearance, and the port's contribution to national GDP and job creation.

Stakeholders are increasingly recognising the need to move beyond throughput as the primary measure of success, toward a broader assessment of economic impact and value addition.

The decade-long transformation of the Port of Mombasa stands as a testament to what can be achieved when institutions commit to shared goals, transparency, and continuous improvement.

The MPNCCC has provided the discipline, direction, and accountability needed to turn a once-strained port into a regional powerhouse.

As new challenges emerge and opportunities expand, the Charter will remain central to shaping the port's future.

With sustained investment, stronger regional collaboration, and adaptive policy frameworks, the Port of Mombasa is well-positioned to cement its place as East Africa's premier maritime gateway for decades to come.

Community Charter Signatories:

1. Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA)
2. Anti-Counterfeit Authority (ACA)
3. Car Importers Association of Kenya (CIAK)
4. Container Freight Station Association (CFSA)
5. East Africa Civil Society Organizations' Forum (EACSOF)
6. East African Grain Council (EAGC)
7. East African Online Transport Agency (EAOTA)
8. East African Tea Traders Association (EATTA)
9. Government Chemist
10. Border Control Operational Coordinating Committee (BCOCC)
11. ICT Authority
12. Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM)
13. Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS)
14. Kenya Coffee Traders Association (KCTA)
15. Kenya International Freight and Warehousing Association (KIFWA)
16. Kenya Long Distance Truck Drivers Union (KLDTDU)
17. Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA)
18. Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI)
19. Kenya Railways Corporation (KRC)
20. Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA)
21. Kenya Ships Agents Association (KSAA)
22. Kenya Trade Network Agency (KENTRADE)
23. Kenya Transport Association Limited (KTA)
24. Mombasa County Government (MGOM)
25. National Public Health Laboratory Services
26. Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA)
27. Pest Control Products Board
28. Petroleum Institute of East Africa (PIEA)
29. Port Health Services Unit (PHSU)
30. Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA)
31. Shippers' Council of East Africa (SCEA)
32. State Department of the East African Community
33. State Department of Infrastructure
34. State Department of Maritime and Shipping Affairs
35. State Department of Trade
36. State Department of Transport
37. The Association of Women in the Maritime Sector in Eastern and Southern Africa (WOMESA)
38. TradeMark East Africa
39. Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA)
40. Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA)
41. Kenya Pipeline Company (KPC)
42. Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)
43. Kenya Ports Authority (KPA)
44. National Transport Safety Authority (NTSA)
45. Kenya Nuclear Regulatory Authority (KENRA)
46. Intergovernmental Standing Committee on Shipping (ISCOS) - now largely operating under the name Maritime Organisation for Eastern, Southern and Northern Africa (MOESNA)
47. Uganda Revenue Authority (URA)
48. The National Treasury
49. Cereal Millers Association (CMA)
50. Empty Container Depots Association (ACDA)
51. National Police Service (NPS)
52. Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA)
53. Ministry of East Africa Community and Regional Development
54. Mombasa Port Civil Society Network

IMPORTATION AND GOODS' CLEARANCE



The purpose of this brochure

The purpose of this document is to provide the information related to importation and clearance of goods. This document provides the meaning of importation, required documents to process a declaration of imported goods, the most important elements to take into consideration and the responsibilities of the importers and clearing agents.

What is Importation?

Importation refers to the action of bringing goods or services into one country from another, either for sale or for any other purpose.

Who is an importer?

An importer is someone who brings goods or services into a country from another either for sale or for any other purpose.

Where to declare the imported goods?

Imported goods are cleared at various Customs offices including border posts, ports, inland offices and in EAC Partner States for intra-regional trade.

What are responsibilities of the importer in clearance of the imported goods?

- Upon arrival of goods to Customs office, the importer submits the relevant documents accompanying the goods to a clearing agent who will make a

Customs declaration;

- The importer has to pay all relevant duties and taxes whenever he/she gets the assessment notice from the clearing agent;
- The importer takes his/her goods out of Customs area immediately after exit note of the goods by Customs;
- The importer is responsible of the offenses made by clearing agent on his/her declaration of goods;
- The importer is required to maintain accurate records of his/her transactions;
- The importer is required to comply with all Customs and other relevant legal requirements.

Who is a clearing agent?

A clearing agent is an intermediate person between a trader/importer and Customs. He/she acts as a broker between a trader/importer and the Customs Administration. He/she is licensed by the Commissioner for Customs Services to act as an agent for transacting business relating to the declaration or clearance of any goods or baggage other than accompanied non-manifested personal baggage of a person travelling by air, land or sea.

Based on Customs Law, importers are obliged to engage Customs clearing agencies for clearance services. A Clearing Agent assists in the transaction of any Business relating to the entrance or clearance of any conveyance or the import or export of goods or baggage in Customs.

What are the responsibilities of a clearing agent?

- To furnish, whenever required by Customs Administration, an authorization from each of the firms or persons by whom he is employed to act as their Customs Agent;
- Not represent a client in Customs in any matter which the licensee dealt as an officer or employee of Rwanda Revenue Authority or of the facts of which he gained knowledge while in Government service;
- Where he knows that a client has not complied with the Law or has made any error in or omission from any document which the Law requires such client to execute, advise his client promptly of the fact of such non-compliance, error or omission and immediately bring the matter to the notice of the appropriate officer of Customs in writing;
- Exercise due diligence to ascertain the correctness of any information which he imparts to a client with reference to any Customs operations;
- Not withhold information relating to Customs operations from a client who is entitled to such information;
- Promptly pay over to Government when due, all sums received for payment of any duties, taxes or other debts or obligations owing to the Government and promptly account to his clients any money received for them from Government, or received from them in excess of Governmental, or the other charges properly payable in respect of the clients Customs operations;
- Not attempt to influence the conduct of any officer of Customs in any matter pending before the Customs by the use of threat, false accusation, duress or the offer of any special inducement or promise of advantage, or of any gift or favor

or other things of value;

- Not procure or attempt to procure, directly or indirectly, information from Customs records or other Government sources of any kind to which access is not granted by proper authority;
- Not employ in any capacity, with power of attorney, by delegation or otherwise, for the promotion of or in connection with the work relating to the license;
- Any person whose application for license or Customs Clearance identity card has been refused; or
- Any person whose license or Customs clearance identity card has been revoked or whose conduct as a partner, manager, director, officer or servant has been the cause of the revocation of the license or Customs Clearing agent identity Card;
- Not lend money to any officer or employee in the service of the Rwanda Revenue authority or become surety for the repayment of money borrowed by any such officer or employee; and
- Inform the Customs administration any change of address before such change is affected.

What are documents used in clearance of goods?

The relevant documents to be attached on Customs declaration are the following:

1. Original commercial invoice
2. Packing list
3. Bill of Lading or Airway bill
4. Certificate of origin if any: COMESA or EAC

Risks involved in clearance

- Under valuation of goods;
- Misclassification of goods;
- Exceeding quantity declared;
- Non reported goods;
- False declaration of origin;
- Wrong commercial description;
- Wrong Customs Procedure Code (CPC);
- Value declared different from attached invoice;
- Wrong standard commodity description;
- Upload wrong documents to the declaration;
- Weight different from the attached documents;
- Prohibited – restricted goods;
- Import through non-authorised route

Facilities offered by Customs to importers

- Gold Card Scheme
- Authorized Economic Operator Program (AEO)
- Authorized removal of goods before payment or after payment
- DAD (Dédouanement à domicile) with or without deposit

MOMBASA PORT'S FOUR-DECADE JOURNEY: FROM WEEKS TO DAYS IN REGIONAL TRADE

For more than four decades, the Port of Mombasa has evolved from a modest, manually operated gateway into a high-capacity, technology-driven maritime hub anchoring the Northern Corridor. Serving Kenya and the landlinked economies of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and South Sudan, the port has progressively transformed regional trade dynamics. Its evolution reflects sustained infrastructure investment, institutional reform, digital integration, multimodal expansion, and performance-based monitoring under the Northern Corridor framework.

In the mid-1980s, the Port of Mombasa handled approximately 45,000 TEUs annually. Operations were largely manual, documentation was paper-based, and coordination among port authorities, customs and inland agencies was fragmented. Cargo clearance was slow and unpredictable. The Northern Corridor road network was fragile and under-maintained, while regional rail systems were either deteriorating or unreliable. Transit from Mombasa to Kampala often took between 18 and 25 days. Weighbridge enforcement was inconsistent, security risks were significant, and the heavy reliance on trucking imposed high transport costs. Rwanda and Burundi frequently used the Central Corridor via Dar es Salaam, while traffic to eastern DRC fluctuated with instability. South Sudan had not yet emerged as a structured trade participant within the corridor framework.

By the mid-1990s, container throughput had risen modestly to about 65,000 TEUs. However, political instability in the Great Lakes region constrained faster growth. Incremental road rehabilitation and the gradual emergence of private logistics providers reduced some bottlenecks, shortening transit times to roughly 15–20 days to Kampala. Nonetheless, structural inefficiencies persisted. Overloading accelerated road deterioration, transport tariffs remained high, and logistics remained overwhelmingly road-based with limited multimodal integration.

The early 2000s marked a turning point. The re-establishment of the East African Community in 2000 deepened regional cooperation and prioritised trade facilitation. By 2005, the introduction of the Simba Customs System enabled electronic declarations, significantly reducing paperwork and processing time. Transit time fell to approximately 10–14 days, and container throughput more than doubled to around 150,000 TEUs. Infrastructure rehabilitation along the Northern Corridor improved reliability, while harmonised axle-load enforcement under the East African Community Vehicle Load Control Act strengthened compliance and road preservation. This period also laid the foundation for structured corridor performance monitoring under the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA).



Port of Mombasa in the 1980s

PORT OF MOMBASA

Between 2010 and 2015, the Port of Mombasa underwent accelerated capacity expansion and operational modernisation. The development of the Second Container Terminal increased annual capacity toward 2.2 million TEUs. Modern ship-to-shore gantry cranes, rubber-tired gantries and improved yard management systems enhanced vessel turnaround and berth productivity. Port infrastructure expanded to 22 deep-water berths, including seven container berths and three liquid cargo berths at the new Kipevu Oil Terminal. These investments significantly increased handling efficiency and reduced congestion.

Institutional reforms reinforced physical expansion. The implementation of the Single Customs Territory enabled clearance at the first point of entry, reducing duplication inland. One Stop Border Posts at Malaba and Busia eliminated double inspections and shortened border delays. The Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) introduced real-time cargo monitoring across Member States, reducing diversion and improving security. By 2015, transit times from Mombasa to Kampala had declined to 7–10 days, and transit container volumes expanded to approximately 320,000 TEUs.

The commissioning of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) in 2017 between Mombasa and Nairobi, later extended to Naivasha, fundamentally reshaped inland logistics. The 592 km SGR corridor enabled structured multimodal integration by shifting a significant share of port evacuation from road to rail. Rail began handling the first 500 kilometres of inland cargo movement, reducing highway congestion, improving predictability and enhancing cargo security. Inland Container Depots (ICDs) in Nairobi and Naivasha became essential decongestion nodes, extending port clearance inland. By 2025, Nairobi ICD handled 311,647 TEUs, reflecting continued growth and stronger rail–port integration.

Automation became central to port efficiency in the 2020s. The Port of Mombasa implemented integrated port community systems linking shipping lines, customs, terminal operators and clearing agents. Electronic cargo manifest submissions, online payment platforms, automated gate management systems and digital berth planning tools significantly reduced manual intervention. These digital systems improved transparency, accelerated customs release processes, strengthened risk-based inspection regimes and enhanced revenue efficiency. Performance benchmarking through the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory institutionalised data-driven governance by tracking indicators such as cargo throughput, dwell time, vessel turnaround and transit performance.

By 2025, the Port of Mombasa recorded 45.45 million metric tonnes (MT) of total throughput, representing a 10.87 percent increase from 40.99 million MT in 2024. Imports accounted for 79.28 percent of total throughput at 36.03 million MT, growing by 20.08 percent year-on-year. Container traffic reached 2,114,480 TEUs in 2025, a 5.48 percent increase from the previous year. Transit cargo volumes rose by 18.49 percent to 15.88 million MT. Uganda remained the dominant corridor user, accounting for 68.74 percent of transit volumes, followed by DRC at 11.49 percent, South Sudan at 10.02 percent and Rwanda at 5.29 percent. Transit time from Mombasa to Kampala has stabilised at

approximately four to five days, reflecting integrated rail–road operations and harmonised border management.

Modal diversification has become increasingly important. While road transport still carries the largest share of cargo evacuated from the port, rail has captured a growing portion of containerised traffic, particularly along the Mombasa–Naivasha axis, reducing pressure on highways. Pipeline infrastructure managed by the Kenya Pipeline Company, extending 1,342 km with annual throughput capacity of 14 million cubic metres, plays a critical complementary role in petroleum distribution to inland depots and neighbouring countries. This multimodal configuration—road, rail and pipeline—has improved resilience, efficiency and cost optimisation along the corridor.

Supporting infrastructure across Member States has strengthened overall corridor performance. The Northern Corridor road network now spans approximately 12,800 km. Kenya reports 82 percent of its corridor roads in good condition, while Rwanda reports 94 percent. Weighbridge modernisation, including high-speed weigh-in-motion systems, has enhanced compliance and reduced unnecessary stoppages. Pipeline integration with facilities such as the Kisumu Oil Jetty and Uganda's Mahathi Terminal has reduced tanker congestion and improved energy security.

The economic and regional impact of this transformation is profound. Transit times have fallen from up to three weeks in the 1980s to approximately four days today. Inventory holding costs have declined, supply chain predictability has improved, and cargo security has strengthened through electronic monitoring. Faster and more reliable logistics have enhanced the competitiveness of landlinked economies and reinforced integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area. The corridor now supports a regional population exceeding 258

million people across a landmass of more than 3.7 million square kilometres, underscoring its strategic significance.

Despite this progress, structural challenges remain. Road transport still dominates beyond rail termini, exposing the corridor to congestion and fuel price volatility. A significant trade imbalance persists, reflected in high empty container repositioning, with empty units comprising a substantial share of total container movements in 2025. Infrastructure gaps in parts of DRC and South Sudan continue to constrain full corridor optimisation. Peak-season congestion and last-mile connectivity require ongoing investment.

Future gains will depend on extending the SGR toward Kisumu and Malaba, developing multimodal logistics hubs, deepening digital interoperability among customs and transport agencies, and strengthening climate-resilient and green freight initiatives. Continued harmonisation of customs procedures and regional coordination will remain essential to sustaining performance gains.

From handling 45,000 TEUs in 1985 to over 2.1 million TEUs in 2025, and from three-week transit delays to four-day delivery cycles, the Port of Mombasa's four-decade journey represents one of Africa's most significant logistics transformations. It is a story of infrastructure expansion, institutional coordination, technological adoption and multimodal integration. For Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and South Sudan, Mombasa has evolved from a slow and congested gateway into a reliable, high-capacity trade backbone. The transition from weeks to days is not merely an operational improvement; it is a structural economic shift that has strengthened regional integration and positioned the Northern Corridor as a competitive and strategic trade artery for Eastern and Central Africa.



GREENING THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR: LESSONS FROM A CONTINENTAL FIRST

Scaling Sustainable Freight for Competitiveness, Climate and Clean Air



The Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030 aims to transform East Africa's busiest trade route into a sustainable, competitive corridor.

Over the past decade, the Northern Corridor has evolved from a conventional trade artery into Africa's most advanced laboratory for corridor-wide green freight reform. Stretching approximately 1,700 kilometres and forming part of Trans-African Highway 8 (Mombasa–Lagos), the Corridor handled about 41 million tonnes of cargo in 2024, up from 24.9 million tonnes in 2014, a 65% growth over ten years. Road freight accounts for over 85% of cargo movement, making it the dominant mode and the principal source of freight-related emissions.

The 2024/2025 corridor-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) baseline confirms that road freight generates approximately 3.98 million tonnes of CO₂ - equivalent emissions annually across key Northern Corridor routes. In addition, total pollutant emissions amount to roughly 20,458 tonnes per year, with nitrogen oxides (NO_x) accounting for more than 94%, while PM₁₀ represents about 5% and black carbon about 1%. These figures underscore the dual climate and public health imperative driving reform.

Recognising that freight efficiency, air quality, climate mitigation and economic competitiveness are inseparable, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA), in partnership with UNEP, CCAC, Smart Freight Centre and other technical partners, developed the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030: Africa's first corridor-wide decarbonisation framework.

From Programme to Strategy: A Structured Evolution

The green freight journey began with the Green Freight Programme (2017–2021), which introduced emissions baselining, eco-driving initiatives and initial awareness-building. While early results were promising, a comprehensive review identified structural constraints: fragmented institutional mandates, inconsistent freight data, ageing truck fleets (median ages ranging from 6–7 years in some countries to up to 16 years in others), variable fuel standards, and persistent logistics inefficiencies.

In response, the Green Freight Strategy 2030, formally endorsed by the Council of Ministers in June 2024, shifted from isolated pilots to a structured, corridor-wide green freight framework. It introduced:

- A quantified target of at least 10% reduction in CO intensity per ton-kilometre by 2030
- A 12% reduction in key pollutants (NO_x, PM, black carbon)
- A net-zero corridor target by 2050.
- Harmonised fuel and vehicle standards (Euro IV-equivalent and 10 ppm sulphur diesel)
- Integration of climate resilience and multimodal solutions (rail and inland waterways)
- Establishment of a Green Freight Transport Network (GFTN)

This marked a decisive shift from programme-based experimentation to institutionalised corridor governance anchored in emissions accounting and regulatory convergence.

GREEN FREIGHT

The Emissions Tracker: Making Climate Action Measurable

A breakthrough innovation under the Strategy is the operationalisation of the Northern Corridor Emissions Tracker, built on the Northern Corridor Emissions Model (NCEM) and structured around the internationally recognised ASIF framework (Activity–Structure–Intensity–Fuel).Integrated into the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, the Tracker links emissions metrics with over 40 operational KPIs, enabling policymakers to analyse freight efficiency and climate impact simultaneously

.Another critical structural insight is that only about 55% of sampled trucks are loaded, meaning roughly 45% of truck-kilometres are run empty. This highlights logistics optimisation and backhaul coordination as low-cost, high-impact climate measures.

Why Green Freight Is a Competitiveness Reform

The Strategy reframes green freight as an economic reform rather than an environmental add-on. Corridor inefficiencies; delays at borders, weighbridges, and ports, increase fuel use and emissions per ton-kilometre. Streamlining procedures through One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs), digital clearance systems, and reduced roadblocks directly lowers both emissions and trade costs.

Moreover, climate-related infrastructure disruptions, including flooding and extreme weather, already cause tens of millions of dollars in annual losses along the Corridor. Investing in climate-resilient infrastructure and upgrading approximately 2,000 km of vulnerable road segments is therefore both a mitigation and adaptation priority.

Ten Strategic Lessons for Africa

The Northern Corridor experience offers powerful policy insights for continental replication:

- Phased, problem-driven strategies outperform static master plans.
- Corridor-wide harmonisation prevents regulatory leakage.
- Strong regional corridor institutions are indispensable.
- Simple emissions tools reshape policy dialogue.
- Trade facilitation and climate mitigation are mutually reinforcing.
- Air-quality and climate goals must be integrated.
- Financing must reflect SME operator realities.
- Environmental objectives should be embedded in corridor mandates.
- Continuous data monitoring enables adaptive management.
- Replication requires adaptation to local institutional contexts.

2026–2030 Priorities: Turning Strategy into Impact

The next phase focuses on five pillars:

- **Consolidating Monitoring Systems:** Full operationalisation of the Emissions Tracker across all six Member States.
- **Scaling No-Regret Measures:** Training at least 1,000 drivers in

eco-driving and fleet efficiency practices, with potential certification integration.

- **Harmonising Fuel and Vehicle Standards:** Advancing 10 ppm sulphur diesel and Euro IV–equivalent requirements through synchronised enforcement.
- **Promoting Multimodal Shift and Climate-Resilient Infrastructure:** Prioritising rail revival, inland waterways, logistics hubs, and resilience upgrades on high-emission segments.
- **Institutionalising the Green Freight Transport Network (GFTN)**
Strengthening public–private collaboration and mobilising green finance facilities.

A Model for Continental Replication

Nearly forty years after its establishment, NCTTCA has once again redefined the Corridor's strategic purpose. The Northern Corridor is no longer merely a conduit for moving goods; it is a governance platform for aligning climate action, trade efficiency, air quality and regional integration.

With 3.98 million tonnes of MtCO₂e now quantified, hotspot routes clearly identified, pollutant profiles mapped, and harmonised standards advancing green freight on the Northern Corridor has shifted from ambition to measurable implementation.

As global carbon regulations tighten and climate risks intensify, the Corridor's experience demonstrates a decisive principle:

Green freight is not optional; it is the foundation of resilient, competitive and integrated regional trade.

						
	Burundi	DRC	Kenya	Rwanda	South Sudan	Uganda
 CO₂ Emissions 3.96 MMtCO ₂ e	0.062 MMtCO ₂ e (2%)	0.04 MMtCO ₂ e (1%)	2.59 MMtCO ₂ e (65%)	0.34 MMtCO ₂ e (9%)	0.099 MMtCO ₂ e (3%)	0.83 MMtCO ₂ e (21%)
 Air Pollutants NO _x Is >94% (Total: 20,298 tonnes/year)	211.7 tonnes/year	92 tonnes/year	15,271.5 tonnes/year	786.6 tonnes/year	426.2 tonnes/year	3,682.2 tonnes/year
 Traffic Volume 29,172 Vehicles/day	924 vehicles/day (3%)	570 vehicles/day (2%)	15,583 vehicles/day (53%)	3,764 vehicles/day (13%)	888 vehicles/day (3%)	7,443 vehicles/day (26%)
 Key Emission Routes	Gitega–Gatumba (66%); Namba–Bujumbura (34%)	Bunia–Kisangani (39%); Goli–Bunia (27%)	Mombasa–Nairobi (61%) and Nairobi–Malaba (36%)	Kigali–Rusizi (84%)	Nimule–Juba (Only reported route)	Malaba/Busia–Kampala (42%); Busia/Malaba–Elegu (31%)
 Heavy Commercial Vehicles HCV-5&6 Axle (~59%); LDT/2-Axle 29% of total traffic	Mixed (LDT 35%, MCV 25%, HCV 34%)	HCV dominant (~73%)	HCV-5&6 Axle 65% of truck traffic	Light-Duty Trucks (LDT/2-Axle) 47%; HCV-5&6 Axle 23% of truck traffic	HCV-5&6 Axle 73% of truck traffic	HCV-5&6 Axle 64% of truck traffic
 Emission Reduction Targets	20% (conditional) by 2030	19% (conditional) by 2030	32% reduction by 2030	38% reduction by 2030	44% reduction by 2030	29% reduction by 2030

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: NCTTCA'S KEY ADVISORY ORGAN

The NCTTCA Executive Committee is an inter-governmental body of Permanent Secretaries responsible for transport matters in member states. This committee serves as the key advisory and policy-initiating organ between the Council of Ministers and the Secretariat.

The meetings are key policy-level gatherings for the authority, which was ratified in 1986 to monitor transit and transport along the corridor. It directs the strategic, operational, and financial activities of the Northern Corridor.

Key roles of the NCTTCA Executive Committee include: The Executive Committee establishes general principles and policies governing the Secretariat, subject to ratification by the Council of Ministers, and ensures the implementation of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement.

The committee's key roles include approving annual budgets, work plans, and strategies for projects such as the Regional Logistics Hub and infrastructure developments, as well as directing the Secretariat on specialized issues such as inland waterways, import-export imbalance studies, and infrastructure development.

This committee is also charged with reviewing and approving terms of service, staff recruitment recommendations, and financial regulations submitted by the Secretariat. It reviews recommendations from Specialized Committees (e.g., customs, transport planning) to facilitate efficient transport and logistics along the corridor.

According to the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement, the Executive Committee holds meetings twice a year. At least one of these meetings is conducted immediately before the annual meeting of the Council of Ministers to ensure strategic alignment and follow-up on corridor activities.

In April 2026, NCTTCA convened its 60th Executive Committee Meeting in Mombasa, Kenya. The Mombasa meeting was attended by leadership from Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda to discuss regional infrastructure and transport. It focused on strengthening regional integration, accelerating trade facilitation, and advancing infrastructure projects.

Key resolutions included strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), optimizing transport logistics, digitizing customs procedures, and implementing measures to improve corridor performance, covering roads, rail, and port operations.



Members of the Executive Committee pose for a commemorative photo during the 61st NCTTCA Executive Committee Meeting, reaffirming their commitment to enhancing transport and trade along the Northern Corridor. / Nairobi, June 2026

The committee evaluated infrastructure developments and pushed for enhanced management of corridor projects. Key focus areas included boosting port efficiency through new terminal operating systems and accelerating the implementation of axle load controls across the region.

Dr. John Deng Diar-manyok, the NCTTCA Executive Committee, emphasized the need to focus on integrating health into transport systems, enhancing border fluidity, and optimizing cargo flows. He highlighted a 10.87% growth in Mombasa port throughput (to over 45M metric tonnes) and an 18.49% increase in transit volumes for 2025.

The meeting emphasized accelerating the Single Customs Territory initiative and implementing Regional Electronic Cargo and Driver Tracking Systems (RECDTS). Resolutions aimed to reduce cargo dwell time at the Inland Container Depot (ICDN) and speed up border processes.

The Executive Committee (EC) recommended engaging the private sector to promote investments in Roadside Stations along the Corridor. Member States were urged to boost coordination, harmonize transit documents, and recognize transport-related certificates for smoother trade.

Planning to Publish Magazines, Newsletters, Brochures, Guides, Handbooks, Catalogues and other Marketing Materials in Print and Digital formats?

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The Nairobi Inland Container Depot is a major logistics hub designed to facilitate cargo clearance closer to importers.

TRANSPORT OBSERVATORY STIRS NORTHERN CORRIDOR INTO PEAK PERFORMANCE

The Northern Corridor Transport Observatory is one of the most significant institutional innovations in the evolution of the Northern Corridor. Established under the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority, the Observatory was conceived as a practical response to a long standing challenge in regional trade facilitation: the absence of reliable, harmonized, and comparable data across Member States. While infrastructure investments were expanding and policy reforms were underway, there was limited capacity to objectively measure whether these interventions were translating into improved performance. The Observatory emerged as the answer, designed as a structured performance monitoring and reporting system to track how the corridor functions in real time and over the long term.

In its early years, corridor performance assessment relied largely on ad hoc surveys and periodic stakeholder consultations. However, as trade volumes grew and regional integration deepened, it became clear that a more systematic and technology driven approach was required. With support from development partners, particularly Trademark Africa, the Transport Observatory Project was formalized and gradually digitized. It evolved from a reporting framework into a dynamic online platform accessible through a public portal. This marked a turning point. Performance monitoring was no longer an internal administrative function but a transparent regional public good.

Today, the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory tracks close to forty key performance indicators organized across major thematic areas including quality of infrastructure, volume and capacity, efficiency and productivity, rates and costs, transit time and delays, intraregional trade, road safety, and greenhouse gas emissions. Data is drawn from multiple sources such as revenue authorities, port systems, weighbridges, railway operators, pipeline companies, transport associations, and national statistical agencies. The information is processed, validated, and presented through digital dashboards, interactive geographic mapping tools, analytical reports, and time series trend analysis. This architecture has transformed the corridor into one of the most data monitored trade routes on the African continent.

One of the most visible impacts of the Observatory has been in reducing transit times. By consistently measuring the time taken for cargo to move from the Port of Mombasa to key destinations such as Kampala, Kigali, Juba, and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Observatory has made inefficiencies impossible to ignore. Its findings have informed the rollout of the Single Customs Territory, the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System, and the operationalization of One Stop Border Posts at crossings such as Malaba, Busia, Katuna, and Nimule. Evidence generated by the Observatory has demonstrated that harmonized customs procedures and coordinated border management significantly shorten clearance times and reduce logistics costs. The steady improvement in journey times over recent reporting cycles reflects the power of data driven reform.

The Observatory has also played a central role in infrastructure planning. By identifying high delay segments, frequent driver stop locations, weighbridge bottlenecks, and sections with deteriorating road conditions, it has guided targeted public investment.

NORTHERN CORRIDOR TRANSPORT OBSERVATORY

Governments and development partners have prioritized road dualling projects, weigh in motion systems, border post upgrades, and port modernization partly on the basis of Observatory evidence. The installation of high speed weigh in motion systems in Kenya and the strengthening of static weighbridges in Uganda illustrate how monitoring has translated into enforcement and asset protection improvements.

Beyond physical performance, the Observatory has expanded into new frontiers aligned with global and regional priorities. Climate change mitigation has become a core pillar. Through collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, the Northern Corridor has integrated greenhouse gas monitoring into the Observatory framework. Emissions from freight transport in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda are now tracked, establishing baselines for decarbonization under the Green Freight Strategy 2030. The introduction of a Northern Corridor Emissions Tracker integrated within the Observatory represents a significant innovation, linking trade performance with environmental accountability. Training programs in eco driving and fuel efficiency further demonstrate how data is being used not only to measure emissions but to actively reduce them.

Digital integration with customs administrations marks another milestone in the Observatory's evolution. Application programming

interface connectivity with revenue authorities such as the Kenya Revenue Authority and the Rwanda Revenue Authority has enabled automated data sharing. This reduces manual reporting errors, enhances transparency, and supports near real time analytics. Uganda and other Member States are advancing similar integration. The result is a corridor where performance monitoring is increasingly automated and embedded within operational systems rather than dependent solely on periodic surveys.

The Observatory's influence extends to trade policy and private sector engagement. Its regular reports provide comparative benchmarking among Member States, encouraging healthy competition and peer accountability. Findings on non-tariff barriers, trade imbalances, empty container repositioning, and informal cross border trade have informed regional dialogue under the East African Community and African Continental Free Trade Area frameworks. By making performance data publicly accessible, the Observatory empowers transporters, freight forwarders, traders, and investors with actionable intelligence.

Social dimensions have also gained prominence. Road safety indicators, driver stop patterns, and compliance levels at weighbridges are now systematically tracked. These metrics inform safety campaigns and regulatory enforcement strategies. The integration of emissions and safety data underscores a shift from viewing the corridor purely as a

logistics channel to recognizing it as a human and environmental ecosystem.

As it enters its third decade, the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory stands as a continental benchmark for corridor performance management. It has shifted the governance paradigm from reactive problem solving to proactive performance optimization. Its impact is visible in shorter transit times, more efficient border operations, better infrastructure targeting, enhanced transparency, and growing environmental responsibility. Challenges remain, including uneven data availability in some Member States, infrastructure maintenance gaps, and persistent non-tariff barriers. However, the institutional culture of measurement and accountability is now firmly established.

The Observatory has transformed the Northern Corridor from a physical transport route into a digital performance corridor. It demonstrates how infrastructure, policy reform, technology, and regional cooperation can converge to drive trade competitiveness. By grounding decision making in evidence and ensuring that data is publicly accessible, the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory has stirred the corridor toward peak performance and positioned it as a model for smart corridor management across Africa.



The Gatuna Border Post



Uganda, Entebbe Expressway



The Naivasha Inland Container Depot (ICD), commissioned in 2020 and linked to the Port of Mombasa via SGR/MGR rail lines, serves as a key transit node for Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, and DRC. It boosts cargo throughput by over 2 million tonnes annually and eases Mombasa port congestion.

INLAND CONTAINER DEPOTS IMPROVE TRANSIT SPEED FOR HINTERLAND COUNTRIES

Inland Container Depots (ICDs), also known as dry ports, play a crucial role along the Northern Corridor as inland logistics hubs that act as an extension of seaports.

The ICDs bring customs clearance, storage, and container handling closer to shippers in the hinterland. These dry ports streamline supply chains by reducing port congestion, lowering inland transport costs, and accelerating cargo movement via rail or road.

According to Transport Observatory reports, the growth in volumes of freight cargo on the Northern Corridor and the development of the Standard Gauge Railway have made the importance of ICDs more pronounced, prompting governments of the Member States to invest resources in ICDs.

The report further states that the fast growth of trade in containerized cargo has also driven the demand for Dry Ports to help decongest the port of Mombasa which is a major logistics gateway to the landlocked countries of Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda.

