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Message from
the Executive
Director

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

I am pleased to welcome you to SEATINI's First Quarter Newsletter for 2026.

As we begin the year, the global economy continues to navigate a complex and uncertain landscape shaped by persistent geopolitical tensions, rising debt distress, climate-related shocks, declining development assistance, and uneven recovery across regions. These dynamics continue to intensify the urgency for inclusive, resilient, and equitable economic governance. For Africa and the wider Global South, they are reshaping critical debates on trade, fiscal, investment, food systems, and sustainable development.

Against this backdrop, SEATINI's work remains firmly grounded in strengthening the link between local realities and regional and global policy spaces. Our commitment is to ensure that development frameworks are inclusive, responsive, and aligned with Africa's aspirations.

During the first quarter of 2026, SEATINI actively contributed to national, regional, and global policy dialogues on economic governance. Our work centred on promoting fair, accountable, and sustainable trade, investment, and fiscal policies that safeguard the interests of communities often excluded from economic decision-making.

A key area of engagement during the quarter was advancing agroecology through trade policy advocacy and strengthening partnerships to build a broader movement for agroecology in East Africa. SEATINI continued to promote agroecology as one of Africa's most strategic and sustainable responses to interconnected challenges, including food insecurity, climate change, growing dependence on imported fertilizers and food imports, biodiversity loss, and inequitable market systems.

Through regional dialogues and collaborative engagements, SEATINI

contributed to the growing momentum for institutional mechanisms to identify, recognize, and verify agroecological products within regional and continental markets. These efforts are aimed at promoting resilient and sustainable food systems, strengthening local production and value chains, supporting smallholder farmers, and advancing fair and equitable market access across Africa. In addition, SEATINI continued to advocate for trade frameworks and policies that support sustainable food systems, protect local livelihoods, and enhance the participation of smallholder producers in regional and continental trade.

Our Financing for Development work remained central, particularly in the context of shrinking Official Development Assistance and rising indebtedness. On tax justice and fiscal accountability, we convened and participated in national-level discussions on proposed tax reforms, consistently advocating for transparent and equitable tax systems that strengthen domestic resource mobilisation, reduce inequality, and curb revenue leakages. At regional and global levels, we contributed to ongoing discussions on the evolving international tax architecture, including the proposed United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, while calling for fair taxing rights and stronger global cooperation on development financing.

Debt sustainability remains an urgent priority across African economies, as growing debt burdens continue to divert public resources away from critical social sectors. Our advocacy for prudent debt management is therefore both timely and essential.

SEATINI also engaged in key conversations shaping Africa's trade policy agenda, including processes linked to the WTO Ministerial Conference and AfCFTA implementation. Our engagements emphasized the need to preserve policy space for industrialization, food security,



value addition, and structural transformation and stronger protections for small-scale cross-border traders, particularly women and youth through simplified trade regimes.

As we reflected on recent WTO engagements, one message became increasingly clear: African countries cannot entirely depend on the multilateral trading system for solutions to most of the urgent challenges. The discussions reinforced the urgency for stronger regional integration, enhanced technical preparedness, and strategic engagement as negotiations continue in Geneva. They also highlighted the growing importance of aligning regional priorities with continental frameworks especially the AfCFTA, while strengthening South–South cooperation and African-led approaches to trade and development.

This year also marks an important institutional milestone for SEATINI. In 2026, we commemorate 30 years (1996–2026) of advancing equitable trade, fiscal justice, and fair investment governance. This milestone reflects three decades of sustained advocacy, strategic partnerships, and unwavering commitment to economic justice. It is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to building inclusive, resilient, and people-centred economies.

Across all programme areas, SEATINI remains committed to promoting rights-based, gender-responsive, and development-centred approaches to trade, investment and fiscal governance. We firmly believe that economic policy must serve people, protect livelihoods, and advance equity in both design and implementation.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our partners and collaborators, including civil society organisations, regional networks, development partners, and research institutions, whose continued solidarity strengthens evidence-based advocacy and amplifies voices from Africa in particular, and the Global South in general, within critical policy spaces.

Looking ahead, SEATINI will continue deepening its work on trade justice, fiscal policy, investment governance, climate justice, and sustainable agricultural systems. We remain committed to ensuring that communities are not only consulted but meaningfully engaged in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

On behalf of the Board, Management, and Staff of SEATINI, I extend heartfelt gratitude to all our partners and stakeholders for your continued trust, support, and solidarity. Your partnership remains central to our collective pursuit of economic justice and sustainable development.

In solidarity,

Jane Nalunga

Executive Director, SEATINI



BUILDING A TRADE MOVEMENT FOR AGROECOLOGY IN THE EAC: ADVANCING A REGIONAL MECHANISM FOR THE IDENTIFICATION, RECOGNITION, CERTIFICATION, VERIFICATION, AND TRADE OF AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS.

On 19th–20th March 2026, a multi-stakeholder consultative workshop was convened in Uganda by SEATINI to advance the development of a regional mechanism for the identification, recognition, certification, verification, and trade of agroecological products within the East African Community (EAC). The workshop brought together policymakers, civil society organizations, researchers, standards bodies, private sector actors, farmer organizations, and regional institutions to build consensus and generate actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening sustainable agricultural trade and enabling smallholder farmers to participate effectively in resilient and inclusive value chains.

The workshop was informed by growing

global and regional recognition of agroecology and organic agriculture as transformative pathways for achieving sustainable food systems, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, improved nutrition, public health, and sustainable livelihoods.

Across East Africa, smallholder farmers continue to practice diverse forms of agroecology rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, diversified farming, mixed crop-livestock systems, agroforestry, ecological soil management, water conservation, seed sovereignty, and low external-input agriculture. These practices contribute significantly to food sovereignty, climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, nutrition



security, and sustainable livelihoods. However, agroecological products remain poorly recognized, inadequately certified, weakly integrated into formal markets, and insufficiently differentiated within trade systems. As a result, farmers often struggle to access premium and structured markets despite growing consumer demand for healthy, safe, traceable, nutrient-dense, clean-label, and sustainably produced food products.

Participants noted that recent global disruptions including climate change, geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and volatility in agricultural input markets have exposed the vulnerabilities of highly industrialized food systems. These crises have reinforced the urgency of transitioning toward resilient and regenerative agricultural systems capable of reducing dependence on imported agrochemicals and fossil-fuel-based inputs while strengthening local economies and ecological sustainability.

At the same time, the workshop acknowledged the important progress already made by the organic movement globally and within East Africa through the establishment of certification systems, standards frameworks, market infrastructure, consumer awareness mechanisms, and regional harmonization processes. Milestones such as the East African Organic Products Standard (EAOPS), the Kilimo Hai Mark, Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), and the growth of organic value chains were highlighted as important foundations upon which agroecological trade systems can build.

In her opening remarks, SEATINI's Executive Director, Ms Jane Nalunga emphasized that agroecology must transition from being viewed merely as a production practice to becoming a viable and profitable economic system that delivers tangible value to farmers, consumers, and national economies. She noted that while countries such as Kenya and Tanzania have made progress through national agroecology strategies, and Uganda is developing one, the absence of structured systems for identification, certification, verification, and trade continues to constrain market opportunities. She stressed that the workshop sought to establish a clear, inclusive, and credible regional mechanism that ensures agroecological products are traceable, verifiable, competitive, and trusted within local, regional, and international markets.



Providing a partner perspective, Nancy Rapando from Climate Works Foundation highlighted agroecology's role in addressing environmental and food systems challenges, including reducing harmful agrochemical use, restoring soil health, lowering emissions, and enhancing resilience. Drawing from experiences in Uganda and Kenya, she underscored the importance of coordinated action among stakeholders and emphasized that fragmented approaches continue to undermine progress toward building a unified regional system. She also highlighted the role in supporting capacity building and promoting sustainable agricultural transitions.





Regional policymakers reinforced the importance of aligning agroecology with legislative and institutional frameworks. Hon. Francine Rutazana reflected on Rwanda's experience in promoting agroecology and reaffirmed the support of the East African Legislative Assembly for advancing agroecology through regional collaboration and partnerships. Complementing this,

Hon. Gideon Gatpan Thoar emphasized that agroecology must be elevated from practice to policy through the development of a regional Agroecology Bill. He highlighted the need for strong legal and institutional frameworks to support certification, harmonization, market recognition, and trade facilitation, and called on stakeholders to contribute evidence and expertise to inform policymaking processes.



From the government perspective, Mr. Okot Richard Okello, Assistant Commissioner, External Trade, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives in Uganda, stressed that agroecological products must be integrated into national export strategies and supported

through standards, branding, value addition, and trade facilitation systems capable of meeting regional and international market requirements.



Representing the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Mr. Bob Sunday George emphasized that agriculture remains central to East African economies but continues to face major challenges including climate change, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, and vulnerabilities within food systems. He described agroecology as a holistic solution capable of addressing these interconnected challenges but noted that its growth remains constrained by weak systems for identification, recognition, certification, and trade. He called for regionally harmonized standards, mutual recognition mechanisms across EAC Partner States, inclusive certification systems such as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), and stronger market linkages. He further stressed that collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, standards institutions, researchers, and private sector actors is essential for building resilient agroecological economies.





In his presentation, Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Deputy Executive Director at SEATINI highlighted the disconnect between agroecological production and market access. While agroecological production continues to expand across the region, market integration remains limited due to weak policy frameworks, fragmented standards systems, inadequate certification mechanisms, limited traceability infrastructure, and insufficient trade channels. He emphasized that trade represents the critical bridge between agroecological production and sustainable livelihoods, but success requires harmonized standards, quality assurance, traceability, consistency, aggregation systems, and sufficient production volumes. He proposed the establishment of a coordinated "Trade Movement for Agroecology" to strengthen policy alignment, market development, and regional trade integration.

During the panel discussion, Mr. Chariton Namuwoza, Chief Executive Officer at NOGAMU emphasized the importance of traceability and certification, drawing lessons from the organic movement and pointing to frameworks such as the East African Organic Products Standard (EAOPS) and the Kilimo Hai Mark as practical entry points for agroecological product recognition.

Mr. Edward Mukiibi, President, Slow Food International highlighted the need to build strong local and hyperlocal markets driven by consumer awareness, food safety concerns, nutrition, and health considerations, noting that agroecology must respond directly to societal needs while strengthening local food systems.

Dr. Florence Lwiza, an agricultural and development economist, Department of Agribusiness and Natural Resource Economics at Makerere University underscored the importance of research and evidence generation in informing policy, standards systems, certification mechanisms, and market development,

while calling for stronger collaboration between researchers and policymakers.



From L-R, Ms. Dr. Florence Lwiza, Hon. Gideon Gatpan Thoar, Mr. Chariton Namuwoza, and Mr. Edward Mukiibi during the panel discussion which was moderated by Ms. Jane Nalunga.

Expanding the discussion to regional trade, Dr. Million Belay, General Coordinator, Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, described agroecology as a science, practice, and social movement aimed at transforming food systems and advancing food sovereignty. He identified key barriers to cross-border trade including policy incoherence, fragmented standards systems, high certification costs, inadequate logistics infrastructure, and weak market systems. He proposed harmonization of standards, scaling up of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), investment in logistics and market infrastructure, and stronger regional coordination as critical solutions.

Similarly, Ms. Shylet T. Nyabeze, Trade facilitation expert at ESAMI/Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa highlighted persistent trade policy and procedural barriers including divergent Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) requirements, inconsistent certification procedures, and weak trade facilitation systems. She emphasized the need for coordinated regional frameworks, improved border systems, capacity building, and harmonized regulatory approaches capable of facilitating agroecological trade within the EAC and under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).



Focusing on standards systems, Ms. Ruth Awiyo from the Uganda National Bureau of Standards emphasized that standards are essential for ensuring quality, safety, consumer confidence, and market access. However, she noted that agroecological principles are not yet fully integrated into existing standards systems. She highlighted challenges including limited awareness, low stakeholder participation, fragmented systems, and high certification costs, and called for the review and strengthening of standards frameworks to better incorporate agroecological principles.

In a second panel, Mr. Henry Kimera, Executive Director at CONSENT emphasized the importance of building a strong quality culture and aligning standards systems with consumer realities and market demands.



L-R, Ms. Josephine Akia Luyimbaazi, Country Director, Pelum Uganda, Mr. Henry Kimera, Executive Director at CONSENT and Mr. Jonathan Lubega, Program Officer, Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation at SEATINI during the panel discussion

Ms. Josephine Akia Luyimbaazi, Country Director, Pelum Uganda highlighted the importance of inclusive and affordable certification approaches such as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in addressing challenges faced by smallholder farmers, particularly high certification costs, weak market access, and exclusion from formal trade systems.

The workshop further emphasized the growing need for convergence, coherence, and collaboration between the agroecological and organic movements. Participants recognized that although agroecology and organic agriculture emerged through different historical and institutional pathways, they share complementary principles around ecological sustainability, biodiversity conservation, soil regeneration, reduced dependence on hazardous agrochemicals, healthy food systems, and resilience-building. Participants therefore stressed the strategic importance of leveraging existing organic certification systems, standards frameworks, market infrastructure, consumer trust mechanisms, and trade channels while integrating broader agroecological principles and regenerative agriculture approaches.

