



# Conference on Land Policy in Africa - 2021

---

## A Call to Action

# Conference on Land Policy in Africa - 2021

## A Call to Action

---

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.

# Research and Academia

---

Academia and research institutions commit to track progress on past calls and to this Call for Action through universities and higher learning institutions.

Academia and research institutions are called upon to:

1. Integrate research and policy by promoting policy dialogues, science–policy linkages, and integrated capacity-building systems across policy-making processes.
2. Communicate their research such that it is “at the table” when policy issues are being discussed. The communication could be in the form of policy briefs, artistic productions and opinion pieces. Policy decisions are rarely responsive to advances in scholarly knowledge due to lack of linkages.
3. Create opportunities to bring together policy makers, governance institutions, implementing agencies and advisory bodies with networks and researchers in land governance, arts, culture and heritage.
4. Encourage research and analysis of best practices in culture and heritage in land governance.
5. Foster an evidence-based research approach to addressing land governance issues at the local level.
6. Make the African Journal of Land Policy and Geospatial Sciences more vibrant to promote knowledge sharing and dissemination on land policy issues.
7. Strengthen the platform of African land researchers and develop academic capacity and networks within the continent.
8. Encourage next-generation in scholarship and gender equity in research capacity through deliberate inclusion of more youth and women in research and publishing initiatives.
9. Pay attention to linguistic diversity on the continent as a resource in knowledge production and dissemination. The multiplicity of languages in Africa provides an opportunity for cultural and regional perspectives and points of view and ought to be harnessed. This might include investing in translation and interpretation capacity to enable cross-country exchange, including in Arabic, Portuguese and Kiswahili.
10. Support academic exchange programmes across African universities and institutions of higher learning, especially for cross-regional experiences.
11. Facilitate training on integrating culture and heritage into training on land governance.
12. Develop guidelines for curriculum development that integrate culture and heritage.
13. Document best practices in culture and heritage in land governance, gather evidence-based data to encourage research at local level not only on “technical issues” but also in articulating social science and including local voices.
14. Integrate upcoming researchers into existing research agendas, including in data collection, analysis and documentation.
15. Incorporate, into policy development and implementation processes, new research and innovations from emerging technology which reflects land management programs and projects.

# Development Partners

---

Technical and development partners are called upon to:

1. Continue support to ALPC to better position it as a Secretariat to facilitate land policy in Africa against its work and business plans.
2. Provide country specific financial and technical support for projects in land policy, governance and related projects, including building the nexus with other sectors such as agriculture, water, culture, environment, forestry.
3. Provide resources that will support and expedite opportunities for review and strengthening of land policies and governance systems to create conducive environments and encourage bottom-up policy engagement and approaches.
4. Support civil society engagement and capacity strengthening to participate in policy advocacy and influencing at national and continental level, including those activities related to decisions in investment projects, land tenure, use rights, gender equality and youth inclusion.
5. Promote blending of the instruments of policy-based operations and investment financing for better results at national level, including result-based investment and incentivizing governments to take action against specific results and commitments.
6. Enhance awareness and dissemination of information towards securing women and youth land rights. This involves communicating or disseminating information in a language or medium they fully understand and comprehend while creating policy engagement spaces for rural women to advocate and influence policies on their rights to land.
7. Support inclusive youth (male and female) and land rights initiatives and approaches — from culture, heritage, land and governance perspectives — at all levels and participation in decision-making structures, including the media, legislature and judiciary, among others.
8. Target cultural and creative industries for support in view of their critical role in awareness raising and dissemination of knowledge and in behaviour change. The cultural and creative industries have economic and social value in Africa. They can support land governance by raising critical questions and proposing viable solutions. Currently, the sector is hardly targeted for funding in the delivery of land policy concerns.
9. Promote generation and dissemination of land data and statistics, including sex disaggregated, rural and urban dimensions; and tenure arrangements for evidence-based policy engagements, planning and decision making.
10. Support research and knowledge management on land governance, art, culture and heritage and its implication on land policies and governance of land in Africa, among other issues.

# Civil Society Organizations and Cultural and Creative Industries

---

We acknowledge that land law and policy reforms do not recognize our arts, culture and heritage. We therefore commit to:

1. Continue advocacy work for land policies adapted to local cultures and protect local knowledge and identity by working closely with communities.
2. Promoting laws and policies that document and protect arts, cultures and heritage.
3. Proposing solutions to finance cultural and creative industries for inclusive land governance so that African cultures can thrive. This might include restitution of cultural heritage in Africa and building museums that tell African stories about land and its value.
4. Advocating for individual and community intellectual property rights during processes of digitizing Africa's cultural heritage and land rights. This might require the development of national policies on culture and heritage which address

digitalization processes and intellectual property rights.

5. Advocating for integration of small-scale producers during the transition to large-scale land-based investments (LSLBI) there is a need to interrogate further the real impact of LSLBIs on communities, especially women and vulnerable groups, and on small-scale farming. The concern of land dispossession in LSLBI processes and the loss of identity by not accessing spiritual, historical and sacred sites is high on the agenda of civil society organizations because land for Africans is more than an asset and a commodity.
6. Interrogating the gaps in the land governance sector in terms of language. This might involve packaging the land discourse to make it more accessible to a wider audience and to the grassroots.
7. Strengthen monitoring of commitments to land policy development and implementation on the continent.

## ***We call on the African Union to:***

- Finalize the African cultural framework and link it to the cultural and creative industries and the question of land governance because land is a catalyst for development. It is important to centre arts and culture in the AU agenda on land going forward in the work done by the ALPC and Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) in, for example, the development and review of university curricula.
- Consider that the loss of land for Africans ignites their loss of identity and culture

and therefore include this issue in their partnership processes so that investment from Europe considers support for agro-ecology and other critical processes that protect culture and identity.

- Reflect on the issues of indigenous people's land to facilitate development of a framework that considers IPR as collateral which will enable them to conserve their land rights even for immediate needs.

---

Conference on Land Policy in Africa Secretariat  
African Land Policy Center (ALPC)  
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia