



Conference on Land Policy in Africa - 2021

A Call to Action

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The African Land Policy Centre (ALPC), a joint initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the African Development Bank (AfDB) biennially convenes the only African, multi-stakeholder conference on land policy in Africa. The Conference complements existing initiatives such as the annual World Bank Land and Poverty Conference, among others. It enhances capacity on the issues and status of land policy development and implementation in Africa by focusing attention of land policy perspectives, sharing evidence, and promoting learning among governments, parliamentarians, farmers, researchers, civil society, traditional authorities, private sector, youth and development and technical partners.

In November 2014 ALPC, then the Land Policy Initiative (LPI), convened the inaugural Conference on Land Policy in Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The conference theme was The next decade of land policy in Africa: ensuring agricultural development and inclusive growth. Heads of States and Government had declared 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security, thus the theme for the conference.

In 2017 the Conference on Land Policy in Africa was convened under the theme Harnessing Africa's demographic dividend through investment in youth in alignment with the

AU theme for 2017, but more importantly in acknowledging youth as agents for socio-economic transformation.

In 2019 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, the Conference was convened under the theme Winning the fight against corruption in the land sector: Sustainable pathway for Africa's transformation. This theme supported the AU Declaration of 2019 as the Anti-Corruption Year under the theme Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation. From the inaugural conference in 2014 to date, under the steering and coordination of the ALPC, the continent has made strides in realizing the calls to action made at the various biennial conferences.

This year's conference, the fourth edition of the CLPA, was held virtually from 1 to 4 November 2021 under the theme: Land governance for safeguarding art, culture and heritage towards the Africa We Want. This Conference theme aligns to the AU Declaration of 2021 as African's Year of Art, Culture and Heritage through the theme Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want.

Delegates representing governments, traditional leaders, academia, researchers, civil society organizations, culture and creative industries, private sector, development partners and media join virtually to reflect on the progress made and together make this Call to Action:

Message to Governments

Governments are called upon to:

1. Develop a mechanism for communicating and following up on the implementation of these key messages after the conference for ease of reporting back in subsequent Conferences. This should be coordinated by ALPC.
2. Mobilize sufficient financial resources for land policy development processes in Africa. The AU is requested to urge governments to consider committing 10% of their national budgets to land policy development processes.
3. Facilitate the use of local languages during land policy development and implementation processes to ensure that they tap effectively from the local knowledge base and include community perspectives.
4. Consider the rapid urbanization of Africa's spaces, and make proactive efforts to preserve historical and spiritual sites, monuments, and ancestral land and heritage.
5. Systematically provide for the appropriate incorporation of traditional institutions and practices during land policy development and law-making processes.
6. Make appropriate provision, during land planning initiatives in rural, peri-urban and urban areas, for access to public spaces for performing and other artists to artistically express themselves and process their products.
7. Devise mechanisms to encourage completion of land policy development processes. In Francophone Africa, land policy development essentially requires revisiting national constitutions. This greatly delays such processes and often becomes a barrier to progress. Governments/policy makers in such jurisdictions are therefore urged to develop strategies and interventionist mechanisms to unlock such barriers, enabling the successful and timely completion of land policy processes.
8. Provide access to and transparency of land data for research and for citizens, review evidence on non-compliance with Africa's land agenda and Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGTs), and set out plans to improve compliance, including openness to academic research as shadow reports on land governance.
9. Give adequate authority and funding to agencies responsible for restoring, safeguarding, preserving and promoting Africa's land-based heritage.
10. Implement policies that facilitate promotion of arts and cultures as drivers and enablers of social transformation, and use emerging land information systems in open and freely accessible formats for as low a cost as possible.

Message to Forum for African Traditional Authorities (FATA)

Traditional authorities are called upon to:

1. Continue advocating for the recognition of FATA by AU, ECA AfDB and ALPC as the official representation of traditional authorities in Africa in dealing with the land in all its presentations on culture and heritage of the African people. FATA recalls that this call for recognition was first made in 2014, repeated in 2017 and emphasized in 2019. Without due recognition within the continental institutional structures, it will be difficult to operationalize the Forum's activities. This statement stems from the decisions that underpinned the formation of FATA, notably meetings held in Accra, Ghana, in 2016; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2017; and affirmed in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in 2019, and thus underscoring the commitment of the traditional authorities of Africa to work with these institutions. Since the meeting in Abidjan in 2019 there has been no interaction between FATA and the continental institutions.
2. Convene meetings of its Council at least twice a year and also establish FATA regional councils based on AU regional communities (ECOWAS, COMESA, SADC, EAC etc.) to consolidate, disseminate and implement FATA resolutions. FATA looks forward to sitting in meetings of AUC committees and eventually participating in AU Heads of State and Government meetings.
3. Commit to work with other key stakeholders to create a sense of sacredness for Africa's objects and institutions of spirituality. These include monuments and places of worship, sacred groves, and other historical sites that link African's belief systems with history and place them at the centre of land use planning and spatial development, thereby preserving them for posterity. As custodians of culture and traditions FATA will engage town and country planning authorities to achieve this objective.
4. Deliberately integrate a gender dimension in their institutions and operations. Culture is dynamic and evolves over time. It is therefore necessary to bring about changes that take into account gender in order to offer men and women the possibility of participating in traditional systems of governance and decision-making processes, including allocation and use of land as well as dispute resolution mechanisms.
5. Strengthen local governance of land resources and the culture and heritage of the people through open, accountable and transparent processes and structures that have economic and social value to local communities and use cost-effective and fit-for-purpose land management processes. African cultures are valuable and should be systematically embedded in the governance structures of the different countries.
6. Reiterate the commitment to guarantee women access to land resources and a framework that provides equitable opportunities to men and women in access, ownership, control and use of land, thereby empowering women economically and socially. In this sense there is need to decolonize our land policies and laws, engage patriarchal systems and include our egalitarian culture and practices.

7. Recommend the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to ensure that FATA commitments and Call to Action at the conferences are implemented and reported at subsequent conferences.
8. Support the systematic surveying and mapping of all lands held under customary arrangements, and reduce the bureaucracy in land documentation and the cost of surveys. Since more than 80% of land rights are held under customary systems, legal recognition should ensure tenure security of customary land rights in all countries of the continent. This will ensure the rights of all land users under customary tenure, reduce corruption in the land sector and increase land investments by local land users to improve productivity, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, social development, gender equity in land distribution, and encourage the use of more inclusive decision-making processes.
9. Reiterate their commitment to ensure that women's land rights are protected and that access to land is guaranteed for younger people and vulnerable people.
10. Commit to developing the capacities of traditional authorities to complement the State judicial systems in dispute resolution and establish more synergy through closer collaboration between traditional authorities, government and judicial institutions dealing with land. Formalizing the legal role of traditional land dispute resolution mechanisms will ensure the provision of land services and minimize opportunities for corruption. This will lead to more accountability, transparency, inclusion and participation.
11. Support the continuous development of the capacities of traditional authorities to improve the implementation of good governance of land as well as support the efforts of governments to realize the contribution of land to the overall social and economic development of our countries. As custodians of culture and tradition this will preserve the rich heritage of the African people.
12. Create more synergies and closer collaboration in the fight against corruption within traditional institutions and to work closely with all land users and owners.

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