There are a total of seven ICDs along the Northern Corridor. In Kenya, the ICDs are managed by the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) and are located in Nairobi, Naivasha, Kisumu, and Eldoret.

Rwanda has two – Magerwa and Kigali Logistics Platform, while Uganda has one, the Multiple ICD based in Tororo. These depots are linked to the Mombasa Port container terminal by rail connections and services.

They are also accessible through the pipeline and roads, allowing trucks to continue delivering large numbers of containers. Imports are delivered directly from Mombasa to the depots “Through Bill of Lading”, while exports can also be consolidated at the ICDs and sent by rail to the Port for shipping.

The depots have transit sheds and stacking grounds equipped with various types of cargo handling equipment like forklifts, trucks, front loaders, tractors, trailers, reach stackers, and crane among others.

The Nairobi ICD is the largest and is located within a fenced area of 18.7 ha at Embakasi. It has a capacity of 450,000 TEU per annum. Due to its geographic position, the Nairobi ICD is best positioned to serve local traffic. It does, however, serve as a transit point for traffic to Kisumu.

Following the commencement of SGR operations, the cargo handled by the ICD increased from an average of 30 TEU's per day to 800 TEUs per day in the last quarter of 2019.

On average, Nairobi ICD receives 7 trains per day carrying an average of 106 TEU's of imports from Mombasa, according to Kenya Ports Authority social media handles in April 2022.

Downstream, the ICD handles 4 – 5 trains daily. The ICD is also a major handler of outbound cargo and empty containers. Reports show that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the wagons on the train are railed back to Mombasa without cargo.

Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) annual bulletin for 2025 on the inland facilities states that the Nairobi Inland Container Depot (ICD) handled 291,858 tonnes of cargo during that period. The ICD, however, has a designed annual capacity of 450,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units).

The throughput in 2025 was largely focused on containerized cargo transported via the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) from the Port of Mombasa, which recorded a record 45.45 million metric tons in total throughput in 2025.

The inland waterway port of Kisumu (often referred to alongside Kisumu ICD operations) experienced significant growth in 2025, processing 496,516 metric tons of cargo, as reported in early 2026. This represents a 55.0 percent increase (or 163,085 metric tons) compared to the 295,516 metric tons handled the previous year.

The Kisumu ICD is designed for a capacity of 15,000 TEU per annum. Plans are underway to transform the Kisumu Dry Port into a transshipment point between the Port of Mombasa and the western region of Kenya, as well as other Northern Corridor Member States of Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi.

According to the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) performance reports for 2025, the Eldoret Inland Container Depot (ICD) is part of a revitalized network designed to handle transit cargo and relieve pressure on the Port of Mombasa, but specific 2025 numerical throughput for the Eldoret facility alone was not detailed in the provided 2025 performance outlook.

The Eldoret ICD, which was established in 1994 to primarily target the landlocked countries of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi.

However, the Dry Port facility is currently not in use as a result of reduced functionality of the Metre Gauge Rail.

The Naivasha ICD is located at Suswa near the SGR railway terminus.

The 45,000-square-meter Naivasha Inland Container Depot (ICD) is linked by a 2.6-kilometer connection road to the Mai Mahiu-Narok road and will essentially serve cargo going west of Nairobi.

As of early 2026, the Naivasha Inland Container Depot (ICD) was operating at only 19% of its 4,000 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) capacity. While 2025 cargo data highlights a record 45.45 million metric tonnes at the Port of Mombasa, the Naivasha ICD was being re-prioritized for regional transit cargo to reduce congestion.

The Naivasha ICD is expected to benefit from being linked to the standard gauge railway (SGR) line from Nairobi.

The Naivasha facility provides storage of cargo, especially those destined for Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

From the ICD, the cargo will be ferried to Western Kenya and the neighbouring countries by road. The Kenyan government has plans to revamp the old Meter Gauge Railway (MGR) line and link it to the SGR track in Naivasha. Other towns earmarked for the development of Dry Ports are Malaba, Taveta, and Voi.

The ICDs are expected to handle transit cargo that passes through the port of Mombasa to landlocked countries of Burundi and Rwanda, and the DRC.

Container freight stations (CFS), are used for temporary storage of goods in transit and as collection centers for empty containers pending repatriation.



Magasins généraux du Rwanda (MAGERWA) s.a.s is Rwanda's primary Inland Container Depot (ICD) and national bond located in Kigali, established in 1969. It serves as a crucial logistics hub for clearing imports and exports, providing cargo handling, storage, and customs services.

CFSs are sometimes known as inland ports, as they receive import and export goods on behalf of KPA on contract from the latter. They therefore act as a link for intermodal transport exchange along the Northern Corridor.

Uganda

Uganda utilizes inland container depots (ICDs) located in Kenya, specifically in Nairobi and Naivasha, which are operated by the Kenya Ports Authority to handle transit cargo.

While Naivasha ICD serves as a primary hub for Uganda and other neighboring countries, there is no official, publicly cited count of dedicated, separate ICDs located within Ugandan borders in the provided search results.

The Kenyan government, according to media reports, has reserved 50 acres h at the Naivasha ICD for Uganda to develop its own freight stations.

Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) has explored developing ICDs or container terminals in the border areas of Malaba and Tororo to act as inland cargo hubs.

Recently, specialized firms have been licensed to operate bonded warehouses and container depots at the Malaba border to facilitate faster verification and bonding of cargo.

The \$180 million, multi-phase Bukasa Inland Port project in Uganda, designed to handle up to 7.5 million tons of cargo annually by 2030, is nearing completion of its initial phases (master planning and site preparation), with Gauff Engineering overseeing the development.

ICDs

The port is designed to create a trimodal transport network—integrating water, rail, and road—to connect Uganda via Lake Victoria to the Central Corridor, providing an alternative to the Northern Corridor.

The project works in conjunction with the Tanzanian Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) from Dar es Salaam, lake transport across Lake Victoria, and connecting Ugandan rail/road networks to lower freight costs and increased efficiency.

The development aligns with Uganda's strategy to enhance regional trade competitiveness by establishing a fast, reliable, and cost-effective transport link to the ocean, complementing existing Ugandan inland container depots, such as the Inland Container Depot Nairobi (ICDN), which the country already supports.

Rwanda

Rwanda basically operates two main Inland Container Depots (ICDs) or dry ports, which are critical to its logistics and import/export operations. These are the Kigali Logistics Platform (Masaka), which is operated by DP World. This is a modern facility that acts as a major hub for cargo transit, offering container handling, storage, and customs services.

The second one is the MAGERWA Inland Depot (Gikondo) established in 1969, this is Rwanda's oldest and central custom bonded warehouse located in Kigali. Kigali Logistics Platform connects Rwanda to neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

The facility accesses the port of Mombasa in Kenya and Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, securing two trade gateways to the sea. It is a high-tech operation that offers real-time cargo tracking to customers; users are able to track their goods through mobile and online apps.

It is a 24-hour monitored inland cargo terminal operated by Dubai Ports World (DPW) group, a Dubai based global port operator. The facility provides services in container handling, loading and unloading from trucks, warehousing, and cold storage.

It is envisaged that the facility will help decongest MAGERWA, Rwanda's main inland cargo handling facility located in Kigali, which handles the majority of Rwanda's imports and exports. The facility has been operational since September 2018 in test mode and has an annual capacity of 50,000 TEUs.

When operating at full capacity, it has the potential to save Rwandan businesses up to \$50 million a year in logistics costs. Since the commencement of its operations in the Rwandan capital last year, the Kigali Logistics Platform has reduced truck-turnaround time which used to be an average of 10-14 days to just 3 days.

The Platform has already contributed to socio-economic progress through the creation of 667 direct and indirect jobs, with 98% local employment.

Burundi

There is at least one primary Inland Container Depot (ICD) / dry port operating in Burundi, located in the capital, Bujumbura. This facility is used for managing containerized cargo, contract logistics, and customs clearance for goods arriving via regional ports. There are inland container depots (ICDs) and dry port facilities in Burundi, primarily located in Bujumbura, to handle cargo from regional transit corridors. Africa Global Logistics operates a dry port in Burundi.

The Port of Bujumbura on Lake Tanganyika handles significant container traffic. Africa Global Logistics (AGL) ICD/ECD, located in Bujumbura, offers warehousing and container management; Global Port Services Burundi (GPSB) manages the main port, which includes a container terminal, while the Mediterranean Shipping Company MSC operates a container depot in Burundi for empty container drop-off and export cargo.

DRC

Because of its land-linked nature in many areas, the DRC relies on external ICDs, such as those along the Northern Corridor (like Naivasha in Kenya) and inland facilities in neighboring countries (like Tanzania/Rwanda) to manage its import/export container traffic.

Based on the Northern Corridor transport network, inland container depots (ICDs) that serve the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are primarily located in neighboring Kenya and Uganda rather than within the DRC itself.

The Northern Corridor road network covers approximately 4,162 km of the DRC, specifically in the eastern regions of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika.

South Sudan

South Sudan is currently developing inland container depots (ICDs) and dry ports to improve logistics, with key locations planned at Nesitu, Kaya, Nimule, and Nadapal. While internal infrastructure is emerging, South Sudan largely relies on regional ICDs—particularly the Naivasha Inland Container Depot in Kenya—for cargo clearance.

South Sudan is actively developing dry ports and empty container depots to reduce reliance on foreign transit points and improve logistics efficiency. Specific sites for these depots include Nesitu, Kaya, Nimule, and Nadapal. South Sudan has secured 10 hectares of land in Naivasha, Kenya, for a dedicated dry port to ease congestion at the Mombasa port.



The Nairobi Inland Container Depot (ICD), managed by the Kenya Ports Authority, serves to decongest the Port of Mombasa, handling containerized and loose cargo, with a capacity of 450,000 TEUs and 14-day free cargo retention.



HOW COVID - 19 BECAME NORTHERN CORRIDOR'S MAJOR GAME-CHANGER

Hon. Adan Mohammed, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of EAC and Regional Development and the Chairman of the Northern Corridor Council of Ministers, is captured here putting on his face mask at the Miritini COVID-19 Testing Centre in Mombasa on 3rd July 2020.

The event was attended by the then Northern Corridor Executive Secretary CPA Omae Nyarandi (far right), Dr. Margaret W. Mwakima, Principal Secretary Regional Development and Northern Corridor Development and the then Chairperson of the Northern Corridor Executive Committee and various Northern Corridor stakeholders, including the Mombasa County Government officials, Kenya Ports Authority as well as representatives of transporters and long distance truck drivers.

The Northern Corridor Transit Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) was established in 1985 to address significant inefficiencies, high costs, and physical and non-physical barriers to the movement of goods and people along the Northern Corridor.

On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) a pandemic as the disease continued to spread worldwide and across the Northern Corridor region. The pandemic had a devastating effect on people worldwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a major game-changer for the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) by accelerating the adoption of digital solutions and new protocols to ensure the continuity and efficiency of trade and logistics in the East African region.

Prior to the pandemic, efforts were underway to digitize trade processes, but COVID-19 created an urgent need that accelerated their implementation. The NCTTCA's long-standing experience in coordinating regional trade provided a foundation for settling on a "new normal" in logistics operations.

The financial impact of COVID-19 on the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) stemmed primarily from disruptions to trade and transport operations, leading to declines in cargo volumes and increased costs for its stakeholders.

The Port of Mombasa, the main gateway for the corridor, experienced a 5% decline in total throughput during the first half of 2020 compared to 2019. Total cargo volume for the entire year 2020 declined slightly to 34.12 million metric tonnes from 34.44 million metric tonnes in 2019.

Containerized traffic specifically decreased by 4% in 2020 compared to the previous year, as some shipping lines cancelled schedules due to the pandemic's uncertainty. There were increased operating costs and delays. The Country-specific containment measures (lockdowns, curfews, mandatory testing, border closures) led to significant operational challenges.

The truck drivers and businesses faced substantial financial pressure from increased fuel expenses, longer turnaround times (delays at border posts could last days or weeks, and additional costs for truck and cargo security. Transit times from Mombasa to destinations like Malaba and Busia rose dramatically in September 2020 compared to January 2020.

COVID-19 also affected informal trade, as the pandemic had a particularly hard-hitting financial impact on small-scale and informal cross-border traders, many of whom are women. Movement restrictions resulted in significant revenue losses and increased financial stress, often leading to debt spirals as traders could not access markets to sell their goods.

The general stifling of domestic and intra-regional trade led to reduced export earnings and lower revenue collection from trade activities across the NCTTCA's member countries. The NCTTCA's primary role as a coordinating body meant its financial impact was tied to the overall performance of the trade corridor and the economic health of its members and the private sector operating within it, which suffered

significant disruption and financial strain. In response, the NCTTCA worked to develop harmonized guidelines and promote the use of digital tools for trade facilitation to build resilience against future disruptions. More information is available on the NCTTCA website.

The NCTTCA's 35th year of existence thus experienced a major game-changer as the region settled on 'new normal.'

This caused NCTTCA to face significant challenges, including disruptions to regional supply chains, primarily due to increased transit times, the imposition of non-tariff barriers by member states, and a decline in cargo throughput.

The NCTTCA Secretariat had to implement the COVID-19 Mass Driver Testing and Clearance initiative to expedite border crossings and minimize delays in cargo movement during the pandemic.

The assessment of the COVID-19 impact on transit transport in the Northern Corridor Region, made by the Northern Corridor Secretariat using key indicators from the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, revealed that the response by regional Governments and Organizations to the COVID-19 pandemic affected the transport sector and the supply chain. These responses and restrictions were meant to "flatten the curve" by reducing or slowing down the escalating infection and mortality rates in our region.

The pandemic forced Governments to respond with travel restrictions and bans to minimize the spread of the disease across countries. They have also enacted domestic measures such as social distancing, mandatory curfews, and lockdowns.

According to the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, the port dwell time was not adversely affected by the pandemic, though a slight increase in cargo dwell time has been observed compared to 2019. The Mombasa Port, as an essential service provider, operated 24/7 throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity.

The resilience of the regional institutions and structures that have been put in place over the years to enhance efficiency and the seamless flow of cargo along the transport corridors has been tested as the movement of all goods to various destinations became essential in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.

The Authority played a pivotal role during the pandemic, as efforts were made to help industry players circumvent the stringent measures on cargo movement imposed by Member States to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Initially, it was very challenging to maintain the optimal flow of goods and services as everyone in the world sought to understand the new disease. However, it never took long to marshal enough support from key industry players to strategize on a new normal that has guided the evolution of a new supply chain.

To address challenges in supplying vital materials needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and help regional economies remain afloat, the Northern Corridor Secretariat established a regional platform for virtual meetings to connect all Northern Corridor Stakeholders.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a major game-changer for the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) by accelerating the adoption of digital solutions and new protocols to ensure the continuity and efficiency of trade and logistics in the East African region.

The weekly meeting mainly focused on what was happening in real time across the Member States, and at the transit/transport node along the Corridor – Port, Weighbridges, Border Posts, Inland Container Depots (ICDs), and Transit Parking Yards in particular.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat also successfully held all its planned Technical and Policy Organs Meetings. The 32nd Meeting of the Northern Corridor Council of Ministers and the 49th Meeting of the Executive Committee were both held virtually during the pandemic.

The period also witnessed a joint Specialized Technical Committee meeting and the validation of the 15th Issue of the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory held online. Recently, the Revised Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement was discussed in an extraordinary Executive Committee Meeting held virtually.

"We have leveraged the IT to run all our activities. This has been a vital lesson that organizations can cost-effectively and efficiently carry out online as opposed to some of the activities that previously needed a lot of physical planning," said Mr. Omae Nyarandi, the then Executive Secretary of NCTTCA. He added that this included very basic things, such as creating a 24/7 WhatsApp Group for quick operational interventions, including with the truck drivers.

The East African Community (EAC), working with the Northern & Central Corridors, deployed a surveillance tracker to help address the pandemic. The initiative will provide a platform for real-time exchange of information on tests taken by drivers and crew, and on the transit movements of drivers and trucks. It also supported the tracking and tracing of drivers and their contacts.

As a multimodal surface transport system linking the Great Lakes countries of Burundi, DR. Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda to Kenya's seaport of Mombasa, the Northern Corridor has played a crucial role in the entire region over the years.

NORTHERN CORRIDOR SETS UP JOINT BORDER COMMITTEES

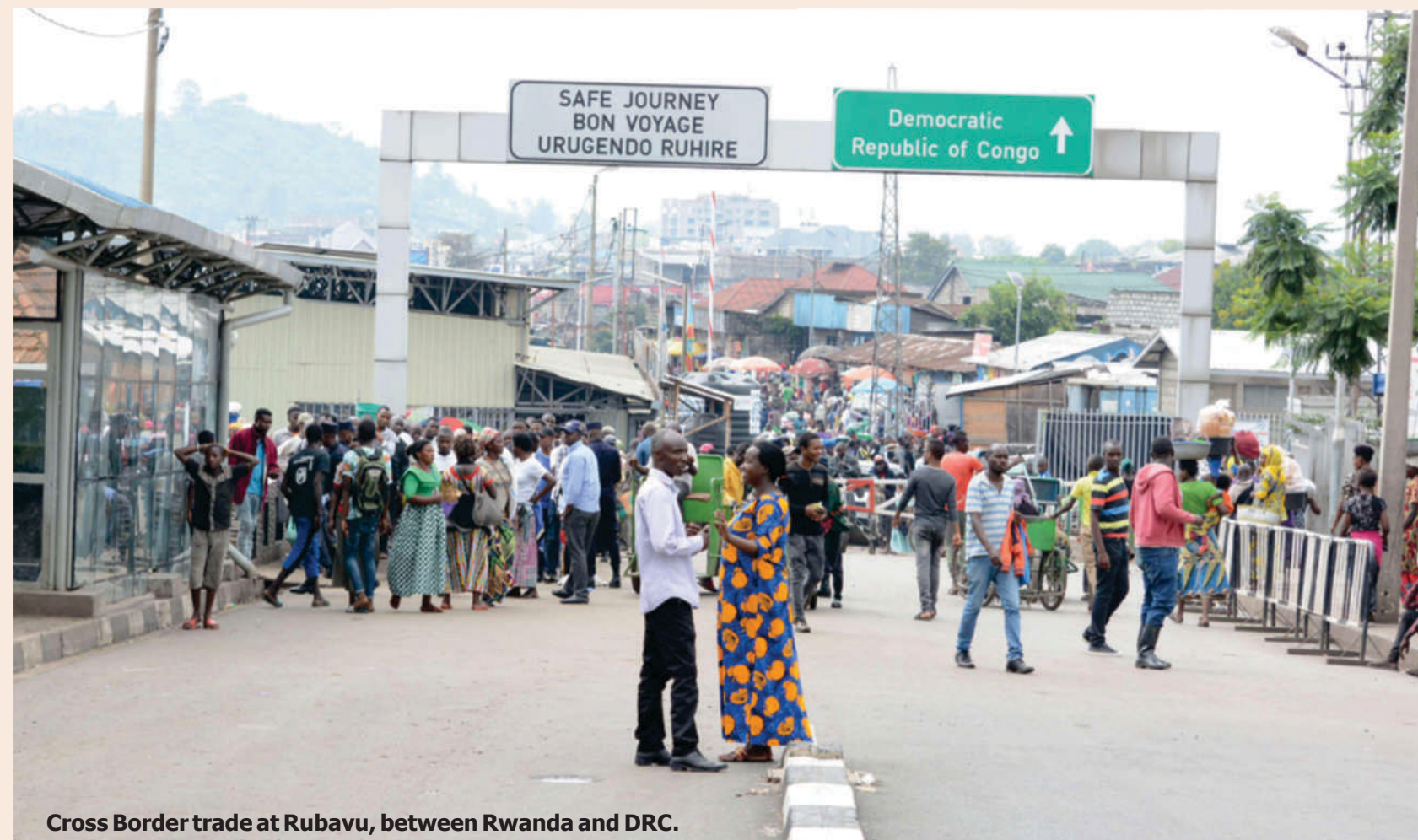
Institutionalising Coordination for Faster, Safer and More Predictable Borders

Efficient borders are the lifeblood of any transit corridor. For the Northern Corridor linking the Port of Mombasa to the landlocked economies of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, border performance directly determines trade costs, transit reliability and regional competitiveness. Recognising that infrastructure investments alone could not resolve persistent procedural bottlenecks, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) took a decisive institutional step: the formal establishment of Joint Border Committees (JBCs) to strengthen coordination and accountability at border crossings.

The foundation for Joint Border Committees was laid in 2012 during the 36th Meeting of the Executive Committee, when Member States agreed that structured coordination mechanisms were necessary at border posts across the Corridor. At the time, border management systems operated largely in isolation, with overlapping procedures, inconsistent enforcement and weak inter-agency communication driving up clearance times and increasing the cost of doing business.

In December 2013, the NCTTCA Council of Ministers formally resolved to assist Member States in forming and strengthening Joint Border Committees. This marked a shift from ad hoc coordination to a structured and institutionalised model of border governance. Shared policy guidelines were subsequently approved by the Council, providing a harmonised framework for implementation across all six Member States. The NCTTCA Secretariat then worked closely with national authorities to operationalise these committees at key border points along the Corridor.

Under the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement of 2007, seamless transit operations are a central objective. However, duplication of documentation, inconsistent inspections, infrastructure constraints and limited public-private dialogue continued to undermine efficiency.



Cross Border trade at Rubavu, between Rwanda and DRC.

Joint Border Committees were therefore designed as formal coordination platforms bringing together customs authorities, immigration services, police and security agencies, standards and regulatory bodies, revenue authorities, and private sector representatives including transporters and trade associations. By convening these stakeholders regularly, JBCs aim to expedite cross-border trade, identify and eliminate non-tariff barriers, improve inter-agency communication, enhance transparency and accountability, and strengthen security and compliance. In essence, the committees institutionalise operational dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, ensuring that inefficiencies are addressed proactively rather than reactively.

On 12 February 2022, NCTTCA introduced new Common Policy Guidelines to further harmonise border management across Member States. These guidelines strengthened the JBC framework by standardising governance structures, clarifying reporting requirements and embedding performance monitoring mechanisms. The policy

recognises that effective border management extends beyond trade facilitation to encompass national and regional security, public health protection, prevention of illegal trade and smuggling, control of trafficking in endangered species, and curbing counterfeit goods. By aligning trade facilitation with regulatory enforcement and security objectives, the framework ensures that border reforms safeguard both economic and national interests.

Each Joint Border Committee operates under clearly defined institutional arrangements. The committee is chaired by the head of the lead border agency, with a vice-chairperson drawn from the private sector to ensure balanced representation of public and commercial interests. A coordinator and a dedicated secretariat support its operations. Membership includes heads of border agencies and representatives from major trade associations and cross-border business organisations.

PERFORMANCE

Appointments are valid for two years and may be renewed upon recommendation from parent institutions, while private sector representatives are required to represent broad stakeholder interests rather than individual companies. JBCs convene monthly, with at least seven days' notice issued before meetings. Decisions are reached by consensus to promote cooperation and shared ownership, and unresolved issues may be escalated to relevant ministries or national trade coordination committees.

To address specific operational challenges, ad hoc Working Groups may be established to focus on technical areas such as ICT integration, customs modernisation, infrastructure planning or traffic flow management. These working groups report back to the main committee upon completing their assignments. Each JBC secretariat is responsible for preparing meeting documentation, monitoring implementation of resolutions, maintaining records and submitting performance reports to national oversight bodies. This structure ensures that discussions at the border translate into concrete, accountable national action.

The development of the JBC model drew heavily from Kenya's experience in piloting institutionalised border committees with support from USAID-COMPETE. Border stations at Busia, Malaba and Namanga demonstrated how structured coordination could significantly improve operational efficiency and reduce clearance times. These pilots provided practical proof that when border agencies and private stakeholders meet regularly, share information and jointly diagnose bottlenecks, measurable improvements follow. Building on this experience, the NCTTCA Secretariat supported Member States in replicating and formalising the model across all Northern Corridor borders.

A defining feature of the harmonised JBC framework is performance-based monitoring. Each committee is required to submit quarterly reports using agreed indicators such as cargo clearance time, cost savings, service efficiency and identified operational bottlenecks. This approach links committee deliberations directly to measurable outcomes, reinforcing accountability and ensuring that coordination efforts yield tangible improvements. By embedding performance indicators within governance structures, NCTTCA has ensured that Joint Border Committees function not merely as consultative forums but as instruments of reform.

The institutionalisation of Joint Border Committees reflects a broader philosophy that has guided the Northern Corridor for four decades: regional integration is not achieved solely through treaties, but through continuous operational coordination. JBCs complement other corridor reforms, including One Stop Border Posts, the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System, implementation of the Single Customs Territory and performance monitoring through the Transport Observatory. Together, these mechanisms form a layered governance framework that enhances predictability, reduces trade costs and strengthens security along the Corridor.

As trade volumes increase under the African Continental Free Trade Area, pressure on border systems will intensify. Joint Border Committees provide a scalable institutional model capable of adapting to rising traffic flows, digitalisation requirements and evolving regulatory standards. By formalising dialogue between government agencies and the private sector, harmonising governance structures and linking performance to accountability, NCTTCA has transformed border coordination from a reactive process into a structured and measurable system. In doing so, the Authority has reaffirmed a core lesson from its forty-year journey: effective regional integration begins at the border, and it succeeds when institutions work together with clarity, discipline and shared purpose.





One of the static weighbridges along the Northern Corridor, managed by KENHA. Others are primarily located at Dongo Kundu, Mariakani, Athi River, Gilgil, Suswa, Webuye and Busia in Kenya, with additional stations in Uganda and the DRC.

THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR VEHICLE LOAD CONTROL EVOLVES TO A TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN SYSTEM

Over the years, the Northern Corridor vehicle load control has evolved from manual, inefficient, and slow weighbridge checks to an automated, regional, and technology-driven system aimed at boosting efficiency and protecting road assets.

The shift includes implementing high-speed weigh-in-motion (HSWIM) sensors, harmonizing East African Community (EAC) laws, and promoting voluntary self-regulation by operators.

According to the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, the Vehicle Load Control has considerably evolved over the years. The transition from manual weighbridges to High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) systems on the Northern Corridor, particularly in Kenya, began in 2013.

The Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) initiated this shift to automate compliance and remove human intervention, starting with bending plate technology and upgrading to piezo-sensor systems by 2017.

The shift from traditional manual weighbridges to High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) systems allows trucks to be weighed at speeds up to 140 km/h, reducing check times from minutes to seconds and minimizing traffic bottlenecks.

The Northern Corridor Member States then moved towards the adoption and domestication of the East African Community (EAC) Vehicle Load Control (VLC) Act, ensuring uniform enforcement of axle load limits across the region.

Some of the Northern corridor vehicle load control enforcement strategies include harmonized axle load limits (EAC Vehicle Load Control Act), high-tech weighing (virtual/high-speed weighbridges), and self-regulation through a voluntary charter for transporters. Key strategies include upgrading to multi-lane weighbridges (e.g., Mariakani), using cargo tracking systems, and promoting railway transport.

The Implementation of the East African Community (EAC) Vehicle Load



Multideck weighbridges, integrated with High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) technology, have been installed along the Northern Corridor to automate the weighing process, increase efficiency, and reduce congestion.

Control Act of 2013, which sets uniform standards for vehicle dimensions and axle loads across all member states, was aimed at Harmonizing Regional Standards.

The Self-Regulatory Charter has a provision for a voluntary compliance framework for the private sector to adhere to load regulations, supported by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority.

Axle load compliance levels are among the key performance indicators tracked by the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory with the aim of identifying the bottlenecks.

The Northern Corridor axle load control is reported to have achieved over 90% vehicle load compliance, rising from below 60% in 2012, with some stations like Mariakani exceeding 99% compliance.

Key successes include implementing automated High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) systems, reducing weighbridge crossing times to under 30 minutes, and enforcing the EAC Vehicle Load Control Act to protect road infrastructure.

As of 2018–2021, vehicle load compliance along the Northern Corridor weighbridges (Mariakani, Athi River, Gilgil, Webuye) has consistently remained above 90%, with Mariakani often recording over 99%.

The implementation of automated multi-deck scales and High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) at major stations has reduced congestion and human intervention.

Weighbridge crossing times dropped from up to a full day in 2012 to less than 30 minutes by 2018 due to improved, automated, and self-regulatory, and, in some cases, self-regulatory measures.

As of early 2025, crossing times had improved due to high-speed weigh-in-motion technology, though congestion persists, particularly at Mariakani, due to road construction was witnessed. Axle load compliance on the Mariakani and Dongo Kundu cluster is over 98% . Generally, swift clearance for compliant trucks occurs within 5 minutes to 1.5 hours.

The Vehicle Load Control Self-Regulatory Charter

The "Self-Regulatory Charter" for the Northern Corridor refers to a collective commitment by private and public sector stakeholders to adhere to vehicle load (overloading) regulations, aiming to improve road infrastructure and facilitate regional trade by ensuring all participants uphold voluntary compliance, according to the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA).

This Charter was established in October 2014 through a coordinated effort by Kenya and the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Authority (NCTTCA) to ensure safer and more coordinated transport and compliance with load control measures.

The initiative represented a significant step in enhancing road infrastructure sustainability within the region by reducing vehicle overloading. It focused on self-regulation to supplement government efforts in vehicle load control, with signatories making individual and collective commitments and establishing a monitoring framework for compliance and progress.

Purpose and Scope for Self-Regulation

The charter promotes self-regulation by the entire industry, including beneficiaries, users, and shippers, to protect road infrastructure from overloading. The Charter is a mechanism for committing to and promoting compliance with vehicle load regulations to reduce non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and foster regional prosperity.

Signatories from both the private and public sectors commit to fulfilling specific targets for compliance with vehicle load regulations. The key components of this Charter include Commitments. Individual and collective commitments from stakeholders to comply with load regulations.

A framework is in place to monitor and evaluate the achievement of commitment targets, often through data collection and performance dashboards. The initiative brings together government institutions, line ministries, and regulatory agencies with private sector players.

Key Stakeholders involved include NCTTCA, which hosts the charter secretariat, provides technical support, and works to roll out the initiative across member states.

The Kenya Transporters Association represents the private sector perspective in developing and promoting the charter. It includes public institutions and regulatory bodies like the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) and Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA), who are also responsible for enforcement.

The self-regulation charter is part of broader efforts by the Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor community to enhance efficiency, reliability, and global competitiveness in the region. The ultimate goal is to reduce costs and facilitate trade by ensuring the integrity of the transport network, including roads.

The Charter is the response to the challenge of dealing with issues affecting overloading through co-operation rather than detailed legislation. Through self-regulation, the industry demonstrates its ability to regulate itself responsibly, by actively promoting the highest ethical standards on axle load control and safeguarding the government and shippers' interests.



The Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) has fully automated weighbridges along the Northern Corridor (Mombasa-Malaba) using high-speed Weigh-In-Motion sensors.



WEIGHBRIDGES IMPROVE CARGO TRANSIT TIMES ON THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR

A truck weighs at a weighbridge along the Northern Corridor.

Weighbridges on the Northern Corridor have significantly improved cargo transit times and efficiency through modernization, with over 95% compliance levels achieved via High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) technology.

The first major static weighbridges in Kenya, including those at Mariakani, Athi River, Mlolongo, Gilgil, and Malaba, were primarily established along the Northern Corridor to control axle loads in the early to mid-2000s, with significant, stricter enforcement regulations taking effect around August 2004, according to a recent Northern Corridor Annual Transport Observatory Report.

Trucks passing through both the Mariakani and Webuye weighbridges averaged 2,000 per day. While weighing technology has existed for decades, these five main stations were highlighted as the core

infrastructure tackling the rapid deterioration of roads due to heavily loaded cargo trucks during that period.

The regulation that forced truckers to use these weighbridges was heavily enforced around August 2004, aiming to restrict, then manage, the axle load, especially for transit cargo from the Port of Mombasa.

In 2008, new rules were implemented to reduce cargo congestion by allowing containers with a "customs seal" to pass after the first weighbridge. From 2013, the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) began replacing these static, human-operated stations with high-speed "Weigh-In-Motion" (WIM) technology, with a major, modernized 15-station network (10 virtual + 5 static) being fully integrated by October 2018.

Modern stations such as the Kanyonyo Weighbridge in Kitui County were developed much later, with major operations launching around February 2025 to monitor regional routes.

In Uganda, the Traffic and Road Safety (Weighbridges) Regulations were instituted, and UNRA (Uganda National Roads Authority) reopened and upgraded several road weighbridges to combat road damage in 2010.

Key infrastructure, such as the weighbridge at Nakkazzi village in Luweero on the Kampala-Gulu highway, was set up in 2011.

Following this, Uganda began installing more modern, fixed weigh stations, with UNRA maintaining 11 fixed stations and 5 mobile bridges as of 2021.

WEIGHBRIDGES

While industrial, small-scale weighing systems may have existed earlier, the organized, official, and national-level network of road weighbridges for vehicle load control in Uganda was largely established around the 2010–2011 period.

In Rwanda the installation of modern, functional weighbridges to enforce axle load control gained significant traction around 2013. Prior to this, Rwanda lacked operational weighbridges, leading to high rates of overloading and road damage.

As part of efforts to implement the East African Community (EAC) Vehicle Load Control Act of 2013, Rwanda began installing new, modern electronic weighbridges to replace malfunctioning ones and to begin enforcing axle load limits on major routes.

The initial focus for installing weighbridges was at border posts and major cargo handling facilities, such as the MAGERWA Inland Depot in Kigali, which has long served as the central hub for clearing imported, exported, and transit goods.

In late 2009, the government announced plans to replace non-functional, older weighbridges with modern electronic systems.

In 2022, Rwanda engaged in benchmarking with Kenya to improve the operation and management of its weighbridge infrastructure.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the history of the first significant industrial weighbridges was likely installed in the 1920s and 1930s, according to historical data available on the infrastructure development in the Katanga region during the Belgian colonial era.

These initial weighbridges were integral to the rapid expansion of the railway network, particularly the Compagnie du chemin de fer du Congo supérieur aux Grands Lacs africains (CFL), founded in 1902, and the Chemin de fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga (BCK) line.

The weighbridges were used to manage the loading of raw minerals and cargo, particularly during the boom in mining development in Katanga during the 1920s and 30s, alongside the construction of major infrastructure like the Lualaba River bridges.

The development of these systems coincided with the construction of landmark steel girder and concrete bridges in the region between 1925 and 1939, notes the Research Gate article.

Burundi, on the other hand, has historically lacked functional, enforced weighbridges along major transit routes compared to its East African Community (EAC) neighbors.

In 2023, eight (8) sites for "Weigh-in-Motion" weighbridges were identified; only two were reported to be under construction, according to media reports.

Because Burundi heavily relies on road transport for imports/exports (especially after the decline of the railway system in the 1970s), the lack of early weighbridge infrastructure was a significant issue in regional transit.

In South Sudan, the Ministry of Roads and Bridges conducted the test for the first-ever weighbridge system on Saturday, November 23, 2024. This initial modern, state-of-the-art weighbridge was installed at Djeri along

the Nimule-Juba highway. The facility was installed to monitor axle loads, curb damage to road infrastructure caused by overloaded commercial trucks, and improve trade efficiency.

Following this first successful installation, the government announced plans in early June 2025 to install five additional weighbridges across the country to protect national highways.

Weighbridges in the Northern Corridor Member States have shown a distinct trend toward automation and improved compliance. The featured High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM) systems at sites like Mariakani, Gilgil, and Athi River to reduce congestion.

Compliance levels have risen to over 94–99%, resulting in fewer delays, though older systems like Busia still struggle with lower compliance rates. Weighbridge compliance on the Northern Corridor has improved significantly over the last decade. The compliance levels are frequently exceeding 90–98% by 2024–2025. This has been attributed mainly to automation and digitization, reducing human involvement and corruption. Major upgrades like High-Speed Weigh-in-Motion (HSWIM)

systems, which allow compliant trucks to skip stopping, have enhanced efficiency, particularly at Athi River, while Busia has sometimes lagged in compliance.

The shift from manual to automated systems has nearly eliminated human interaction, increasing compliance to 98% by late 2025. The Northern Corridor Transport Observatory data indicated an increasing trend in compliance at major weighbridges such as Mariakani and Athi River, but a decreasing trend was observed at others like Busia and Gilgil in certain reporting periods.

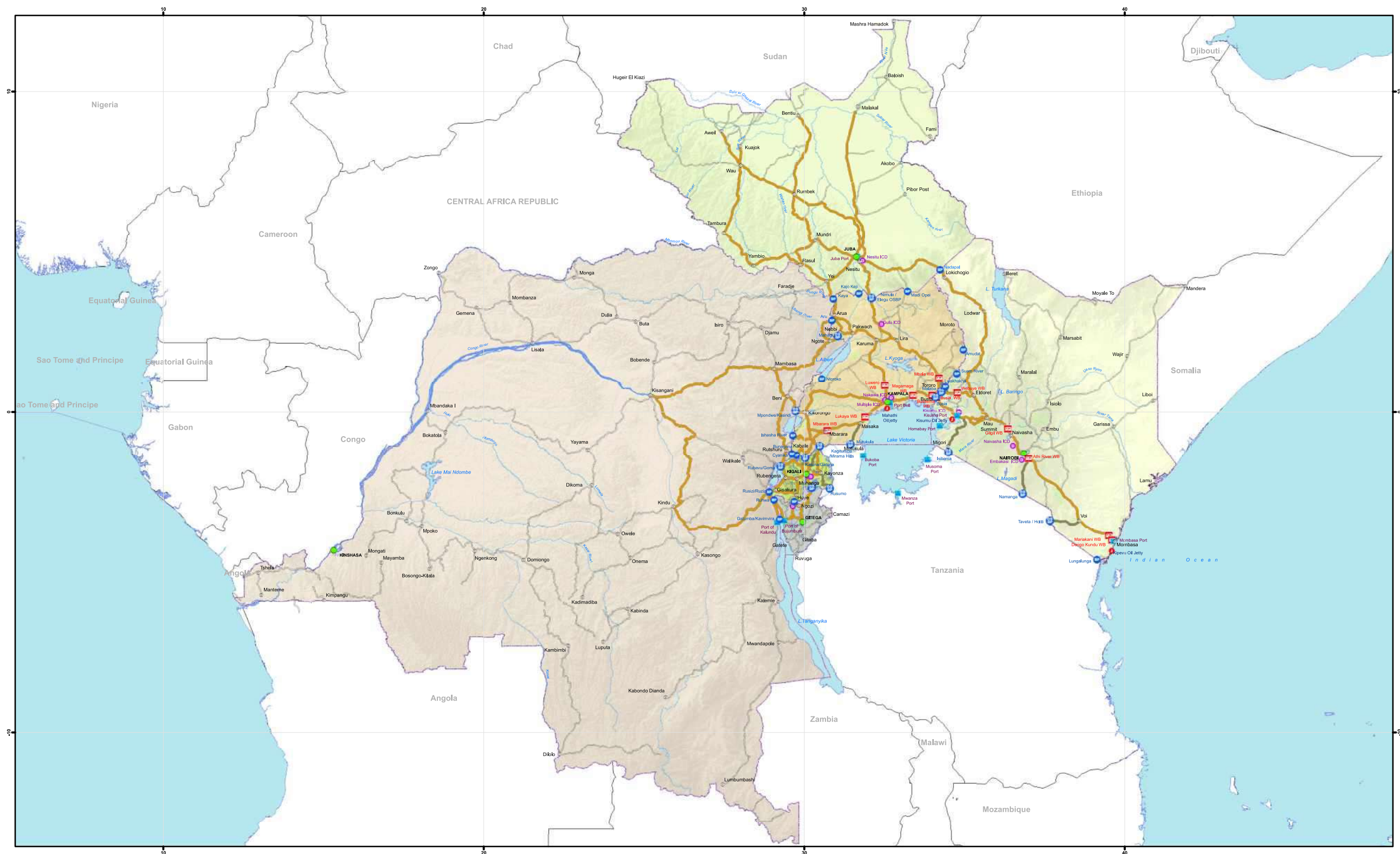
As of 2018–2019, compliance was noted as high (96.26% to 99.32%) at major checkpoints, including Mariakani, Athi River, and Webuye.

The installation of HSWIM technology allowed compliant trucks to pass without stopping, significantly lowering transit times.

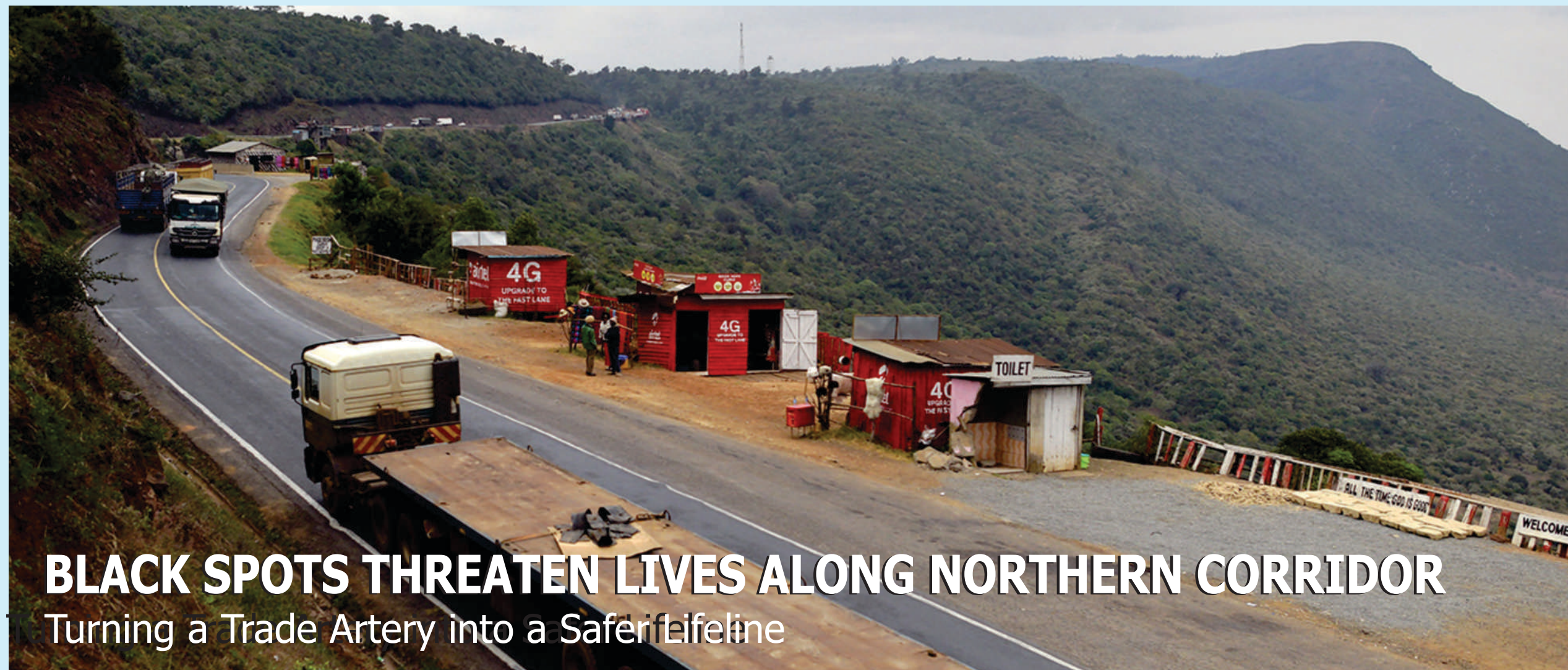
Modernized stations like Athi River, Mariakani, and Gilgil in Kenya are reported to have reached over 94%–99% compliance, curbing overloading and extending road lifespan.



The Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) has fully automated weighbridges along the Northern Corridor (Mombasa-Malaba) using high-speed virtual sensors to curb overloading and reduce traffic congestion. These systems, located at key points like Gilgil, Mai Mahiu, and Mariakani, allow compliant trucks to pass without stopping, achieving over 99% load compliance.



CLIENT	TITLE	MAP DETAILS	LEGEND	MAP LOCATION	CONSULTANT
 Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Co-ordination Authority 1196 Links Road, Nyali P.O. Box 34068 - 80118 Mombasa, Kenya Tel: 254 41 4470734, 254 729 923574, 254 733 532485, Telefax: 254 414470735 Email: ncttca@ncttca.org	NORTHERN CORRIDOR MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE MAP Road and inland waterways	- Map Projection: Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84) - Northern Corridor Member States: 6 (Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi & DRC) - Map compiled with data provided by Northern Corridor Secretariat and publicly available datasets - Map publication date: October 2022	LEGEND - Town - City - Boarder Post (BP) - One Stop Boarder Post (OSBP) - Inland Container Depot (ICD) - Weigh Bridge (WB) - Ports - Oil Jetty - Northern Corridor Road - Alternative Route - Other Road - River - Forest - Lake - Member State Boundary - Member State - Burundi - DRC - Kenya - Rwanda - South Sudan - Uganda Scale 1:6,000,000 0 800 1,700 3,400 5,100 6,800 Kilometers	 Chad Sudan Ethiopia CAR South Sudan Uganda Kenya Angola DRC Rwanda Burundi Zambia Tanzania Mozambique	CONSULTANT Published by  INTERNATIONAL GEOMATICS CONSULTANCY Geomaps Centre, Matumbato Road - Upperhill, P.O. Box 61071-00200, Tel: 254(020)2715829 2713350, Email: geomaps@geoafrica.com This map is not an authority on boundaries



BLACK SPOTS THREATEN LIVES ALONG NORTHERN CORRIDOR

Turning a Trade Artery into a Safer Lifeline

The Northern Corridor is East Africa's most critical trade and transport artery, stretching over 12,707 kilometres from the Port of Mombasa through Nairobi, Kampala, Kigali, and into Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It carries the economic aspirations of landlinked nations, moving millions of tonnes of cargo annually.

Yet alongside this flow of commerce runs a quieter but devastating crisis: road crashes that claim thousands of lives each year. Despite major investments in infrastructure and policy reform, high-risk locations, known as "black spots", continue to endanger motorists, pedestrians, and communities along the route.

A black spot is defined as a stretch of road or specific location characterised by a high concentration of traffic accidents. In November 2019, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) undertook a detailed survey in Rwanda and Uganda

to map and analyse these danger zones. The findings were sobering: 143 black spots were identified; 28 in Rwanda and 115 in Uganda.

In Uganda, road crashes claim an average of 10 lives per day, the highest toll in East Africa. A UNECA review found traffic fatalities increased by 26% over a decade, with an estimated annual economic loss of UGX 4.4 trillion (USD 1.2 billion) — approximately 5% of GDP.

Rwanda performs comparatively better, yet still recorded approximately 750 road fatalities in a single year. Given its smaller vehicle fleet, its fatality rate per 10,000 vehicles remains high by global standards.

These are not abstract numbers. They represent workers, traders, families, and drivers whose lives are cut short on the very corridor meant to drive prosperity. Road safety, therefore, is not only a transport issue — it is an economic and social imperative.

The survey found Rwanda's main corridor routes — Kigali–Gatuna, Kigali–Rubavu, and Kigali–Akanyaru Haut — generally well maintained. However, structural weaknesses increase crash risk.

Many sections fall below the East African highway design standard of 3.5 metres per lane. Some two-way carriageways measure only six metres in total width, limiting manoeuvrability. Road shoulders are often narrow or missing entirely — a serious concern in mountainous terrain where roads curve along steep slopes.

Concrete chevron barriers have been installed along dangerous curves, helping prevent vehicles from veering off cliffs. However, most are only 0.8 metres high — below the recommended 1.2 metres for such terrain.

The survey recommends updating road design standards, widening lanes and shoulders where feasible, and installing higher protective barriers in high-risk zones.

ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVES

Uganda presents a more varied risk landscape. The western corridor (Kabale–Mbarara–Mpondwe) is relatively stable, but the eastern stretch from Kampala through Jinja to Malaba remains highly hazardous. This heavily trafficked freight route suffers from distressed pavement, eroded shoulders, fading road markings, vegetation overgrowth, and limited climbing lanes. Sharp bends and blind spots contribute to head-on collisions and fatal single-vehicle crashes.

Infrastructure challenges are compounded by behavioural risks: speeding, reckless overtaking, and dangerous driving near trading centres. Informal roadside markets present additional hazards. The tragic 2018 Rwahi Market incident, where a truck crashed into vendors, underscored the urgency of reform.

The survey recommends relocating roadside markets at least 100 metres from highways, strengthening enforcement, improving signage and markings, and rehabilitating deteriorated sections. The survey emphasises that road safety cannot be addressed through infrastructure improvements alone; instead, it requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that integrates engineering upgrades, stricter enforcement, behavioural change, and stronger institutional collaboration.

To this end, key regional recommendations include the development of a Regional Black Spot Management Guideline to harmonise identification and mitigation measures across Member States, as well as the establishment of a Northern Corridor Road Safety Data Management System to improve crash monitoring and response. The survey further calls for structured driver training programmes for commercial transporters, intensified road safety awareness campaigns, and the mobilisation of dedicated regional funding to address high-risk locations. As trade volumes continue to rise under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), traffic density along the corridor is expected to increase, making timely preventive interventions even more critical.

One of the most transformative safety interventions being advanced by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) is the development of Roadside Stations (RSS). These designated rest and service facilities are strategically designed to reduce fatigue-related accidents by providing regulated stopping points for long-distance drivers, while also offering secure parking to discourage unsafe roadside stops. In addition, RSS centres provide access to basic health checks and mechanical services, improving both driver welfare and vehicle roadworthiness. They also support public health initiatives, including HIV/AIDS prevention programmes targeting mobile populations along the corridor. By integrating transport safety with public health and community wellbeing, the RSS model represents a holistic approach to corridor management and, if fully implemented, will become a cornerstone of safer and more efficient operations along the Northern Corridor.

Though the survey was conducted in 2019, its recommendations remain highly relevant today. The Northern Corridor has transformed trade efficiency over four decades; but safety must advance at the same pace as speed and volume. The corridor is meant to drive integration, not tragedy. Safer roads are foundational to economic growth, regional competitiveness, and sustainable development.

With coordinated action, adequate funding, political commitment, and behavioural change, the Northern Corridor can become not only East Africa's most efficient trade route; but also its safest. The lives lost daily on the region's roads are preventable. And prevention is a responsibility shared by governments, institutions, transporters, and communities alike.



Delegates from the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) member states of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda pose for a group photo during a meeting convened to develop a regional Road Crash Database to standardize data collection, improve accuracy, and ensure interoperability among member states.

One of the core mandates of NCTTCA is to improve safety on transport infrastructure along the Northern Corridor. This involves implementing strategic interventions such as harmonizing road safety laws to align traffic regulations across Member States, addressing risk factors on Corridor road networks, and establishing effective systems for managing and analyzing road safety data.

To achieve these goals, NCTTCA has already implemented several impactful initiatives, including:

Mapping Black Spots: Surveys have been conducted to identify

high-risk areas, analyze contributing factors, and develop regional guidelines for managing these locations.

Road Safety Awareness Campaigns: Awareness efforts in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and South Sudan promote safe driving practices and foster a culture of responsible road use.

Roadside Stations (RSS): Facilities such as the SupaStop by SuperiorHomes in Kenya and Nesitu Parking Yard in South Sudan support driver wellness and enhance road safety. Feasibility studies are underway for similar stations in Burundi and the DRC.



The Northern Corridor Road Safety Awareness Campaign



**Think
Safety**
Take your rest
**Arrive
live**



The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) has conducted road safety awareness campaigns in Uganda as part of a larger regional effort to reduce crashes on the Northern Corridor route. These campaigns focus on improving driver behavior, especially the 92% of accidents caused by human error, by promoting eco-driving techniques and educating stakeholders on safer practices. The NCTTCA also works to standardize accident data collection through a regional Road Crash Database, supports the development of Roadside Stations, and conducts training to improve safety and sustainability in the transport sector.

NCTTCA PROMOTES SAFER ROAD USAGE

In 2023, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority, in collaboration with the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) and the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) conducted an intensive, joint road safety campaign along the 1,700km Northern Corridor, targeting heavy goods and public service vehicle (PSV) drivers, particularly before the festive season.

These initiatives addressed the 92% of accidents caused by human error, focusing on reducing fatalities through driver education, black spot identification, and improved, safe, and comfortable road infrastructure.

The campaign focused on long-distance truck drivers and public service vehicle (PSV) drivers, emphasizing the need for rest and safe driving practices.

Key interventions include identifying and mapping accident "black spots," establishing emergency response centers, and setting up wellness centers for drivers.

On another front, the TotalEnergies Marketing Kenya PLC and other private sector companies, along with the NCTTCA, are actively involved in similar efforts, including the "Safe Way, Right Way" NGO initiative.

The Campaigns focused on the dangers of speeding, drunk driving, and the importance of using seatbelts, particularly for boda boda passengers and pedestrians.

These efforts are crucial for reducing the high number of accidents, which are largely attributed to human error, such as speeding, fatigue, and reckless driving.

In an effort enhance road safety along the Northern Corridor, the NCTTCA, in collaboration with key stakeholders, successfully conducted a similar Road Safety Awareness Campaign in South Sudan from November 18th to 22nd, 2024.

This impactful campaign, spanning three days, aimed to promote safer road usage along one of Africa's most critical trade routes. The event, hosted in Juba, brought together key stakeholders, including government officials, law enforcement, transport operators, and the public, in a united effort to reduce road accidents and save lives.

The launch event was graced by esteemed leaders, including Ms. Mary Akech Milla, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, who emphasized South Sudan's commitment to tackling road safety issues.

"Most road accidents are preventable," she stated. "Today, I call on each of us to take responsibility as road users. Together, we can create a future where our roads are paths to prosperity, not danger."



Dr. John Deng, the NCTTCA Executive Secretary launches a week-long road safety awareness campaign at Gerayo Amahoro, Rwanda to further influence behavior change among motorists and pedestrians. The campaign was conducted in different parts of the country in September 2024 to promote safe driving, encourage proper vehicle maintenance, and to foster the culture of responsible driving.

Dr. John Deng, Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA), highlighted the campaign's broader regional impact.

"The Northern Corridor is not just a trade route—it's a lifeline. This campaign reflects our shared commitment to saving lives and supporting sustainable economic growth by ensuring safer roads," he said.

Lt. Gen. James Ruot Wuor, Assistant Inspector General of Police, stressed the need for collective action.

"Road safety is not the responsibility of one individual or institution. It requires the unified effort of policymakers, law enforcement, transport operators, and road users. Together, we can make every journey a safe one," he remarked.

The campaign sought to educate road users on the causes of accidents and promote safe driving practices; advocate for proper vehicle maintenance and the use of safety gear like helmets and seatbelts; raise awareness about the safety needs of vulnerable road users, including pedestrians and cyclists; and foster a culture of shared responsibility and advocate for stronger road safety policies.

Interactive roadshows captivated audiences in high-traffic areas, including Konyo Konyo, Shirikat, New Site, Gudele, Customs, Jebel, Gumbo, and Nesitu, with skits, music performances, and safety quizzes engaging over 5,000 participants. Additionally, social media campaigns and media coverage amplified the initiative's message, reaching thousands more.

Roadshows held in Juba and along the route to Nesitu reached over 5,000 participants with skits, quizzes, and music performances. These interactive sessions emphasized practical safety measures and reached a broad audience, including truck drivers and pedestrians at markets, bus stops, and other key locations.

A media campaign complemented the on-ground efforts, utilizing TV, radio, and social media to amplify the message. Billboards at strategic locations, branded materials such as reflective jackets, t-shirts, and caps, enhanced visibility and extended the campaign's reach.

Using engagements with stakeholders during the campaign highlighted the need for infrastructure improvement, sustained efforts on road safety, and inter-agency collaboration.

Dr. Deng underscored the importance of partnerships: "This campaign is part of a larger regional initiative, and its success depends on the sustained collaboration of all stakeholders. Together, we can transform the Northern Corridor into a safe and efficient trade route."

The stakeholders called for the development of regulations guiding road safety initiatives and enforcement.

The Road Safety Awareness Campaign marked a significant milestone in South Sudan's journey toward safer road usage.

It's a clarion call - "THINK SAFETY. TAKE YOUR REST. ARRIVE ALIVE!" - resonated as a powerful reminder of the shared responsibility to protect lives.

This is a road safety campaign slogan used by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority to reduce accidents by encouraging drivers to avoid fatigue and practice safe driving. It targets long-distance truck drivers and motorists to reduce accidents caused by overspeeding and fatigue.

The "THINK SAFETY. TAKE YOUR REST. ARRIVE ALIVE!" campaign, often implemented by partners like TotalEnergies Marketing Kenya PLC, is part of a broader, successful initiative along the Northern Corridor aimed at reducing accidents through driver education, behavioral change, and the identification of 141 safe resting sites.

This vigorous campaign has significantly reduced accidents by targeting fatigue and promoting compliance with traffic rules across Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC. With plans to extend the initiative to Burundi and the DRC, the campaign sets a strong foundation for creating safer, more efficient transportation systems across the region.

The NCTTCA formally launched its specialized Road Safety Strategy (RSS) program in **2014**. This followed comprehensive studies identifying 141 priority locations for safety improvements to enhance transport along the route.



NCTTCA Secretariat staff and development partners brainstorm during a Road Side Station (RSS) program which is aimed at providing road users with safe and comfortable road travel conditions and contribute to local economies.



NORTHERN CORRIDOR ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Think safety. Take your Rest. Arrive Alive
An initiative by:

**Northern Corridor Transit and Transport
Coordination Authority (NCTTCA)**

SAFETY MESSAGES

1. **Don't drive tired.** Fatigue can impair your judgment and reaction time, so take a break if you're feeling sleepy. **Stay alert, stay alive!** Always keep your eyes on the road and avoid distractions while driving.
2. **Remember, safety starts with you.** Be a responsible driver and help make our roads safer for everyone.
3. **Make sure your car is roadworthy.** Regular maintenance and checks can prevent accidents caused by faulty equipment.
4. **Speed kills.** Obey speed limits and drive safely to reach your destination.
5. **Keep a safe distance from the car in front of you.** It gives you more time to react to sudden stops or turns.
6. **Always wear your seatbelt.** It's the simplest way to protect yourself in case of an accident.
7. **Obey traffic signals and signs.** They're there to keep you and others safe.
8. **Don't drink and drive.** It's not worth the risk to yourself and others on the road.
9. **Avoid using your phone while driving.** It's not worth risking your life or someone else's for a text or call.
10. **Be patient and courteous on the road.** A little kindness goes a long way in making our roads safer for everyone.
11. **Stop for pedestrians.** They have the right of way, always.
12. **Watch out for motorcycles and bicycles.** Always check your blind spots before changing lanes or turning.
13. **Stay in control of your vehicle.** Don't drive aggressively or engage in road rage.
14. **Stay informed about road conditions and weather.** Adjust your driving accordingly.
15. **Always signal before turning or changing lanes.** It helps other drivers anticipate your next move.
16. **Slowdown in school zones and residential areas.** Children can be unpredictable and may dart out into the road unexpectedly.

The Northern Corridor Road Safety Awareness Campaign

Think safety
Take your rest
Arrive Alive

3rd-9th April 2023



**NORTHERN CORRIDOR
TRANSIT AND TRASPOT
COORDINATION AUTHORITY**



**MINISTRY OF ROADS
AND TRANSPORT**



**Kenya National
Highways Authority**
Quality Highways, Better Connections



**THE NATIONAL
POLICE SERVICE**



NCTTCA TEAMS UP WITH IFAD TO EMPOWER YOUTH AND WOMEN IN NORTHERN CORRIDOR REGION

A delighted youth poses for a photograph with a full set up and test milk cool tank for the Kayonza Cooperative Society in Rwanda under the NCTTCA and IFAD project funded by the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) to help the rural poor.

In 2022, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) engaged with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to implement a regional project funded by the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF).

This project supports smallholder farmers and agribusinesses in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda that have been affected by COVID-19. The initiative enhanced market access, digital services, and input access to improve food security and supply chain resilience.

The NCTTCA and IFAD partnership was primarily aimed at improving rural livelihoods and infrastructure in the former's member states.

IFAD has, over the years, supported programs in Kenya and the wider region, focusing on agriculture, food security, and resilience, often linking to finance, climate adaptation, and leveraging the corridor's transport network for development, as seen in IFAD's support for Kenya's agricultural strategy and initiatives around remittances.

NCTTCA teamed up with the Rome-based organisation to cushion the rural poor from the pangs of hunger caused by COVID-19 through a US\$ 1,979,750 project.

The Grant Agreement signed established short-term interventions to mitigate COVID-19's impact on rural farmers and traders in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda.

The specific target beneficiaries across the target countries were approximated at 30,000 farmers (at least 6,000 per country (for 5 out of the 6 Northern Corridor Member States) with 50 percent female and 25percent youth) from at least 100 Farmer Organizations (FOs).

The project also aimed at supporting 750 MSME staff/owners, already supporting smallholder farmers, 250 personnel, including Staff of NCTTCA, government staff, financial services staff, and representatives of the National Agribusiness Chambers of Commerce.

Besides NCTTCA and IFAD, the project was being implemented in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), which is an organization that leads international efforts to defeat hunger, and the World Food Programme (WFP), which is the food-assistance branch of the United Nations.

The project also incorporated key stakeholders in the project areas, from both public and private sectors, including the National and Regional governments and their agencies.

This Project came in handy to address the ongoing challenges faced by traders, farmers, consumers, and other stakeholders along the borders as Member States within East Africa continue to implement measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The Authority found it necessary that immediate actions be taken to implement this Project and meet the target goals and objectives in each Member State as envisaged.

The present scenario in all countries presents challenges faced by the target groups such as lack of resources to invest after the ravages of the pandemic; lack of market to sell due to eroded purchasing power; high cost of inputs as a result of scarcity and reduced supply; difficulties in compliance to new Covid – 19 protocols and measures introduced and limited support from public institutions towards reviving businesses and investment.

EMPOWERMENT

The project came up with several possible interventions which include developing a working partnership with other, ongoing IFAD funded Projects in the areas of interest to streamline implementation and ensure successful interventions; identification of baseline conditions and needs of the beneficiaries and developing work plans with specific interventions for each country and undertaking implementation of the interventions as planned, taking into consideration the actual needs of the target beneficiaries.

Other interventions included applying structured models such as equipment provision and capacity enhancements, among others, as the case may be; and monitoring progress over time and documenting stories to communicate outcomes and also for knowledge management.

The direct and indirect target groups for this project were identified as MSMEs (traders, transporters, agents, processors, retailers, store managers, and agribusiness service providers).

Prior to the launch of the project, NCTTCA undertook an extensive needs assessment and beneficiary identification in all five Member States selected for this Project. This resulted in the identification of farmer groups, cooperative societies, and farmer associations, as well as preferred equipment under the 4 sectors of choice for the Project, thus – Dairy, Horticulture, Fisheries, and Poultry.

NCTTCA then undertook the acquisition of this equipment for three Countries – Burundi, Kenya, and Rwanda, all of which have since been distributed to the beneficiaries.

The distribution of equipment was undertaken in Kenya's lakeside city of Kisumu, between the 10th and 14th of October 2022; in Rwanda (in Nyagatare – Kanyanza – Rubavu) between the 18th and 22nd of October 2022, while in Burundi, the equipment was targeted for farmer groups and small-scale traders in Gihanga – Rugombo.

According to the IFAD annual report 2024, the organisation has supported Burundi since 1980, focusing on rural poverty reduction, food security, and climate resilience. Key projects include the Agricultural Production Intensification and Vulnerability Reduction Project (PIPARV-B), the Value Chain Development Programme (PRODEFI), and participation in the Kugwiza project to improve agricultural value chains.

The Agricultural Production Intensification and Vulnerability Reduction Project (PIPARV-B) targets high-malnutrition areas like Gitega, Karusi, Kayanza, Ngozi, and Muyinga, supporting small-scale farmers with climate-resilient technologies, improved seed access, and livestock.

The Value Chain Development Programme (PRODEFI) focuses on strengthening value chains for key crops, supporting rural income growth through cooperative development.

The Kugwiza Project (AID-I GLR) was launched in 2023 to enhance agricultural value chains for food-security crops like cassava, beans, rice, and maize, with a specific \$3 million grant focusing on providing hybrid maize seeds, vegetable seeds, and livestock to increase productivity in

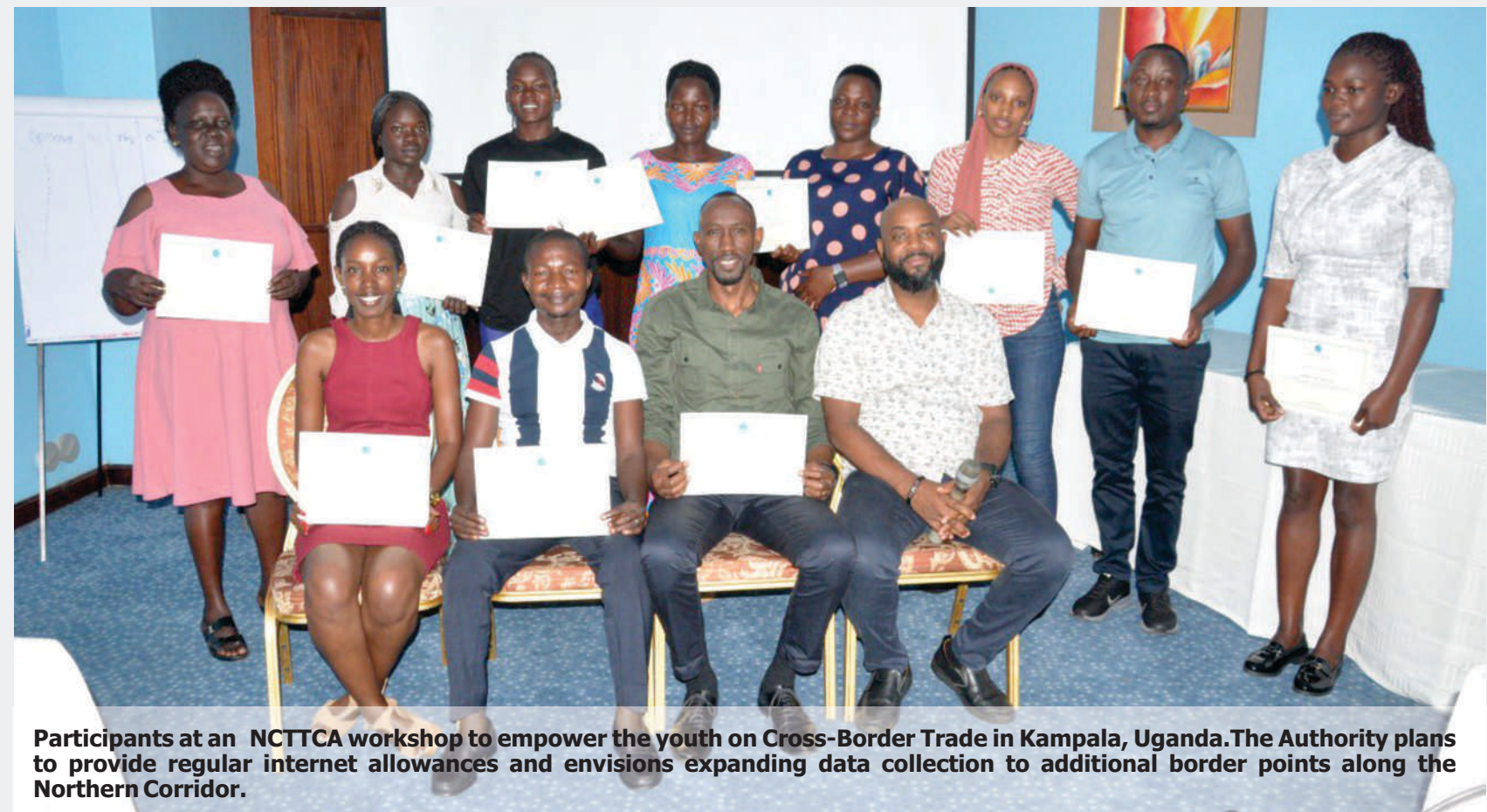
response to economic shocks. IFAD projects in Burundi also focus on increasing female participation in agricultural leadership and providing literacy and legal support.

In Kenya, IFAD supports several key projects aimed at enhancing food security, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, and empowering rural communities. Major initiatives include the Integrated Natural Resources Management Programme (INReMP), Rural Kenya Financial Inclusion Facility (RK-FINFA), Kenya Livestock Commercialization Project (KELCOP), and the Aquaculture Business Development Programme (ABDP). Integrated Natural Resources Management Programme (INReMP) is a \$126.8 million initiative focusing on improving livelihoods, soil conservation, and forest cover management.

The Rural Kenya Financial Inclusion Facility (RK-FINFA), on the other hand, is a six-year (2022-2028) project aimed at improving access to financial services for smallholder farmers and rural enterprises; the Kenya Livestock Commercialization Project (KELCOP) operates in ten counties to transform traditional livestock rearing into commercialized,

climate-resilient systems. Aquaculture Business Development Programme (ABDP) supports the expansion of the aquaculture sector to increase income for rural households, while Agribusiness Hub Programme focuses on increasing rural youth employment through jobs and agribusiness support.

In Rwanda, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has financed 19 rural development projects since 1981, focusing on irrigation, dairy development, agribusiness, and climate resilience to reduce poverty. Key active or recent projects include the Kayanza Irrigation and Integrated Watershed Management Project, the Rwanda Dairy Development Project, and Climate-Resilient Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP). The Kayanza Irrigation and Integrated Watershed Management Project (KWIIP) is a major initiative aimed at enhancing agricultural water management, constructing valley tanks, and improving irrigation in dry areas (approx. US\$ 78.5 million in recent funding).



Participants at an NCTTCA workshop to empower the youth on Cross-Border Trade in Kampala, Uganda. The Authority plans to provide regular internet allowances and envisions expanding data collection to additional border points along the Northern Corridor.

Rwanda Dairy Development Project (RDDP) focuses on strengthening the dairy value chain, improving milk quality, and increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers while the Climate-Resilient Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) aims at reducing post-harvest losses and strengthening agribusiness through improved technology and storage; Project for Rural Income through Exports (PRIE) targets smallholder farmers to boost their incomes through cash crops and agricultural exports.

There is also a project for the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PAPSTA), which targets watershed management and agricultural technology, aligning with national agricultural strategies, and the Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management Project (KWAMP), which focuses on sustainable natural resource management to boost agriculture in the Kirehe district.

IFAD projects in South Sudan focus on increasing food security, reducing poverty, and boosting agricultural productivity. Key initiatives include the Southern Sudan Livelihoods Development Project (SSLDP), the Sustainable Agricultural Development Project (SADEP), and support for resilient food systems, directly benefiting rural households by strengthening their resilience to climate change and enhancing market access.

The Southern Sudan Livelihoods Development Project (SSLDP) was approved in 2008 (completed around 2015/2016) to reduce rural poverty, increase food security, and improve agricultural marketing for households.

The Sustainable Agricultural Development Project (SADEP) aims to enhance resilience, improve food security, and reduce poverty among the most vulnerable and food-insecure households; the Agricultural Infrastructure and Technical Support IFAD works with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, investing in rural infrastructure (such as rehabilitation of roads to connect farmers to markets) and supporting climate change resilience, particularly through technical assistance and funding from organizations like the Global Environment Facility.

Since 2011, according to the report, IFAD has financed multiple initiatives in South Sudan, reaching thousands of households with a focus on sustainable agricultural development.

In Uganda, [IFAD](#) projects focus on reducing poverty, increasing food security, and improving climate resilience for smallholder farmers. Key active projects include the National Oil Palm Project (NOPP), National Oil Seed Project (NSOP), and the Project for Financial Inclusion in Rural Areas (PROFIRA), which aim to enhance livelihoods, build agricultural infrastructure, and increase market access.

The National Oil Palm Project (NOPP) focuses on strengthening the oil palm industry, particularly in regions like Kalangala and Buvuma, to enhance livelihoods as per the IFAD report. The National Oil Seed Project (NSOP, 2019–2028) aims to boost the production of oilseeds to reduce vegetable oil imports, targeting 120,000 smallholder farmers.

The Project for Financial Inclusion in Rural Areas (PROFIRA) facilitates access to financial services for rural households, supporting community-managed microfinance, while the Project for the Restoration of Livelihoods in the Northern Region (PRELNOR) targets rural poverty in northern Uganda by increasing income and food security.

Yield Uganda Investment Fund is an initiative supported by IFAD and the EU, offering capital to small and medium-sized agribusinesses to strengthen their operations, while the Agricultural Technology and Agribusiness Advisory Services Programme aims to enhance agricultural productivity and agribusiness development.

These projects are part of IFAD's long-term strategy to transform Uganda's agricultural sector from subsistence to commercial, specifically addressing climate resilience and supporting smallholder participation in value chains, says the IFAD report.



Jovial residents in a village in Kisumu County in Kenya receive dairy Equipment under the NCTTCA and IFAD project funded by the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) to help the rural poor. The group

PICTURE SCENE



Three heads of state are seen here marching in step to attend the 14th Summit of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIP) held in Nairobi on 26th June 2018. The Summit hosted by H.E Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, was attended by H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda and H.E Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda.



The 28th Meeting of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority Council of Ministers held on 23rd June 2016 in Mombasa, Kenya.



A Northern Corridor Executive Committee meeting held in Mombasa. The meeting brought together representatives from member states including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda, along with the Private Sector Investment Promotion.



The 37th Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) Council of Ministers meeting, held in July 2025 and opened by Kenya's Roads and Transport CS Davis Chirchir, focused on harmonizing regional trade and transport policies.



NCTTCA hands over Nesitu Truck Parking Yard to the Government of South Sudan in a grand ceremony.



The 43rd Executive Committee meeting of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) took place in July 2025 alongside its Council of Ministers meeting.



Delegates attending the NCTTCA Regional Cluster meeting pose for a group photo. The clusters were established to accelerate infrastructure development and trade facilitation among member states.



Delegates at the 54th Executive Committee meeting aimed to advancing the objectives of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement by providing strategic guidance and streamlining the implementation of Corridor activities by the Secretariat and Member States.



Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Roads and Transport, Hon. Davis Chirchir, (standing Centre) posing for a photo with other leaders after presiding over the official opening of the inaugural Regional Highway Safety Investors Conference 2026 in Mombasa.

PICTURE SCENE



Dr. Deng Diar Diing, the Executive Secretary NCTTCA hands a gift to Ms Margaret Tendwa during a farewell party organized by the authority to retiring staff. Ms Tendwa served the Authority as the Personal Assistant to the successive Executive Secretaries between 15th June 1989 and 31st October 2025.



The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority team led by Director for Investment and Promotion Dennis Mganga (3rd left), during a courtesy call on Governor Mutula Kilonzo Jr. economic opportunities along the busy transnational highway.



NCTTCA Executive Secretary, CPA Omae Nyarandi, (seated with blue mask) and the East African Community and Regional Development Minister, Hon. Aden Mohammed (3rd from left) together with other officials pose for a photo at the Miritini COVID-19 Testing Centre.



The NCTTCA reaffirms its commitment to fostering inclusive trade, sustainability, and private sector development at the 3rd Juba Economic Forum, held from May 13–15, 2025, at the Central Bank of South Sudan Convention Centre.



The Anti-Counterfeit Authority of Kenya (ACA) and NCTTCA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to combat the shipment of counterfeit and illicit goods on May 16, 2023, in Mombasa. The Anti-Counterfeit Authority Executive Director Dr. Robi Mbugua Njoroge (left) Mr. Josephat Kabeabea, Chairman of the Board of Directors at ACA (centre) and CPA Omae Nyarandi, then Executive Secretary NCTTCA display the signed MoU.



Mr. Donat Bagula, the Executive Secretary NCTTCA shakes hand with Hon. A. Abdissa YADETA, State Minister of Transport during the working visit of the 3rd Kenya-Ethiopia joint Technical Corridor Coordinating Committee delegations at NCTTCA, on March 1st, 2016.



Truck drivers pose for a photo during a training session on eco-driving practices in Mombasa.



During the 31st Meeting of the Council of Ministers held in Mombasa, Kenya Hon. James Macharia, of Kenya (not in the picture); took over as the Chairperson from Hon. John Luk Jok, (left) of South Sudan. Ms Esther Koimett, the Principal Secretary for the State Department for Transport represented the CS in the handing over ceremony.



Mr. Gideon Chikamai, Deputy Director Transport Policy and Planning at NCTTCA dribbles the ball past an opponent during the East, Central and Southern Africa Shipping & Freight Logistics Football Tournament (ECSAFOT), a corporate football competition held in Kenya for maritime and logistics industry players held in Mombasa.



The Roles of the Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor Community Charter :

- **Establishes** a performance dashboard for monitoring key indicators like ship turnaround time, container dwell time, and cargo transit time along the corridor.
- **Acts** as a framework to reduce transportation costs and logistics inefficiencies, aiming to create a world-class seaport.
- **Promotes** the expansion of port, road, and railway infrastructure, including facilitating the uptake of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) for cargo.
- **Binds** stakeholders to specific, collective obligations and timelines, encouraging a shift away from a "silo mentality" toward collaborative, efficient service delivery.
- **Supports** the full utilization of the Kenya National Single Window System for paperless trade, automated cargo clearance, and improved, faster joint inspections.



<https://mpnccc.go.ke>



The Construction of the Rironi-Mau Summit Highway is advancing. The project expands the 233 km A8 route into a dual carriageway through a Public-Private Partnership

THE PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FACILITATES INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ON THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) has played a crucial role in the Northern Corridor's development since the inception of the Northern Corridor Transit Transport Coordination Authority in 1985 by bridging infrastructure gaps by bringing private capital, technological support, and efficiency to projects like the roads, Ports and inland waterways," Denis Muganga, NCTTCA Director for Private Sector Investment Promotion Program.

Through PPPs, said Mr Muganga, regional trade has been considerably enhanced, jobs created, and economic growth through better governance achieved across the six Member states, namely Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda.

PPPs combine public sector objectives with private sector resources and skills to deliver better, more sustainable infrastructure and services for the region's economic development along the Northern Corridor.

The primary road project under Public-Private Partnerships on Kenya's Northern Corridor is the Nairobi-Nakuru-Mau Summit Highway (A8), specifically the Rironi-Nakuru-Mau Summit section, aiming to upgrade this critical route with dual carriageways, improved safety, and better connectivity by handling design, build, finance, operations, and maintenance through a PPP model to reduce congestion and enhance trade.

The total investment cost for the Project is estimated to be between approximately \$1.4 billion USD and \$1.53 billion USD, to be developed under a PPP model. The Project is being implemented under a Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Maintain, and Transfer (DBFOMT) model and involves several key partners.

Key among them are the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) consortium. The main objectives of this Project are to alleviate severe congestion, reduce high accident rates (especially near Salgaa and Gilgil), and improve efficiency for agriculture, tourism, and trade.

The PPP Model will see the involvement of the private sector in designing, building, financing, operating, and maintaining the road under a long-term contract. Once completed, the road users will see a faster freight movement, enhanced safety features, improved drainage, stronger regional trade links, and better market access for farmers.

This is a significant infrastructure project transforming the key Nairobi-Western Kenya corridor into a modern dual carriageway, aimed at boosting trade, tourism, and connectivity within East Africa.

This Project was launched under a Public-Private Partnership model. It involves upgrading the Rironi-Mau Summit (A8) section and the Nairobi-Maai Mahiu-Naivasha (A8 South) link, featuring tolling, interchanges, and truck lanes, with completion anticipated by 2027-2028. Road projects under PPPs on the Northern Corridor in Uganda focus on enhancing the route from the Kenyan border to Kampala.

Loans have been acquired from development partners like the African Development Bank and Agence Française de Développement. It is designed to be a tolled expressway, with Phase 1 covering the urban section (18km) and 35km of the mainline to Namagunga, and Phase 2 covering 42km from Namagunga to Jinja.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The Jinja–Busesa Expressway, as part of the multinational Kenya–Uganda Expressway project, plans include the construction of a new 60-kilometre expressway from Jinja to Busesa under a PPP model. The overall project cost is estimated at approximately US\$1.48 billion to US\$1.55 billion.

Phase One of the Project covers the 33-kilometre section from Kampala to Namataba and the Kampala Southern Bypass. It is financed by sovereign loans and grants from development partners, including US\$229.5 million from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and US\$106 million from the European Union.

The Busesa–Malaba and Busitema–Busia Dual Carriageways.

These sections are planned for upgrading and dualling to improve traffic flow along the trade corridor and the Kampala Southern Bypass, which is part of the KJE project. This 18km road is being developed to connect with the existing Kampala Northern Bypass to form a ring road.

The African Development Bank (AfDB), through grants from the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (NEPAD-IPPF), funded the feasibility studies for the Busesa–Malaba and Busitema–Busia dual carriageways project.

Based on recent reports and infrastructure data, the following key road projects on or connecting to the Northern Corridor in Rwanda are either developed, planned, or under study for Public-Private Partnerships.

The main Project is the Kagitumba–Kayonza–Rusumo Road Project, with a total value of USD 490.26 million, and is identified as a key transportation infrastructure project in Rwanda.

The Project is primarily financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB), with significant co-financing from the European Union (EU) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), alongside contributions from the governments of Rwanda and Uganda, forming part of a larger Northern Corridor regional highway initiative.

The Kigali–Ruhengeri–Gisenyi Road is listed as a major rehabilitation project with studies in progress to align it with international standards, and the Gatuna–Kigali Road has been identified as a crucial section of the Northern Corridor requiring strengthening, with studies in progress for development.

The financiers for the Kigali–Ruhengeri–Gisenyi road rehabilitation, included the European Union (EU), the African Development Bank (AfDB) (through IDA), and the Saudi Development Fund, alongside Rwandan government contributions, as part of broader transport sector support to improve key national roads connecting to the DRC. The EU provided significant funding for specific sections like Gisenyi–Ruhengeri, while the World Bank (IDA) topped up EU financing for the overall Project.

A grant agreement was signed in June 2019 for approximately \$42.8 million for the Prince House–Giporoso–Masaka Road, A 10-km urban upgrade in Kigali, designed to enhance connectivity to Eastern Rwanda, with significant government investment and the Base–Butaro–Kidaho Road (63km), which enhances connectivity in the Northern Province region.

The Project is being funded primarily by the Chinese Government, providing a significant grant, with the Government of Rwanda as the receiving agency and contributing partner for this crucial infrastructure development.

Under a similar arrangement, the extension of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) in East Africa is undergoing a significant shift, moving away from Chinese sovereign debt-funded models towards Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and securitised financing, with construction of the Naivasha–Kisumu–Malaba extension slated to begin in January 2026.

This initiative aims to create a continuous, modern rail link from the Port of Mombasa (Kenya) to Kampala (Uganda), with future connections targeting Rwanda, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Key projects include rehabilitating Kisumu Port, a central inland waterway hub on Lake Victoria, revitalized regional trade by upgrading infrastructure, reviving MV Uhuru operations for petroleum transport to Uganda/Tanzania, boosting cargo (fuel, fertilizer, cement), and creating a multimodal (rail, road, water) transport system, significantly increasing cargo volumes and connectivity while spurring the Blue Economy and job creation.

The rehabilitation of Kisumu Port primarily involves funding from the Kenyan Government through the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA), with support often coming from international partners like the World Bank for broader transport sector initiatives that include inland ports, while private entities like CMA CGM Group also engage in partnerships for port development.

There is an ongoing work on passenger facilities and smaller piers and constructing new ports on Lake Kivu (Rwanda/DRC), aiming for efficient, secure, and integrated multimodal logistics across East Africa. This is aimed at boosting regional trade and infrastructure through private sector investment.

In general, the Northern Corridor Member States have, over the years, utilised PPP models to bring private sector investment and expertise, driving economic growth and enhancing the competitiveness of the entire Northern Corridor region.

In June 2025, the NCTTCA, in collaboration with GIZ, German International Cooperation, and the CONNEX Initiative, hosted a regional workshop focused on enhancing negotiation and contract management skills for infrastructure megaprojects in the transport and energy sectors.

This transformative event, titled “Negotiating in the 21st Century: Getting a Better Infrastructure Deal for the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority and its Member States,” brought together policymakers, industry experts, and private sector representatives from Northern Corridor Member States of Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda to tackle the challenges and opportunities involved in negotiating fair and sustainable infrastructure contracts.

The preparation and execution of infrastructure megaprojects often presented unique challenges, particularly at the negotiation stage between governments and private investors. Governments frequently faced a disparity in resources and expertise compared to private sector counterparts. The workshop aimed to bridge this gap by fostering peer learning and knowledge exchange on best practices for negotiating fairer and more effective contracts.



Delegates attending Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority the 9th PPP Stakeholders Committee Meeting held in Mombasa in June 2025 are captured here all ears to the ongoing deliberations. The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration for sustainable growth along the northern corridor.



Dr. DENG TALKS ON THE FUTURE OUTLOOK OF NCTTCA

Dr. Eng. John Deng Diar Diing was appointed as the Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) to run the Secretariat for a six-year term, commencing in September 2024. He aims at transforming the Northern Corridor into a seamless, efficient, smart, and sustainable economic development corridor. This transformation focuses on reducing trade costs, improving regional connectivity, integrating green transport, and promoting investment along the transit route. In an interview with **George Sunguh**, the Editor of the handbook commemorating the Authority's 40th anniversary, the ES spoke of various achievable ways to chart the Future Outlook of NCTTCA. Below are the excerpts of the interview.

Question1: The Executive Board of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport has, on several occasions, appealed to Member States to domesticate the provision of the Transit and Transport Agreement of the Northern Corridor in their respective national laws and regulations. How successful has this been?

Dr. Deng': The treaty was signed in 1985 and came up with broad landscape policies to be translated into laws. The treaty has been reviewed twice. The countries have generally complied with the treaty's provisions, but domestication requires a basic response to specific issues.

Issues of trade facilitation are captured under the tripartite framework and mostly domesticated in these countries. Largely speaking, the exercise is successful.

However, there are some gray areas specific to particular protocols, such as the automation of customs processes. We still have some challenges because some countries have not yet domesticated this in their laws. For example, South Sudan, with which we are working to automate its customs system.

DR Congo has just finished the exercise, and before the end of 2026, it should be integrated into the regional customs territory. As it is, I think we are moving in the right direction.

Question 2: As you celebrate the 40th anniversary of NCTTCA, have all the Member States ratified the Transit Transport Agreement, and deposited the instruments with the Secretariat as required?

Dr. Deng': Yes. The last revision of the agreement, which was signed in 2023, is now being ratified. The agreement, as it was signed and released into operation, has been ratified by all Member States.

Question 3: The NCTTCA Secretariat once surveyed the transit road linking the Port of Mombasa to Burundi and Rwanda via Tanzania (via Nairobi and Isebania) to assess its viability as a shorter alternative transit route. What impact has this alternative route had on the initial Northern Corridor route?

Dr. Deng': This is quite an operationally important question. All efforts have been made to ensure that all Member States accessing the Port of Mombasa through Northern Tanzania are within our logistics reach. There has been a framework of engagement and awareness of the border procedures.

We are aware that Tanzania has its own interests and views the Port of Mombasa as a competitor to the Port of Dar es Salaam.

This is something that we cannot wish away overnight. The agents at the border have come to understand that trade transcends politics. At the same time, we are keeping the traditional route as long as it remains efficient. As a result, we have seen some good impact.

Cargo to Rwanda has increased from 200,000 metric tonnes to 700,000 metric tonnes. Burundi cargo has also gone overboard. These are the countries affected by the route passing through Northern Tanzania. Our focus has been on ensuring that non-traffic barrier impediments do not affect trade in the region. Otherwise, we are on a positive trajectory in all aspects.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Question 4: The Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) was formally launched on March 2, 2012, by the Presidents of Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan as a new integrated transport corridor from the traditional Northern Corridor. How do the two corridors intend to work together?

Dr. Deng': We cannot decide how these two corridors should work together. One thing is for sure, they will have to share the logistics that go through the Port of Mombasa.

We have submitted a proposal to the Government of Kenya for the NCTTCA to manage the transit trade at the two ports of Mombasa and Lamu.

LAPSSET serves South Sudan and Ethiopia through Kenya. South Sudan is a member of the Northern Corridor, while Ethiopia is not. We are now geared to woo Ethiopia to join NCTTCA. According to 2025 records, Ethiopia shipped about 100,000 metric tonnes through the Port of Mombasa.

This was more than what the port handled for Burundi. We are sure that if we can invest in facilitating this trade, it can easily reach 300,000 Metric tons or even more.

The volume of Burundi cargo, on the other hand, tripled. In my mind, the Kenyan government has no reason to host two institutions serving the same purpose. Although NCTTCA is an international institution, it is hosted by the Kenyan government.

There is no reason, in my opinion, that we should have another institution handling transit trade on the LAPSSET Corridor. During the same period, Somalia exported about 6,000 metric tons through the Port of Mombasa, and it, too, can eventually join the NCTTCA. It is my wish that we bring Ethiopia on board and that the LAPSSET is subsumed by the NCTTCA.

Question 5: While significant efforts and legal frameworks, such as the NCTTCA agreement, aim to harmonize railway standards and procedures across the Northern Corridor, the lines are not fully harmonized, as the region still operates on Meter Gauge Railways (MGRs) and new Standard Gauge Railways (SGRs). What plans do you have for seamless rail integration in the region?

Dr. Deng': The meter-gauge railway network has been here for the past 100 years. They were developed as regional lines, not on a country basis. So by design, they were harmonized. The concession made in 2004 to place them under a single management was meant to last for 20 years. This expired in 2025. All that needs to be done is to ensure that they are fully operational.

On the Standard Gauge Railways (SGR) side, Kenya went with the Chinese, while Uganda initially settled on the Chinese but later dropped them in favor of the Turks. Some variance was discovered in the design.

As NCTTCA, we convened a meeting of technocrats to harmonise the designs before Uganda starts the construction work. We still have outdated policies for managing rolling stock. The current arrangement requires that Kenya Railways transport Ugandan cargo from the Port of Mombasa to the Busia or Malaba border, from where Uganda Railways takes it to the final destination.

There should be agreement on how best to manage this. Uganda thinks that if Kenya takes its cargo from the Port of Mombasa to Kampala, their rolling stock will remain idle.

Given how political it is, we cannot help but insist on a seamless intermodal system. Otherwise, the time and cost of loading, transporting, and delivering the cargo to the final destination should be kept short and as cost-effective as possible.

Question 6: At what stage are plans to extend the rail network connecting Kampala and Mombasa to Kisangani to support the development of the Kisangani Port and the inland waterways transport mode?

Dr. Deng': Kenya is at an advanced stage of finalizing Section B from Kisumu to Malaba. Cargo meant for Lake Victoria will be dropped in Kisumu, while what is meant for Malaba will be taken all the way to Malaba.

Uganda, on the other hand, has already signed a contract with a Turkish company. The handover of the site was completed in December 2025. There are still a few basic issues to be addressed. Rwanda currently has no railways. They have to prepare policies and everything that entails.

Question 7: The introduction of the One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) on the Northern Corridor has been hailed by a section of port users as a highly innovative and transformative idea that could deliver truly seamless trade facilitation across the Eastern Africa region. What is your comment on this?

Dr. Deng': Yes. This was a great idea; it works, but of course, it can be perfected. The infrastructure is in place, and the institutional interaction framework is in place, but there are a few things to be done to make the programme achieve its desired goals.

If the infrastructure and roads constructed are not aligned with the process, the goals cannot be fully achieved. If you go to Malaba or Busia, you realize that the design of the One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) sections, which were meant to be 'drive through', are not being used because the scanners were not designed into the framework. So the trucks have to bypass the 'Drive Through' section to be scanned elsewhere.

We are currently looking for the resources to redesign the whole section embedded with the scanners.

Number two, auxiliary facilities like impounding areas are not available. So if a truck is found non-compliant, its arrest causes a jam.

Thirdly, the continuous power outages are one of the issues that have grossly affected the OSBPs. The concept is indeed transformative, but these are some of the technological issues that need to be perfected. One of the best achievements of the OSBPs is that border communities no longer see each other as antagonists, but as partners in one business.

Question 8: The Northern Corridor Secretariat has made commendable efforts to digitize trade facilitation (like electronic cargo tracking) within the region, but underlying issues of ICT infrastructure & Connectivity needs at various Border points persist. What is being done to improve these facilities?

Dr. Deng': The Regional Electronic Cargo System, which tracks cargo, is one of the areas of the virtual clearance automation of customs processes that we need to improve. If cargo tracking cannot be done, you have not integrated your customs processes.



Kenya is doing fairly well in this aspect. The Kenya Revenue Authority is providing tracking gadgets. The government is contemplating privatizing this service so that the gadgets can be accessed easily, but of course, there is a risk to that. Some unscrupulous people may mount their own gadgets that blind the official one on the truck, rendering the whole exercise useless.

Question 9: The Tripartite (COMESA, EAC, SADC) and Northern Corridor stakeholders have been working to harmonize axle load standards, with significant agreements and implementation efforts, notably the 2008 EAC agreement on axle mass harmonization and subsequent regional initiatives such as the 2014 Port Charter. Are you satisfied with the level of adoption within the Member States?

Dr. Deng': The implementation of the axle load control is largely successful. We only have issues with the vehicle management system.

In South Sudan, the axle load control is yet to be adopted. Traffic matters are managed by the police, who are both regulators and enforcers of the law.

In DR Congo, the same control system has yet to be fully implemented, as the country has been at war for most of the recent period.

Question 10: The Northern Corridor has been at the forefront of collecting data through its Transport Observatory Portal and Time Release Studies (TRS), gathering key performance indicators (KPIs) from stakeholders. How much has this helped improve regional trade efficiency?

“When I took office, the throughput at the Port of Mombasa was about 36 million metric tonnes, and I said that by the time I leave office, it should be at 50 million metric tonnes. That means I would have eliminated many non-tariff barriers and made it easier for more goods to reach the hinterland countries.

Dr. Deng': We collect data and produce an annual report that measures all 45 indicators. This has been a very successful exercise, and it is the basis for our engagement with Member States on various interventions.

We have seen port indicators consistently improve as a result of this exercise, while trade facilitation has improved through the monitoring of the indicators. Over the last two years, we have seen a considerable increase in cargo throughput at the port. We have created an ambiance that is friendly to traders.

Under a new concept by Trade Mark Africa called Trade Catalyst East Africa, we are working to establish express lanes at our borders. If you don't want to queue, you can pay a special fee, say USD 10, and bypass the jam.

To me, such a concept will be a game-changer, as it will allow perishable goods to be released faster than waiting up to 3 hours. I think we are the best corridor in Africa.

Question 11: The latest NCTTCA Strategic Plan (2022-2026) focuses on making the corridor seamless, efficient, smart, and a driver of regional economic development through infrastructure, trade facilitation, and sustainability initiatives, such as the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030. How much has been achieved in transforming the corridor into a "smart corridor" for seamless trade?

Dr. Deng': We are currently reviewing the Strategic Plan's performance. I rate the level of achievement at over 60 per cent. The areas of performance have been quite ambitious, even though. We will simplify the next version, focusing only on areas that can be addressed within the four-year time frame.

What we have done in this strategic plan is build a framework of collaborators to mobilise stakeholders.

Early last year, we went to the Netherlands with UNEP and met with several agencies, including the GIZ (a German development agency), the Smart Freight Centre, the Climate Centre, and Clean Coalition for Air.

We got USD 700,000 from GIZ for electrification projects within the Northern Corridor.

In the next 50 years, vehicles will be electric. We have to map the availability of energy sources within the region and the distribution of power; the availability of the charging stations, and the number of electric vehicles within the region.

All these are combined with the availability of institutions to manage all these resources and the participation of the private sector.

All this is being mapped out, and once the report is out, we will know the state of each country's preparation for electrification. The country that needs policy formulation, legal framework, and capacity building, we will support them in that direction. To me, this is an achievement I will be proud of when I leave the Northern Corridor Secretariat.

Question 12: Removing obstacles, streamlining customs procedures, and promoting cross-border trade were among the central reasons for the Northern Corridor initiatives. How successful can you say you are, 40 years down the line?