Participants identified several critical issues requiring urgent action, including weak recognition and differentiation of agroecological products, fragmented standards and regulatory systems across EAC Partner States, weak infrastructure for aggregation and traceability, limited integration of agroecological products into trade systems, insufficient coordination among stakeholders, weak market incentives, and low consumer awareness. They also highlighted the need to strengthen policy coherence across agriculture, trade, environment, health, nutrition, and public procurement systems.

In conclusion, the consultative workshop demonstrated that building a functional regional mechanism for agroecological



product certification and trade requires coordinated and sustained action across policy, standards, trade, research, certification, infrastructure, and market systems. By aligning regulatory frameworks, strengthening certification and verification approaches, investing in market development, and fostering convergence between agroecology and organic agriculture, the EAC can create an enabling environment where agroecological and organic products are recognized, trusted, competitive, and effectively traded. Such a system will not only improve livelihoods for smallholder farmers but also contribute significantly to regional integration, sustainable agricultural transformation, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, public health, and food sovereignty across East Africa.



The photos show distinguished participants and stakeholders during the regional workshop on the development of a mechanism for the identification, recognition, certification, verification, and trade of agroecological products within the East African Community (EAC) organised by SEATINI

SEATINI at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14)

SEATINI actively participated in a range of stakeholder sessions during the 14th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC14), held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 26 to 30 March 2026. These included civil society engagements, notably at the IISD Trade and Sustainability Hub, as well as sessions and side events organised by Our World Is Not for Sale (OWINFS) and the Africa Trade Network. Through these platforms, SEATINI contributed to policy dialogues and advocacy discussions aimed at advancing a fair, inclusive, and development-oriented multilateral trading system that responds to the realities of developing countries and small-scale producers.



Reimagining Agricultural Trade Rules for Small-Scale Producers

SEATINI participated in a high-level side session titled "Small-Scale Producers and International Trade: What Role for a Reimagined Agreement on Agriculture?" held at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Trade and Sustainability Hub on the sidelines of the WTO MC14 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

SEATINI Executive

Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga, underscored the indispensable role of small-scale producers in Africa's agricultural systems, noting that they are central to food security, rural livelihoods, employment creation, and environmental sustainability across the continent. She further highlighted that women make up the majority of small-scale agricultural producers,

yet continue to face disproportionate challenges arising from unequal trade structures, limited access to productive resources, and inadequate policy support.

Ms. Nalunga drew attention to persistent structural imbalances within the global agricultural trading system, including tariff escalation, inequitable market access conditions, and unresolved issues such



as public stockholding for food security purposes. She noted that these longstanding constraints continue to undermine the competitiveness of African producers and limit their ability to participate meaningfully and benefit equitably from international trade.

SEATINI emphasized that existing agricultural trade rules under the WTO often reflect systemic asymmetries that disproportionately disadvantage developing countries and small-scale producers, particularly **those operating within informal, subsistence-based, and vulnerable farming systems.** Ms

Nalunga stressed that any meaningful reform of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture must place development at its core by safeguarding policy space for food security measures, supporting domestic agricultural transformation, and strengthening the resilience and sustainability of smallholder farming systems.

The engagement further reaffirmed the need for continued advocacy for a more balanced and inclusive multilateral trading system that prioritizes development, equity, and sustainability in global agricultural trade negotiations. SEATINI reiterated that international

trade rules must be reformed to reflect the realities and development needs of small-scale producers in developing countries, ensuring that trade serves as a driver of inclusive economic transformation rather than deepening existing structural inequalities.

Through its participation at WTO MC14, SEATINI continues to champion trade policy frameworks that recognize and support the critical contribution of small-scale producers to sustainable development, while promoting equitable, people-centred, and resilient agricultural systems.



Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI, delivers a submission during the session “Small-Scale Producers and International Trade: What Role for a Reimagined Agreement on Agriculture?” at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Trade and Sustainability Hub in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on the sidelines of the WTO 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14).

Advancing African Perspectives in Multilateral Trade Governance: SEATINI Participates in OWINFS Press Conference at WTO MC14



On the sidelines of the 14th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, the Our World Is Not for Sale (OWINFS) Network convened a high-level press conference that brought together journalists, civil society organisations, and trade policy advocates to present Global South perspectives on ongoing multilateral trade negotiations. The presser provided a platform for critical reflection on the direction, transparency, and inclusiveness of current WTO processes, with participants expressing concern that prevailing negotiation approaches risk marginalizing developing countries while concentrating decision-making power among a few influential members. SEATINI, a member of the OWINFS Network, participated in the engagement alongside other civil society actors advocating for a fair and development-oriented multilateral trading system.

Discussions during the briefing highlighted growing apprehension over emerging shifts within the multilateral trading system that could further deepen structural inequalities

and constrain the effective participation of developing countries in shaping global trade rules. Participants called for renewed commitment to governance reforms that uphold fairness, transparency, inclusivity, and balanced participation in multilateral trade negotiations.

SEATINI Executive Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga, contributed to the discussions by emphasizing the urgent need for structural transformation within Africa's economic and trade systems. She stressed that global trade rules must support, rather than undermine, industrialization, value addition, and agrarian transformation across the continent. Ms. Nalunga reiterated that agriculture remains the backbone of many African economies and continues to play a central role in food security, employment creation, rural livelihoods, and poverty reduction.

She further noted that African producers continue to operate within highly unequal global trading conditions shaped by persistent distortions in international



agricultural markets. In particular, she highlighted the continued use of harmful subsidies by developed countries, especially within the cotton sector, which continue to depress global prices and weaken the competitiveness of African farmers. According to Ms Nalunga, such imbalances continue to hinder efforts towards building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural systems capable of driving long-term development.

Ms. Nalunga also raised concern over the gradual erosion of key multilateral principles that have historically underpinned the WTO system, including consensus-based decision-making, Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT), the Single Undertaking principle, and the Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) principle. She cautioned that weakening these foundational principles risks undermining the integrity, legitimacy, and development orientation of the multilateral trading system, while further constraining policy space for developing countries.

The discussions additionally raised concerns regarding the increasing use of plurilateral approaches within the WTO, including Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) and the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement. Participants cautioned that such approaches could contribute to fragmentation within the multilateral trading system, reduce policy flexibility for developing countries, and create potential tensions with regional integration processes such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The engagement concluded with a strong call for urgent reforms to address persistent structural imbalances and power asymmetries within global trade governance. SEATINI reaffirmed its solidarity with civil society organisations and development partners across Africa and the Global South in advocating for a fair, transparent, inclusive, and development-oriented multilateral trading system that places people, equity, and sustainable development at the centre of global trade negotiations.



Second from the left is Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI during the OWINFS Network press conference held on the sidelines of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The press briefing brought together civil society organisations and trade advocates to advance Global South perspectives on inclusive and development-oriented multilateral trade governance.

Advancing Africa's Structural Transformation in Global Trade: SEATINI Engages in WTO MC14 Civil Society Dialogue



SEATINI participated in the WTO MC14 Civil Society Dialogue Panel 2 titled *"Africa in the Multilateral Trading System: Choices and Challenges"* held at the Palais des Congrès in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on the sidelines of the 14th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC14). The dialogue convened African civil society leaders, trade experts, policymakers, and development stakeholders to examine how the multilateral trading system can better support Africa's industrialization, digital transformation, sustainable development, and structural economic transformation.

Representing SEATINI Uganda, Executive Director Ms. Jane Nalunga contributed to discussions on the urgent need to transform Africa's trade structure to reduce dependence on primary commodity exports and promote industrialization, value addition, and economic diversification.

Discussions during the panel highlighted concerns that prevailing global trade arrangements continue to reinforce commodity dependence, limiting Africa's capacity for structural transformation and exposing economies to recurring external shocks.

Participants noted that many African countries continue to rely heavily on a narrow range of primary commodities for a significant share of their export earnings. This persistent dependence, they observed, increases vulnerability to global price volatility, weakens fiscal stability, and constrains the ability of countries to invest in long-term development priorities. It also limits opportunities for value addition, decent job creation, industrial growth, and the development of competitive regional and global value chains.

The dialogue underscored the need for comprehensive reforms to the multilateral trading system to enable developing countries to pursue transformative development strategies. Key issues raised included the importance of expanding



policy space for industrial development, addressing tariff escalation that discourages value addition, and strengthening regional integration frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to support diversified production and intra-African trade.

Participants further stressed the need to make Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) provisions more effective and development-oriented, ensuring that they meaningfully address the structural constraints facing developing countries rather than remaining largely symbolic commitments within the WTO framework. Strengthening regional value chains and deepening intra-African trade were identified as critical pathways towards building more resilient and self-sustaining economies.

SEATINI reaffirmed that addressing

commodity dependence requires deliberate policy shifts at both national and global levels, including rebalancing international trade rules to support industrialization, economic diversification, and sustainable development. SEATINI further emphasized the importance of preserving sufficient policy space for developing countries to implement transformative economic strategies tailored to their development priorities.

The engagement concluded with a shared call for a more equitable and development-oriented multilateral trading system capable of supporting Africa's long-term structural transformation. Through its participation at WTO MC14, SEATINI continues to advance evidence-based advocacy aimed at promoting fair trade rules that support inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development outcomes for Africa.



Ms. Jane Nalunga (second last from the far right), Executive Director of SEATINI joined the WTO Director General and other distinguished experts for the WTO MC14 Civil Society Dialogue Panel 2 titled “Africa in the Multilateral Trading System: Choices and Challenges” held in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The dialogue focused on addressing Africa’s structural trade challenges and advancing pathways towards industrialization, value addition, and economic diversification.

Rethinking Global Trade Governance for a Climate-Just and Inclusive Future



On 28 March 2026, SEATINI, in collaboration with ODI Global and the Remaking Trade Project, co-organised a high-level session titled “Rethinking Global Trade Governance for a Climate-Just and Inclusive Future” at the IISD Trade & Sustainability Hub, held on the sidelines of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14). The session brought together leading voices in trade, development, and climate policy to reflect on the future of global trade governance and provided a critical platform to examine how the multilateral trading system can respond to intensifying geopolitical fragmentation, widening inequalities, and accelerating climate disruption while remaining fit for an inclusive and sustainable future.

The session convened experts, policymakers, and development practitioners to reflect on the future of global trade governance amid deepening global challenges. Participants engaged in critical reflections on how multilateral trade rules could be reshaped to better advance inclusive development and climate sustainability. There was shared

concern that the current multilateral trading system is under increasing strain due to overlapping crises, including stalled governance reforms, persistent development asymmetries, and the rapid expansion of unilateral climate-related trade measures. These dynamics were seen as risks that could further marginalise developing countries and weaken their ability to shape global trade rules.

At the same time, participants emphasized that these challenges also present an opportunity to reset global trade governance in ways that are more coherent with the Paris Agreement on climate change, biodiversity commitments, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A central issue of discussion was the rise of unilateral climate-related trade policies, particularly Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAMs). While such instruments aim to support global decarbonization, participants warned that they risk creating a “green squeeze” on developing economies if implemented without adequate flexibility, climate finance, and technology transfer support. Many



developing countries continue to face structural barriers in accessing climate finance and green technologies, limiting their capacity to comply with rapidly evolving sustainability standards. Without corrective measures, such policies could deepen inequalities in global trade participation and reinforce existing structural imbalances in the international trading system.

SEATINI, as one of the leading civil society voices from Africa, reaffirmed the need to safeguard policy space for green industrialization and structural transformation in developing countries. Ms Jane Nalunga, SEATINI Executive Director emphasized that sustainability standards must not become disguised protectionism, but should instead enable inclusive development pathways that allow African countries and other developing economies to industrialize, diversify, and move up global value chains.

SEATINI further stressed that Africa's structural transformation depends on equitable access to global markets, fair and balanced trade rules, and the ability to build productive industrial capacity without punitive restrictions. It also highlighted that

agriculture remains central to livelihoods, food security, employment creation, and rural development across the continent, yet continues to operate within deeply unequal global trading conditions.

Participants noted that persistent distortions in international agricultural markets, including trade-distorting subsidies in developed economies, continue to undermine the competitiveness of African producers. These structural imbalances were identified as major obstacles to building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural systems capable of supporting long-term development. Concerns were also raised about the gradual erosion of foundational principles of the multilateral trading system, including consensus-based decision-making, Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT), the Single Undertaking principle, and the Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) principle. Participants cautioned that weakening these principles risks undermining the legitimacy, predictability, and development orientation of the World Trade Organization system, while further constraining policy space for developing countries.

The discussion further examined the increasing use of plurilateral approaches within the WTO framework, including Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) and the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement. While these were viewed by some as pragmatic pathways for progress, participants warned that they may also contribute to fragmentation of the multilateral system, limit inclusive participation in global rule-making, and create tensions with regional integration efforts such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. The session concluded with a strong call for urgent, systemic reform of global trade governance to address entrenched structural imbalances, power asymmetries, and inequities within the multilateral trading system. Participants reaffirmed the need for a reimagined trade

architecture that is transparent, inclusive, and development-oriented, placing equity, climate justice, and structural transformation at its core.

Ms Nalunga reiterated SEATINI's commitment to working alongside civil society organisations, development partners, and policy advocates across Africa and the Global South to advance a fair and balanced multilateral trading system that enables developing countries not only to participate in global trade governance, but to actively shape it in line with their development priorities.



