

Concept Note
2021 CONFERENCE ON LAND POLICY IN AFRICA (CLPA-2021)

I. BACKGROUND

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) was launched in 2017 as a successor to the Land Policy Initiative (LPI). The Land Policy Initiative was established in 2006. Key achievements of the LPI include the development of the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G), prepared to provide guidance on the development and implementation of sound national land policies and the Guiding Principles on Large- scale Land based Investments (GPs) availed to AU member states in support of the negotiation of fairer and more sustainable land investments. The F&G was adopted by the African Ministers responsible for Land in April 2009 and further endorsed by the African Heads of State and Government through a Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa during the 13th Assembly of the African Union in July 2009.

The ALPC is facilitating and coordinating the implementation of the AU Agenda on Land as outlined in the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges as well as subsequent AU Decisions related to land governance in key areas including: large scale agricultural investments; women's land tenure security; land, ethnicity and conflict; land governance curricula and training; as well as institution building.

In this endeavour, the ALPC is building on the work of the LPI as articulated in its strategic plan (2019-2023) and is implementing programmes focused on ensuring: (1) Increased and improved generation and dissemination of knowledge, wherein policymakers and key stakeholders are adequately furnished with important and relevant data and knowledge on land issues obtaining on the continent; (2) Increased and sustained political will is generated through enhanced advocacy initiatives; (3) Policymakers and stakeholders central to the land question are enhanced with requisite skills and expertise through capacity development initiatives; (4) Institutions and systems central to dealing with land governance and administration are strengthened such that they are well resourced and effective in their delivery; and (5) Coherent and effective partnerships are forged with actors central to the improvement of land governance and administration in Africa.

The Conference on Land Policy in Africa (CLPA) has proved to be a major policy dialogue, information sharing and learning event, serving, thus, a number of focuses highlighted above. Its overall goal is to deepen capacity for land policy development, implementation and monitoring with specific focus on emerging issues and AU commitments, including in the land sector through: i) improved access to knowledge and information in support of evidence-based land policymaking; ii) showcasing promising practices in the field of land policy and governance and; iii) facilitating networking amongst land actors in Africa. In this regard, the Conference brings together participants drawn from academia and research, government, traditional authorities, CSOs, private sector, parliamentarians and development partners to disseminate knowledge to promoting dialogue, networking, advocacy and partnerships in support of implementation of the AU in particular evidence-based land policy development, review, implementation and monitoring. The continental land conference meets African policymakers and stakeholders' needs and complements existing global and national initiatives.

The Conference adopts a scientific approach through establishing a Scientific Committee, involving research and academia from across the continent and abroad. It is designed to also capture a broad range of land-related local knowledge and know-how, and generate interest from CSOs, women's organizations, farmers organizations, traditional leaders and the private sector. The Conference has a catalytic effect on land policy development, implementation and monitoring in Africa through creating space for presenting research findings on land policy and governance and drawing the attention of a wide range of stakeholders and partners on emerging land issues and challenges that need specific attention in order to achieve the objectives of the Agenda 2063. Selected papers from the Conference are peer-reviewed and published in a special issue of the *Journal of African Land Policy and Geospatial Sciences*.

The inaugural CLPA took place in 2014 under the theme *"The Next Decade of Land Policy in Africa: Ensuring Agricultural Development and Inclusive Growth,"* attracting 342 participants (30% women). This was followed by the second Conference held in November 2017, under the theme *"The Africa We Want: Achieving socio-economic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth"*, gathering 445 participants from 49 countries and featuring ninety- five (95) scientific paper presentations, in addition to masterclasses, policy dialogues, and side events. Finally, the third edition of the Conference was held in November 2019 with the theme *"Winning the Fight Against Corruption in the land sector: sustainable pathways for Africa's Transformation"* and witnessed around 550 participants with over 100 papers presented.

The forthcoming fourth edition of the CLPA will be held in a hybrid format on the 2nd - 4th November 2021 in Kigali, Rwanda, under the theme: "*Land governance for safeguarding art, culture and heritage towards the Africa We Want*". The Conference's theme aligns to the African Union 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*".

The AU recognize the role arts, culture, and heritage can play as catalysts for the socio-economic development and integration of the African continent. Hence, the proposed theme draws inspiration from the AU Agenda 2063 as a shared strategic framework and blueprint for inclusive growth and sustainable development. The year of arts, culture and heritage will happen at a time when AU Member States will still be grappling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which imposes heavy human, financial and economic costs to the land governance space in Africa. The crisis also provides an opportunity to re-examine the continent's socio-economic priorities to land governance, including the role of cultural workers, contributing to building stronger and more resilient development sectors towards equality, inclusion, social cohesion and African Renaissance. It also provides an opportunity to examine how the creative and visual arts support land structures towards creating a juxtaposition of economic growth versus poor land use triggered by excessive pressure on land to satisfy artistic expressions such as fashion, sculpture and other arts derived from our culture and heritage. Land governance in Africa has multiple intersections and areas of exploration within art, culture and heritage, which influences the land space. Land in Africa is at the centre of culture and heritage, which provides a framework for a continental discourse towards improving the land governance space and attaining "*The Africa We Want*" as envisioned in the AU Agenda 2063.