Dr. Deng': Streamlining customs processes online across the region promotes cross-border trade. Some areas are successful while others are

still a work in progress. The COMESA simplified regime is the most important tool we have in promoting cross-border trade. The tool says that goods valued at less than USD 2,000 should not be subject to customs procedures. It thus makes it easy for a person to load, say, a bag of maize onto his bicycle, ride across the border to the market, and sell it there.

The Goma, Bukavu, Busia, Malaba, and Eleku are among the most successful stories under the COMESA simplified regime theme. We have, however, noticed gaps that we are working on. We have been focusing heavily on promoting trade while doing little to develop it. We have developed a framework to work with commercial banks to provide, say, USD 500 loans to small cross-border traders on a weekly basis to facilitate their business.

We have spoken with AGRA (the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa) to get us started with USD 100,000. This particular programme will be managed by the Equity Bank. If this experiment works well, we will extend it to other border posts.

Question 13: What are some of the main challenges inhibiting the NCTTCA dream?

Dr. Deng': Politics. Certain political decisions made at various levels in various countries hinder trade. For example, in Burundi and Rwanda, some borders are not operational just because of politics. The same case with South Sudan and Kenya. To me, these are some of the challenges inhibiting the NCTTCA dream. If we can change our political attitude, the rest are just operational issues that can be easily managed.

Question 14: What legacy would you like to leave at the Secretariat when your term comes to full fruition?

Dr. Deng': When I took office, the throughput at the Port of Mombasa was about 36 million metric tonnes, and I said that by the time I leave office, it should be at 50 million metric tonnes.

That means I would have eliminated many non-tariff barriers and made it easier for more goods to reach the hinterland countries. To operationalize that, I would love to see the Naivasha Inland Container Depot developed so that goods destined to Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda are not handled in Mombasa, but in Naivasha. This means we would have reduced the distance for the port users in these countries by about 700 kms.

This means we would have reduced the distance from the point of custom handling to Kigali from 1,600 km to 950 km, to Bunjumbura from about 1,200 km to 300 km, to Uganda from 300 km to about 600 km, and to South Sudan from about 600 km to 300 km.

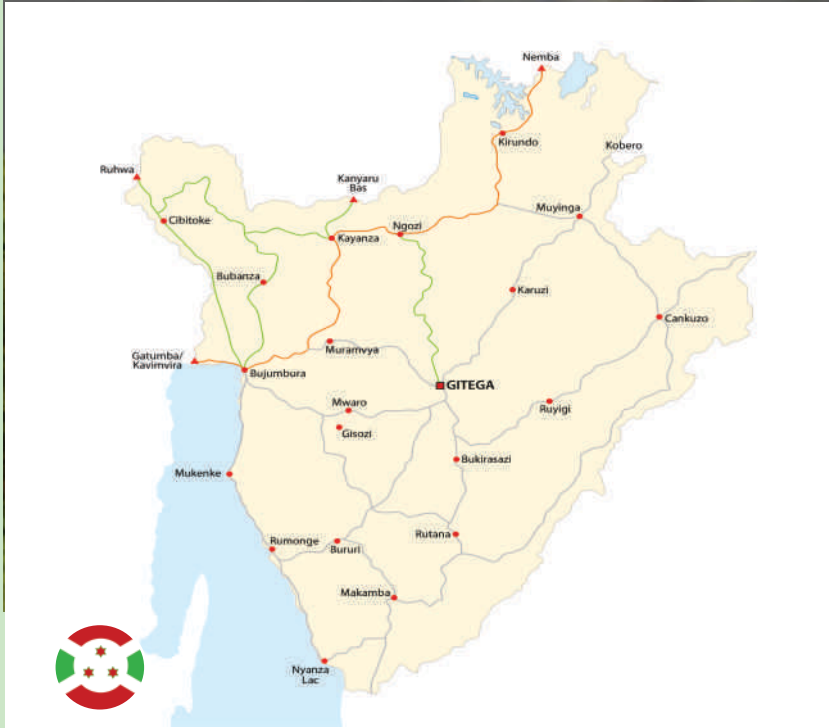
If we can do this, it will significantly change the dynamics of trade in the region.

Secondly, I would like to have all Member States' customs processes automated and integrated, so that there is no duplication of declarations for goods.

Finally, I would like to have the Kisangani border (between the DRC and Uganda) and the Kenya-South Sudan border opened for trade.

I would also like to see Ethiopia join the Northern Corridor.

PROFILE - BURUNDI



FACTFILE:

Country Name	Republic of Burundi
Capital	Gitega(political); Bujumbura (economic)
Population (million, 2025)	14.05
Real GDP growth (2025, %)	4.6
Area (km²)	25,680
Official Languages	Kirundi, French, English
Key Neighbours	Rwanda, DRC, Tanzania
Signature Landmark	Lake Tanganyika; national drumming tradition



A partial aerial view of the Port of Bujumbura - (AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP - 25-Aug-2023)

Burundi is a founding signatory of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (1985) and uses the Port of Mombasa as a secondary maritime gateway alongside the Port of Dar es Salaam. Most Northern Corridor-bound traffic to Burundi moves by road through Uganda and Rwanda, reflecting the corridor's role in ensuring predictable access to seaborne trade for landlocked economies. The corridor segment serving Burundi is strategically important for resilience and route diversification, particularly during disruptions affecting alternative gateways.

The alternative Northern Corridor route is significantly boosting Burundi-bound traffic via the Port of Mombasa, reducing cargo transit times by up to and improving regional trade efficiency. The alternative Northern Corridor route via Voi-Taveta-Holili-Singida boosts Burundi traffic by offering a shorter, 1,545km path from the Port of Mombasa, reducing travel distance by over 350km. This corridor, supported by the Holili/Taveta One-Stop Border Post, aims to lower transport costs, improve regional trade, and reduce cargo reliance on the traditional Malaba route.

Infrastructure and facilitation snapshot:

- **Roads:** Burundi's corridor connectivity depends on cross-border road continuity and reliability of key bridges and urban approaches to Bujumbura.
- **Rail:** Burundi currently has no operational railway; rail connectivity remains a medium- to long-term investment priority for regional integration.
- **Inland Waterways:** Modernisation of Bujumbura Port and Lake Tanganyika navigation remains central to improving inland maritime logistics and reducing road pressure.
- **Trade Facilitation:** One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) and streamlined customs cooperation are critical to reducing transit time and predictability risks for Burundi-bound cargo.
- **Safety & Sustainability:** Roadside Stations (RSS) planning supports safer driving, regulated rest, and basic services along long-haul routes.



DRC HAS THE LARGEST FOOTPRINTS ON THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR

The DRC acceded to the Northern Corridor Agreement in 1988, formalising long-standing trade dependence on coastal gateways for its vast eastern hinterland. The country's Northern Corridor interface is anchored in cross-border connections with Uganda and Rwanda, with corridor performance shaped by road condition variability and security dynamics in parts of the eastern region. Strengthening corridor reliability for the DRC is therefore as much a governance and safety agenda as it is an infrastructure agenda.

Infrastructure and facilitation snapshot

- **Roads:** The DRC has the largest corridor road footprint among member states; performance is strongly influenced by pavement

condition, axle-load enforcement capacity, and security predictability.

- **Rail & Inland Waterways:** Inland waterway nodes (e.g., Congo River-related systems) remain important for national connectivity, but require sustained rehabilitation to play a stronger multimodal role.
- **Borders & OSBPs:** OSBPs such as Ruzizi II and Mahagi are critical 'choke-point reducers' for DRC trade with the EAC and Great Lakes region.
- **Compliance Systems:** Consistent axle-load control and improved data systems are essential to protect roads and reduce logistics costs for long-haul freight.



FACTFILE:

Country Name	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Capital	Kinshasa
Population (million, 2025)	111.73
Real GDP growth (2025, %)	5.1
Area (km ²)	2,267,050
Official Languages	French(official); Lingala, Kiswahili(Kingwana), Kikongo, Tshiluba(major national languages)
Key Neighbours	Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, South Sudan, CAR, Zambia, Angola, Republic of Congo
Signature Landmark	Virunga National Park, Congo River System

PROFILE - KENYA



ROAD CONDITION PROFILE(IRI-BASED, CORRIDOR SECTIONS)

Very Good (<2) km	605
Good (2-3.99) km	553
Fair (4-5.99) km	249
Total km	1407

FACTFILE:

Country Name	Republic of Kenya
Capital	Nairobi
Population (million, 2025)	56.43
Real GDP growth (2025, %)	4.9
Area (km²)	582,644
Official Languages	English, Kiswahili
Key Neighbours	Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia
Signature Landmark	Great Rift Valley, Maasai Mara, Mount Kenya



Kenya is the coastal gateway of the Northern Corridor, hosting the Port of Mombasa and the core multimodal spine connecting to Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan and the eastern DRC. As a founding member (Agreement signed in 1985), Kenya's corridor performance anchors regional supply chains through port efficiency, road reliability, border facilitation, and the growing role of rail. In 2025, inland container depots (notably Nairobi ICD) and targeted axle-load control systems continued to shape corridor throughput and road preservation outcomes.

Infrastructure and facilitation snapshot

- **Roads (condition):** Kenya's corridor road sections are

predominantly in very good or good condition, supporting high freight volumes and time-sensitive trade.

- **Rail:** The Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) supports port–hinterland movement and decongests highways, with ICD interfaces central to last-mile logistics.
- **Ports & Inland Waterway Linkages:** Kisumu Port and associated lake logistics strengthen multimodal options and regional connectivity on Lake Victoria.
- **Trade Facilitation:** OSBPs, Single Window systems, and RECTS contribute to predictable clearance and reduced dwell/queue time.



Rwanda is a landlinked Northern Corridor member state whose competitiveness depends on reliable access to maritime gateways, with the corridor providing a key route via Uganda to the Port of Mombasa. Rwanda's performance advantage is reinforced by strong road quality and a policy focus on logistics efficiency, border modernisation, and systems integration. As regional trade grows, Rwanda's priorities increasingly emphasise multimodal options, safe roads in mountainous terrain, and digital facilitation to reduce trade transaction costs.

Infrastructure and facilitation snapshot

- **Roads (condition):** Rwanda's corridor road sections are largely

in very good/good condition, supporting predictable truck movement.

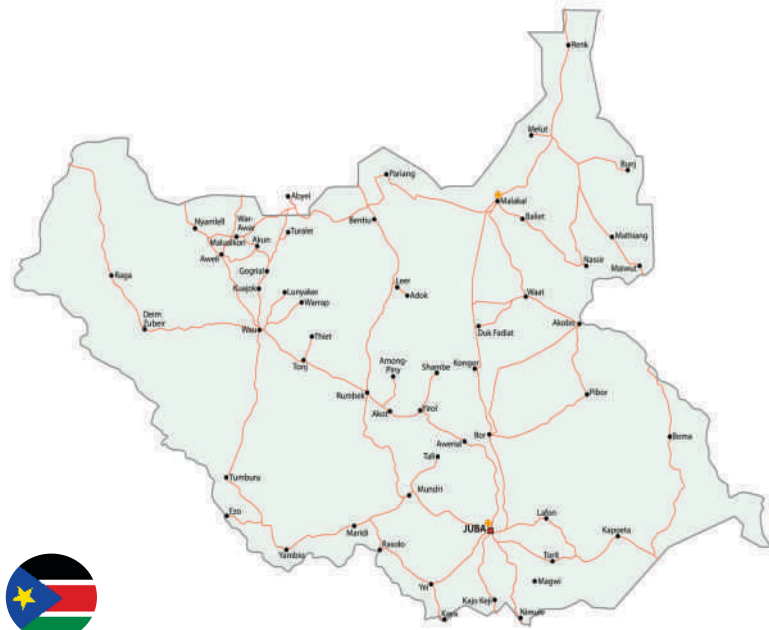
- **Rail:** Rwanda has no operational railway, but remains engaged in regional SGR planning to strengthen multimodal resilience.
- **Borders & OSBPs:** Gatuna and border interfaces with the DRC are strategic for regional integration and reduced clearance time.
- **Inland Waterways:** Lake Kivu port development initiatives strengthen domestic and cross-border lake logistics potential.



ROAD CONDITION PROFILE(IRI-BASED, CORRIDOR SECTIONS)	
Very Good (<2) km	468
Good (2-3.99) km	413
Fair (4-5.99) km	61
Total km	942

FACTFILE:	
Country Name	Republic of Rwanda
Capital	Kigali
Population (million, 2025)	14.26
Real GDP growth (2025, %)	7.0
Area (km ²)	26,338
Official Languages	Kinyarwanda, French, English
Key Neighbours	Uganda, Tanzania, Burudi, DRC
Signature Landmark	Volcanoes National Park (mountain gorillas)

PROFILE - SOUTH SUDAN



FACTFILE:

Country Name	Republic of South Sudan
Capital	Juba
Population (million, 2025)	11.94
Real GDP growth (2025, %)	-23.8
Area (km ²)	610,952
Official Languages	English (primary)
Key Neighbours	Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, DRC, CAR
Signature Landmark	The Sudd Wetland



NORTHERN CORRIDOR-A LIFELINE TO SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan acceded to the Northern Corridor Agreement in 2012, extending the corridor's development and trade facilitation mandate into one of Africa's newest and most logistically constrained economies. South Sudan's corridor priorities are shaped by long distances, fragile road condition in parts of the network, and the need to institutionalise predictable border and customs operations. The corridor continues to serve as a strategic lifeline for essential supplies and reconstruction inputs, while policy reforms aim to improve safety, reliability, and multimodal integration over time.

Infrastructure and facilitation snapshot

Roads: The corridor network in South Sudan is extensive but faces significant condition and resilience constraints, increasing the

importance of prioritised rehabilitation and climate-proofing.

- Borders & OSBPs:** Interfaces with Uganda (Elegu/Nimule) and Kenya (Nadapal) are essential for reducing delays and supporting structured trade flows.
- Systems:** Adoption of cargo tracking and customs modernisation tools strengthens compliance, reduces diversion risk, and supports revenue protection.
- Safety:** Roadside parking/controlled stops and planned RSS facilities support fatigue management and safer long-haul operations.



UGANDA SERVES AS THE ANCHOR TO THE CORRIDOR'S HINTERLAND MARKET

Malaba One-Stop Border Post - BusinessQuest (11,2024)

Uganda is a founding signatory and remains the largest transit cargo destination through the Port of Mombasa, positioning it as the Northern Corridor's anchor hinterland market. The corridor connects Uganda to Mombasa through the Malaba and Busia interfaces and links onward to Rwanda, South Sudan and the eastern DRC, making Uganda both a destination and a critical transit node. With strong economic growth and rising trade volumes, sustaining corridor performance for Uganda depends on road preservation, safer operations on high-traffic sections, and continued improvement of border and customs systems.

Infrastructure and facilitation snapshot

- Roads (condition):** Uganda's corridor sections are predominantly in good condition, but targeted upgrading is needed on high-traffic

and safety-sensitive segments to manage congestion, terrain risks and crash exposure.

- Rail:** The Meter Gauge Railway (MGR) historically linked Mombasa–Kampala and remains important for multimodal potential as rehabilitation progresses.
- Inland Waterways:** Lake Victoria links via Port Bell (Kampala) remain strategic for multimodal logistics when supported by reliable lake services and rail-road interfaces.
- Borders & OSBPs:** Malaba and Busia are key gateways with Kenya; Elegu/Nimule is critical for South Sudan-bound movement—OSBPs reduce duplicated procedures and improve predictability.
- Digital Facilitation:** Implementation of SCT-aligned processes and cargo tracking systems (including RECTS) strengthens compliance, transparency and transit security.

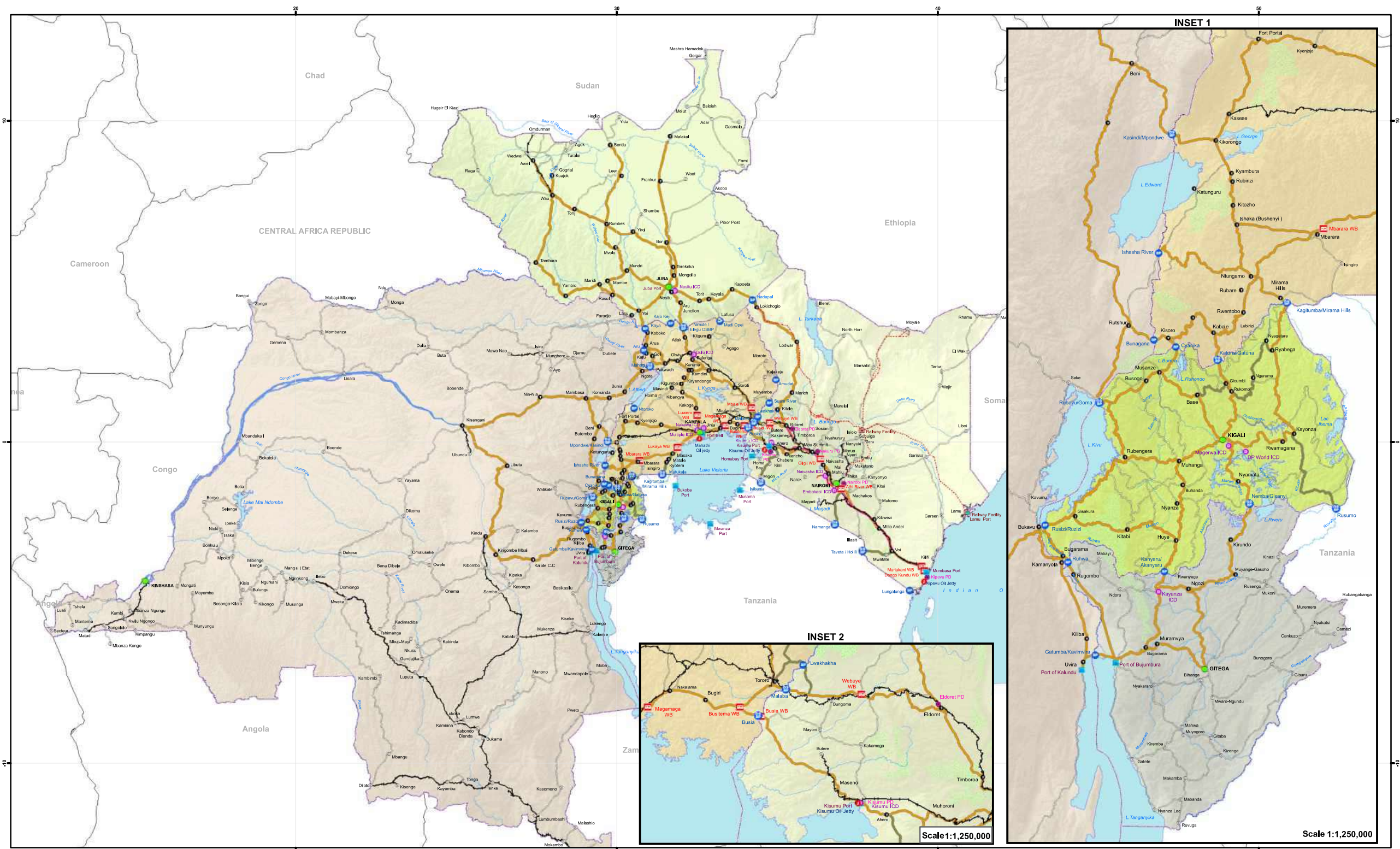


ROAD CONDITION PROFILE(IRI-BASED, CORRIDOR SECTIONS)

Very Good (<2) km	425
Good (2-3.99) km	1451
Fair (4-5.99) km	363
Poor (6-10) km	59
Total km	2298

FACTFILE:

Country Name	Republic of Uganda
Capital	Kampala
Population (million, 2025)	50.02
Real GDP growth (2025, %)	6.3
Area (km ²)	199,810
Ease of doing business score (1-100)	60
Official language(s)	English, Kiswahili (official EAC context) and major local languages
Key neighbours	Kenya, South Sudan, DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania
Signature landmark	Lake Victoria; source of the Nile (Jinja)



CLIENT	TITLE	MAP DETAILS	LEGEND	MAP LOCATION	CONSULTANT
 Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Co-ordination Authority 1196 Links Road, Nyali P O Box 34068 - 80118 Mombasa, Kenya Tel: 254 41 4470734, 254 729 923574, 254 733 532495; Telefax: 254 414470735 Email: ncca@ncca.org	NORTHERN CORRIDOR MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE MAP	- Map Projection: Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84) - Northern Corridor Member States: 6 (Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi & DRC) - Map compiled with data provided by Northern Corridor Secretariat and publicly available datasets - Map publication date: October 2022	LEGEND - Town - Transit Town - City - Inland Container Depot (ICD) - Boarder Post - One Stop Boarder Post - Weigh Bridge (WB) - Ports - Pipeline Depot (PD) - Oil Jetty - Lamu Port (LAPSSET) - Railway Facilities (LAPSSET) - Standard Gauge Railway - Meter Gauge Railway - Pipeline - Northern Corridor Road - Alternative Route - Other Road - River - Lapsset Corridor - International Boundary - Member State - Forest - Lake - Member State Boundary Member State - Burundi - DRC - Kenya - Rwanda - South Sudan - Uganda INSET1: Burundi, Rwanda & Part of Uganda INSET2: Busia-Malaba Scale 1:6,000,000		CONSULTANT Published by  Geomaps Centre . Matumbato Road , Upperhill, P.o Box 61071-00200. Tel: 254 (020)2715829,2713350. Email: geomaps@geofafrica.com This map is not an authority on boundaries

Towards a more connected world

Trade flourishes when aspirations are nurtured, economies are bolstered, and global unity is fostered. At the Port of Mombasa, we excel not only in handling your cargo efficiently but also in proactively meeting your expectations. Our dedicated team, cutting-edge infrastructure, modern equipment, e-cargo processing capabilities, and robust multi-modal transport network have solidified our position as a pivotal regional logistics hub.

Furthermore, our modern cruise terminal offers a plethora of amenities including lounges, restaurants, and gift shops, ushering in a realm of uncharted expedition for you to explore. As the exclusive safari port along the Indian Ocean, the Port of Mombasa presents a gateway to an unparalleled cruise experience, inviting passengers to embark on a journey to discover the enchanting wonders of Kenya through the realm of cruise travel.



THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR AGREEMENT POWERS EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA'S TRADE

The Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement is quietly shaping the flow of trade, investment and regional integration across East and Central Africa.

Through its Protocols, it reveals how policy, infrastructure and commerce intersect along one of the continent's most strategic trade arteries.

The arteries of commerce in East and Central Africa are governed by a single, vital document: the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA).

Far more than a technical trade agreement, the Agreement serves as the operating manual for one of Africa's most important economic lifelines, connecting the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa to the vast hinterlands of Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For decades, the Northern Corridor has been the primary gateway through which fuel, food, machinery and manufactured goods reach landlocked economies.

Today, as regional trade volumes rise and supply chains become more complex, the effectiveness of this corridor has become a central business issue.

Logistics costs in the region remain among the highest in the world, often accounting for more than 40 per cent of the final cost of goods. Every delay at the port, border or weighbridge ultimately feeds into higher prices for consumers and reduced competitiveness for businesses.

It is against this backdrop that the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement, particularly its eleven detailed Protocols, assumes strategic importance.

The most recent updates, adopted at an Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee on October 7, 2020, reaffirmed the commitment of Contracting Parties to harmonise regulations, remove non-tariff barriers and modernise transport systems.

The Agreement is not merely about moving goods faster; it is about creating predictability, transparency and shared economic interest across borders.

This article examines the NCTTA protocol in detail, illustrating how each pillar contributes to the functioning of the Corridor and why its implementation is crucial to traders, manufacturers, investors, and policymakers across the region.

At its core, the Northern Corridor is a logistics system. The first three protocols address the physical movement of goods, establishing common rules for maritime ports, roads, and railways.

Every container, bag of fertiliser or litre of fuel entering the Northern Corridor begins its journey at sea.

NO. 1 MARITIME PORT FACILITIES



Protocol No. 1, which governs maritime port facilities, therefore sets the tone for the entire system.

Its guiding principle is simple but powerful: equal treatment for all Contracting Parties using Kenya's maritime port facilities, principally the Port of Mombasa.

Under this Protocol, the Government of Kenya undertakes to facilitate the use of port infrastructure by other Corridor states for the movement of transit goods.

This includes ensuring access to warehouses, transit sheds, container yards and open storage areas operated by the Kenya Ports Authority or authorised private entities. Services must be provided in a timely, equitable and non-discriminatory manner.

From a business perspective, this provision effectively internationalises the Port of Mombasa. Decisions on port efficiency, automation and capacity expansion are no longer purely national concerns; they have direct implications for economies hundreds of kilometres inland.

THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR AGREEMENT POWERS EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA'S TRADE

Any congestion at the port quickly translates into higher demurrage costs, stock shortages and price pressures in Kampala, Kigali or Bujumbura. By embedding shared responsibility and rights within the port system, the Protocol aligns Kenya's port development agenda with regional economic stability.

infrastructure investment while improving road safety. For logistics firms, this harmonisation allows for better fleet planning, predictable delivery schedules and lower long-term operating costs.

NO. 2 ROUTES AND FACILITIES



Protocol No.2

Once cargo exits the port, it moves largely by road, making Protocol No. 2 one of the most operationally significant elements of the Agreement.

Road transport remains the dominant mode for containerised cargo and regional trade, despite growing investment in rail.

This Protocol addresses long-standing challenges along the Corridor, including multiple transit charges, inconsistent permits and divergent traffic regulations.

It seeks to harmonise transport licensing so that a truck authorised in one country can operate across borders with minimal administrative friction.

Standardised documentation reduces bureaucracy and limits opportunities for corruption, a persistent concern for transporters.

A critical provision relates to axle load control and vehicle dimensions. Overloaded trucks have historically caused severe damage to regional road networks, resulting in increased maintenance costs and slower transit.

By enforcing uniform axle load limits and traffic regulations, the Protocol protects

NO. 3 CUSTOMS CONTROL AND OPERATIONS



Protocol No. 3 focuses on rail transport, which plays a crucial role in efficiently and sustainably moving bulk cargo. Rail offers clear advantages for heavy commodities such as fuel, cement, grain and steel, particularly over long distances.

The Protocol promotes the standardisation of rolling stock and the harmonisation of railway operating rules. Its objective is to enable seamless cross-border rail operations, reducing the need for transshipment at borders.

Provisions cover common transit charges, coordination of railway personnel and the elimination of bottlenecks at border stations.

In the context of renewed investment in the Standard Gauge Railway, this Protocol provides the regulatory foundation for deeper rail integration.

For large-scale importers and exporters, reliable rail services mean lower logistics costs, reduced congestion on highways and a smaller environmental footprint. Recognising that a resilient corridor cannot rely on a single mode of transport, the NCTTA incorporates complementary systems that expand reach and flexibility.

For countries bordering the Great Lakes, inland water transport remains an underutilised asset.

THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR AGREEMENT POWERS EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA'S TRADE

NO. 10 HANDLING OF DANGEROUS GOODS



Protocol No. 10 applies pursuant to Article 41(b) of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement and governs the handling and transport of dangerous goods within the territories of the Contracting Parties. The protocol also provides for the adoption of the Tripartite Model Law on the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road.

The protocol covers all materials, substances and articles classified as dangerous goods under internationally accepted recommendations, whether transported in transit or as part of interstate trade within the corridor. Definitions applicable to the protocol are those provided under Article 1 of the parent Agreement.

In recognising international best practice, the Contracting Parties agreed to apply instruments and standards developed by global bodies, including the United Nations Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, the International Atomic Energy Agency's regulations on radioactive materials, the Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, the International Civil Aviation Organization's technical instructions, and the Basel Convention on hazardous waste.

The parties further acknowledged the mandatory status of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code from January 2004, with specified sections remaining recommendatory, including training requirements and certain operational provisions.

For classification purposes, the protocol relies on the United Nations' "Transport of Dangerous Goods" manual as the basis for identifying risks associated with dangerous goods.

Contracting Parties also undertook to ensure the proper labelling of dangerous goods using internationally recognised danger labels and placards, accompanied by clear national instructions for handling and transport.

Documentation requirements for dangerous goods are aligned with Section 8 of the Northern Corridor Transit Agreement, ensuring uniform procedures across member states.

NO. 11 MEASURES OF FACILITATION FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES, TRADERS AND EMPLOYEES



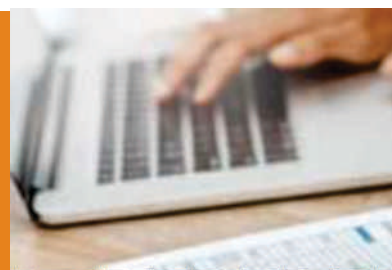
Protocol No. 11, adopted pursuant to Articles 43, 44 and 45 of the Agreement, focuses on facilitating the movement and operation of transit agencies, traders and their employees. The protocol aims to ensure the orderly management of interstate and transit traffic, as well as the smooth and speedy movement of goods across borders.

The protocol allows Contracting Parties to establish Transport Liaison Offices in each other's territories and to appoint liaison officers to support transit operations. It also grants duly recognised carriers permission to set up agencies in member states for interstate and transit traffic operations.

Member states committed to providing essential services and amenities to liaison offices and carrier agencies, including utilities and communication services, subject to prevailing charges. In addition, the protocol requires the issuance of multiple-entry visas and work permits of the longest possible duration to employees engaged in interstate and transit trade.

THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR AGREEMENT POWERS EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA'S TRADE

NO. 4 DOCUMENTATION AND PROCEDURES



Protocol No. 4 governs the use of shared waterways such as Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika as integral components of the Corridor.

The Protocol harmonises safety standards, navigation rules and port and landing site facilities. It also promotes cooperation in search and rescue operations, hydrographic surveys and the maintenance of navigational aids.

These measures are essential for improving safety and reliability, key prerequisites for attracting private investment into lake transport.

Inland waterways provide a cost-effective alternative for transporting bulky cargo and petroleum products, thereby reducing pressure on road networks. For Lake Basin economies, improved water transport strengthens links to regional markets and supports inclusive growth.

Air transport may account for a smaller share of freight by volume, but its economic impact is significant.

NO. 5 TRANSPORT OF GOODS BY RAIL



Protocol No. 5 outlines cooperation in air transport to facilitate the movement of passengers and high-value, time-sensitive cargo.

The Protocol focuses on harmonising aviation safety regulations, navigation aids and air traffic control services. It also encourages the simplification of border procedures for air cargo and the coordination of air service agreements among Contracting Parties.

For exporters of perishables such as fresh produce, flowers and pharmaceuticals, efficient air transport is essential. Improved regional air connectivity also supports business travel, tourism and investment flows, reinforcing the broader trade ecosystem.

NO. 6 TRANSPORT OF GOODS BY ROAD



Energy supply underpins every sector of the economy, and **Protocol No. 6** addresses the transport of petroleum products through pipelines. Pipelines provide a safer, cheaper and more environmentally friendly alternative to road tankers.

The Protocol establishes common rules for the operation, security and use of existing and future pipelines. It covers transit fees, capacity allocation and coordinated security measures to prevent sabotage or spills.

By ensuring predictability in fuel supply, the Protocol supports industrial production, transport services and household consumption across the Corridor.

Infrastructure alone cannot deliver efficient trade without supportive regulatory systems. Protocols Seven, Eight and Nine tackle the institutional and procedural barriers that often cause the most costly delays.

THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR AGREEMENT POWERS EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA'S TRADE

NO. 7 INLAND WATERWAYS TRANSPORT



The Protocol promotes risk-based inspections, electronic cargo tracking and close cooperation between customs authorities. At the same time, it strengthens joint efforts to combat smuggling, illicit trade and drug trafficking.

For businesses, the impact is tangible: shorter clearance times, reduced administrative costs and more predictable supply chains. For governments, improved compliance and data sharing enhance revenue collection without impeding trade.

Protocol No. 7 focuses on improving and harmonising communication systems along the Corridor, including telecommunications and postal services.

The Protocol encourages the integration of regional communication networks, standardised data formats and the use of digital technologies.

These measures support electronic cargo tracking, pre-arrival customs processing and coordinated border management. Faster information flow directly translates to reduced transit times and lower costs for businesses.

NO. 8 TRANSPORT BY PIPELINE



Protocol No. 8 is widely regarded as the most transformative for traders. It aims to simplify and harmonise customs procedures for transit goods across all Contracting Parties.