On the immediate left is SEATINI Executive Director together with other distinguished experts during the session at IISD's Trade & Sustainability Hub



ADVANCING AfCFTA-ALIGNED INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND FACILITATION IN UGANDA

Uganda continues to register steady economic growth and remains strategically positioned within regional and continental markets. With abundant natural resources, a youthful labour force and access to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) market, the country has significant potential to attract investment that supports industrialisation, job creation and sustainable development. However, foreign direct investment (FDI) remains heavily concentrated in extractive industries, while investment in high-impact sectors such as agro-processing, manufacturing and renewable energy remains limited. Challenges

related to coordination, digitalisation and investment facilitation also continue to constrain Uganda's competitiveness.

Against this backdrop, the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment (PoI) presents an important opportunity for Uganda to reposition its investment framework towards sustainable and inclusive growth. The Protocol, adopted by African Union Heads of State as part of Phase II of the AfCFTA negotiations, seeks to promote, facilitate and protect investment while safeguarding the right of states to regulate in the public interest and advancing sustainable development objectives.

To support this agenda, SEATINI Uganda, in partnership with ODI Global and with support from the British High Commission Kampala, convened a stakeholder consultative workshop on 19 February 2026 to validate findings and recommendations from the study titled "Support for AfCFTA-aligned Investment Promotion and Facilitation in Uganda." The workshop brought together representatives from government institutions, the private sector, development partners and civil society to discuss practical measures for aligning Uganda's investment promotion and facilitation framework with the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Louis Arinaitwe, Country Director at the British High Commission highlighted the need for Africa to attract more development-oriented investment capable of driving structural transformation, creating jobs and strengthening regional value chains. He noted that despite Africa accounting for a significant share of the world's population, the continent continues to attract a relatively small proportion of global FDI flows. He emphasized that effective implementation of the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment could help Uganda unlock new opportunities under the government's Tenfold Growth Strategy, particularly by positioning the country as a competitive investment destination within the continental market.

Providing an overview of the study, Bernardo Arce Fernandez, Research Officer in the International Economic Development Group at ODI explained that the Protocol on Investment is designed to create a more transparent, predictable and investor-responsive environment across Africa while embedding sustainable development principles. He noted that the study focused on two key pillars: strengthening Uganda's FDI value proposition in line with AfCFTA priorities

and improving investment facilitation through enhanced coordination, Regional One-Stop Centres and complementary digital services. He further underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement in ensuring national ownership of the proposed reforms.

Giving remarks on behalf of SEATINI Uganda, Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Deputy Director at SEATINI stressed that domestication and implementation of the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment must go beyond commitments at the continental level and translate into practical reforms within Uganda's national investment framework. He called for stronger alignment between Uganda's investment policies and the objectives of the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment, particularly in promoting sustainable development, technology transfer, skills development and structural transformation. He also emphasized the importance of attracting quality investment that supports Uganda's long-term development priorities rather than focusing solely on increasing investment volumes.

Presenting the study's key recommendations, Nakaweesa Catherene, Program Associate at SEATINI highlighted the need to strengthen inter-

agency coordination, accelerate digitalization and improve transparency within Uganda's investment facilitation framework. Among the proposed measures were the phased rollout of Regional One-Stop Centres beyond Kampala, enhancement of online registration and licensing systems, publication of investment procedures and timelines, and strengthening investor aftercare services. She also underscored the importance of promoting investment in sectors aligned with AfCFTA priorities, including agro-processing, renewable energy and value-added manufacturing.

Participants engaged in constructive discussions on how Uganda can leverage the AfCFTA framework to attract more sustainable and regionally integrated investment while improving the overall investor experience. The workshop also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to validate and refine the study's recommendations ahead of finalization of the report.

The validated recommendations are expected to contribute to a clearer roadmap for Uganda's implementation of the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment, particularly in strengthening investment promotion and facilitation, operationalizing Regional



One-Stop Centres and expanding digital services to improve efficiency, transparency and competitiveness. Ultimately, these reforms are expected to support Uganda's ambition to attract investment that contributes meaningfully to industrialization, regional integration and inclusive economic transformation.



Mr. Louis Arinaitwe, Country Director at the British High Commission delivering opening remarks during the stakeholder consultative workshop on AfCFTA-aligned investment promotion and facilitation in Uganda



Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Deputy Executive Director of SEATINI giving remarks on behalf of SEATINI and emphasizing the need to align Uganda's national investment policy framework with the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment.



Mr. Bernardo Arce Fernandez, Research Officer at ODI Global presenting key findings from the study and contextualizing the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment during the workshop.



Nakaweesa Catherine, Program Associate at SEATINI presenting policy recommendations on strengthening investment facilitation, coordination and digitalization.



Participants following discussions during the stakeholder consultative workshop on AfCFTA-aligned investment promotion and facilitation in Uganda.



Mr. Louis Arinaitwe, Country Director at the British High Commission Kampala (left), Mr. Herbert Kafeero (centre), Deputy Executive Director at SEATINI and Mr. Bernardo Arce Fernandez (right) after the stakeholder consultative workshop on AfCFTA-aligned investment promotion and facilitation in Uganda. Research Officer at ODI Global (right) after Uganda's investment workshop on AfCFTA-aligned investment promotion and facilitation in Uganda



Africa Trade Network Convenes Strategic Consultative Meeting Ahead of WTO MC14 Amid Rising Global Trade Tensions

SEATINI co-organised a three-day Africa Consultative Meeting ahead of the World Trade Organization's Fourteenth Ministerial Conference (MC14), held in Entebbe, Uganda, in February 2026. The meeting was jointly convened with Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Africa) and ENDA-CACID under the Africa Trade Network (ATN), under the theme "Preparing African Civil Society for Effective Engagement at the WTO MC14 Conference."

The consultative meeting formed part of a broader continental effort to strengthen coordination among African civil society,

trade ministries, academia, and diplomatic missions in the lead-up to MC14 scheduled for March 2026 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. It aimed to deepen shared understanding of the evolving negotiating landscape and build a more coherent African strategy in global trade governance at a time of intensifying geopolitical competition and increasing uncertainty in the multilateral trading system.

Participants reflected on the rapidly evolving global trade environment, increasingly characterised by the use of tariffs as geopolitical tools, stalled WTO reforms, and growing reliance on plurilateral initiatives in

areas such as e-commerce and investment facilitation. These shifts were widely seen as reshaping the balance of power within the WTO and placing additional pressure on developing countries to engage in negotiations that may not fully reflect their development priorities.

In her opening remarks and keynote address, SEATINI Executive Director Ms. Jane Nalunga underscored the persistent structural constraints shaping Africa's participation in WTO processes. These include limited technical capacity, weak coordination between Geneva-based negotiators and national capitals, and

fragmented African positioning across negotiating groups. She emphasised the critical role of informed and coordinated civil society engagement in supporting African policymakers ahead of MC14, reiterating the principle that “no deal is better than a bad deal” where outcomes risk undermining Africa’s development trajectory and policy autonomy.

Discussions highlighted that WTO reform debates remain deeply contested, particularly on issues such as Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT), industrial policy space and subsidy disciplines, decision-making processes, and the long-stalled dispute settlement system. Participants reaffirmed the Africa Group communication (WT/GC/W/971) as a key anchor for common African positions, stressing the need to safeguard consensus-based decision-making, preserve policy space for industrialisation, and restore a fair, effective, and accessible dispute settlement mechanism.

Concerns were also raised over efforts to mainstream Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs), particularly on e-commerce and investment facilitation, into the WTO rulebook without adequate safeguards. Participants cautioned that such moves risk entrenching asymmetries in the global trading system and further constraining African countries’ ability to pursue digital industrialisation, data sovereignty, and development-oriented trade regulation.

The meeting placed strong emphasis on Africa’s structural transformation agenda. Despite the continent’s significant economic potential, it continues to import over USD 50 billion worth of food annually, a reality linked to long-standing constraints on agricultural policy space, low productivity, and limited value addition. In this context, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was recognized as a key strategic instrument for transformation. However, participants noted that intra-African trade remains low at approximately 15%, compared to over

60% in more integrated regions.

Participants underscored the importance of ensuring coherence between AfCFTA implementation and WTO commitments, warning that new multilateral disciplines must not restrict policy tools required for agro-processing, mineral beneficiation, and broader industrial development. The need to protect and expand Africa’s policy space for context-specific development strategies emerged as a consistent and unifying theme throughout the discussions.

The meeting concluded with a call for sustained coordination among African stakeholders beyond MC14, including stronger continental platforms and enhanced South-South cooperation. SEATINI reaffirmed its commitment to advancing evidence-based advocacy, capacity building, and inclusive policy dialogue aimed at strengthening Africa’s collective voice in global trade negotiations.

Participants emphasized that MC14 represents a decisive moment for Africa to assert its development priorities within the multilateral trading system, ensuring that emerging global trade rules enable rather than constrain industrialization, food sovereignty, digital transformation, and structural economic transformation across the continent.





Participants during the Africa Consultative Meeting Towards WTO MC14 held in Entebbe, Uganda, discussing Africa's strategic engagement and policy priorities ahead of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon.



Participants during the Africa Consultative Meeting Towards the WTO MC14 held in Entebbe, Uganda.



Representatives of the co-organizers of the meeting, including Mr. Sylvester Bagooro, Program Officer at TWN Africa (left), Ms. Nalunga Jane, Executive Director of SEATINI (middle), and Mr. Mounirou Alioune KANE, Project Manager at ENDA CACID (extreme right), during the concluding session of the consultative meeting.



Strengthening Inclusive Regional Trade: SEATINI Participates in COMESA–EAC–SADC Policy Dialogue on the Tripartite Simplified Trade Regime

SEATINI, represented by Executive Director Ms. Jane Nalunga, participated in the COMESA–EAC–SADC Policy Dialogue Forum on the Tripartite Simplified Trade Regime (TSTR) held in February 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya. The dialogue brought together representatives from Regional Economic Communities (COMESA, EAC, and SADC), government institutions, civil society organisations, private sector actors, and development partners to discuss strategies for strengthening simplified trade systems and advancing inclusive regional economic integration across the

Tripartite region.

The Forum reaffirmed the Tripartite Simplified Trade Regime as a key instrument for facilitating intra-regional trade, reducing trade costs, and enhancing the participation of small-scale cross-border traders in formal regional markets. Discussions highlighted the growing importance of simplified trade mechanisms in promoting economic resilience, improving market access, and deepening regional integration across Eastern and Southern Africa.

Participants emphasized that effective implementation of the

Simplified Trade Regime requires strengthened coordination among Regional Economic Communities, Partner States, and non-state actors, including civil society and the private sector. Particular attention was given to ensuring that trade facilitation reforms respond to the lived realities of small-scale traders, especially women and youth, who constitute a significant share of informal cross-border trade in the region.

The dialogue further identified persistent barriers affecting small-scale cross-border trade, including Non-Tariff Barriers

(NTBs), limited awareness of simplified trade procedures, inadequate border infrastructure, and uneven implementation of regional trade commitments. Participants called for improved institutional coordination, enhanced dissemination of trade information, and more inclusive policy frameworks that protect vulnerable traders while expanding opportunities for regional commerce.

SEATINI contributed perspectives grounded in its ongoing advocacy for equitable trade policies, regional integration, and people-centred trade governance. The organisation emphasised that simplified trade regimes should go beyond increasing trade volumes to ensure meaningful socio-economic transformation, including improved livelihoods, strengthened micro and small enterprises, and expanded opportunities

for inclusive growth across the region.

SEATINI further underscored the importance of strengthening accountability, transparency, and stakeholder participation in the implementation of regional trade frameworks to ensure that integration processes deliver sustainable and inclusive development outcomes for communities, traders, and businesses across the Tripartite region.

Through its participation, SEATINI reaffirmed its commitment to evidence-based policy engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration aimed at making the Tripartite Simplified Trade Regime more effective, accessible, and responsive to the needs of small-scale cross-border traders and regional economic actors.



Advancing Global South Perspectives on Debt Justice and Development Finance: SEATINI Participates in Financing for Development Strategy Meeting in the Philippines

SEATINI participated in the Financing for Development (FfD) Coordination Group Strategy Meeting held in January 2026 in Quezon City, Philippines. The meeting brought together civil society organisations (CSOs), policy advocates, and global experts to reflect on the evolving international economic landscape and to deliberate on the future direction of the Financing for Development (FfD) process, including the work of the FfD Civil Society Organization Mechanism.

The engagement provided a strategic platform for CSOs from the Global South and

beyond to assess emerging fiscal and debt challenges facing developing countries. Discussions focused on rising debt vulnerabilities, constrained fiscal and policy space, and the increasing pressures on governments to finance sustainable development priorities amid overlapping global crises.

Participants built on outcomes from the 2023 CSO convening in Bogotá, Colombia, which produced the Bogotá Declaration, a collective call for urgent reforms to the international debt architecture. The meeting reviewed progress since Bogotá, including

sustained CSO advocacy that contributed to the inclusion of key provisions under paragraph 50(f) of the Fourth Financing for Development (FfD4) outcome document, the Sevilla Commitment (Compromiso de Sevilla).

The discussions highlighted growing momentum among civil society actors towards the establishment of a fair, transparent, and rules-based multilateral framework to address recurring sovereign debt crises affecting developing countries. Participants noted that the current global debt architecture remains heavily

skewed against developing economies, often limiting their ability to invest in essential sectors such as health, education, climate resilience, and productive transformation.