The Conference complements existing initiatives such as the annual World Bank Land and Poverty Conference. Its hosting is intended to multiply opportunities for Africans to participate in a regional conference. The CLPA is expected to have a catalytic effect on land policy development and implementation in Africa through creating space for presenting the intersection among art, culture, heritage and land governance, and knowledge sharing on the role of land governance to safeguard art, culture, and heritage towards Agenda 2063. The Conference will also present research findings on land policy and governance and draw the attention of African Researchers, Governments, Parliamentarians, Civil Society, Traditional Authorities, Private Sector and Development Partners on emerging land issues and challenges that need specific attention for achieving the objectives of the Development Agenda 2063.

This edition of the Biennial Conference will adopt a creative and scientific approach in line with its theme. The Conference will be designed to capture a broad range of emerging issues and knowledge and generate interest in current land policy themes from a wide range of African policy actors. The conference format will be a hybrid with online and physical participation in Kigali that covers plenary and parallel sessions, masterclasses, pre-conference events, side events, exhibitions, and social media to reach a broader audience.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

Overall Objective

The overall objective of the Conference is to deepen commitment and strengthen capacity for land policy development, implementation and monitoring in Africa through improved access to knowledge and information in support of evidence-based land policymaking.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the Conference are to:

1. Share and exchange knowledge and best practices on issues related to land tenure security, especially for women and vulnerable groups in customary jurisdictions; options/modalities for transparent, accountable and sustainable land-based management and investments; addressing land-related conflicts; land governance for safeguarding art, culture, and heritage, among others;
2. Showcase information, communication and land administration technologies and innovations to enhance land governance and administration;
3. Provide a platform for networking among researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders to improve the quality and quantity of research to address African specificities and emerging issues in land governance
4. Provide space for informed policy dialogue among stakeholders on policy options to enhance land governance, strengthen access to land by all land users, including women and youth, and recognize the customary based land rights of African communities; and
5. Provide an opportunity for advocacy and resource mobilization in support of national and regional land policy initiatives geared towards enhanced land governance in Africa.

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

Outcomes

- a) Improved knowledge in support of evidence-based land policy development, implementation and monitoring in Africa;
- b) Enhanced and deepened consensus amongst African policymakers and stakeholders on promising avenues for addressing land governance challenges;
- c) Improved networking, partnerships and resources for land governance and land policy in Africa.
- d) Better appreciation of the role of land for safeguarding Africa's art, culture, and heritage on livelihood particularly for marginalised groups.

Outputs

Key outputs of the Biennial Conference include the following:

- Conference papers
- Curated creative art expression with examples from fashion, creative and visual art, among others
- Anthology of artistic content (stories, poems and others)
- Visual documentaries and films
- Documentary
- Web articles and opinion pieces
- Conference report
- Press releases
- Conference proceedings
- Special issue of the Journal of African Land Policy and Geospatial Sciences."

IV. 2021 CONFERENCE ON LAND POLICY IN AFRICA

The forthcoming edition of the Conference on Land Policy in Africa will take place on 2-4 November 2021 in Kigali, Rwanda. The Conference theme is - *Land governance for safeguarding art, culture, and heritage towards the Africa We Want*.

1. Discussion Theme

The Conference's theme is endorsed by the AUC-ECA-AfDB Joint Working Group on Land and presented to the Scientific Committee for adoption. In addition, the theme is often aligned with the AU theme of the year, as adopted by the African Union Assembly¹.

¹ The 34th session of the AU Assembly **ENDORSES** the proposal by H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar KEITA, President of the Republic of Mali, to declare 2021 AU Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage, and **REQUESTS** the Commission, in collaboration with the Champion, to propose the related theme, for consideration and adoption by the Executive Council at its June/July 2020 Session.

Several sub-themes are the key focus for discussions in strategic plenary and parallel sessions. These sub-themes are identified by the Conference appointed Scientific Committee once the conference theme is decided.

A Call for Abstracts is sent out as the basis for selecting paper contributions and selecting Masterclasses, side events, policy dialogues, exhibitions, and other related events that ensure alignment of Conference contributions to the identified and selected sub-themes. This is carried out by the appointed Scientific Committee, which guides the scientific content and focus of the Conference. The Committee is comprised of experts on land policy, land administration, gender and development in Africa, representing academia from Africa and abroad, UN and non-UN organizations intensively involved in enhancing land governance in Africa and relevant CSOs. In addition, due to this edition's "culture and art" nature, the Scientific Committee is extended to includes scholars, authors, and specialists in anthropology, culture, creative and performing art, religion, and history.