At its core is the move towards a single transit document or common transit regime, eliminating repetitive paperwork at each border.

NO. 9 MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT OF GOODS



Protocol No. 9 shifts the focus from transport efficiency to economic transformation. It commits Contracting Parties to promoting intra-regional trade, joint export strategies and cooperation in industrial and investment policy.

The Protocol recognises the importance of labour mobility, supporting the movement of drivers, mechanics, freight forwarders and other professionals.

Contracting States to the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement have adopted three far-reaching protocols aimed at enhancing safety in the handling of hazardous goods, facilitating transit operations for traders and transport workers, and mitigating the environmental impact of transport activities along the corridor.

THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR AGREEMENT POWERS EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA'S TRADE

To further ease movement, the Contracting Parties agreed to issue Laissez-Passer documents to transit and transport operators and their staff, in compliance with COMESA or EAC treaties. These documents may be cancelled in cases of legal infringement, with relevant enforcement agencies duly informed.

Employees of carrier agencies are permitted to travel freely along authorised routes, while service cards indicating identity, nationality and duties will be issued for official identification purposes. Member states also committed to exchanging information on uniforms, badges and identity documents used in transit operations.

The protocol concludes with an agreement on the registration of transit agencies operating within and through the territories of the Contracting Parties.

NO. 12 THE MITIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF TRANSPORT ACTIVITIES ON THE ENVIRONMENT



Protocol No. 12 addresses the environmental and climate-related impacts of transport activities along the Northern Corridor, pursuant to Article 48 of the Agreement. Its purpose is to promote cooperation in mitigating environmental degradation and strengthening the climate resilience of transport infrastructure.

The protocol defines key environmental and climate concepts, including sustainable development, climate change, green infrastructure, hazardous waste, ecosystems and environmental impact assessment. It applies to all transport-related activities, including maritime ports, road and rail freight, inland waterways and construction of transport infrastructure.

Contracting Parties are committed to adopting and harmonising environmental standards and laws to control pollution arising from transport activities, while balancing socio-

economic development with environmental protection. The protocol also obliges states to support scientific research and adopt technologies that reduce environmental harm.

On sustainable development, member states agreed to ensure that transport infrastructure projects are guided by sound environmental and social policies, with continuous monitoring of environmental impacts and measures to reduce carbon emissions from freight transport.

The protocol introduces a green transport policy framework, encouraging the development of green infrastructure, efficient logistics, cleaner fuels, well-maintained vehicle fleets and the promotion of public and non-motorised transport. It also calls for measures to reduce congestion and emissions through improved transport planning.

Fuel quality management is addressed through common standards, compliance programmes, fuel testing systems and penalties for non-compliance. The Contracting Parties further agreed to protect ecosystems and wildlife habitats along the corridor by preventing habitat fragmentation, wildlife collisions, floods, and landslides.

Regarding climate change adaptation, the protocol requires integrated planning to enhance the resilience of transport systems, including infrastructure designs that can withstand extreme weather events. Member states also agreed to develop a coordinated roadmap for climate risk mapping and mitigation.

Environmental management of inland waterways and port areas is also covered, with provisions on pollution control, vessel standards, data sharing and compliance by private operators. The protocol further mandates harmonised pollution control measures, including safe handling of oil products, hazardous substances and emissions.

Environmental impact assessments are mandatory for transport projects that have significant environmental impacts, particularly those with transboundary implications. The protocol also establishes frameworks for environmental disaster preparedness, public participation, access to environmental information and justice.

Compliance, dispute settlement and cooperation with third parties are provided for, with disputes to be resolved through negotiation or mechanisms set out in the Agreement. The protocol reaffirms that its provisions form an integral part of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement and do not override international obligations unless serious environmental harm would result from doing so.



STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH AfDB RESHAPING THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR

In the high-stakes world of regional integration, few partnerships carry as much weight for the future of East and Central Africa as the collaboration between the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

For nearly four decades, this alliance has been the bedrock of infrastructure development for the Northern Corridor, a multimodal trade route linking the maritime port of Mombasa to the landlocked hinterlands of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda.

Today, as Africa moves toward the realization of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the NCTTCA-AfDB relationship is evolving from a traditional lender-client dynamic into a sophisticated strategic partnership aimed at creating a "Smart and Green" economic artery.

Decades of Integration

The roots of this partnership date back to the mid-1980s. When the Northern Corridor Transit Agreement was first signed in 1985, the region faced a daunting challenge: extreme isolation of landlocked states and a crumbling road network that made trade prohibitively expensive.

The AfDB was among the first major development partners to recognize the NCTTCA's mandate. Over the last 40 years, the Bank has transitioned from funding isolated national road segments to supporting a holistic, "corridor-wide" approach.

This long-term commitment has been essential in transforming the Northern Corridor into one of the most efficient trade routes on the continent, moving from simple road repair to complex multimodal logistics.



Landmark Projects Across Six States

The cooperation between the NCTTCA and AfDB is visible in concrete and asphalt across all six member states. The Bank has injected billions of dollars into the corridor, focusing on both "hard" and "soft" infrastructure, including policy and trade facilitation.

In Kenya and Uganda, one of the most ambitious recent milestones is the US\$239 million additional financing approved in late 2025 to secure the full completion of the Mombasa–Eastern DRC trade corridor.

This funding specifically targets the elimination of the notorious "Kampala bottleneck" by advancing the Busega–Mpigi Expressway, a 27-kilometre stretch that currently adds hours of paralyzing congestion to regional trade.

In Rwanda and Burundi, the AfDB has been instrumental in the rehabilitation of the Kagitumba–Kayonza–Rusumo and Rumonge–Bujumbura roads.

These projects are more than just pavement; they are vital lifelines that connect agricultural hubs to international markets. For the DRC and South Sudan, the partnership has shifted focus toward feasibility studies and expansion.

Recent approvals in December 2025 include funding for the South Sudan–Ethiopia–Djibouti transport corridor, including updates to studies for the 280-kilometre Kapoeta–Boma–Raad road, ensuring that the corridor's benefits reach even the most remote regions of the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa.

Perhaps the most transformative joint effort has been the construction of One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) at critical crossings, such as Malaba and Rusumo.

By housing officials from two countries under one roof, these facilities have slashed transit times from days to mere hours.

These posts represent the "soft" side of the partnership, where AfDB funding meets NCTTCA's regulatory coordination to harmonize customs procedures and eliminate redundant documentation.

Measuring the Economic Impact

The economic dividends of the NCTTCA-AfDB partnership are quantifiable and profound. By reducing the "cost of distance," the collaboration has directly stimulated regional GDP growth. In 2012, it took an average of 18 days for a container to travel from Mombasa to Kampala.

Today, thanks to AfDB-funded road improvements and NCTTCA-led policy reforms, that time has been cut in half.

Furthermore, the transit time between Mombasa and Kigali, which used to take 7 to 10 days, is projected to fall to just 5 to 6 days once the current expressway projects are fully operational by 2030.

Modernized roads have led to a significant decrease in Vehicle Operating Costs (VOCs). For trucking companies, this means less wear and tear and lower fuel consumption—savings that are increasingly vital as global energy prices fluctuate.

The corridor now handles over 30 million tons of cargo annually, a massive leap that has enabled the region to keep pace with the exploding demand for imports and exports.

The AfDB's continuous investment ensures that the Port of Mombasa remains a competitive gateway, even as rival routes like Tanzania's Central Corridor advance.

Navigating the Roadblocks: Challenges Experienced

Despite the successes, the journey hasn't been without potholes. Both the NCTTCA and the AfDB acknowledge several persistent challenges. The "Maintenance Gap" remains a primary concern; building a road is one thing, but maintaining it is another.

Budgetary constraints in member states often lead to premature highway degradation, creating a "vicious cycle" in which infrastructure requires costly reconstruction rather than routine upkeep.

Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), such as illegal roadblocks, varying axle-load limits, and cumbersome documentation, continue to plague transporters despite efforts at digitalization.

Climate change has emerged as a formidable adversary. The 2024-2025 seasons saw increased flooding and landslides that damaged key corridor segments, necessitating US\$287 million in emergency repairs for Kenya alone.

This has forced the AfDB to rethink engineering standards to ensure "climate resilience." Furthermore, funding disparities and security concerns in conflict-affected regions of eastern DRC and South Sudan make it difficult to attract the private sector investment needed to complement Bank grants.

The Road Ahead: Future Plans

The future of the NCTTCA-AfDB partnership is defined by the Northern Corridor Strategic Plan (2022-2026) and the Green Freight Strategy 2030.

A major priority is Digitalization, moving toward a "Paperless Corridor" with integrated electronic cargo tracking and single-window systems.

There is also a concerted Multimodal Shift to move heavy cargo from roads to the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and inland waterways like Lake Victoria, which will reduce road damage and lower emissions.

The Green Freight Strategy 2030, endorsed by regional ministers in June 2024, is perhaps the most forward-looking initiative. It aims to reduce CO2 emission intensity and particulate matter by 10-12% by the end of the decade.

The strategy includes plans for "EV readiness" by 2030 and a goal of a net-zero emission corridor by 2050. To fund these ambitions, the AfDB is utilizing "Bankability" studies to attract Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), ensuring that the next generation of expressways is built and maintained through sustainable financial models.

The relationship between the NCTTCA and the African Development Bank is more than a financial agreement; it is a shared vision for a borderless Africa.

As they look toward 2030, the focus is shifting from simply moving goods to moving them sustainably and smartly.

For the 200 million people living within the Northern Corridor's sphere of influence, this partnership remains the most reliable vehicle for economic liberation.

PARTNERS



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANISATION PROVIDES THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR WITH A FOUNDATIONAL BLUEPRINT

In the intricate web of global commerce, the efficiency of a trade corridor often lies at the thin line between economic prosperity and stagnation.

At the heart of East and Central Africa's logistics network lays the Northern Corridor, a multimodal artery spanning six member states: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda.

Central to the success of this 1,200-mile stretch is the long-standing technical and strategic partnership between the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

This collaboration, spanning over two decades, has evolved from basic customs synchronization to a sophisticated digital and policy-driven alliance aimed at creating a seamless corridor for the region's 200 million citizens.

The relationship between the NCTTCA and the WCO is not a recent development. It dates back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, shortly after the NCTTCA was revitalized to manage the transit agreement of its member states.

The WCO, acting as the global steward of customs standards, provided the foundational blueprints for the Northern Corridor.

The partnership was cemented through the adoption of the Revised Kyoto Convention and the SAFE Framework of Standards, which the NCTTCA utilized to harmonize the divergent customs laws of its six member states.

Over the last 20 years, this relationship has shifted from periodic consultations to a continuous, integrated technical assistance program.

The NCTTCA and WCO have collaborated on several transformative projects that have fundamentally altered how goods move across East African borders. Perhaps the most significant joint venture is the implementation of the Time Release Study (TRS).

Using the WCO's internationally recognized methodology, the NCTTCA conducts periodic assessments to measure the actual time required for the release of goods from arrival at the Port of Mombasa to final release at inland destinations such as Kampala or Goma.

These studies identify bottlenecks, such as slow document processing or physical inspection delays, enabling evidence-based policy shifts to improve cargo flow.

Furthermore, the WCO has been instrumental in providing the technical framework for the Single Customs Territory (SCT).

This project allows for the assessment and collection of duties at the first point of entry in Mombasa. By training customs officials from all six states on WCO-standardized valuation and rules of origin, the partnership has significantly reduced the need for multiple checks and bond guarantees at internal borders.



significant reduction in customs fraud and revenue leakage.

Harmonized documentation makes it increasingly difficult to under-declare goods, ensuring that landlocked countries like Uganda and Burundi receive their fair share of tax revenue. However, the journey has not been without its roadblocks.

The NCTTCA and WCO face unique challenges, including infrastructure disparities. While Kenya and Rwanda have highly digitized customs systems, other members, such as South Sudan and parts of the DRC, are still catching up, creating a digital divide that can hinder corridor-wide efficiency.

Political and security instability also poses a threat to progress. Conflict in eastern DRC and South Sudan frequently disrupts the implementation of joint projects, placing WCO-trained customs officers at physical risk and leaving infrastructure vulnerable to damage.

Moreover, non-tariff barriers, such as numerous police checkpoints and varying weight limit enforcement, remain a persistent challenge that technical customs standards alone cannot solve.

Despite these hurdles, the organizations remain focused on the future, shifting their attention toward digitalization and sustainability for the 2025–2030 periods.

Looking ahead, the NCTTCA aims to integrate Artificial Intelligence into

the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory under the WCO's latest strategic plan, allowing for predictive modeling to anticipate border congestion.

There is also a push for a Green Freight Initiative, in which the two organizations are developing Green Customs protocols to streamline the clearance of eco-friendly technologies and to implement paperless e-customs.

As the African Continental Free Trade Area gains momentum, the NCTTCA and WCO are working to align Northern Corridor protocols with continental standards, ensuring the corridor serves as a gateway for the entire continent.

The relationship between the NCTTCA and the World Customs Organization remains a testament to the power of international standards when combined with local expertise.

By turning technical guidelines into real-world efficiency, this partnership has transformed the Northern Corridor from a series of disjointed border stops into a unified engine for East African growth.

As they move toward a more digital and integrated future, the pulse of trade in the region beats faster and more reliably than ever before, promising a more connected and prosperous future for the six member nations.

Additionally, through the WCO's Mercator Programme, the NCTTCA has helped member states develop Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs.

This "trusted trader" initiative allows compliant businesses to enjoy fast-tracked clearance, with the NCTTCA ensuring these standards are mutually recognized across all six member states.

The collaboration between these two entities has yielded tangible economic dividends for the region. In 2010, it took an average of 18 to 20 days for a container to travel from Mombasa to Kampala.

Today, thanks to coordinated border management and electronic tracking systems supported by WCO standards, that time has been reduced to between 4 and 6 days.

This efficiency drastically lowers logistics costs, as reduced delays at border posts like Malaba and Busia save transporters significant overhead.

Estimates suggest that each day a truck is delayed, a transporter incurs approximately \$300 to \$500 in costs. By eliminating days of idle time, the NCTTCA-WCO initiatives save the regional economy hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Beyond speed, the partnership has bolstered revenue security. By implementing the WCO Data Model, member states have seen a



The relationship between the NCTTCA and the World Customs Organization remains a testament to the power of international standards when combined with local expertise.

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GIZ Support Northern Corridor Green Freight Project

On April 3, 2025, the Northern Corridor (NCTTCA) signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with the GIZ, a German Society for International Cooperation and Germany's leading development agency that works worldwide on behalf of the German government.

This MoU marked GIZ's commitment to supporting NCTTCA's sustainability efforts by providing technical support for the corridor, with a focus on strengthening services and cost recovery.

The deal with the NCTTCA will implement the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy, which aims to reduce carbon emissions from cargo transport across rail, road, ports, and inland waterways.

The MoU between GIZ and the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority, signed in Mombasa, committed Euro 750,000 to support sustainable infrastructure and green transport projects. This funding supports the Corridor's growth, focusing on technical assistance, capacity

building, and developing bankable projects.

The partnership comes amid a surge in cargo handling at the **Port of Mombasa**, which has grown from 31.83 million tonnes in 2019 to over 41 million tonnes in 2024.

According to recent media reports, the increase has led to a corresponding rise in carbon emissions, necessitating the adoption of cleaner freight technologies. Under the agreement, GIZ will provide technical assistance to at least two transport infrastructure projects along the corridor. The support will focus on integrating sustainable transport solutions and promoting investments in green freight technologies.

Speaking on the collaboration, NCTTCA Executive Secretary Dr. John Deng emphasized that the partnership will also involve capacity-building to attract private-sector investment in sustainable infrastructure.

"The shift to green freight solutions is not just an environmental imperative but also an economic opportunity. With GIZ's support, we aim to enhance efficiency while reducing the carbon footprint of our transport systems," Dr. Deng stated.

The Northern Corridor, a key trade route connecting Kenya's port of Mombasa to landlocked countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, plays a crucial role in regional commerce. By adopting cleaner transportation technologies, stakeholders aim to mitigate environmental impact while promoting sustainable economic growth.

The implementation of the Green Freight Strategy is expected to drive the adoption of energy-efficient transport modes, encourage the use of alternative fuels, and enhance freight logistics. Authorities believe that integrating sustainable practices into the region's transport network will help the corridor remain competitive while addressing climate concerns.

NCTTCA has existed since 1985, when the six Member States started signing the Agreement for the East African trade route from the East African premier Port of Mombasa into the hinterland.

Currently, the GIZ also supports the Northern Corridor by funding regional integration, the Northern Corridor Trade Facilitation - a coordinated effort to streamline and speed up trade and cargo movement through East Africa's vital transport route, the Northern Corridor, linking the Port of Mombasa to landlocked Member states.

It does this by using NCTTCA agreements to simplify customs procedures, harmonize policies, improve infrastructure (roads, rail, waterways), and reduce delays for seamless regional integration and global market access.

GIZ also supports the NCTTCA's Infrastructure Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) by enhancing capacity for infrastructure investment and developing bankable projects. It has focused on projects such as Lake Victoria connectivity (oil jetty, safe navigation), capacity-building for negotiation, and promoting climate-resilient transport. It has also remained in the forefront of NCTTCA's Capacity Building, training on negotiation skills, contract management for infrastructure, and supporting agribusiness in Western Kenya.

A clear example is when GIZ gave seed funding to the NCTTCA - a commitment of over €750,000 (approx. KSh105m) for infrastructure development and PPP capacity to attract private investment.

The workshop held in **June 2025** focused on negotiation skills for sustainable infrastructure via PPPs and on technical assistance for projects such as Roadside Stations (RSS).

Another workshop on AgriJobs - a program in Western Kenya towns of Bungoma, Kakamega, Kisumu, Siaya and Vihiga focused on training the youth in agribusiness and supports enterprise creation.

In essence, GIZ focuses on sustainable, integrated, and green transport solutions, leveraging private-sector involvement to deliver large-scale infrastructure and economic development along the corridor.

The collaboration between the GIZ and the Northern Corridor has largely focused on making the corridor efficient, smart, and green, emphasizing infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and climate goals through initiatives such as the Green Freight Strategy 2030.



Mr Herman TUYAGA (left), the CEPGL Permanent Executive Secretary and Mr Fred TUMWEBAZE, then Ag. Executive Secretary of the NCTTCA, are captured here on April 5, 2017 signing an MOU to collaborate on programs promoting regional trade and integration.

CEPGL COOPORATES WITH NCTTCA TO PROMOTE REGIONAL TRADE

On April 5, 2017, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) and the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) signed an MOU to collaborate on programs promoting regional trade and integration.

This cooperation between CEPGL-NCTTCA will involve joint planning and coordination of trade, business promotion, and cross-border transport infrastructure projects, as well as trade between Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC, which are members of both institutions.

Furthermore, the cooperation will foster regular joint meetings to identify new cooperation programmes and projects, agree on an action plan for the implementation of identified cooperation programmes and projects, and assess the progress and impact of identified cooperation programmes and projects underway or already undertaken, for the mutual benefit of the region.

According to Mr Herman TUYAGA, the CEPGL Permanent Executive Secretary and Mr Fred TUMWEBAZE, Ag Executive Secretary of the NCTTCA, both Executives, agreed that there are pending priority areas that can be quickly harnessed and spearheaded for the benefit of the cooperating Member States.

It was recalled that the two intergovernmental organisations have common areas where people can come together to work for the sustainable development of the region and to promote intra-regional trade and business.

It was further agreed that, with this Cooperation Agreement, some of the areas of emphasis expected to take focus and likely to have a great impact are the simplification of documents and formalities, and the facilitation of transport and cross-border trade.

Other key areas of cooperation would include, but not be limited to, harmonisation of efforts to increase efficiency and reinforce cooperation in areas of physical integration, infrastructure, energy, transport and communications, free movement of people and goods, integrated Border management, trade and customs.

The Strength of this cooperation agreement is underpinned by the fact that three Member States of CEPGL (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda) are all signatories to the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement along with Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda.

PARTNERS



NORTHERN CORRIDOR SHARES BEST PRACTICES ON CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT AND TRADE FACILITATION

A delegation from Djibouti pictured here in Mombasa on February 3, 2025 during a benchmarking visit aimed at learning from the Northern Corridor's advanced corridor management. This visit was facilitated by TradeMark Africa, to inform the establishment of the Djibouti Corridor Management Authority.

East Africa's Northern Corridor trade route, which today emanates from the Port of Mombasa, serves as a model for other regional corridors by sharing best practices in integrated transport management, trade facilitation, and sustainable infrastructure, particularly through its data-driven monitoring portal and collaborative legal framework.

On February 3, 2025 the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority hosted a delegation from Djibouti's Technical Committee on a benchmarking visit aimed at learning from the Northern Corridor's advanced corridor management, transport monitoring via the

Transport Observatory, and trade facilitation mechanisms.

Facilitated by TradeMark Africa, this visit is a strategic initiative to inform the establishment of the Djibouti Corridor Management Authority and the development of a Transport Observatory Portal. This collaboration underscores the importance of regional partnerships and knowledge-sharing in enhancing trade efficiency and economic development across Africa.

The delegation, composed of representatives from Djibouti's Ministry of Infrastructure & Equipment, Ministry of Trade & Tourism, Ministry of Budget, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, and the Chamber of

Commerce, engaged with key infrastructure and regulatory agencies across Kenya and Rwanda.

On corridor establishment, management, and trade facilitation, the delegation held knowledge-sharing sessions with the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA).

The Northern Corridor operates under a Multilateral Agreement, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (NCTTA), a regional legal framework that governs trade facilitation, transport infrastructure, and customs harmonization among member states.

This agreement establishes institutional arrangements, including the NCTTCA, which oversees policy implementation and stakeholder coordination to ensure seamless transit operations. Additionally, the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory Portal serves as a real-time data monitoring and reporting platform, tracking key performance indicators such as transit times, cargo throughput, and bottlenecks along the corridor. This data-driven approach enables evidence-based policymaking, enhances transparency, and supports continuous improvements in trade efficiency across the region.

The delegation's visit is a crucial step towards leveraging best practices from the Northern Corridor in Djibouti's transport sector. Notably, the delegation acknowledged the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory Portal as a model for enhancing transparency, monitoring, and reporting of trade data.

The delegation toured crucial infrastructure nodes, including:

Port of Mombasa: Engagements with Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) and Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) officials on port efficiency, cargo handling, and trade facilitation mechanisms.

Mariakani Weighbridge: Insights into axle load control policies, high-speed weigh-in-motion systems, and enforcement strategies by Kenya

National Highways Authority (KeNHA).

Taveta/Holili One-Stop Border Post (OSBP): Demonstration of customs integration under the Single Customs Territory (SCT), the role of the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS), and enhanced border security operations by KRA in collaboration with Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), Immigration, and enforcement agencies.

The delegation was particularly impressed by the seamless coordination of agencies, which facilitates efficient cargo evacuation, reduces transit delays, and enhances cross-border trade.

The study tour will conclude in Rwanda, where the delegation will visit key logistics hubs, including:

DP World Kigali – A demonstration of efficient inland container depot operations.

MAGERWA ICD – Learning best practices in freight handling and customs facilitation.

Driving Knowledge Exchange for Regional Trade Efficiency

The delegation's visit is a crucial step towards leveraging best practices

from the Northern Corridor in Djibouti's transport sector. Notably, the delegation acknowledged the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory Portal as a model for enhancing transparency, monitoring, and reporting of trade data.

Furthermore, representatives from the Djibouti Port Community System, Djibouti Port Corridor Roads, and private-sector groups such as the ATD Freight Forwarders Association, the RTA Freight Forwarders Association, and the Djiboutian Transporters Association participated in discussions on automated trade facilitation and infrastructure integration.

Strengthening Regional Trade Networks

The engagement highlighted the role of harmonized trade policies and smart logistics solutions in advancing Africa's economic integration goals.

"We remain committed to fostering stronger regional collaborations, sharing expertise, and championing trade facilitation measures that will transform transport corridors into efficient trade arteries for economic growth across the continent," concluded Dr. John Deng, NCTTCA Executive Secretary.



The Djibouti delegation captured while on a field trip during the benchmarking trip along the northern corridor.



NCTTCA AND TRADEMARK AFRICA BOOST EASTERN AFRICAN TRADE



For more than a decade, the partnership between the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and TradeMark Africa (TMA) has played a pivotal role in transforming trade and transport systems across Eastern and Central Africa. Through collaboration and investments in infrastructure, digital innovation, trade facilitation reforms, corridor performance monitoring and regional integration initiatives, the two institutions have helped reduce the cost and time of doing business along one of Africa's most strategic trade corridors.

The partnership has been complementary: NCTTCA, established under the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement, coordinating regional efforts to improve the movement of goods and people along the Corridor, while TradeMark Africa, formerly TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), provided technical expertise, development financing, project management support and implementation capacity to deliver transformative trade facilitation programmes.

Over the years, the collaboration has demonstrated how strong institutional partnerships, backed by data and targeted investments, can

address long-standing bottlenecks that had constrained regional trade and economic growth.

A Strategic Partnership for Regional Integration

The collaboration between NCTTCA and TMA has evolved into one of the most successful development partnerships supporting regional trade integration in Eastern Africa. Working alongside governments, development partners, private sector stakeholders and regional economic communities, the two institutions have jointly pursued interventions aimed at improving corridor efficiency, enhancing logistics competitiveness and facilitating cross-border trade.

Among the earliest milestones of the partnership was support towards the implementation of the Mombasa Port Community Charter and the Northern Corridor Charter launched in 2014.

This initiative introduced performance commitments among public and private sector stakeholders operating along the Corridor and established accountability mechanisms for improving cargo movement.

The partnership further expanded into infrastructure development, border management reforms, corridor performance monitoring, transport observatory systems, policy advocacy, research and capacity building initiatives across Northern Corridor Member States.

Through these efforts, the collaboration has helped convert what had once been a fragmented transport route into an increasingly integrated regional logistics network connecting the Port of Mombasa to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan.

Modernizing Border Management

One of the most visible outcomes of the partnership was the development and operationalization of One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) at key crossing points along the Corridor.

Prior to these interventions, traders and transporters faced lengthy delays caused by multiple inspections, duplicate procedures and poor coordination between border agencies. Cargo trucks often spent several days at border crossings, increasing transport costs and disrupting supply chains.

The establishment of modern OSBPs at Busia and Malaba transformed the clearance process by enabling border agencies from neighbouring countries to operate under one roof. Cargo inspections were streamlined, procedures harmonised and documentation increasingly

digitized. As a result, border crossing times reduced by more than 80%, cargo predictability improved and transport costs declined.

The impact was equally significant at the Elegu–Nimule border crossing serving South Sudan. Before modernization, clearance procedures could take several days, contributing to shortages of essential commodities and increasing the cost of imports. The coordinated border management approach drastically reduced delays and improved the flow of trade into South Sudan.

Similar improvements were recorded at Goli and Mahagi on the Uganda–DRC border, and borders between Rwanda and Uganda, where upgraded facilities continue to support growing trade volumes.

The Northern Corridor Transport Observatory: A Game-Changer in Corridor Performance Monitoring

Perhaps the most transformative achievement of the NCTTCA–TMA partnership is the establishment and continuous enhancement of the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory (NCTO).

Developed jointly by NCTTCA and TradeMark Africa, the Observatory became the premier corridor performance monitoring platform in Africa, providing data on trade and transport performance across the Northern Corridor.

The platform introduced a new era of evidence-based decision-making by tracking critical performance indicators throughout the logistics chain. These indicators included port performance, transit times, border crossing efficiency, cargo dwell time, transport costs, weighbridge compliance, road safety indicators, infrastructure performance and non-tariff barriers.

The Observatory fundamentally changed how corridor challenges are identified and addressed. Problems that had previously been discussed based on anecdotal evidence could now be quantified, analyzed and acted upon using verifiable data.

The system enables policymakers to pinpoint precisely where delays occur; whether at ports, border posts, weighbridges or along specific road sections; and facilitates targeted interventions to resolve bottlenecks.

PARTNERS

Driving Digital Transformation

The NCTTCA–TMA partnership recognizes that efficient trade facilitation required more than physical infrastructure. As a result, significant investments have over the years been directed towards digitalisation and automation initiatives aimed at creating a seamless logistics environment.

The collaboration has supported the implementation of regional digital trade systems, including electronic cargo tracking technologies, corridor information platforms and performance monitoring tools. These initiatives have enhanced cargo visibility, strengthened compliance monitoring and improved coordination among agencies and transport stakeholders.

The adoption of digital solutions has reduced paperwork, minimized opportunities for corruption and increased transparency throughout the transport chain, ultimately laying the foundation for a fully integrated Smart Corridor ecosystem.

Supporting Multimodal Transport Development

Recognizing the limitations of relying exclusively on road transport, NCTTCA and TMA have been actively promoted multimodal transport solutions aimed at improving efficiency and sustainability. The partnership supported initiatives encouraging greater utilisation of rail and inland water transport systems as alternatives to road freight. Particular emphasis has been put on exploring opportunities within Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Kivu transport systems. Support was also provided for studies examining modal shift strategies, navigational assessments, port development initiatives and inland water transport improvements.

These interventions contribute to broader regional efforts to diversify transport options, reduce logistics costs and improve environmental

sustainability.

Reducing Trade Costs and Transit Times

The economic impact of the partnership became increasingly evident through measurable improvements in corridor performance. Transit times between the Port of Mombasa and major inland destinations reduced significantly over the years. Cargo predictability improved, inventory costs declined and supply chains became more reliable.

The Port of Mombasa recorded substantial operational improvements, while border crossing efficiencies and cargo clearance times improved across multiple entry and exit points. For businesses operating within the region, these improvements translated into lower logistics costs, increased competitiveness and enhanced market access.

The benefits extended beyond traders and transporters. Consumers across the region experienced improved availability of goods, reduced supply chain disruptions and lower costs for imported products.

Supporting Policy Reform and Regional Cooperation

Beyond operational improvements, the partnership has also played a critical role in advancing regional policy harmonisation and institutional cooperation. Joint research studies, stakeholder consultations and policy dialogues have supported reforms in customs procedures, trade facilitation, transport regulation and logistics management.

The collaboration has strengthened mechanisms for monitoring and resolving non-tariff barriers, promoted implementation of service-level agreements and standard operating procedures, and encouraged adoption of common performance standards across member states.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Despite significant achievements, several challenges remain.

Infrastructure gaps persist in parts of South Sudan and the Democratic

Republic of Congo. Non-tariff barriers continue to emerge periodically, while regulatory inconsistencies occasionally affect cargo movement.

The COVID-19 pandemic for instance exposed vulnerabilities within regional supply chains and highlighted the importance of coordinated crisis response mechanisms. The experience reinforced the need for resilient transport systems, stronger digital integration and enhanced stakeholder collaboration.

Importantly, it also demonstrated the value of the Transport Observatory as a monitoring and early-warning tool capable of providing timely information during periods of disruption.

Renewing the Partnership Beyond 2026

Building on the achievements of the previous decade, NCTTCA and TradeMark Africa are set to renew and deepen their strategic partnership in 2026 through a new Memorandum of Understanding aimed at guiding cooperation over the next decade.

The plans to renew the collaboration reflect a shared commitment to strengthening trade and transport efficiency, regional integration and corridor competitiveness.

Future cooperation areas include further enhancement of the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, development of smart corridor technologies, implementation of predictive analytics tools, promotion of multimodal transport systems, expansion of digital trade solutions, strengthening of non-tariff barrier monitoring mechanisms, implementation of the revised Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor Community Charter and mobilization of resources for strategic projects. The renewed partnership also envisages collaboration on green logistics initiatives, sustainable transport systems, inland water transport development, corridor digitalisation, knowledge management, institutional strengthening and implementation of innovative solutions to improve trade and logistics performance across the region.

A key priority for the next phase would be the development of a Smart Corridor Programme designed to enhance end-to-end visibility, efficiency and performance of trade and transport systems through integrated digital, institutional and infrastructure interventions.

The NCTTCA–TradeMark Africa partnership has had an enduring legacy on regional trade and transport development.

As both institutions prepare to embark on a renewed chapter of cooperation, the foundation laid over the previous decade provides a strong platform for advancing a smarter, greener, more efficient and more competitive Northern Corridor capable of supporting the economic aspirations of the region for years to come.



In this collaboration, TradeMark Africa brings to the table technical expertise, project management capacity and access to large-scale development financing. Where the NCTTCA identifies the problems and convenes governments, TradeMark Africa helps design, fund and implement solutions.

Together, they have spent years dismantling what traders often describe as the “invisible walls” of regional commerce: bureaucracy, fragmented infrastructure and high, unpredictable costs.



President Ruto flags the first truck to use the upgraded road at Mariakani.

EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORT FOR THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR: A LONG-STANDING PARTNERSHIP DRIVING REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY, TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The European Union (EU) has been one of the Northern Corridor's most significant development partners, supporting transport infrastructure, trade facilitation, sustainable freight initiatives, and regional integration for more than three decades. Through grants, concessional financing, technical assistance and policy support, the EU has played a critical role in strengthening East Africa's busiest trade and transport corridor, which connects the Port of Mombasa to the hinterland markets of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan.

The partnership gained renewed momentum under the EU's Global Gateway Strategy following commitments made during the European Union–African Union Summit held in Brussels in February 2022. The initiative seeks to support sustainable, trusted and resilient infrastructure investments that enhance connectivity, value chains, services and employment opportunities across Africa and Europe.

Speaking during the inauguration of the first section of the upgraded Mombasa–Kilifi Highway in November 2022, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen underscored the importance of the Northern Corridor to regional development and international trade.

"At the European Union–African Union Summit, we committed to supporting our African partners in building sustainable and secure connections fit for the 21st century through Global Gateway. With the inauguration of the first stage of the Northern Corridor highway, we are delivering on that promise for Kenya. Supporting our partner countries to grow economies, value chains, services and jobs will benefit industries in both Africa and Europe and bring security to the people of both our continents."

The inauguration, attended by Kenyan President His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto, marked the completion of the first 54-kilometre section of the upgraded Mombasa–Kilifi Highway, a strategic component of the Northern Corridor. The project received a €30 million grant from the European Union and formed part of a wider programme to modernize transport infrastructure along East Africa's principal trade route.

Transforming Strategic Infrastructure Along the Northern Corridor

Under the Global Gateway initiative, the European Union, the European Investment Bank (EIB Global), Germany's KfW Development Bank and the Government of Kenya have jointly invested in the upgrading of key road sections along the Northern Corridor.

One of the flagship projects is the upgrading of the 30-kilometre Kwa Jomvu–Mariakani Highway, launched in February 2025. The project received support through a Team Europe financing package comprising a €20 million EU grant, a €50 million EIB Global loan, a €50 million KfW loan and approximately €20 million from the Government of Kenya.

PARTNERS



Upon completion, the upgraded road is expected to serve more than 20,000 vehicles daily, significantly easing congestion on one of the busiest sections of the corridor, reducing transport costs, improving road safety and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

During the launch ceremony, President Dr. William Ruto praised the partnership, noting that the improved infrastructure would enhance the efficiency of cargo movement to and from the Port of Mombasa and strengthen Kenya's position as the gateway to the East and Central African region.

The EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jozef Síkela, described the project as a demonstration of how quality infrastructure investments can accelerate economic growth, strengthen regional trade and deepen cooperation within the East African Community.

"This Global Gateway project is a great example of quality infrastructure made possible by the cooperation between the Kenyan government and the European Union. Together, we're not just building infrastructure together; we're accelerating Kenya's economic development and supporting trade cooperation in the East African Community more broadly," he said.

Similarly, European Investment Bank Vice President Thomas Östros emphasized that sustainable transport investments are essential for growth, inclusion and regional competitiveness.

"Sustainable transport is key to growth and inclusion as it connects people and enables trade. Projects such as this one bring together key

aspects of sustainability, safety, accessibility, resilience, and efficiency. Road transport plays an important role in the Kenyan economy, affecting all sectors and society as a whole. At the EIB, we are glad to support the national government in realizing its development agenda, which is in line with the EU-Kenya partnership strategy and the Global Gateway initiative," he said.

KfW Country Director Kristina Laarmann highlighted the project's potential to create jobs, stimulate local businesses and reduce vehicle operating costs.

"We all know that the Mombasa port serves as a major gateway for East Africa by connecting Kenya to significant trade routes in East and Central Africa. This is why this project is so important.

It will not only create jobs during the construction phase, but also during the operational phase. It will also stimulate job opportunities and local businesses after completion. By widening the carriageways, traffic jams and the average time to pass the road section will be reduced. Ultimately, this shall also lead to a reduction in transport costs and savings in vehicle operating costs," she said.

Supporting a Comprehensive Corridor Development Programme

The Kwa Jomvu–Mariakani Highway forms part of a broader EU-supported programme aimed at upgrading strategic sections of the Northern Corridor. Other major projects include:

- * Upgrading of the Mombasa–Kilifi Highway (54 km);
- * Rehabilitation of the Kitale–Morpus Highway (75 km);
- * Upgrading of the Isebania–Kisii–Ahero Highway (172 km);
- * Construction and improvement of associated feeder roads covering approximately 230 km.

Collectively, the European Union has committed approximately €85 million in grant financing towards these highway projects, while EIB Global and KfW have jointly provided about €190 million in concessional financing. Together with contributions from the Government of Kenya and the African Development Bank, total investment in the Northern Corridor road improvement programme exceeds €750 million.

These investments form part of the EU's broader commitment under the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, which seeks to support strategic transport corridors across the African continent and facilitate regional trade and economic integration.

More Than Three Decades of Partnership

The European Union's support to Kenya's transport sector dates back to the early 1990s. Over the past three decades, the EU has invested more than €550 million in transport infrastructure projects that support the Northern Corridor and the Ethiopia–South Sudan transport corridors. One notable milestone was the EU-supported Northern Corridor Rehabilitation Programme Phase III launched in 2010, which contributed to improving critical road infrastructure and enhancing trade flows across the region.

The EU's continued commitment demonstrates a long-term partnership focused on strengthening regional connectivity, reducing transport costs and promoting sustainable economic development.

Supporting Trade Facilitation and Green Transport

Beyond infrastructure development, the European Union has increasingly supported initiatives aimed at improving transport efficiency, sustainability and climate resilience along the Northern Corridor. Working with the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA), development partners and regional stakeholders, the EU has supported programmes promoting green freight transport, emissions reduction and sustainable logistics practices.

These efforts include support for:

- * Implementation of the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy;
- * Eco-driving and fuel-efficiency training programmes for freight operators;
- * Capacity-building initiatives on sustainable transport and logistics;
- * Climate-resilient transport planning;
- * Freight decarbonization initiatives around the Port of Mombasa;
- * Sustainable transport and trade facilitation interventions under the Global Gateway framework.

These programmes complement infrastructure investments by ensuring that increased transport capacity is accompanied by reduced environmental impacts and improved operational efficiency.

Supporting Evidence-Based Corridor Planning

The European Union is also supporting strategic planning and analytical studies aimed at improving long-term transport development along the Corridor.

Among the ongoing initiatives is support for the development of the Northern Corridor Infrastructure Master Plan and the Comparative Transport Cost Study. Stakeholder consultations and data collection activities for the transport cost study have been completed, and the first interim report has been reviewed by stakeholders. The study seeks to provide an evidence-based comparison of transport costs across the corridor, identify inefficiencies affecting competitiveness and support policy interventions that enhance trade facilitation.

The Infrastructure Master Plan is expected to provide a comprehensive roadmap for future investments, ensuring that corridor development remains aligned with regional trade growth, climate resilience objectives and emerging transport demands.

The European Union continues to position the Northern Corridor as one of Africa's most strategic transport and trade corridors. Through infrastructure investment, policy support, climate-smart transport initiatives and technical assistance, the partnership is contributing to improved regional connectivity, enhanced trade competitiveness and sustainable economic growth across East and Central Africa.



USAID'S CONTRIBUTION TO TRADE FACILITATION AND CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

For more than a decade, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) played an important role in supporting trade facilitation, regional integration and transport efficiency along the Northern Corridor. Working closely with the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA), the East African Community (EAC), national governments and private sector stakeholders, USAID helped advance initiatives aimed at reducing trade barriers, improving border operations and strengthening regional competitiveness.

PARTNERS

USAID's engagement became particularly visible through the USAID-COMPETE programme, which supported efforts to modernize trade and transport systems across East Africa. Through technical assistance, capacity building and policy support, the programme contributed to the implementation of practical solutions designed to address longstanding bottlenecks affecting the movement of goods along the Corridor.

One of the notable milestones in this partnership was USAID-COMPETE's participation in the 6th Northern Corridor Trade and Transport Logistics Chain Stakeholders Consultative Forum held in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, on 3 April 2012. During the forum, USAID-COMPETE highlighted several structural and operational challenges that continued to hinder efficient trade across the region.

Among the key concerns identified were limited awareness among public authorities of the broader economic implications of trade facilitation measures, weak collaboration between public and private sector actors, inadequate communication between border stations and central government agencies, excessive regulatory controls, infrastructure deficiencies at border posts, and insufficient coordination among border management agencies. Additional challenges included unreliable power and internet connectivity, inadequate parking and office facilities, low staffing levels, and the persistence of unprofessional practices that undermined service delivery at border crossings.

To address these challenges, USAID promoted the adoption of Integrated Border Management approaches that encouraged greater coordination among agencies operating at border posts. The programme recognized that improving trade facilitation required not only physical infrastructure investments but also institutional reforms and stronger cooperation among stakeholders.

A major component of this effort involved supporting the establishment of Joint Border Committees at key border stations throughout the region. These committees brought together government agencies and private sector stakeholders involved in cargo clearance and cross-border trade. Their mandate included identifying operational bottlenecks, strengthening dialogue between public and private sector actors, improving communication between border stations and headquarters, and promoting a more balanced approach to regulation and trade facilitation.

The committees also helped cultivate a trade facilitation culture by encouraging collaborative problem-solving and reducing conflicts that often arose among agencies and traders operating at border posts. Their work contributed to more efficient border management practices and laid the foundation for many of the coordinated border interventions that were subsequently adopted across the region.

Beyond border management reforms, USAID-COMPETE supported studies and initiatives aimed at improving customs procedures and reducing cargo clearance times. The programme contributed to Time Release Studies and customs modernization efforts that provided valuable insights into inefficiencies affecting regional trade and informed subsequent policy reforms.

USAID's support complemented broader regional efforts led by NCTTCA and its development partners to transform the Northern Corridor into an efficient and competitive economic corridor. These efforts focused on improving transport infrastructure, streamlining customs procedures, harmonizing trade regulations, enhancing corridor management systems and promoting the use of technology to facilitate seamless movement of goods.

The partnership also reinforced collaboration between NCTTCA and regional organizations such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Through these partnerships, significant progress was made in implementing trade and transport facilitation instruments, including One-Stop Border Posts, Integrated Border Management systems, Electronic Single Window Systems and harmonized Vehicle Load Control mechanisms.

USAID's contribution also complemented other donor-supported initiatives that strengthened evidence-based corridor management. During this period, NCTTCA, with support from development partners including TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), established the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory, a web-based corridor performance

monitoring platform that tracks transport costs, transit times, cargo volumes, infrastructure performance and operational efficiency along the Corridor. The Observatory became a critical tool for monitoring corridor performance and supporting policy decisions through reliable data and analysis.

The collaboration between USAID, NCTTCA and other regional partners contributed significantly to advancing the vision of a more integrated and efficient Northern Corridor. Through support for institutional reforms, trade facilitation measures, customs modernization, stakeholder coordination and regional integration initiatives, the partnership helped create conditions for faster cargo movement, lower transport costs and improved competitiveness for businesses operating across East and Central Africa.

Although USAID's programmes have since concluded, many of the systems, partnerships and reforms supported through this collaboration continue to influence trade facilitation efforts along the Northern Corridor. The legacy of this partnership remains evident in the region's continued pursuit of seamless trade, efficient transport networks and deeper economic integration among member states.





Kenya Hosts Groundbreaking Eco-Driving and Smart Freight Transport Managers Training to Promote Safer Roads and a Greener Northern Corridor

KÜHNE FOUNDATION HELPS STEER THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR TOWARDS A LOW-CARBON FUTURE

PARTNERS

As global trade continues to expand, transport corridors face a growing challenge: how to move increasing volumes of cargo while reducing environmental impacts. Along the Northern Corridor, the busiest trade and transport route in East and Central Africa, this challenge has become a catalyst for innovation, partnership and transformation.

At the forefront of this transition has been the collaboration between the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and the Kühne Foundation, working through its Kühne Climate Center and in partnership with the Smart Freight Centre (SFC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), governments and private sector stakeholders. Together, these organizations have been helping to shape a new vision for freight transport, one that combines economic growth with environmental sustainability.

The partnership has been anchored on the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030 (NCGFS 2030), a pioneering regional framework designed to reduce emissions, improve fuel efficiency, strengthen climate resilience and prepare the Corridor for a cleaner transport future. Developed in 2023 through a collaborative process involving NCTTCA, UNEP, Smart Freight Centre and the Kühne Foundation, the strategy provides a practical roadmap for transforming freight transport across the six Northern Corridor Member States.

The strategy set ambitious targets for the decade ahead, including a 10% improvement in fuel efficiency, a 10% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions intensity, a 12% reduction in harmful pollutants such as particulate matter, black carbon and nitrogen oxides, eco-driving training for at least 1,000 drivers, and climate resilience interventions covering more than 2,000 kilometres of transport infrastructure by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050.

Recognizing the need to turn strategy into action, the Kühne Climate Center and Smart Freight Centre launched the Green Freight Support Program in Eastern Africa in 2024. The initiative created a regional platform that brings together governments, transport operators, freight forwarders, development partners and logistics companies to accelerate the adoption of sustainable freight practices throughout the region. The Northern Corridor was identified as one of the programme's flagship implementation corridors due to its strategic importance to regional trade and economic development.

The programme has focused on practical interventions that deliver measurable environmental and operational benefits. These include strengthening freight emissions accounting systems, supporting logistics optimization, promoting cleaner vehicle technologies, enhancing freight sector skills, establishing green freight networks and advancing climate-resilient transport solutions. Through these

interventions, the partnership has sought to demonstrate that reducing emissions and improving transport efficiency are mutually reinforcing objectives rather than competing priorities.

A significant milestone in the partnership was reached on 14 February 2025 when a delegation from the Kühne Foundation, led by Dr. Jörg Wiese, Chief Executive Officer of the Kühne Climate Center, visited the NCTTCA Secretariat in Mombasa. Discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in implementing the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030 and identifying opportunities to accelerate the adoption of sustainable freight transport solutions across the region.

The collaboration has already translated into tangible action on the ground. Groundbreaking Eco-Driving and Smart Freight Transport Managers Training programme has been rolled out and implemented in all Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda under the framework of the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030. The initiatives bring together truck drivers, fleet managers, regulators and logistics professionals to build practical skills in fuel-efficient driving, emissions monitoring, route optimization, occupational safety and sustainable freight management.

The programme has demonstrated how behavioural and operational changes can contribute significantly to reducing the environmental footprint of freight transport while lowering operating costs for transport operators.

The partnership has also supported the establishment of greenhouse gas emissions baselines across Northern Corridor Member States, providing the data necessary for evidence-based decision-making and long-term monitoring of progress towards climate goals. These efforts have strengthened the Corridor's ability to measure transport emissions, identify priority intervention areas and track progress towards its aspiration of becoming a Net-Zero Emission Corridor by 2050.

Beyond the Northern Corridor, the Kühne Foundation and the Kühne Climate Center have become internationally recognized leaders in sustainable logistics and climate-focused transport solutions. Their global initiatives include advancing green freight programmes, promoting sustainable cold-chain logistics through the Greener Reefers Alliance, supporting climate-resilient supply chains, researching low-carbon logistics systems and developing capacity-building programmes that help countries transition to greener transport systems.





The NCTTCA Executive Secretary Dr. Diar Deng consults with the NCTTCA Council of Ministers chairperson, Hon. Marie Chantal Nijimbere, who is also Burundi's Minister of Commerce, Transport, Industry, and Tourism during an East African Community (EAC) synergy meeting.

NCTTCA–EAC SYNERGY RE-ENGINEERS EAST AFRICA'S TRADE LIFELINE

PARTNERS

Every day, thousands of tonnes of cargo leave the Port of Mombasa destined for markets hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of kilometres away. Containers bound for Kampala, Kigali, Bujumbura, Juba, Goma and Kinshasa travel across a vast network of roads, railways, border posts and inland waterways that collectively form one of Africa's most important trade corridors.

For many years, however, this journey was marked by long queues at borders, multiple customs procedures, high transport costs and unpredictable transit times. For businesses, every hour lost translated into higher costs. For governments, inefficiencies constrained trade competitiveness and economic growth. For consumers, delays often meant higher prices.

Today, a different story is unfolding. At the heart of this transformation lies a powerful alliance between two regional institutions whose mandates intersect at a common objective: making trade faster, cheaper, safer and more sustainable. The East African Community (EAC) provides the political vision and legal framework for regional integration, while the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) turns those commitments into practical solutions that move goods across borders every day.

Together, they have quietly engineered one of the most significant logistics transformations on the African continent. Regional integration often evokes images of treaties, protocols and summit declarations. Yet its true value is measured by what happens on the ground; at ports, border crossings, rail terminals, weighbridges and along transport corridors.

This is where the partnership between the EAC and NCTTCA has distinguished itself.

While the EAC has developed the policies and legal instruments that promote the free movement of goods and services, NCTTCA has worked with governments, border agencies, transporters and development partners to operationalize these commitments across six member states: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda.

The result has been a shift from fragmented national transport systems to an increasingly connected regional logistics ecosystem. Few developments better illustrate the success of this collaboration than the transformation of border management across the region.

For decades, crossing an international border often meant duplicate inspections, repeated documentation and lengthy waiting times. Cargo trucks could spend days at border crossings, increasing costs and disrupting supply chains.

The introduction of One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) fundamentally changed this reality. At Malaba and Busia between Kenya and Uganda, Gatuna/Katuna between Uganda and Rwanda, and Elegu/Nimule linking

Uganda and South Sudan, border agencies from neighbouring countries now operate under one roof. Instead of clearing cargo twice, traders complete procedures through a single coordinated process.

What was once a major bottleneck became one of the strongest symbols of regional integration in action.

The impact extends far beyond reduced waiting times. Faster border clearance has lowered transport costs, improved reliability, enhanced trade competitiveness and strengthened economic links between member states.

The NCTTCA-EAC partnership has also challenged traditional assumptions about how cargo should move across the region.

Historically, freight transport depended overwhelmingly on roads. While road transport remains essential, the growing volume of regional trade has prompted efforts to create a more balanced and efficient multimodal transport system.

The Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) represents a central pillar of this vision. Joint technical initiatives continue to advance plans for extending the railway network beyond Kenya toward Uganda and eventually into the wider region. Once completed, the system is expected to move significant cargo volumes from road to rail, reducing congestion, lowering logistics costs and improving environmental sustainability.

At the same time, inland water transport is making a remarkable comeback.

Lake Victoria, once a major commercial transport route, is increasingly being integrated into regional logistics planning. Enhanced connections between Kisumu, Port Bell and Mwanza are creating new opportunities for the movement of bulk cargo, including petroleum products, while easing pressure on regional highways.

The future Northern Corridor is therefore not being built around a single transport mode. It is emerging as a fully integrated network where road, rail and water transport complement one another.

While highways and railways often capture headlines, one of the most transformative developments has taken place largely behind the scenes.

The Single Customs Territory (SCT) has fundamentally changed how transit cargo moves within the East African Community.

Under this arrangement, customs duties are assessed and collected at the first point of entry, allowing cargo to move through multiple countries without repetitive customs procedures.

For traders, this means fewer delays, less paperwork and lower costs. For governments, it means improved revenue assurance and stronger regional cooperation.



The system has transformed customs administration from a series of isolated national processes into a coordinated regional mechanism, reflecting the deeper integration envisioned by both the EAC and NCTTCA.

A defining feature of the NCTTCA-EAC collaboration has been the recognition that effective corridor management requires accurate information.

The Northern Corridor Transport Observatory has become one of Africa's most sophisticated corridor performance monitoring platforms, providing real-time and historical data on transit times, cargo volumes, transport costs, infrastructure performance and border efficiency.

The Observatory has shifted policy discussions from assumptions to evidence.

Governments can now identify bottlenecks, measure the effectiveness of reforms and prioritize investments based on data rather than perception.

The results are tangible. Transit times along key routes have declined significantly over the years, while corridor performance has become increasingly predictable and transparent.

In modern logistics, information moves almost as importantly as cargo; and the Transport Observatory has become a critical tool in ensuring both move efficiently.

The Northern Corridor is no longer viewed simply as a route for moving cargo.

Increasingly, it is being positioned as a catalyst for industrialization, investment and regional value chains.

The emergence of logistics parks, inland container depots, industrial zones and Special Economic Zones reflects a broader shift toward creating economic activity along the corridor itself.

The Naivasha Special Economic Zone exemplifies this transition. By bringing manufacturing, logistics and trade services closer together, it creates opportunities for value addition while reducing supply chain costs for regional businesses.

This evolution reflects a new understanding of transport corridors—not merely as roads connecting markets, but as economic ecosystems capable of driving regional transformation.

As trade volumes increase, sustainability has become an increasingly important consideration.

The NCTTCA and EAC have embraced the challenge of balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility.



Hon. Beatrice Askul Moe, the Chairperson of the EAC Council of Ministers and Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for East African Community Affairs, presenting the East African Community (EAC) budget speech for the Financial Year 2025/2026 flanked by fellow legislatures in Arusha.

Initiatives such as the Northern Corridor Green Freight Strategy 2030, eco-driving programmes, emissions monitoring systems and climate-resilient infrastructure planning are helping position the corridor for a low-carbon future.

The Northern Corridor Emissions Tracker is providing unprecedented insights into freight-related greenhouse gas emissions, enabling policymakers and transport operators to identify opportunities for reducing environmental impacts while improving operational efficiency.

This emerging green agenda is transforming sustainability from an environmental aspiration into a practical component of transport planning.

Despite substantial progress, the journey toward seamless regional integration remains unfinished.

Non-tariff barriers continue to emerge in various forms. Infrastructure quality remains uneven across some sections of the corridor, particularly in parts of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Financing requirements for major projects remain substantial, while road safety continues to demand urgent attention.

These challenges are significant, but they also underscore the importance of sustained regional cooperation.

The very existence of coordinated institutions such as the EAC and NCTTCA provides a platform through which these issues can be addressed collectively rather than individually.

Looking ahead, the vision is increasingly ambitious.

Digital customs integration, expanded railway connectivity, enhanced inland water transport, climate-smart freight systems, modern logistics hubs and stronger links with regional initiatives are steadily redefining what the Northern Corridor can become.

The ultimate goal extends beyond reducing transit times or lowering transport costs.

It is about creating a connected regional market where businesses can compete more effectively, investments can flourish, and citizens can benefit from increased trade and economic opportunity.



HOW NCTTCA AND COMESA ARE REWRITING THE RULES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

It's journey will take it across Kenya, through Uganda, and deep into Central Africa. It will pass weighbridges, border posts, customs checkpoints, logistics hubs and hundreds of kilometres of road infrastructure.

Yet what is remarkable is not the distance - It is how much the driver no longer has to stop. Two decades ago, such a journey would have been a test of endurance. Cargo would face multiple customs bonds, repetitive paperwork, inconsistent regulations and lengthy border delays. Every

stop increased costs. Every delay reduced competitiveness. Today, much of that friction has disappeared.

Behind this transformation lies one of Africa's most practical and effective partnerships; the collaboration between the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Most traders may never see it. Many drivers may never think about it. But every day, the systems developed through this partnership quietly

facilitate the movement of billions of dollars' worth of trade across East and Central Africa.

Trade does not slow down because of distance. It slows down because of procedures.

For years, transport operators moving goods across several countries faced a maze of customs guarantees, permits and inspections. A truck carrying cargo from Mombasa to Kigali or Goma often had to comply with different requirements in each country along its route.

Recognizing that fragmented systems were costing businesses time and money, COMESA developed regional trade facilitation instruments while NCTTCA worked with member states to implement them along the Northern Corridor.

The result has been a gradual but profound shift in the way regional trade is conducted. Instead of navigating multiple customs guarantees, transporters can now rely on the COMESA Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG) Scheme. Rather than securing separate bonds at each border, traders use a single regional guarantee recognized across participating countries.

The system has simplified transit procedures, reduced administrative costs and improved predictability for businesses moving goods across borders. For transporters, it means fewer interruptions. For traders, it means faster deliveries. For economies, it means stronger regional commerce.

Every year, governments invest billions in transport infrastructure. Yet overloaded trucks have historically shortened the lifespan of roads and increased maintenance costs. Through collaboration between COMESA and NCTTCA, technology is helping solve this challenge.

The COMESA Virtual Transport Facilitation System introduced modern Weigh-in-Motion technology that allows authorities to monitor vehicle weights more efficiently without creating unnecessary delays for compliant transporters. The objective is simple: protect infrastructure without compromising trade efficiency. This balance between regulation and facilitation has become a defining characteristic of the partnership.

For transport operators, crossing borders once meant navigating different licensing requirements in every country. Regional transport companies often spent considerable time and resources securing multiple permits to operate across neighbouring states. Through harmonisation initiatives supported by COMESA and implemented along the Northern Corridor, the Customs Carrier License created a more streamlined approach.

Transporters licensed in one participating country can now operate more easily across multiple jurisdictions. The reform may appear administrative, but its impact is strategic. It lowers barriers to regional transport services, encourages competition and supports the emergence of integrated regional logistics networks.

A generation ago, international trade relied heavily on paper. Documents travelled almost as much as cargo. Today, the future of trade facilitation is digital.

The Northern Corridor has become an important testing ground for modern trade technologies. Electronic customs systems, cargo tracking

platforms and digital documentation are steadily replacing manual processes that once slowed cross-border movement.

The COMESA Digital Land Bridge initiative represents the next phase of this transformation. Its ambition is straightforward: create a seamless flow of information that mirrors the seamless movement of goods. When information moves faster, cargo follows.

No country illustrates the strategic significance of the NCTTCA–COMESA partnership more than the Democratic Republic of Congo. As one of Africa's largest economies and a major source of critical minerals, the DRC is increasingly central to regional and global supply chains.

For decades, however, logistical challenges limited DRC connectivity to international markets. Today, the Northern Corridor is emerging as one of the country's most important gateways to the Indian Ocean. By facilitating trade between eastern DRC and the Port of Mombasa, the partnership is helping unlock new commercial opportunities, strengthen regional value chains and deepen economic integration across East and Central Africa.

The implications extend far beyond transport. They touch manufacturing, mining, agriculture, investment and industrial development.

The NCTTCA–COMESA partnership is evolving beyond traditional corridor management. Increasingly, the focus is shifting towards building an economic corridor rather than simply maintaining a transport corridor.

This means supporting industrial parks, Special Economic Zones, logistics hubs, digital trade platforms and sustainable freight systems. It means ensuring that countries along the corridor do not merely move

goods but create value from them. It means transforming transport infrastructure into a platform for industrial growth. This vision aligns closely with the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which seeks to create a single African market capable of competing globally.

The next chapter of the partnership will be defined by sustainability, technology and resilience. Green freight programmes promote fuel-efficient operations and emissions reduction. Digital platforms are improving transparency and predictability. Advanced analytics through the Transport Observatory are helping governments identify bottlenecks before they become major disruptions.

The goal is not merely to move cargo faster - It is to build a corridor that is smarter, greener and more competitive.

The success of the NCTTCA–COMESA partnership is not measured by the number of meetings held or agreements signed.

It is measured by what traders experience. A truck crossing a border without unnecessary delays. A manufacturer accessing a new market. A logistics company reducing operating costs. A consumer paying less for imported goods. These are the everyday outcomes of regional integration. They rarely make headlines, yet they collectively shape the economic future of East and Central Africa.

And as trade continues to expand across the continent, the partnership between NCTTCA and COMESA is proving an important lesson: the most effective integration is often the kind that works so well people barely notice it is there.





THE WORLD BANK SUPPORTS THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR THROUGH RECS

Regional integration does not happen by chance. It requires roads that connect markets, border systems that facilitate trade, institutions that coordinate policies, and investments that unlock economic opportunities across national boundaries.

For more than four decades, the World Bank has been one of the most influential partners supporting these objectives across East and Central Africa. Through financing, technical assistance, policy reforms and institutional support, the World Bank has helped transform the Northern Corridor from a collection of national transport routes into one of Africa's most important regional trade and logistics networks.

The Northern Corridor serves as the principal gateway linking the Port of Mombasa to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda. It traverses the areas of influence of several Regional Economic Communities (RECs), including the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL). Through these institutions and member states, the World Bank has supported numerous programmes that have significantly improved regional connectivity, trade facilitation and economic integration.

Historically, trade within the Great Lakes region was constrained by infrastructure networks developed during the colonial era, which were designed primarily to move raw materials to coastal ports rather than facilitate trade among neighbouring countries. Recognizing that efficient transport systems are critical for economic growth and regional stability, the World Bank increasingly shifted its focus towards supporting regional integration as a cornerstone of development.

This shared vision laid the foundation for a strong and enduring partnership between the World Bank and the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA). Through a combination of infrastructure investments, policy reforms and institutional strengthening, the partnership has helped facilitate the movement of goods and people across the six Northern Corridor member states while enhancing the region's competitiveness in global markets.

Transforming Trade Through Regional Integration

Among the most influential World Bank-supported initiatives was the East Africa Trade and Transport Facilitation Project (EATTFP), implemented between 2006 and 2015.

The project addressed key challenges affecting the performance of the Northern and Central Corridors, including poor transport infrastructure, inefficient logistics services, cumbersome customs procedures and non-tariff barriers.



Implemented across East African Community partner states, the programme supported the establishment of the EAC Customs Union, implementation of the EAC Customs Management Act, interconnection of customs information systems and broader trade facilitation reforms. The impact was transformative. Transit time between Mombasa and Kigali declined from approximately 19 days to five days. Dwell time at the Port of Mombasa reduced from 13 days to eight days, while border crossing times at the Gatuna/Katuna border between Rwanda and Uganda fell from 13 hours to just two hours. These improvements demonstrated how coordinated investments in infrastructure and policy reforms could dramatically improve regional trade performance.

Supporting Cross-Border Trade in the Great Lakes Region

Building on these achievements, the World Bank supported the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP), implemented between 2016 and 2024 across Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with COMESA playing a key coordinating role.

The project focused on improving trade opportunities in border regions by modernizing trade infrastructure, simplifying procedures and strengthening institutional capacity. Investments supported the upgrading of border facilities at Goma and Bukavu in the DRC, Mpondwe in Uganda, and cross-border markets in Rwanda. The project also promoted implementation of the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime and facilitated bilateral engagements to address trade barriers between neighbouring countries.

Importantly, the programme strengthened cooperation among border agencies through the establishment of Joint Border Committees and enhanced the technical capacity of border officials. These interventions improved communication, streamlined procedures and reduced the costs and time associated with cross-border trade.

Driving Policy Reforms Across the Continent

Beyond physical infrastructure, the World Bank has also supported policy reforms through the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP), one of Africa's longest-running transport initiatives.

For more than 30 years, SSATP has worked with African governments and regional institutions to address systemic challenges affecting the transport sector. The programme currently supports 43 African countries and numerous regional organizations under its Fourth Development Plan (2022–2026), focusing on regional integration, urban mobility, road safety and road asset management.

Its contributions have included promoting corridor development strategies, strengthening the capacity of regional transport institutions, supporting policy reforms and advancing the use of innovative technologies such as GPS-based Truck Monitoring Systems to improve corridor performance analysis. The SSATP Programme ultimately provided the guideline for the establishment and management of transport corridors and led to the establishment of the Transport Observatory. These efforts have enhanced evidence-based decision-making and strengthened the management of regional transport corridors, including the Northern Corridor.

Investing in Strategic Infrastructure

The World Bank has also financed major infrastructure projects that directly support traffic movement along the Northern Corridor.