SEATINI, joining other CSOs in the FfD Coordination Group, contributed to the deliberations by drawing on its ongoing work on debt justice, fiscal governance, and equitable development financing. The organisation emphasised the need for reforms that strengthen the voice and meaningful participation of developing countries in global financial governance processes, while safeguarding national policy space to pursue inclusive development priorities.

Participants also discussed ongoing advocacy efforts towards the establishment of a United Nations Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt as part of broader reforms aimed at improving debt restructuring processes, enhancing transparency and

accountability in lending and borrowing, and advancing development-oriented financing systems responsive to the needs of the Global South.

The meeting reaffirmed the central role of civil society organisations in shaping global policy debates on financing for development, debt governance, and economic justice. Participants called for strengthened coordination and sustained collective action among CSOs to advance inclusive, transparent, and people-centred reforms of the international financial system.

Through its participation alongside other CSOs in the FfD Coordination Group, SEATINI reaffirmed its commitment to advancing equitable global economic governance, debt justice, and sustainable development pathways that support inclusive socio-economic transformation in Africa and across the Global South.



Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI, joins other civil society participants for a group photo following the Financing for Development (FfD) Coordination Group Strategy Meeting held in Quezon City, Philippines.



Strengthening East Africa's Strategic Engagement Ahead of WTO MC14: SEATINI Convenes Regional Policy Webinar on Ahead of WTO MC14

SEATINI, in partnership with EcoNews Africa and under the umbrella of the East Africa Trade Network (EATN), convened a regional webinar on 27 February 2026 to assess East Africa's preparedness for the 14th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC14) and to examine strategic responses to the evolving global trade landscape. The engagement brought together policymakers, trade experts, civil society organisations, and regional stakeholders to reflect on the implications of ongoing WTO reform discussions and the need to safeguard development policy space for East African countries within the multilateral

trading system. The webinar provided a platform for dialogue on emerging global trade dynamics, increasing geopolitical uncertainty, and the potential implications of proposed WTO reforms for developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Discussions underscored the importance of coordinated regional engagement and evidence-based advocacy to ensure that East Africa's development priorities are effectively represented in global trade negotiations.

In her opening remarks, SEATINI Executive Director Ms. Jane Nalunga emphasised that WTO MC14 presents a critical

opportunity for East African countries to strengthen coordination on common negotiating positions and collectively defend development interests within the multilateral trading system. She highlighted persistent structural challenges facing the region, including limited industrial capacity, commodity dependence, low levels of value addition, and vulnerability to external economic shocks. Ms. Nalunga further stressed the importance of preserving policy flexibility at both national and regional levels to ensure that WTO outcomes support sustainable industrialization, food security, and inclusive economic transformation.



Delivering the keynote address, Ms. Annette Ssemuwemba Mutaawe from the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat highlighted growing uncertainty surrounding WTO MC14 and ongoing reform proposals affecting Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) provisions. She cautioned that attempts to weaken development flexibilities or dilute core WTO principles, including the single undertaking approach, could further fragment the multilateral trading system and constrain the ability of developing countries to pursue national development priorities. She also raised concerns regarding negotiations on Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) and e-commerce, emphasising the need for strategic engagement that safeguards regulatory autonomy and preserves development policy space.



Providing a national perspective, Ms. Georgina Mugerwa from Uganda's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives outlined Uganda's position on WTO agricultural negotiations and emerging digital trade discussions. She noted the continued importance of addressing

longstanding concerns related to food security and domestic agricultural support, while acknowledging the limited progress achieved in these areas within the WTO framework. On digital trade and Investment Facilitation for Development proposals, she emphasised that Uganda continues to carefully assess emerging commitments to ensure alignment with national development priorities, including industrial policy, taxation, and data governance.

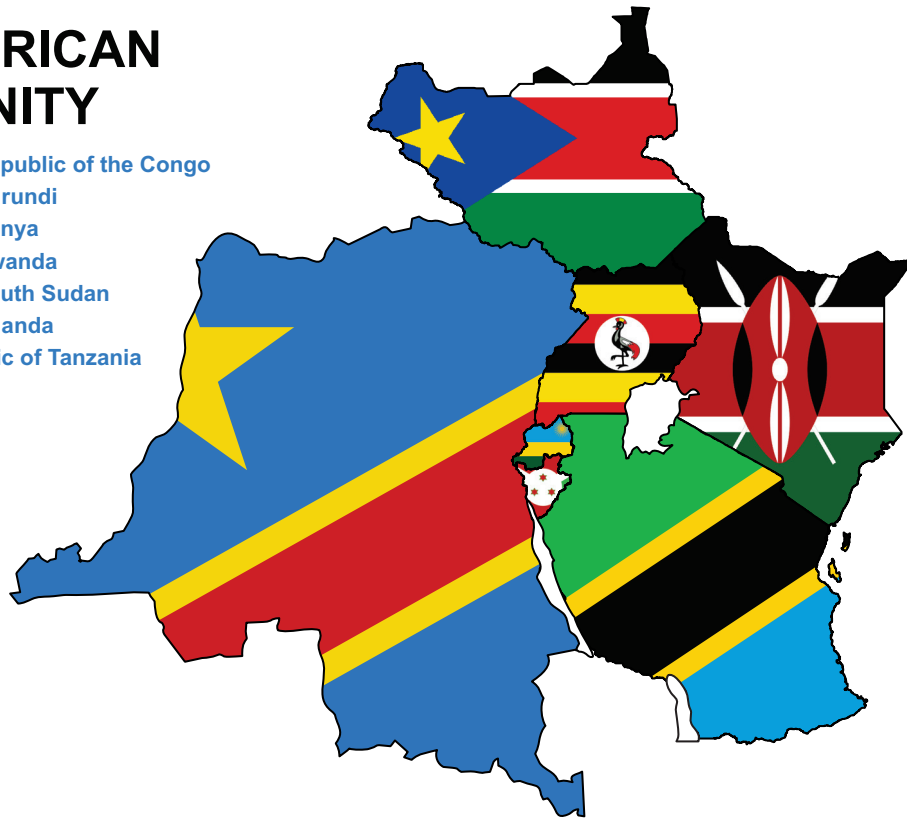


Regional and systemic perspectives were further provided by Ms. Vahini Naidu from the South Centre, who highlighted the implications of Least Developed Country graduation for East African countries approaching graduation thresholds. She noted that countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania risk losing critical preferential treatment and development flexibilities without adequate and well-structured transition mechanisms. She stressed the importance of preserving policy space, strengthening productive capacities, and ensuring development-oriented transition strategies that mitigate potential economic vulnerabilities associated with graduation.



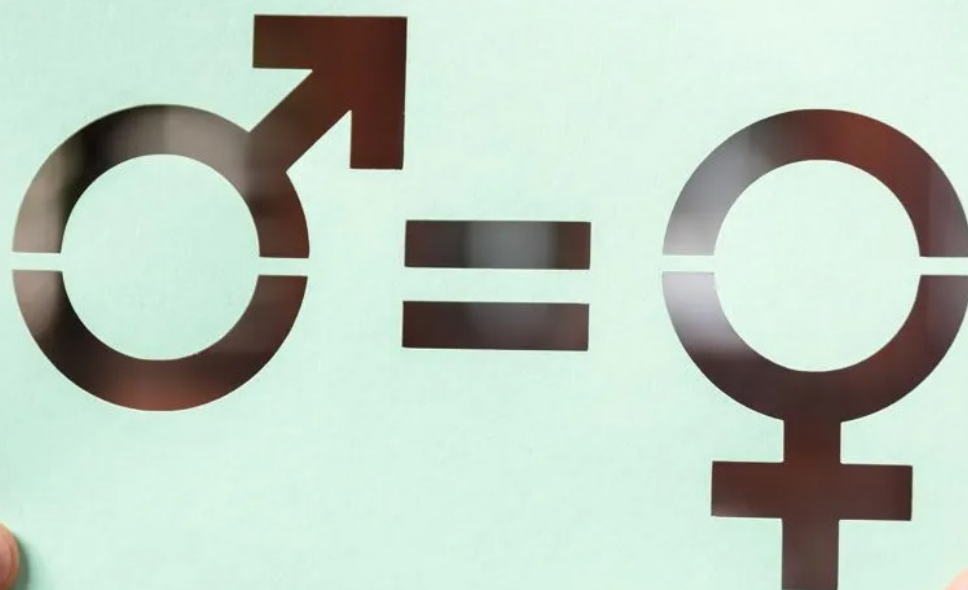
EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

-  Democratic Republic of the Congo
-  Republic of Burundi
-  Republic of Kenya
-  Republic of Rwanda
-  Republic of South Sudan
-  Republic of Uganda
-  United Republic of Tanzania



The webinar also facilitated broader reflections on LDC graduation processes, WTO reform dynamics, trade preferences, and regional preparedness for MC14 negotiations. Participants emphasized the need for strengthened regional coordination, enhanced technical capacity, and sustained evidence-based advocacy to safeguard East Africa's development interests within global trade governance.

The engagement concluded with a renewed commitment from SEATINI, EcoNews Africa, and the East Africa Trade Network to deepen strategic policy engagement and regional collaboration ahead of WTO MC14. Participants reaffirmed that an inclusive, fair, and development-oriented multilateral trading system remains essential for supporting sustainable industrialization, economic resilience, and equitable development across East Africa.



Advancing Gender-Responsive Investment Governance to Protect Women Workers in East Africa

As East Africa continues to attract increasing flows of foreign direct investment, concerns remain over the safety, rights, and wellbeing of women workers who constitute a significant proportion of the labour force in key productive sectors. Women are particularly concentrated in labour-intensive industries such as agriculture, horticulture, and extractives sectors that have expanded alongside rising investment inflows. While these investments have contributed to job creation and economic growth, they have not been matched with adequate safeguards to protect women from exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and gender-based violence (GBV). Evidence continues to point to persistent workplace harassment and coercion, often driven by power imbalances, insecure employment arrangements, and weak enforcement of labour protections.

Against this background, SEATINI convened a webinar titled “Advancing Gender-Responsive Investment Governance and

Protecting Women Workers’ Rights in East Africa” in commemoration of International Women’s Day. The engagement provided a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue aimed at deepening understanding of GBV in commercial investment settings and advancing policy approaches that integrate gender equality, labour rights, and social protection within investment governance frameworks across the region.



Delivering the keynote address, SEATINI Executive Director Ms. Jane Nalunga



underscored that investment governance plays a critical but often under-examined role in shaping labour conditions. She noted that while significant emphasis has been placed on attracting investment into the region, insufficient attention has been given to ensuring that such investments uphold labour rights, gender equality, and workplace safety standards. She called for the deliberate integration of gender-responsive safeguards into investment policies, licensing frameworks, and regulatory systems to ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of women's dignity, safety, and rights.



Expanding on the broader context, Ms. Nakaweesa Catherine, Trade Policy Analyst at SEATINI, highlighted the paradox of investment-led growth in East Africa. While foreign direct investment has generated employment opportunities, many women continue to experience precarious work arrangements, unsafe

working environments, and limited access to justice mechanisms. She noted that structural weaknesses, including inadequate reporting systems and weak enforcement of labour regulations, further increase women's vulnerability to GBV in the workplace. Beyond the social and human rights implications, she emphasised that GBV also carries significant economic costs, including reduced productivity, high staff turnover, and increased public health burdens.



From a workers' rights perspective, Ms. Katusime Jesse Kafanabo, Head of Gender, Youth, and Education at the Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU), highlighted the lived realities of women in plantations and other labour-intensive sectors. She observed that women are often concentrated in low-paying, insecure jobs with limited opportunities

for career advancement, while men predominantly occupy supervisory and decision-making positions. She further noted that labour casualisation and weak union representation expose women to abuse and undermine their ability to demand safe and decent working conditions. Barriers to reporting GBV including fear of job loss, stigma, and economic dependency continue to silence many survivors.



Providing a legal and policy perspective, Ms. Kagoye Robinah, Executive Director of Voices for Labour (VFL), emphasised the need to strengthen enforcement mechanisms to address GBV in the world of work. Referencing international frameworks such as the ILO Convention 190, she noted that while legal instruments exist, implementation remains weak due to under-resourced labour institutions, limited inspection capacity, and barriers to accessing justice. She called for stronger accountability systems, enhanced awareness, and more

accessible support mechanisms for survivors of workplace violence.



At the regional level, Hon. Ntangiza Fatuma, Member of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), called for strengthened cooperation among East African Partner States to harmonise policies and reinforce oversight mechanisms. She noted that although legal and policy frameworks exist, enforcement remains a key challenge limiting their effectiveness in protecting women workers. She urged policymakers and stakeholders to collaborate in developing and implementing gender-responsive investment policies that prioritise labour rights and social protection.

Adding to the discussion, Hon. Francine Rutazana, Chairperson of the EALA Committee on Communications, Trade, and Investment, underscored the importance of inclusive and multi-stakeholder approaches in addressing GBV within investment environments. She emphasised that sustainable solutions require coordinated action among governments, investors, employers, civil society, and workers, grounded in the lived experiences of women across different sectors of the economy.

The engagement concluded with a shared understanding that investment governance must move beyond a narrow focus on investment attraction to a more balanced, development-oriented approach that integrates human rights, labour protection, and gender equality. Participants reaffirmed that protecting women workers is not only a moral and legal imperative but also a fundamental condition for achieving sustainable, inclusive, and equitable economic development in East Africa.





Strengthening Fiscal Decentralisation: SEATINI Builds Capacity of Local Governments on Revenue Mobilisation and Accountability in Bushenyi and Isingiro

SEATINI, with support from the Embassy of Ireland, is implementing the Sustaining Tax and Revenue Improvements for Development (STRIDE) project aimed at strengthening local revenue systems in five municipalities and five town councils across Uganda. The project promotes fair, inclusive, and sustainable revenue mobilisation, allocation, and accountability with the broader goal of improving service delivery and livelihoods, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Uganda's decentralisation policy, operationalised through the Local Government Act (1997), devolves powers, functions, and resources to local governments to enhance service delivery, accountability, and citizen participation at the grassroots level. While the framework envisions locally generated revenue as a

key supplement to Central Government transfers, local revenue currently remains limited, with most local government budgets funded through unconditional, conditional, and equalisation grants, alongside donor support. In many cases, local revenue contributes as little as 7% of total district budgets, with central transfers accounting for approximately 93%, significantly constraining fiscal autonomy.

It is against this background that on 18 and 19 March 2026, SEATINI conducted a capacity-building training for local government officials from Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality and Isingiro Town Council. The training focused on decentralisation and strengthening systems for local revenue mobilisation, allocation, utilisation, and accountability, with the aim of enhancing effective implementation of fiscal decentralisation at the sub-national level.



While opening the meeting, Mr. Willis Nimusiima, Town Clerk of Isingiro Town Council, emphasised that decentralisation can only deliver its intended outcomes when local governments are equipped with the administrative, technical, and financial capacity to translate policy into action. He noted that while devolution of power brings decision-making closer to communities and enables context-specific solutions, it also places significant responsibility on local authorities to plan, budget, and deliver services efficiently. He cautioned that without adequate skills, funding, strong institutions, and accountability mechanisms, the benefits of decentralisation risk remaining underutilised, contributing to challenges in service delivery, resource management, and continued dependence on central government.



Speaking on behalf of SEATINI Executive Director Ms. Jane Nalunga, Mr. Nice Musana, Programmes and Monitoring & Evaluation Manager, underscored that global shifts including declining development assistance and changing

investment priorities make domestic resource mobilisation and effective decentralisation more critical than ever. He emphasised the need to empower local governments to efficiently mobilise and manage their own resources in order to reduce dependency and respond more effectively to community needs.



Mr. Aloysius Kittengo, Programme Coordinator (Financing for Development) at SEATINI, highlighted the importance of linking policy, legal frameworks, and implementation practice in advancing decentralisation. He noted that Uganda is currently undertaking reforms aimed at strengthening local capacity and fiscal autonomy through new strategic frameworks. He referenced the Ministry of Local Government Strategic Plan (2026–2030), which prioritises improved service delivery, enhanced local revenue mobilisation, and strengthened performance of districts and lower local governments. He further noted that these efforts are reinforced by the Public Financial Management (PFM) Reform Strategy (2025–2030), which focuses on strengthening financial systems, improving monitoring mechanisms, and enhancing accountability at sub-national levels to ensure more effective resource management and service delivery.

Together, these reforms reflect a shift from the mere transfer of powers to a more comprehensive approach that invests in the capacity, financing, and oversight systems required to make decentralisation more effective and results-oriented in Uganda.

The training concluded with active participation from local government officials, who engaged in discussions on practical strategies for improving revenue mobilisation, enhancing accountability systems, and strengthening service delivery outcomes at the local level.



Participants engage in discussions during the capacity-building training on decentralisation and local revenue mobilisation, allocation, utilisation, and accountability for Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality and Isingiro Town Council officials.



Participants pose for a group photo after completing the training on strengthening fiscal decentralization and local revenue systems in Uganda.

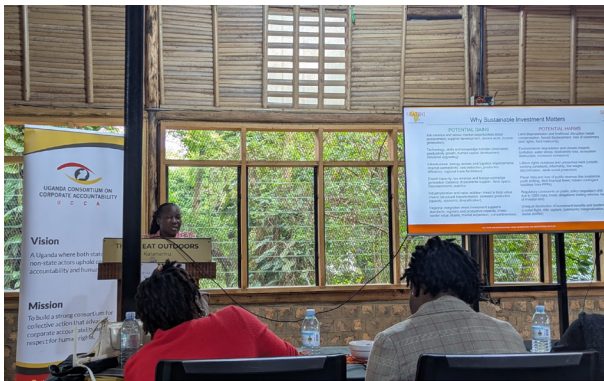


Advancing Corporate Accountability and Rights-Based Development: SEATINI at UCCA Annual General Assembly

SEATINI participated in the Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability (UCCA) Annual General Assembly, which brought together 26 member organisations to reflect on progress and emerging challenges in advancing corporate sustainability, responsible business conduct, and human rights in Uganda. The Assembly took place against a backdrop of increasing constraints on civic space, declining funding for civil society organisations, and shifting global economic conditions affecting sustained advocacy work.

Opening the Assembly, Ms. Angella Nabwowe, Executive Director of the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), underscored the growing importance of corporate accountability within Uganda's development agenda. She noted that civil society continues to play a critical role in advancing the business and human rights agenda, even as funding pressures and civic space limitations continue to affect the sustainability and reach of advocacy efforts.





SEATINI contributed to the discussions through a capacity-building session on trade and investment trends and their implications for business and human rights, delivered by Mr. Mugambwa Owen Paul Dogoto and Ms. Nakaweesa Catherine. The session highlighted how increasing foreign direct investment flows, evolving regional integration frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and shifting global supply chains are reshaping Uganda's investment and development landscape.



While these developments present important opportunities for economic growth and structural transformation, SEATINI also highlighted emerging risks, including labour rights violations, weak enforcement of environmental and social safeguards, and "race to the bottom" dynamics in regulatory standards. The presentation emphasised the need to integrate human rights considerations more systematically into trade and investment policies to ensure that economic growth is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable, and does not come at the expense of workers, communities, and environmental protection.

The Assembly further reflected on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, where participants emphasised the critical role of civil society in documenting, monitoring, and reporting human rights violations, including those linked to corporate actors, as a means of strengthening accountability and justice systems.

A key cross-cutting concern raised throughout the meeting was the increasingly constrained and unpredictable funding environment for civil society organisations. Participants noted that declining donor support and shifting funding priorities are affecting long-term advocacy initiatives and organisational sustainability, calling for more adaptive, diversified, and resilient funding strategies.

In response, SEATINI shared practical approaches for strengthening organisational resilience, including diversifying funding sources, building stronger coalitions, prioritising high-impact advocacy, and leveraging digital tools to enhance efficiency, coordination, and outreach.

The Assembly concluded with a reaffirmed call for strengthened collaboration among civil society actors to advance corporate accountability and ensure that trade and investment systems are grounded in human rights, equity, and sustainable development principles. SEATINI reiterated its commitment to advancing this agenda through evidence-based advocacy at national, regional, and global levels.



CSOS PRESENT JOINT POSITION ON FY2026/27 BUDGET FRAMEWORK PAPER, URGE STRONGER LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

SEATINI together with other CSOs including The Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), Uganda Debt Network (UDN) jointly presented a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) position paper to the Parliamentary Committee on Public Service and Local Government in response to the Budget Framework Paper (BFP) for FY 2026/27.

This engagement was part of CSOs efforts towards intensifying advocacy aimed at strengthening decentralized governance and improving service delivery across Uganda. This was highlighted through a joint engagement with the Parliamentary Committee on Public Service and Local Government on the FY2026/27 Budget Framework Paper (BFP).

The engagement brought together CSOs working on tax, debt, budget and development related issues including SEATINI, Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group

(CSBAG), Uganda Debt Network (UDN), and, which jointly presented a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) position paper outlining key governance and service delivery concerns affecting Local Governments.

A major area of focus in the submission was the promotion of solar energy solutions as a sustainable and cost-effective alternative to the national electricity grid, particularly in rural and underserved communities. The organizations noted that increased investment in solar technologies could significantly improve service delivery in sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and education.

The CSOs also highlighted several systemic challenges that continue to affect the effectiveness of decentralization. These included low local revenue mobilization, heavy dependence on central government transfers, persistent staffing gaps in districts, and inadequate funding for induction and capacity building of Local Government leaders.

Concerns were further raised about delays



in finalizing Local Government Development Plans, weak implementation of Local Economic Development (LED) initiatives, and the limited functionality of District Public Accounts Committees (DPACs), which play a critical role in strengthening accountability and oversight.

The position paper additionally underscored the need for increased financing for climate change interventions at the Local Government level to enable districts to respond more effectively to environmental and climate-related challenges.

In their recommendations, CSOs called on Parliament and relevant Ministries,

Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to fast-track regional development plans anchored on each region's comparative advantages. CSOs also emphasized the importance of stronger cross-sector coordination, improved data and evidence systems, and sustained investment in institutional and technical capacity to support efficient local governance and inclusive regional development.

The joint engagement reaffirmed the continued role of civil society in contributing to policy dialogue and advocating for accountable public finance management and responsive service delivery systems in Uganda.



Civil Society Organizations including SEATINI, Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment, Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group, Uganda Debt Network interface with the Parliamentary Committee on Public Service and Local Government to present a CSO position paper to Parliament on the Budget Framework Paper 2026/27



SEATINI Participates in Financial Sustainability Workshop for Brot für die Welt Partners in Kenya

SEATINI, represented by the Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Herbert Kafeero, and the Programmes, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Mr. Musana Nice, participated in a four-day Financial Sustainability Workshop for partners of Brot für die Welt held in Kenya.

The workshop convened senior representatives from partner organisations to strengthen institutional capacities, share experiences, and explore practical approaches to sustainable resource mobilisation within a changing development financing landscape. The engagement provided an important platform for reflection on how civil society organisations can strengthen institutional resilience, maintain programme relevance, and sustain impact amidst evolving donor priorities and increasing demand for accountability and evidence-based programming.

SEATINI's participation reflected the organisation's continued commitment to strengthening institutional sustainability to effectively advance its work on trade justice,

fiscal governance, climate justice, and inclusive development. As development financing dynamics continue to shift globally, the discussions underscored the growing importance of strategic positioning, adaptive programming, and long-term institutional planning in enabling civil society organisations to remain responsive to emerging development challenges.

Participants emphasized the need for organisations to align programmes with the priorities and realities of communities and stakeholders while ensuring that interventions deliver measurable and sustainable outcomes. Discussions further highlighted that institutional credibility remains central to building trust with development partners and sustaining collaboration. In this regard, strengthening governance systems, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and investing in evidence-based reporting were identified as critical pillars for organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

The workshop also explored the role of

strategic partnerships and collaborative networks in advancing sustainable resource mobilisation beyond project-based funding cycles. Participants reflected on the importance of cultivating trust-based relationships, strengthening institutional visibility, and clearly communicating organizational impact in an increasingly competitive funding environment.

In addition, practical sessions focused on organisational positioning, proposal development, and identification of emerging funding opportunities aligned with institutional priorities. Participants shared tools and approaches aimed at strengthening organisational competitiveness while ensuring that resource mobilisation efforts remain grounded in institutional mission, programme impact, and development relevance.

The knowledge and insights gained from the workshop will contribute to SEATINI's ongoing efforts to strengthen its financial sustainability and institutional resilience. This remains critical in supporting the organisation's broader mission of promoting accountable governance, equitable trade and investment policies, sustainable development, and inclusive socio-economic transformation.



Mr. Herbert Kafeero (Left), Deputy Executive Director, and Mr. Musana Nice (Right), Programmes & Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, from SEATINI while contributing to discussions in the Financial Sustainability Workshop for Brot für die Welt partners held in Kenya



The SEATINI team posing for a group photo with partners from Brot für die Welt during the Financial Sustainability Workshop in Kenya



Participants posing for a group photo after the Financial Sustainability Workshop for Brot für die Welt partners in Kenya



SEATINI Showcases STRIDE Project at Ireland–Uganda Development Partners' Fair in Karamoja

The SEATINI team proudly participated in the Partners Fair held on 20th February 2026 at Hotel Africana during the official visit of Ireland's Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora to the Karamoja sub-region.

The event, organised under Irish Aid-supported programmes, celebrated more than two decades of partnership and development cooperation between Ireland and Uganda in advancing inclusive and sustainable development within Karamoja and beyond.

With financial support from the Embassy of Ireland in Uganda, SEATINI is currently implementing the Sustaining Tax and Revenue Improvements for Development (STRIDE) project across selected Local Governments in Uganda. The initiative is being implemented in the municipal councils of Kotido, Moroto, Apac, Bushenye-Ishaka, and Mityana, as well as

the town councils of Nakapiripirit, Napak, Isingiro, Kassanda, and Nakasongola.

At the exhibition, SEATINI highlighted the transformative impact and key lessons emerging from the STRIDE project in strengthening citizen-centred, transparent, and accountable domestic revenue systems within Local Governments. The project promotes fair, inclusive, and socially sustainable domestic revenue mobilisation, allocation, and accountability processes aimed at improving livelihoods and expanding access to quality social services especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including rural women, youth, persons with disabilities, and people living with HIV.

The engagement provided a valuable platform for dialogue on the critical role of domestic revenue mobilisation in advancing sustainable development and enhancing Local Government responsiveness to community priorities.



SEATINI underscored the need for equitable taxation and accountable public finance management systems that safeguard vulnerable populations while strengthening citizen participation and public trust in governance processes.

Participation in the Partner Fair further strengthened collaboration between SEATINI, the Embassy of Ireland, development partners, and implementing organisations working across the Karamoja

sub-region. The interaction reaffirmed a shared commitment to promoting social inclusion, equitable development, and sustainable livelihoods in underserved communities.

Through the STRIDE project, SEATINI continues to contribute to Uganda's broader efforts to strengthen fiscal governance, deepen accountability, and support inclusive socio-economic transformation within Local Governments.



The SEATINI team at the Partner Exhibition with Ireland's Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora, showcasing the impact of the STRIDE project and the partnership with the Embassy of Ireland in Uganda in advancing inclusive local development in the Karamoja sub-region.



WHAT STAKEHOLDERS SAY ABOUT THE STRIDE PROJECT



Mr. Geoffrey Sebukera, Town Clerk, Nakasongola Town Council

"We are very happy with the STRIDE project implemented by SEATINI because it has greatly transformed our work. At the beginning of the project, we faced challenges in revenue mobilization, but our capacity has since been strengthened through the various trainings and engagements involving leaders, revenue collectors, and enforcement officers.

The project introduced us to new ideas and approaches that have helped expand our revenue base. One of the key achievements was the establishment of a Property Owners' Association, which we formed and trained with guidance from SEATINI. This association has greatly supported revenue mobilization efforts in the municipality.

Through STRIDE, we have also gained a better understanding of the legal framework governing local revenue and transfers from the central government. We are grateful for the support and impact the project has had on our council."



Mr. Willis Nimusiima, Town Clerk of Isingiro Town Council

"The trainings under the STRIDE Project have been very helpful to us, and the information shared is highly relevant to our work. The knowledge and skills gained have contributed significantly to improving local revenue performance in our area. Those of us who consistently attend these trainings return to our municipalities and apply the lessons learned in our daily work. We have gained valuable guidance, shared experiences, and learned practical approaches to sustaining tax and revenue improvements for development."



Mr. John Longolio, Deputy Town Clerk, Moroto Municipal Council

"We can confidently say that we are better off today because of the support and continuous engagement from SEATINI through the STRIDE Project. We appreciate the efforts to keep us informed and continuously build our knowledge and capacity.

At every stage, SEATINI has provided training and technical support, and we continue to apply the knowledge gained in our offices to improve our work and service delivery to the community."

THEME: PROGRESSIVE TAXATION FOR THE HUMAN RIGHT TO CARE



ON THURSDAY,
05 MARCH 2026



START AT
2:30PM - 4:00PM
(EAT)



MS. REBECCA KABEJJA-AFMA
ALLUMNI, FEMNET
Speaker



DIANA MUCHOGE- AFRODAD
Speaker



GLORIA NAKAJUBI-UPFSP
Speaker



TUMUHE HILDA -SEATINI
Moderator



PROGRESSIVE TAXATION AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO CARE: WHY AFRICA MUST RETHINK PUBLIC FINANCING

Across Africa, governments are grappling with rising public debt, shrinking fiscal space, and increasing pressure to finance essential public services. Yet amid these economic pressures, women and marginalized communities continue to shoulder the heaviest burden, particularly through unpaid care work and regressive tax systems that deepen inequality rather than reduce it. The conversation on tax justice is therefore no longer only about revenue collection; it is increasingly about human rights, gender equality, and social justice.

The Global Days of Action on Tax Justice for Women's Rights (GDOA), led by the Global Alliance for Tax Justice and regional partners, has since 2017 mobilized activists and civil society organizations under the campaign theme Make Taxes Work For Women. This year's theme, "Tax Justice

for the Human Right to Care," comes at a critical moment as countries negotiate the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, which aims to strengthen global cooperation on fair taxation, curb illicit financial flows, and address multinational corporate tax avoidance.

To embrace the Global Day of Action on Tax Justice for Women and Girls scheduled for 2nd to 8th March 2026, SEATINI, organised a webinar on Progressive taxation for the human right to care, to explore how progressive tax regimes can translate into attainment of the right to care in Uganda, and other developing countries.

Speaking during the webinar, Diana Mochoge highlighted Africa's growing debt crisis, noting that debt servicing on the continent rose from 3 percent of



government expenditure in 2009 to 10 percent in 2023. African countries are projected to spend about \$88.7 billion on external debt servicing in 2025, while the continent's average tax-to-GDP ratio remains at only 16 percent compared to the OECD average of 34 percent. Countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia are spending more than half of their tax revenues on debt repayment, reducing investments in healthcare, education, and social protection.

Mochoge explained that governments often resort to austerity measures and indirect taxes such as VAT, which disproportionately affect low-income households and women. As public services decline, women are forced to absorb the burden through unpaid care work, including caring for families, fetching water, and supporting households where governments fail to provide adequate social services.

Mochoge further argued that progressive taxation is essential for financing care systems and reducing inequality. Many African countries rely heavily on regressive taxes such as VAT and PAYE, which contribute nearly 50 percent of government revenue, while corporate taxes contribute only about 15 percent. Progressive taxation, where higher-income earners and corporations contribute a larger share, can help governments mobilize domestic resources for healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social protection without excessive borrowing. This opportunity is presented in the ongoing negotiations for a UN framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, through which low income countries are negotiating for source as opposed to residence based taxation.

According to Gloria Nakajubi from the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection, social protection includes public

and private interventions that address risks and vulnerabilities that expose individuals to income insecurity and social deprivation. There is a need to increase social protection investment from the current 0.7 percent to at least 2 percent of GDP while exploring sustainable domestic financing options such as contributory schemes, budget reprioritization, and targeted consumption taxes.

Nakajubi also emphasized that sustainable financing for social protection is critical to protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring that care systems are adequately supported. She noted that stronger government commitment and increased public investment are necessary to build resilient social protection systems capable of addressing poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.

Civil society organizations participating in the webinar urged governments across the Global South to play an active and decisive role in the negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation by championing progressive, equitable, and people-centered tax systems.





Advancing Regional Competitiveness and Inclusive Trade: SEATINI Participates in High-Level Multi-Sectoral Dialogue on Intra-EAC Trade

SEATINI participated in the High-Level Multi-Sectoral Dialogue on Intra-East African Community (EAC) Trade held in Kigali, Rwanda, under the theme “From Commitment to Action: Scaling Up Regional Competitiveness to Unlock Trade and Prosperity in the EAC.” The dialogue brought together EAC Partner States, regional institutions, private sector actors, civil society organisations, and development partners to identify practical solutions to persistent barriers affecting intra-regional trade and to strengthen regional competitiveness.

Representing SEATINI, Mr. Mugambwa Owen, Trade and Investment Policy Analyst, contributed to discussions on eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), strengthening trade facilitation systems, and enhancing institutional accountability as key drivers of inclusive and sustainable regional integration.

Participants noted that intra-EAC trade remains at approximately 15%, significantly below the regional target of 40%. This gap

was attributed to persistent NTBs, high transport and logistics costs, inadequate infrastructure connectivity, and inconsistent implementation of regional trade commitments. These challenges continue to undermine regional market access and competitiveness, with disproportionate impacts on small-scale traders, women, and youth engaged in cross-border trade.

The dialogue underscored the urgent need for strengthened enforcement of the EAC Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers Act (2017), including more effective accountability mechanisms and time-bound resolution frameworks to ensure that agreed commitments are fully implemented and translated into measurable outcomes.

Infrastructure and logistics constraints also featured prominently in the discussions. Participants called for accelerated investment in integrated regional transport systems, including rail and inland water transport, to reduce the cost of doing business, strengthen regional value chains, and enhance the EAC’s competitiveness in



both regional and global markets.

SEATINI further emphasised the importance of coordinated trade diplomacy and policy coherence among EAC Partner States, cautioning that fragmented external trade negotiations could undermine regional integration efforts and weaken collective bargaining power. Participants also welcomed ongoing efforts to operationalise the EAC Trade Remedies Committee (TRC) as a rules-based mechanism for addressing trade disputes and mitigating recurring NTBs.

Reaffirming SEATINI's commitment to evidence-based advocacy and multi-

stakeholder engagement, Mr. Mugambwa Owen stressed that regional integration must extend beyond trade expansion to ensure inclusive economic participation, equitable market access, and sustainable development outcomes for all citizens of the region.

The dialogue concluded with a renewed call for stronger regional institutions, coordinated implementation of commitments, and sustained political will to unlock the full potential of intra-EAC trade and advance shared prosperity across the East African region.



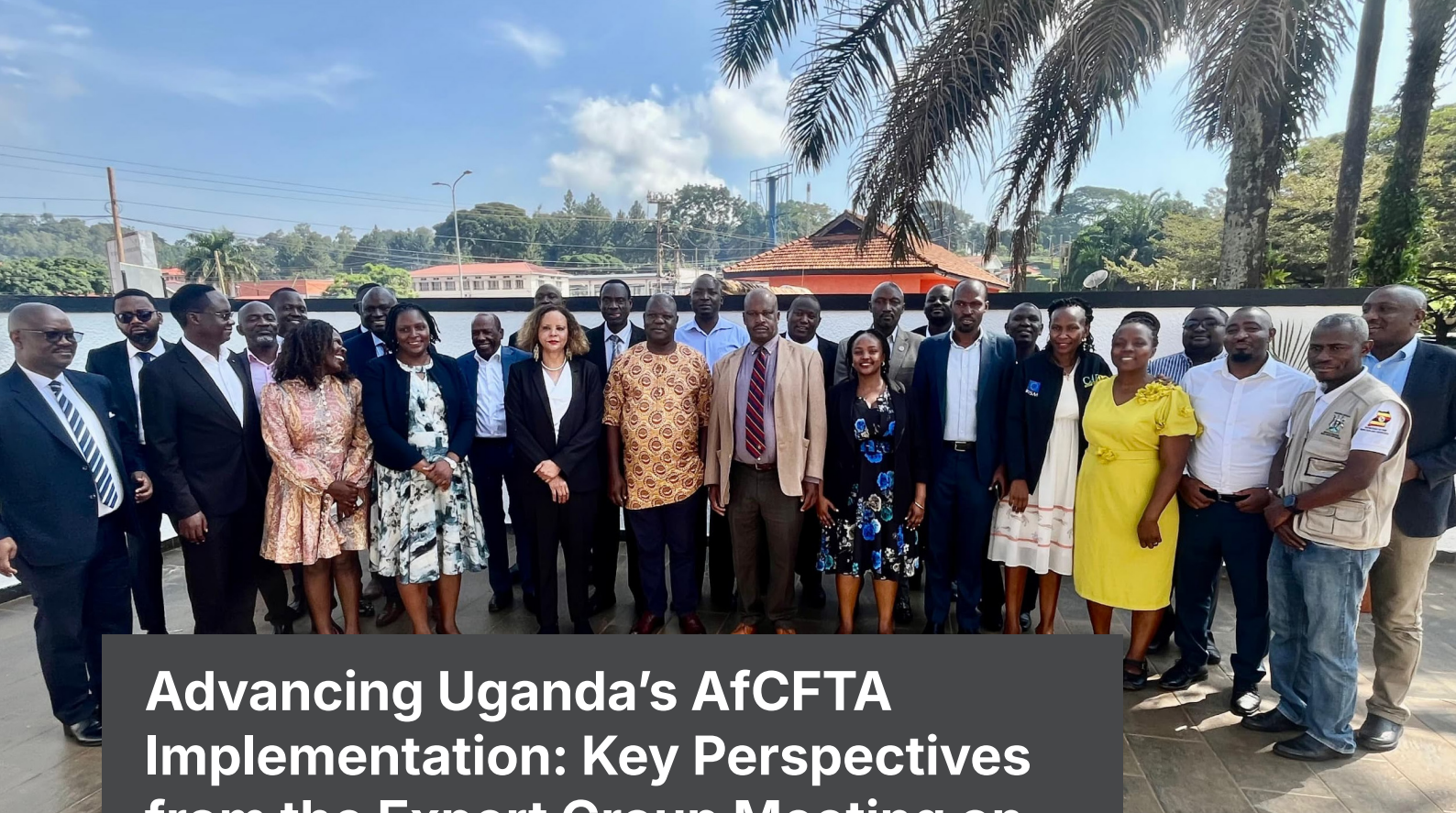
Mr. Mugambwa Owen, Trade and Investment Policy Analyst, shares SEATINI's perspective during the High-Level Multi-Sectoral Dialogue on Intra-East African Community (EAC) Trade held in Kigali, Rwanda.



Participants at the High-Level Multi-Sectoral Dialogue on Intra-East African Community (EAC) Trade convened by the East African Community in Kigali, Rwanda.



Participants poses for group photo after the High-Level Multi-Sectoral Dialogue on Intra-EAC Trade convened by the East African Community in Kigali, Rwanda.



Advancing Uganda's AfCFTA Implementation: Key Perspectives from the Expert Group Meeting on Progress and Gaps

The AfCFTA Secretariat, in collaboration with Uganda's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (MTIC), convened an Expert Group Meeting in Kampala to review Uganda's implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) under the AfCFTA Implementation Review Mechanism (AFIRM). Launched in 2023, AFIRM is a voluntary peer review process designed to assess progress, identify implementation gaps, and support State Parties in strengthening performance across key trade areas.

The meeting provided an opportunity to validate findings from an independent assessment conducted by the consultant, Dr. Paul Bagabo and to reflect on Uganda's progress in implementing its AfCFTA commitments. It also built on discussions from the National Trade Review Conference, reinforcing the importance of situating AfCFTA implementation within a broader national trade and development agenda aimed at strengthening competitiveness, regional integration, and sustainable economic transformation.

Overall, the assessment presents a picture of cautious but uneven progress. Uganda performed relatively well in Trade in Goods, achieving an overall score of 84.3%. Strong performance was recorded in areas such as Rules of Origin, Special Economic Zones, Trade Facilitation, and the management of Non-Tariff Barriers, indicating that foundational systems supporting goods trade are gradually being strengthened and alignment with continental frameworks is advancing. However, this progress is significantly constrained by a major gap in Trade Remedies, where Uganda recorded a score of 0%, pointing to a critical institutional weakness that could undermine the country's ability to respond to unfair trade practices and protect domestic industries under the AfCFTA.

In contrast, Trade in Services remains a more uneven area of implementation, with a score of 60.4%. The findings highlight persistent coordination challenges among implementing institutions, slow domestication of commitments, and

limited follow-through by responsible agencies. These gaps continue to constrain Uganda's ability to fully realise the potential of services trade under the AfCFTA framework.

Beyond the technical scores, the discussions in Kampala highlighted deeper structural and operational constraints affecting implementation. Participants pointed to weak inter-agency coordination, persistent Non-Tariff Barriers, limited private sector awareness of AfCFTA opportunities, customs inefficiencies, and high logistics costs as key challenges. Collectively, these issues continue to slow the effective implementation of the agreement and limit its developmental impact.

Stakeholders emphasised that successful AfCFTA implementation will require a shift from a compliance-focused approach to a more strategic emphasis on competitiveness, value addition, and integration into regional and continental value chains. The private sector was identified as a key actor that requires stronger engagement, awareness, and support to fully benefit from emerging opportunities under the continental market.

SEATINI actively participated throughout the Expert Group Meeting, contributing to working groups on Non-Tariff Barriers, Technical Barriers to Trade, Sanitary

and Phytosanitary Measures, Trade Facilitation, and Trade Remedies. One of the key interventions underscored the importance of first addressing Non-Tariff Barriers within the East African Community framework before escalating them to the AfCFTA level, as a way of strengthening regional coordination and improving dispute resolution efficiency.

SEATINI also raised concerns over the low awareness and limited use of the AfCFTA Non-Tariff Barriers Online Reporting Mechanism, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises and cross-border traders who are often most affected by such barriers. Strengthening sensitisation, accessibility, and usability of this platform was highlighted as a key priority to improve its effectiveness.

The meeting reaffirmed that while Uganda has made meaningful progress in AfCFTA implementation, significant gaps remain that could limit its developmental impact if not addressed. SEATINI emphasised the need for strengthened institutional coordination, urgent development of a functional trade remedies framework, and enhanced private sector readiness. Participants agreed that addressing these gaps will be critical for ensuring that the AfCFTA delivers on its promise of inclusive economic transformation and sustainable development for Uganda and the wider region.





National Trade Review Conference 2026: Aligning Trade Policy with Uganda's Structural Transformation Agenda

The National Trade Review Conference 2026, held under the theme "Trade-Driven Transformation: Policies, Institutions and Partnerships for Uganda's Structural Economic Shift," brought together government, private sector, civil society organisations, development partners, and academia to reflect on Uganda's trade future in line with the ambitions of the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV).

move decisively from raw commodity dependence towards value addition, industrialisation, and competitive export development. Despite growth in exports, particularly within the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), structural challenges such as informality, weak production capacity, and limited value addition continue to constrain meaningful economic transformation.



The conference underscored a central message: Uganda's trade agenda must



The Minister of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives anchored discussions on Uganda's ambition to expand

manufacturing and increase the share of processed exports. The British High Commissioner emphasized that while market access opportunities exist under schemes such as the UK Developing Countries Trading Scheme, Uganda's key challenge lies in supply-side readiness and the ability to meet increasingly stringent export requirements.

The AfCFTA Secretariat highlighted Uganda's strategic opportunity to align national trade reforms with continental integration frameworks, particularly in emerging sectors such as pharmaceuticals. It also underscored the importance of leveraging instruments such as the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) and the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund to support trade expansion and competitiveness.

SEATINI emphasised that Uganda's trade policy requires stronger coordination across national, regional, and global frameworks, supported by improved institutional alignment and financing. A key concern raised was the persistent gap between policy intent and implementation capacity, particularly within institutions responsible for trade coordination.



SEATINI further stressed the need for targeted product development and market-specific export strategies, rather than broad and unfocused export promotion

approaches. Strengthening production systems, supporting small-scale producers, and building backward and forward linkages were identified as critical for ensuring inclusive and sustainable transformation.

At a structural level, SEATINI called for strengthened institutional coordination mechanisms, including the revitalisation of inter-agency trade coordination structures, to ensure coherent implementation across sectors and levels of government.

Across sessions, participants highlighted persistent constraints including weak agro-industrial value chains, infrastructure and logistics gaps, limited compliance with international standards, and low competitiveness in both services and manufacturing sectors. Informality, which affects over 70% of enterprises, was identified as a major barrier to financing, formal market participation, and export readiness.

Stakeholders further noted that trade agreements alone are insufficient in the absence of adequate domestic production capacity, standards compliance systems, and market readiness frameworks.

SEATINI made several key contributions throughout the conference, including:

- The need to strengthen investment policy frameworks to require technology and skills transfer, particularly in extractive and industrial sectors
- The importance of aligning Uganda's trade priorities across AfCFTA, EAC, and WTO frameworks to avoid policy fragmentation
- The urgency of preparing for stricter global market requirements, including EU environmental regulations such as the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR),



Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), and pesticide compliance standards

- The need to prioritise production capacity and market readiness before entering or negotiating trade agreements

The conference reaffirmed that Uganda's trade transformation will depend less on the number of agreements signed and more on structural reforms that strengthen production systems, institutions, and coordination mechanisms. SEATINI underscored that achieving a trade-driven economic shift requires deliberate investment in value addition, policy coherence, and inclusive participation of small-scale producers in regional and global value chains.

SEATINI Executive Director Ms. Jane Nalunga participated as a panelist in Plenary Session 1 titled "Navigating a Fragmenting Global Trading System." She provided a substantive intervention grounded in SEATINI's trade justice framework.

She emphasised that Uganda must closely monitor shifting dynamics in key export markets, particularly emerging European Union regulatory measures such as the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), and pesticide compliance requirements. These, she noted, represent structural shifts requiring strategic adaptation rather than reactive responses.

Ms. Nalunga recommended the reinstatement of the Inter-Institutional Trade Committee (IITC) to address fragmentation in trade policy coordination, noting that no single ministry can effectively manage Uganda's multi-dimensional trade agenda in isolation. She further stressed the need for Uganda to move beyond generic market targeting towards product-specific export strategies, including identifying specific products for specific markets, improving

product development and packaging, and strengthening structured supply arrangements.

She cited value-added tea (including purple tea) and market-specific avocado exports to China as examples of more targeted approaches, alongside models of value addition such as the Creps soda factory, which has created stable demand for pineapple producers and supported improved livelihoods.

Ms. Nalunga further emphasised the importance of focusing beyond aggregate trade figures to prioritise production, productivity, and the strengthening of backward and forward linkages, particularly for small-scale producers. She also highlighted the need for better alignment of Uganda's trade-related policies across national, regional, and multilateral frameworks (EAC, AfCFTA, WTO), and stressed the importance of effective participation in the upcoming WTO MC14.

She noted that trade policy, procurement policy, and tax policy remain insufficiently harmonised, and observed that trade priorities are often not matched by corresponding budget allocations. She therefore called for stronger financial and institutional support to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives to enable effective delivery of its mandate.





Strengthening Fiscal Decentralisation for Improved Local Revenue Performance in Apac Municipal and Nakasongola Town Councils

Uganda's decentralisation framework, established under the 1993 policy and operationalised through the Local Government Act (Cap. 138), devolves planning, service delivery, and resource management to Local Governments. This system is intended to enhance citizen participation, improve accountability, and strengthen local governance.

However, Local Governments continue to face significant fiscal constraints. On average, urban councils generate only 7%–15% of their budgets from own-source revenue, relying heavily on central government transfers. This limited fiscal autonomy is compounded by weak administrative systems, low compliance levels, and inadequate technical capacity, resulting in revenue losses estimated between 35%–60%. In addition, limited transparency where only 30%–40% of citizens are aware of how local revenues are utilized continues to undermine trust and voluntary tax compliance.

It is against this backdrop that SEATINI Uganda, with support from the Embassy of Ireland, conducted a capacity-building training for officials from Apac Municipal Council and Nakasongola Town Council. The training aimed to strengthen fiscal decentralisation by improving revenue mobilisation, allocation, utilisation, and accountability in line with existing legal and policy frameworks.

Opening the training, Mr. Muboki Paul, Town Clerk of Apac Municipal Council, noted that many fiscal challenges at the local level stem from limited understanding and inconsistent implementation of decentralization principles. He called for renewed commitment by Local Governments to prioritise domestic revenue generation, enforce compliance with physical planning and building regulations, and strengthen staff capacity through continuous learning and knowledge sharing. He further emphasized the importance of discipline, legal awareness, and accountability in improving service delivery.



When government gives the power of revenue management back to local governments, it means we must take responsibility to identify our own revenue sources, collect them effectively, and use that knowledge to transform our communities.



From SEATINI, Ms. Nice Musana, Programmes and Monitoring & Evaluation Manager, noted that the intervention is part of broader efforts to strengthen tax systems and improve the relationship between taxpayers and government. She stressed that transparency and accountability are critical in building trust, which in turn enhances voluntary tax compliance and overall revenue performance.

Providing a policy perspective, Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development SEATINI, reiterated that decentralisation is designed to transfer political, financial, and administrative authority closer to the people. However, he noted persistent implementation gaps and weak local revenue bases, which continue to limit its effectiveness. He emphasised that strengthening Local Government systems is essential for improving service delivery and enhancing citizen participation.

The training strengthened participants' skills in identifying, collecting, managing, and accounting for local revenues. It also underscored the importance of strategic allocation of resources to key sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and water, as a pathway to improving service delivery and community welfare.

Strengthening fiscal decentralisation remains central to improving governance and service delivery at the local level. Enhancing revenue mobilisation, accountability, and institutional capacity will enable Local Governments to become more self-reliant, efficient, and responsive to citizens' needs.



SEATINI remains committed to supporting Apac Municipal Council, Nakasongola Town Council, and other local authorities in building fair, transparent, and effective local revenue systems that foster sustainable development and rebuild public trust



Strengthening Governance of Uganda's Food and Nutrition Regulatory Landscape for a Healthier Nation

Uganda's ambition to achieve rapid economic growth under the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV) depends on a healthy and productive population. However, this goal is increasingly threatened by food insecurity, malnutrition, and the rising burden of diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which account for about 33% of deaths. Despite ongoing efforts to review the Food and Nutrition Policy (2003), develop the Food and Nutrition Bill, and establish a Food and Agriculture Regulatory Authority, progress remains slow due to weak coordination and limited political will. This highlights the urgent need for coherent, inclusive, and enforceable food and nutrition governance frameworks.

It is within this context that SEATINI and partners CONSENT, CEFROHT and FIAN Uganda under the theme *"Know What You Eat,"* organized the National Dialogue on Governance of Uganda's Food and Nutrition Regulatory Landscape to assess progress, identify gaps, and strengthen

collaboration among key stakeholders. The dialogue was moderated by **Mr. Lubega Jonathan**, Program Officer, Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation.

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Musana Nice**, Program and M&E Manager representing the Executive Director, SEATINI, noted that Uganda's development ambitions risk being undermined by poor nutrition and rising diet related-health challenges. He stressed that food should be treated as a fundamental human right and called for policies that prioritize public health, because a healthy population is essential for national transformation.

Mr. Kimera Henry Richard, Team Lead, CONSENT, underscored the importance of prioritizing sustainable and inclusive food systems. He challenged stakeholders to rethink investment priorities, emphasizing that food systems must remain central to development. He highlighted the need for stronger consumer protection, improved school feeding programs, and better



coordination among regulatory institutions.

During the dialogue, Mr. **Alex Bambona**, Assistant Commissioner, Food and Nutrition Security, Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) gave a recount on the progress towards the review of the Food and Nutrition Policy, 2003. He noted that the revised policy is expected to be launched in around November 2026. He emphasized that the new policy aims to ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all through a multi-sectoral and evidence-based approach. However, he acknowledged that the current policy has become outdated and must respond to emerging challenges such as food safety and climate change.

The Assistant Commissioner provided an update on the progress of the Agriculture & Food Safety Regulatory Authority. It is currently at the Bill drafting stage with inputs from the MAAIF Top Management which will thereafter be forwarded to the next processes. The Bill covers issues of Veterinary Drugs, Agrochemical and Food Safety. He later committed to documenting the dialogue as part of the processes that contributed to the shaping of the Food and Nutrition Policy review.