The Conference retains its three core-themes:

1. Emerging best practices in developing culturally responsive land policies
2. Effective land governance institutions and administration reforms reflective of Africa's cultural heritage
3. Monitoring and evaluation of inclusive land governance

With a cross-cutting theme on Youth, gender, water and climate change

The CLPA Sub-themes are:

- I. Land and spirituality in the African socio-cultural context
- II. Education and knowledge systems in inclusive land governance
- III. Land in African cultural heritage and creative industries
- IV. Political economy, land heritage and the creative economy
- V. Culture and geo-spatial systems
- VI. Women perspective to secure tenure rights
- VII. Decolonization and land as a social process of change

2. Stakeholders and Partnerships

The Conference on Land Policy in Africa is organized by the AUC, ECA and AfDB under the auspices of the African Land Policy Centre, in close collaboration with its key partners including inter-governmental organizations, government agencies, academia, regional economic communities, and African centres of excellence, CSOs, African private sector associations and development partners

3. Dates and Venue

The date for the Conference is set for the 2nd to 4th of November 2021, and the venue is based on the hosting arrangements. In this regard, the inaugural Conference was held on 11-14 November 2014, hosted by AUC at the AU Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. ECA hosted the second Conference at the UN conference Centre between 14 and 17 November 2017, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the Third Conference was held on 25-29 November 2019, hosted by AfDB and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire at Sofitel Hotel, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

The Government of Rwanda will host the 2021 Conference.

4. Conference Format

Due to the evolving nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have considered several options on the conference format which include:

Plan A: physical presence of presenters, speakers and participants

So far, the Conference has been a physical meeting of presenters, speakers and participants for at least a week, excluding pre-events. In addition, the Conference features thematic-focused, panel-based plenary sessions and parallel sessions in correspondence to selected sub-themes. A typical conference day includes one plenary session and two rounds of 4 breakout sessions, over 4hrs 30 minutes with lunch break offered in between.

Widely considered as Africa's premier platform for land governance, the Conference attracts enormous side events. CLPA-2019, for instance, witnessed the organization of fifty side events. The side events range from technically-oriented meetings, master classes and launches, ranging from 90 to 120 minutes in time duration. Side events are typically organized before and after the second daily technical session. Interpretation services are provided for main conference sessions².

Plan B: Virtual/e-Conference

In the event of continued outbreak of COVID-19 with travel restrictions and/ physical distancing measures still in place, it is proposed that the entire or part of the Conference be held virtually, i.e. a video conference platform powered by the services of a reliable video conferencing tool such as Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Zoom³ etc. Simultaneous

² AU working languages are used for the conference.

³ These three indicated platforms are widely considered as the best providers of e-calls/webinars services currently available considering stability, security, and, more importantly, quality streaming under low internet bandwidth.

interpretation services will be provided.⁴ The ITSS unit of ECA will provide the necessary IT related technical support/back-up, including providing the platforms, planning and launching the calls, and technical backstopping, etc.

The duration and format of the e-conference would have to be revisited, likely towards reduced duration for individual sessions, and the Conference as a whole spreading out over a shorter period. This is critical to be able to effectively engage the audience who would be following discussions from an office/ home environment with potential distractions. This would, therefore, have implications on the number of selected scientific papers for presentation⁵.

The e-conference may consider the following options, depending on the extent and magnitude of COVID related restrictions, and in view of connectivity challenges/costs in Africa.

- 1- Option B-1: the Conference is fully streamed from one base e.g. ECA, with all interventions made live (online) by speakers/participants from home. Prior recording is suggested for those with poor network; and as a back-up for all if possible
- 2- Option B-2: Assuming that restrictions on movement of people is eased at country level; but not for international travel for all countries, the Conference may, in addition to holding option B-1, establish aggregating hubs in selected African countries where the majority of registered participants reside. These national aggregation centers would serve as hubs for live broadcasting of the event (observing physical distancing, as appropriate). Full set-up arrangement would need to be in place, including session chairs, moderators, technical backstopping and refreshments, in addition to other administrative issues, including, for example, connecting on-site participants, and renting venues, and necessary equipment and infrastructure). The aggregating hub for live presentations would ideally also be well equipped to (1) record and (2) air/broadcast/stream live presentations.
- 3- Option B-3: Hybrid model: the Conference will be based on ongoing activities on ground in Kigali, Rwanda as well as video streaming based in ECA HQ

Consensus is tilted towards Option B-3 for the CLPA 2021. However, due to the fluid nature of the Covid pandemic, the conference organisation will continue to evolve to meet current realities.

⁴ Up to the minute of drafting the present CN, Zoom is the only video conferencing service platform that provides a multi-language simultaneous interpreting service for participants within its powered e-calls and webinars. However, it is to be noted that given mounting competition among platform service providers, it is reasonably anticipated that interpretation services would be widely incorporated in more platforms due to observably continuous upgrading efforts.

⁵ In CLPA-2019, 101 papers were presented over about 30 technical sessions spanning over 4 working days.

5. Operational modalities

The conference operations is chaired by the Government of Rwanda and co-chaired by the AUC over the Coordinating Committee. The Coordinating Committees is supported by a number of sub- committees.

Various committees are under the leadership of different institutions and the ALPC serves as the secretariat to the coordinating committee. The different committees are supported by consultants which includes the event director, the cultural and creative industries advisor, among others.

6. Contact

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