One such initiative was the North-Eastern Road Corridor Asset Management Project (NERAMP) in Uganda, implemented between 2014 and 2024. The project rehabilitated and maintained the strategic Tororo–Kamdingi road corridor, a key route connecting Uganda with South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. By improving road quality, safety and maintenance practices, the project enhanced regional connectivity and strengthened links between the Port of Mombasa and inland markets.

In Kenya, the Northern Corridor Transport Improvement Project (NCTIP), implemented between 2004 and 2015, focused on improving the efficiency of road transport along the corridor while supporting post-crisis infrastructure recovery. The project financed the rehabilitation of critical road sections between Mau Summit, Kericho and Kisumu, while also supporting institutional reforms that led to the establishment of key

transport sector agencies including the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA), Kenya Urban Roads Authority (KURA), Kenya Rural Roads Authority (KeRRA) and the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA).

The project reduced travel times and vehicle operating costs while strengthening Kenya's transport governance framework.

Similarly, the Kenya Transport Sector Support Project (KTSSP), implemented between 2011 and 2019, addressed critical infrastructure bottlenecks along the Northern Corridor and the Tanzania-Kenya-South Sudan road corridor. Investments included upgrading the Athi River–Machakos Turn-off section, rehabilitating the Maji ya Chumvi–Bachuma Gate road section and constructing major interchanges that improved traffic flow and safety. These improvements enhanced transport efficiency and contributed to Kenya's Vision 2030 development objectives.

A Lasting Impact on Regional Competitiveness

Taken together, these initiatives have produced far-reaching benefits for the Northern Corridor and the wider region. Improved roads, modern border facilities, streamlined customs procedures, stronger institutions and better policy coordination have significantly reduced the cost and time required to move goods across borders.

More importantly, these investments have strengthened regional integration by connecting markets, facilitating trade and improving access to economic opportunities for millions of people across East and Central Africa.

The World Bank's contribution to the Northern Corridor extends beyond individual projects. It has helped create the enabling environment necessary for regional trade to flourish by supporting infrastructure development, institutional reforms and policy harmonisation across multiple countries and regional organizations.

As trade volumes continue to grow and new opportunities emerge under initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the legacy of these investments remains evident in the Northern Corridor's evolution into a modern, competitive and increasingly integrated trade and transport network.

Today, the NCTTCA continues to collaborate with the World Bank and other development partners to advance infrastructure development, strengthen corridor management systems and enhance regional connectivity. This enduring partnership remains an important driver of economic integration and sustainable development across the Northern Corridor region.

JICA AND THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR: BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS OF REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Few development partners have left as visible a footprint on East Africa's transport and logistics landscape as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Through strategic investments, technical expertise, infrastructure planning and knowledge transfer, JICA has played a significant role in strengthening the Northern Corridor; the primary gateway linking the Port of Mombasa to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

For more than a decade, JICA's support has extended beyond individual infrastructure projects to encompass a broader vision: transforming the Northern Corridor into an efficient, safe and integrated logistics network capable of supporting regional trade, industrialization and economic growth.

JICA's structured engagement with the Northern Corridor gained momentum following the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), held in Yokohama, Japan, from 1–3 June 2013.

Held under the theme "Hand in Hand for a More Dynamic Africa," the conference emphasized private sector-led growth, resilient economies and the empowerment of women and youth.

During TICAD V, the Government of Japan announced its intention to support the development of the Northern Corridor, recognizing its strategic importance to East Africa's economic future.

According to JICA's publication *Promoting Development in Kenya: Sixty Years of Partnership* (2019), Japan identified the Northern Corridor as a critical economic artery connecting the Port of Mombasa with Nairobi and onward to regional markets in Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This commitment laid the foundation for a series of interventions that have since helped reshape transport and logistics across the region.



President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya (far left) and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (centre) preside over the official opening of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in August 2016.

One of JICA's most significant contributions was the development of the **Master Plan on Logistics in the Northern Economic Corridor (NEC)** between 2015 and April 2017.

The study was designed to address one of the region's most persistent challenges: high logistics costs. At the time, transport expenses along the corridor often accounted for up to 30 percent of the value of goods being transported, significantly reducing the competitiveness of regional economies.

The Master Plan provided a comprehensive roadmap for improving transport efficiency, reducing congestion and strengthening multimodal connectivity from the Port of Mombasa through Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and the DRC.

Rather than focusing solely on roads, the plan examined the entire logistics chain, identifying opportunities to improve the integration of ports, roads, railways, border facilities and logistics hubs to create a more efficient regional transport system.

Recognizing that the Port of Mombasa is the only international seaport serving the Northern Economic Corridor, JICA has consistently supported efforts to expand port capacity and improve operational efficiency.

Through technical cooperation with the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA), JICA has contributed to port modernization initiatives aimed at enhancing cargo handling capacity and reducing congestion.

JICA has also supported the development of the **Mombasa Special Economic Zone (SEZ)**, recognizing the need to complement transport infrastructure with industrial and logistics investments capable of generating jobs and value addition.

In 2019, JICA signed loan agreements worth approximately **¥85 billion** for the **Mombasa Special Economic Zone Development Project (I)** and the **Mombasa Gate Bridge Construction Project (I)**.

These projects were designed to work together as part of a broader regional development strategy. While the Special Economic Zone seeks to attract investment and industrial activity, the Mombasa Gate Bridge is expected to improve mobility and connectivity within the coastal region.

The bridge would eventually replace dependence on the Likoni Ferry crossing, which currently serves approximately 300,000 passengers and 6,000 vehicles daily. Once completed, the bridge is expected to significantly reduce travel delays, improve logistics efficiency and enhance access to the southern mainland and surrounding economic zones.

Beyond major infrastructure projects, JICA has also contributed innovative ideas that address the human side of transport and logistics.

One of the most notable examples is the introduction of the Japanese **Michi-no-Eki**, or **Roadside Station (RSS)**, concept along the Northern Corridor.

NCTTCA EMPOWERS WOMEN IN CROSS BORDER TRADE

Strengthening Market Access, Resilience and Regional Inclusion Along the Northern Corridor

Cross-border trade is one of the most tangible outcomes of regional integration along the Northern Corridor. Every day, thousands of traders move agricultural produce, foodstuffs and essential commodities across the borders of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda. A significant proportion of these traders are women whose businesses support household incomes, strengthen food security and sustain local supply chains across the region.

Recognizing both the critical role women play in regional trade and the challenges they continue to face, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA), in partnership with the Africa Women Agribusiness Network (AWAN Afrika), has institutionalized Market Access Master Classes to equip women agri-traders with the skills, knowledge and tools needed to compete successfully in regional and continental markets.

The initiative reflects NCTTCA's broader commitment to transforming the Northern Corridor from a transport route into a development corridor that promotes inclusive growth, economic resilience and sustainable trade.

A notable milestone in this effort was the Market Access Master Class held in Mombasa from 17–19 October 2023 in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Conducted under the theme “Tackling Gender Dimensions of Trade and Strengthening Resilience in Small and Medium Agro-Enterprises within the Northern Corridor,” the programme brought together 27 women entrepreneurs from Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda.

More than a training workshop, the Master Class served as a structured empowerment programme designed to address the barriers that continue to limit women's participation in formal cross-border trade.



Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya cut the tape signifying the opening of the Busia One-Stop-Border Post (OSBP) to boost intra-regional trade along the Northern Corridor by cutting the time taken to clear goods and to cross the border between Kenya and Uganda.

These challenges include limited access to market information, discriminatory practices, complex trade documentation requirements, weak negotiation skills and restricted participation in formal value chains.

Women traders often face additional obstacles such as harassment, inadequate access to information and difficulties navigating customs and border procedures. These vulnerabilities became even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when border closures and public health restrictions disrupted trade flows and significantly reduced income opportunities for many small-scale traders.

Speaking during the programme, then NCTTCA Executive Secretary Mr. Justus Omae Nyarandi acknowledged that women traders were among the groups most affected by the pandemic. Despite these challenges, he noted that the Secretariat worked closely with corridor partners and national authorities to ensure that essential trade, particularly food

trade, continued to move across borders.

Mr. Nyarandi further emphasized the importance of government policies that protect women traders and create an enabling environment for their participation in formal regional trade systems.

According to NCTTCA's post-event report, the Master Class was developed in response to a recurring challenge: many women involved in agriculture and agribusiness operate outside formal value chains. As a result, they often have limited bargaining power, inadequate access to market intelligence and fewer opportunities to secure reliable markets for their products.

While many women entrepreneurs are aware of opportunities within the Northern Corridor and the wider African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), their ability to take advantage of these opportunities is frequently constrained by limited business planning and marketing skills.

CROSS-BORDER TRADE

The primary objective of the Master Class was therefore to strengthen participants' marketing strategy capabilities and enable them to expand their businesses beyond local markets into regional and continental value chains.

A major component of the training focused on developing effective marketing strategies. Participants learned how to craft compelling value propositions, develop key business messages, identify and profile target customers, and apply the marketing mix framework comprising Product, Price, Promotion, Place and People.

The programme simplified marketing concepts and demonstrated how a well-designed marketing strategy can serve as a practical roadmap for reaching customers, differentiating products and achieving sustainable business growth.

Participants were also guided through six essential steps for developing an effective marketing strategy:

- * Defining clear business goals;
- * Understanding target customers;
- * Identifying market opportunities and gaps;
- * Developing compelling business messages;
- * Preparing realistic marketing budgets; and
- * Measuring performance through clear indicators.

In addition, the women received practical training on competitor analysis, customer retention and evaluating the effectiveness of marketing campaigns; skills that are essential for expanding beyond local border markets and accessing larger regional opportunities.

Beyond business development skills, the initiative also promotes digital empowerment.

Through mobile-based platforms and digital tools, women traders gain access to real-time market information and commodity price data, enabling them to make informed business decisions, negotiate better prices and reduce vulnerability to exploitation.

The partnership with AWAN Afrika and other stakeholders ensures that the programme extends beyond the classroom. Participants become part of wider networks that provide mentorship, peer learning opportunities, information exchange and continued support across borders.

This combination of practical skills, digital access and institutional support is helping redefine the role of women traders within regional trade ecosystems.

For many participants, the impact has been transformative. Ms. Jeane Bayera, Chairperson of the Gatuna Cross Border Trade Cooperative, who has been trading cereals between Uganda and Rwanda since 2010, described the training as both practical and enlightening.

"I found the trainings by the Northern Corridor quite helpful and eye-

opening," she said, adding that she planned to share the knowledge with members of her cooperative upon returning home.

Similarly, Ms. Lonah Angalu Okitoi, Chairperson of the Malaba Cross Border Women Traders Credit and Savings Cooperative Limited, recalled participating in earlier NCTTCA training sessions in Kampala. For her, the programme enhanced business confidence and strengthened her understanding of customs procedures and regional trade opportunities.

These experiences illustrate one of the programme's greatest strengths: its multiplier effect. Participants return to their communities equipped not only with new skills but also with the ability to train and mentor other women traders.

The significance of these interventions extends beyond individual businesses. As implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area gathers momentum, women-led enterprises will play an increasingly important role in driving intra-African trade. However, to benefit fully from these opportunities, small and medium-sized

enterprises must be equipped to meet market requirements, comply with standards and compete effectively.

By improving marketing skills, strengthening resilience and expanding access to market intelligence, NCTTCA's Market Access Master Classes are helping women traders transition from subsistence and survival trading to growth-oriented entrepreneurship.

The initiative aligns closely with NCTTCA's vision of inclusive corridor development, ensuring that the benefits of infrastructure investments, digitalization and trade facilitation reforms reach grassroots economic actors.

Empowering women in cross-border trade is not a peripheral activity; it is central to sustainable regional development. Women traders contribute significantly to food security, support rural and urban value chains, sustain household incomes and strengthen economic linkages among Northern Corridor member states.



NCTTCA AND CCTTFA JOIN FORCES TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL TRADE AND CONNECTIVITY

In January 2026, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency (CCTTFA) took a significant step towards strengthening regional integration and trade facilitation by signing a five-year

Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in Mombasa, Kenya.

The agreement was signed by NCTTCA Executive Secretary, Dr. John Deng Diar Diing, and CCTTFA Executive Secretary, Adv. Flory Okonge, marking the beginning of a new phase of collaboration between the two major transport corridor institutions serving East and Central Africa.

The Memorandum of Cooperation establishes a framework for enhanced coordination in transport and trade facilitation, with a particular focus on harmonizing policies, addressing non-tariff barriers (NTBs), improving logistics efficiency, and promoting sustainable transport solutions. Through this partnership, the two institutions aim to strengthen the competitiveness of the region's transport corridors and facilitate the seamless movement of goods across borders.

The collaboration recognizes the strategic role played by both corridors in connecting land-linked countries, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda, to the ports of Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Mtwara. Together, these corridors serve as critical gateways for regional and international trade, supporting economic growth and integration across East and Central Africa.

Under the agreement, the two organizations will work jointly to identify, monitor and address non-tariff barriers that affect the efficient movement of cargo and people. By improving coordination and information sharing, the partnership seeks to reduce logistics bottlenecks, enhance corridor performance and create a more predictable trading environment for businesses operating within the region.

The Memorandum also provides for cooperation in infrastructure development planning, trade and transport facilitation, digitalization, corridor performance monitoring, road safety initiatives and the promotion of green and sustainable transport systems. Particular emphasis will be placed on improving operational efficiency, strengthening resilience within regional supply chains and advancing environmentally sustainable transport solutions.

To guide implementation, the two institutions agreed to develop a three-year joint action plan supported by a high-level steering committee. The action plan will outline priority activities, implementation arrangements and mechanisms for monitoring progress and evaluating results.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, both institutions emphasized the importance of stronger collaboration among regional corridor organizations in supporting the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), regional economic integration and sustainable development.

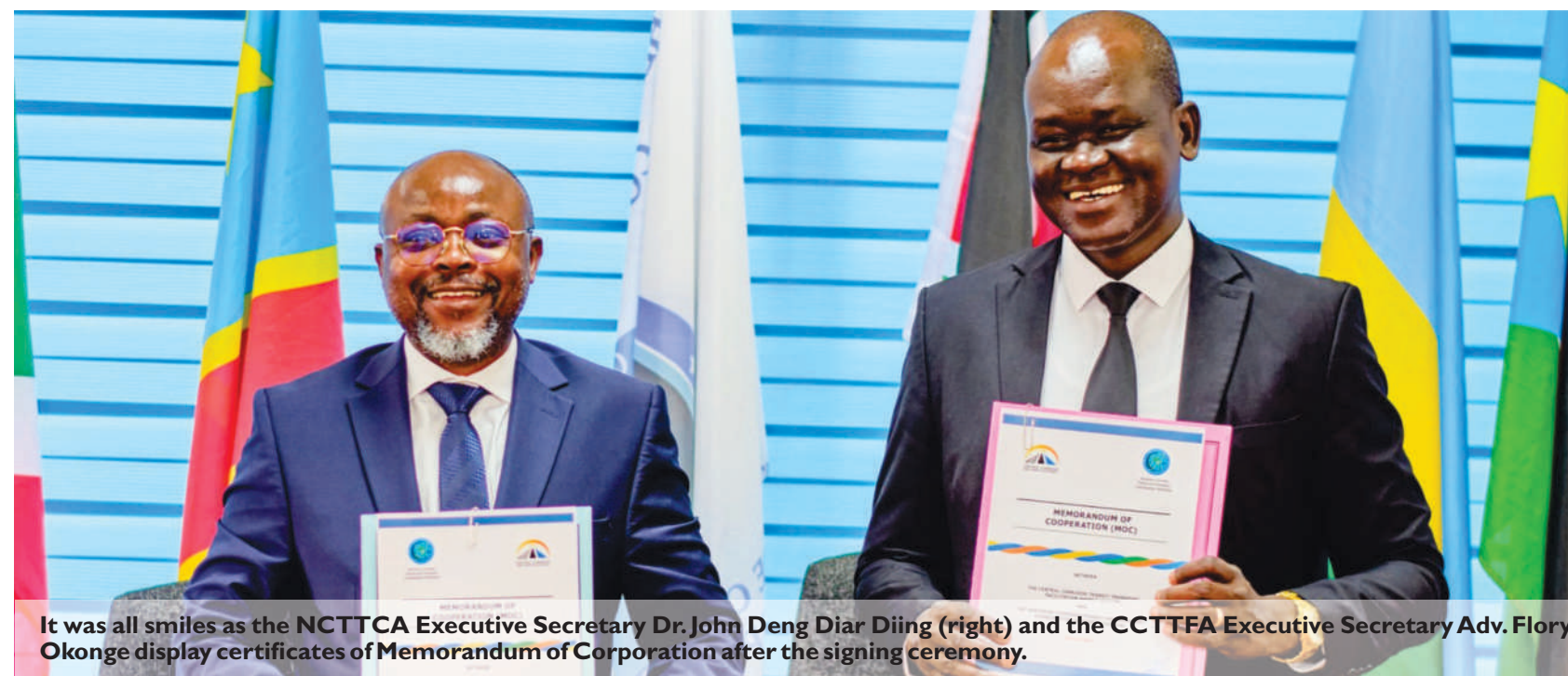
The partnership brings together two intergovernmental organizations with complementary mandates and extensive experience in corridor management and trade facilitation.

The NCTTCA is responsible for coordinating the development and management of the Northern Corridor, which links the Port of Mombasa to Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda through a multimodal transport network comprising roads, railways, inland

waterways, pipelines and ports.

Similarly, the CCTTFA coordinates the development and management of the Central Corridor, a strategic transport and logistics network connecting the Port of Dar es Salaam with Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi and Zambia. The Agency works to facilitate trade by reducing transport costs and transit times, supporting infrastructure development, promoting modal shift from road to rail transport and addressing barriers to the movement of goods and services.

The Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency is currently implementing several strategic initiatives, including railway expansion projects such as the Uvinza–Musongati Railway, the establishment of One-Stop Inspection Stations to streamline transit operations, and the deployment of digital solutions through the Central Corridor Transport Observatory for real-time corridor performance monitoring and data collection.



It was all smiles as the NCTTCA Executive Secretary Dr. John Deng Diar Diing (right) and the CCTTFA Executive Secretary Adv. Flory Okonge display certificates of Memorandum of Cooperation after the signing ceremony.

THE IRI EQUIPMENT



The International Roughness Index (IRI) equipment is used on the Northern Corridor to monitor, measure, and quantify road surface roughness. It serves as a key performance indicator within the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory to assess the condition of the road network across Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda. The equipment is used to assess the pavement condition and it helps determine whether road sections are in good, fair, or bad condition (e.g., maintaining an average IRI below 2.9 mm/m on Kenyan roads). Data collected by IRI tools helps governments and transport authorities identify specific bottlenecks and plan road repairs or rehabilitation to reduce bottlenecks in their respective infrastructure maintenance planning.

By identifying rough sections, the equipment helps in strategies to improve efficiency, reduce transit times, and reduce transport costs associated with vehicle maintenance and fuel consumption to ensure transit and trade efficiency. The IRI equipment helps monitor the performance of road assets, ensuring that pavement quality supports the safe and efficient movement of goods. The Northern Corridor Transport Observatory uses this data to track the overall quality of the corridor's transport infrastructure.

NCTTCA COLLABORATES WITH EQUITY BANK TO EMPOWER YOUTH AND CROSS-BORDER TRADERS

In March 2025, Equity Bank, in partnership with AGRA and North Star Alliance, collaborated with the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) to strengthen the capacity of cross-border traders and support inclusive economic growth along the Northern Corridor.

The collaboration is aimed at boosting regional trade, improving logistics efficiency and expanding access to finance for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across East Africa. It also supports the broader goals of regional integration by promoting entrepreneurship, strengthening value chains and empowering women and youth engaged in cross-border trade.

A key milestone of the partnership was a three-day capacity-building workshop held from 10 to 12 March 2025 at the Greystone Hotel in Malaba, Uganda. The training brought together 40 women and youth drawn from eight cross-border trader associations operating along the Northern Corridor.

Facilitated by Equity Bank, North Star Alliance and AGRA, the workshop provided practical business skills designed to help participants formalize, strengthen and expand their enterprises. The training covered critical areas including business formation and registration, business operations and management, access to finance, and business growth strategies. The initiative sought to equip participants with the knowledge and tools required to improve business performance, access financial services and take advantage of emerging opportunities in regional and cross-border markets.

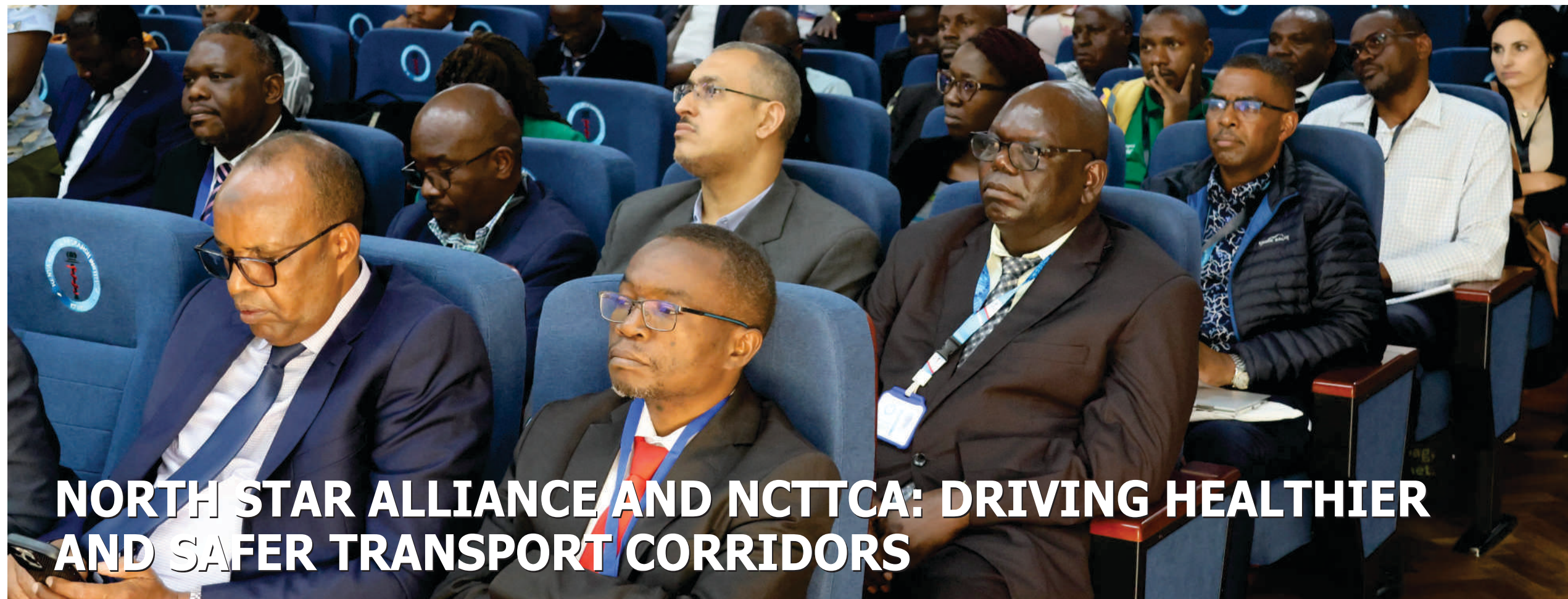
To further enhance access to market information, the NCTTCA introduced the Northern Corridor Business Information Portal (NCBIP) and a complementary mobile application. The platform provides traders with real-time information on agricultural commodity prices and trade volumes across border markets.

The mobile application also supports data collection by market enumerators stationed at border markets, helping improve trade transparency while providing traders with timely market intelligence to support informed business decisions.

In collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Secretariat has also supported small businesses, including farmers and cross-border traders in Rwanda, Kenya and Burundi, through the provision of equipment and financial assistance. These interventions are intended to improve business operations, strengthen financial resilience and create sustainable income opportunities, particularly for women and youth.



Miss Barbara Mbabazi (right), AGRA's representative, hands over a certificate to one of the participants during a three-day workshop empowering women and youth from March 10-12, 2025, at the Greystone Hotel in Malaba, Uganda. The workshop was organized by the NCTTCA in collaboration with the Equity Bank, North Star Alliance, and AGRA.



NORTH STAR ALLIANCE AND NCTTCA: DRIVING HEALTHIER AND SAFER TRANSPORT CORRIDORS

A section of delegates attending the 2nd Regional Conference on Transport Corridors and Health (RCTCH2025), organized by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority and North Star Alliance held in Nairobi in December 2025. The Conference was themed "Innovations and Partnerships for Healthy and Prosperous Corridors," and it brought together stakeholders to improve health services and safety for mobile populations

Every day, thousands of trucks travel along the Northern Corridor, carrying goods that sustain economies, industries and livelihoods across East and Central Africa. From the Port of Mombasa to destinations in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), these vehicles form the backbone of regional trade.

Behind every truck, however, is a driver spending long hours on the road, often far from family, healthcare facilities and social support systems. While transport corridors facilitate the movement of goods, they also create unique public health challenges that can affect not only transport workers but entire communities along the route.

Recognizing this reality, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport

Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) and the North Star Alliance have built a strong partnership focused on improving the health, safety and wellbeing of mobile populations, particularly truck drivers and cross-border traders.

Their collaboration reflects a simple but powerful principle: healthy transport corridors are productive transport corridors.

For nearly two decades, North Star Alliance has been working to ensure that healthcare services reach those who spend much of their lives in transit.

Since 2006, the organization has operated renowned roadside wellness clinics, popularly known as "**Blue Box Clinics**", at strategic locations along transport corridors in Africa. Working closely with regional

institutions such as NCTTCA, these clinics provide accessible healthcare services to truck drivers, transport workers, sex workers, border communities and other vulnerable populations.

The facilities offer a wide range of services including HIV testing and treatment, tuberculosis screening, sexual and reproductive health services, management of non-communicable diseases, mental health support and health education.

By bringing healthcare closer to transport routes, the initiative has helped bridge a critical gap for mobile populations who traditionally struggle to access consistent medical services due to the nature of their work.

The Northern Corridor remains the busiest trade and transport route in

East and Central Africa.

In 2025, the Port of Mombasa handled a record **45.45 million metric tonnes of cargo**, while Northern Corridor transit traffic continued to grow, serving six member states and supporting millions of livelihoods across the region. Thousands of trucks move along the corridor daily, connecting businesses and consumers across borders.

Yet the very mobility that drives regional trade also creates health vulnerabilities.

Long-distance truck drivers often spend extended periods away from home, work under demanding schedules and have limited access to healthcare services. Historically, these conditions have increased their vulnerability to communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis

and sexually transmitted infections. More recently, emerging public health threats, mental health concerns, occupational safety issues and environmental health challenges have added new dimensions to corridor health management.

The NCTTCA–North Star Alliance partnership seeks to address these challenges through a combination of health service delivery, awareness creation, policy advocacy and regional coordination.

A major milestone in the partnership was the launch of the **Regional Conference on Transport Corridors and Health (RCTCH)**.

The inaugural conference was held in Nairobi in December 2024 under the theme: "Innovations and Partnerships for Healthy and Prosperous Corridors."

The conference brought together transport operators, healthcare professionals, policymakers, development partners, researchers and community organizations from across Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda.

The objective was to create a platform for addressing the growing intersection between transport, trade and public health.

Building on its success, a second conference was organized in December 2025, further strengthening dialogue on the future of health-smart transport corridors in Africa.



A group photo of the 2nd Regional Conference on Transport Corridors and Health

SPORTS



NCTTCA team warming up for the Stanchart Marathon



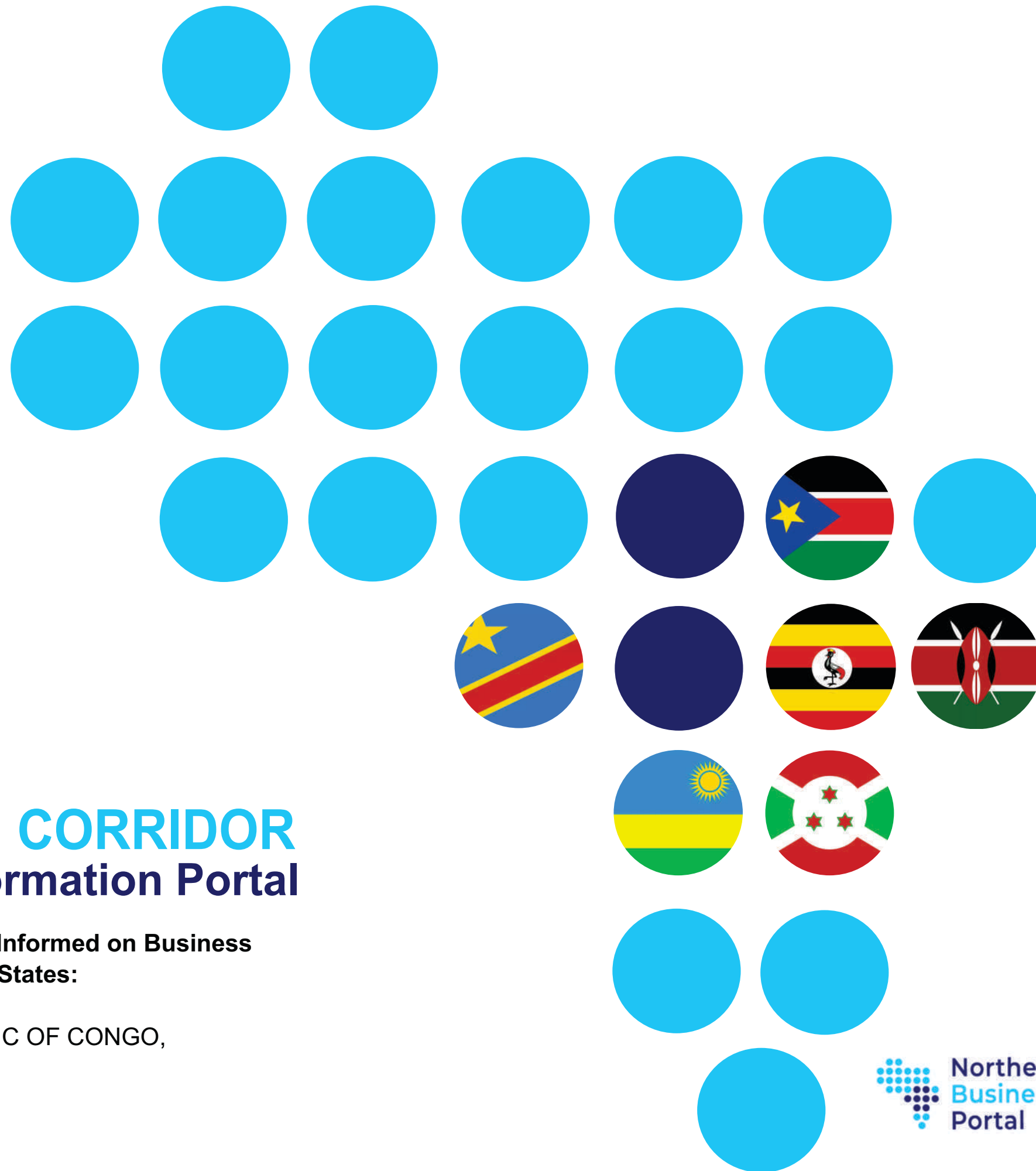
"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is an old adage that the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) Secretariat woke up to years back. Today, NCTTCA is a regular participant in various sporting activities across the region.

The Secretariat, for instance, has participated in several East, Central, and Southern Africa Shipping and Logistics Football Tournaments (ECSAFOT) in recent years.

The Authority is cognizant of the fact that balancing work and play is essential to a healthy, creative, and well-rounded life for its workforce.

The ECSAFOT tournament features teams from various shipping and logistics companies, with past winners including MAERSK Kenya and Kenya Ports Authority (KPA).

The ECSAFOT is an initiative that uses football to bring together stakeholders in the region's shipping logistics and maritime industry, with a view to enhancing collaboration, cohesiveness, and connectivity among industry players, which is important for facilitating seamless freight logistics. The annual event, based on nonprofessional football for employees and affiliates of the respective entities, is planned to be held in different cities across the region.



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**Northern Corridor Transit
and Transport Coordination Authority,**
House 1196, Links Road, Nyali.
P O Box 34068, Post - Code 80118 Mombasa, Kenya
+254 733 532485 / +254 729 923574
www.ttca@ttcanc.org