During the dialogue, a panel was constituted and moderated by Mr. Benard Bwambale, the Programs Coordinator, CONSENT. This comprised of Ms. Birungi Sarah the senior Officer, Uganda Human Rights Commissioner (UHRC), Hon. Christine Kaaya Nakimwero, Woman MP Kiboga District, Mr. Wambona Martin, the Program Associate, CEFROHT and the Mr. Kittengo Aloysious, Program Coordinator, Financing for Development, SEATINI. It aimed at unpacking the policy, legal, and fiscal gaps and opportunities in Uganda's food and nutrition environment.

From a human rights perspective, **Ms. Birungi Sarah** from the Uganda Human Rights Commission highlighted the persistent food insecurity, particularly in vulnerable regions such as Karamoja

and refugee settlements. She called for sustainable interventions, including strengthening agricultural extension services and promoting equitable food distribution, to ensure the realization of the right to food.

Mr. Martin Wambona, Program Associate from CEFROHT highlighted the increasing consumption of processed foods and the rise in diet related NCDs. He emphasized the need for stronger regulation of unhealthy foods, including measures such as nutrient profiling and restrictions of harmful food components, to protect public health.

Addressing fiscal and regulatory issues, **Mr. Aloysious Kittengo**, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development at SEATINI emphasized the role of taxation and enforcement in shaping food systems. He called for stricter compliance measures and improved coordination between government institutions to ensure that food standards are upheld.

Hon. Christine Kaaya Nakimwero, Woman MP for Kiboga District and Secretary General of the Uganda Parliamentary Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security, stressed the importance of engaging policymakers to fast-track the Food and Nutrition Bill. She emphasized the need to balance consumer protection with sustainable investment in food systems and called for continuous engagement with Parliament to advance the policy process.

The dialogue concluded with a commitment to develop a joint CSO petition to the Speaker indicating the urgency for having progressing food and nutrition legal and policy frameworks. Key priorities include accelerating the review and approval of the Food and Nutrition Policy, fast-tracking the development and passing of the Agriculture & Food Safety Regulatory Authority Bill. This will contribute to safeguarding public health, strengthening human capital, and ensuring Uganda's

sustainable socio-economic transformation



Participants during in the National Dialogue on the Governance of Uganda's Food and Nutrition Regulatory Landscape at Protea Hotel



Advancing Sustainable Food Systems and Equitable Value Chains: SEATINI Participates in Economist Impact Future of Food Summit 2026, London

On 10 February 2026, SEATINI's Executive Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga, participated in the Economist Impact Future of Food Summit held at Convene, 155 Bishopsgate, London. The summit brought together global policymakers, private sector actors, financiers, and development experts to explore pathways for delivering food security through systems transformation that balances people, planet, and economic sustainability.

Ms. Nalunga contributed to the panel discussion titled "Collaborating to Amplify Financial Returns Throughout the Value Chain," moderated by Brigid McAleer, Communications Director at SAI Platform. She shared the stage with Lissy Smit, Global Head of Sustainability at Rabobank; Juan Carlos Ardila, Founder and CEO of Cafexport; and Sarah Laidler, Global Practice Area Lead – Agriculture, Food & Drink Retail at The Carbon Trust.

The discussion centred on a fundamental challenge in global food systems: transforming agrifood value chains

requires shared responsibility across all actors. Participants emphasised that it is neither fair nor sustainable to expect farmers to bear the disproportionate costs of sustainability transitions. Instead, financial models must evolve to more equitably distribute both risks and rewards across the entire value chain.

Key issues raised during the session included the environmental footprint of the food sector, which accounts for approximately one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, much of it embedded within Scope 3 supply chains. The discussion also highlighted the critical role of corporate investors, whose capital is essential in bridging public financing gaps and scaling climate-smart agricultural practices.

Ms. Nalunga underscored the importance of carbon insetting as a practical and emerging tool for agrifood businesses seeking to reduce emissions directly within their own supply chains, where environmental impacts are generated. She

noted that, when well-designed, inseting can address Scope 3 emissions, which account for an estimated 70–90% of food system footprints, while also reducing exposure to climate-related supply disruptions.

She further highlighted that carbon inseting can support compliance with evolving sustainability reporting and due diligence requirements, while strengthening long-term relationships with producers through incentives for verified regenerative and sustainable practices. Unlike offsetting, which operates outside the supply chain, inseting links climate action directly to sourcing systems, livelihoods, and business continuity.

Drawing on SEATINI's work under the Making Agricultural Trade Sustainable (MATS) project, Ms. Nalunga emphasised that carbon initiatives cannot operate in isolation. She stressed that such efforts

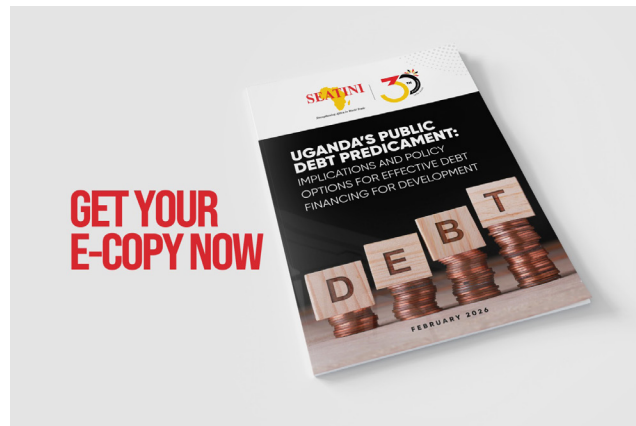
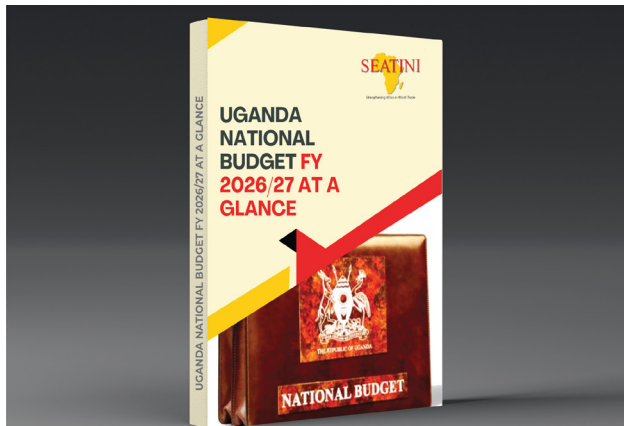
must be aligned with broader trade policy frameworks, governance reforms, and inclusive development strategies in order to deliver durable and equitable outcomes.

She further reiterated that carbon must generate value not only in terms of emissions reductions, but also in strengthening rural economies, building resilient supply chains, and promoting fairer trading systems that include small-scale producers.

The engagement concluded with a shared understanding that achieving sustainable food system transformation will depend on credible standards, coherent policy frameworks, and investment models that recognise and reward the role of local communities within global agrifood value chains.



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OPINION MEDIA OUTREACH



Why AU meeting for trade ministers matters

On 25-26 February 2026, African Ministers responsible for trade will gather in Maputo, Republic of Mozambique, under the African Union (AU) framework. This meeting comes just weeks before the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), scheduled for March 2026 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

With global trade discussions poised to influence Africa's development trajectory, the Maputo gathering provides a critical platform for African countries to coordinate positions, align national and regional strategies, and present a unified stance on issues of strategic importance.

MC14 will address several complex and interrelated agendas, including comprehensive discussions on WTO reform and ongoing plurilateral initiatives. Reform discussions will focus on institutional strengthening, dispute settlement, the operationalisation of Special and Differential Treatment (SDT), and striking a balance between development priorities and procedural efficiency. Plurilateral negotiations are expected to feature prominently, particularly the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFDA) and the temporary moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions, alongside broader debates on e-commerce, digital trade rules and the trade-related aspects of Artificial Intelligence.

The interests of powerful economies are particularly influential in these negotiations, as they seek commitments that secure digital market advantages, protect their global technology firms, and limit the regulatory flexibility of developing countries. The African Group has consistently advocated for outcomes that safeguard Africa's development interests, defending agriculture and food security, strengthening SDT provisions, and preserving policy space for industrialisation, digital transformation, and economic diversification. The Group has also emphasised the importance of consensus-based decision-making, countering attempts to marginalise

The upcoming Maputo meeting is far more than a routine preparatory session...

Jane Nalunga Strategy

plurilateral outcomes into the WTO framework without full multilateral approval, a strategy increasingly advanced by some developed economies that risks constraining Africa's policy autonomy and its ability to pursue domestic development priorities.

The current global trading system is marked by growing asymmetries. While advanced economies expand the use of industrial policy instruments including subsidies, strategic procurement, local content requirements, and regulatory measures to strengthen competitiveness in sectors such as renewable energy, digital technologies, and advanced manufacturing, developing countries, including Africa, face pressure to adopt restrictive disciplines that limit similar interventions.

For Africa, this raises a fundamental question: will emerging global trade rules expand or constrain the continent's development options? Many African economies remain heavily dependent on primary commodity exports, with limited diversification and weak manufacturing capacity. Infrastructure gaps, high trade costs, technological deficits, and vulnerability to external shocks continue to limit competitiveness. Agriculture, which employs the majority of Africa's population, remains particularly affected by trade-distorting domestic support measures in developed countries. Without meaningful reform of global agricultural rules, African countries' efforts to modernise agriculture, strengthen food security, and increase value addition will continue to be constrained.

Against this backdrop, the Maputo meeting

is strategically vital. It provides African Ministers with the opportunity to develop collective positions that reaffirm agriculture and food security as central pillars of the development agenda, defend and strengthen SDT as a non-negotiable element of fairness in the multilateral system, safeguard policy space for industrialisation and digital transformation, and ensure coherence between ARCTA implementation, national strategies, and WTO outcomes.

The African Union and the African Group have historically pushed for reforms that reflect Africa's development priorities. Key achievements include coordinated positions on agricultural subsidies, public stockholding for food security and resistance to the forced multilateralisation of plurilateral agreements such as IFDA. These efforts demonstrate that speaking with one voice amplifies Africa's influence in global trade negotiations and ensures that development considerations remain central. MC14, however, presents additional challenges. Some developed countries are actively shaping rule-making on subsidies, e-commerce, and investment facilitation to reinforce their strategic advantages in digital markets, advanced manufacturing, and global value chains, often in ways that could limit Africa's industrial policy options. Ministers in Maputo must therefore assess these proposals critically, ensuring that any commitments preserve policy space for domestic and regional development agendas, and support the effective implementation of Agenda 2063 and the ARCTA framework.

The upcoming Maputo meeting is far more than a routine preparatory session; it is a defining moment for Africa. By coordinating positions across Member States, integrating REC perspectives, and articulating clear priorities, the continent can ensure that global trade negotiations serve the interests of all countries, not only the most powerful.

Ma Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute.

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Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Why AU meeting for trade ministers matters

EDITOR: On February 25-26, 2026, African Ministers responsible for trade will gather in Maputo, Republic of Mozambique, under the African Union (AU) framework.

This meeting comes just weeks before the Fourteenth Ministerial Conference (MC14) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), scheduled for March 2026 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Yet again, just like the historic Nairobi Ministerial Conference (MC10) held in Kenya in 2015, MC14 will take place on African soil, offering the continent a rare opportunity to host global trade negotiations and shape outcomes that directly impact its economic future.

With global trade discussions poised to shape Africa's development trajectory, the Maputo gathering provides a critical platform for African countries to coordinate positions, align national and regional strategies and present a unified stance on strategic issues.

MC14 will address several complex and interrelated agendas, including comprehensive discussions on WTO reform and ongoing plurilateral initiatives. Reform discussions will focus on institutional strengthening, dispute settlement, the operationalisation of Special and Differential Treatment (SDT), and striking a balance between development priorities and procedural efficiency.

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The writer is executive director, Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute

Jane Nalunga

Imbalances in global trading

GLOBAL TRADE
INTERVIEW
ISMAIL MUSA
LADU

Trickery, manipulation, and self-centred interests—often at the expense of the development agenda of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) such as Uganda—find their way into the global trading system overseen by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Ahead of this month's fourteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) that will be hosted in Yaoundé, Cameroon, Ms

Jane Nalunga, an expert on multilateral agreements, in an interview explains why Uganda and other African counterparts should stand firm in the negotiations.

Why is the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC14) a make-or-break moment for Uganda and other least developed countries (LDCs)?

The fourteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) is a make-or-break moment for Uganda and other least developed countries (LDCs) because it is a strategic opportunity to safeguard development mandates, preserve industrial policy space, and ensure coherence between multilateral and global trade commitments and regional transformation frameworks.

Why should Uganda and other African countries stand firm in the negotiations?

Uganda and other African countries should stand firm in the negotiations because it is a strategic opportunity to safeguard development mandates, preserve industrial policy space, and ensure coherence between multilateral and global trade commitments and regional transformation frameworks.

What should Uganda and other African countries do to ensure coherence between multilateral and global trade commitments and regional transformation frameworks?

Uganda and other African countries should ensure coherence between multilateral and global trade commitments and regional transformation frameworks by aligning their national strategies with the WTO outcomes.

How can Uganda and other African countries ensure coherence between multilateral and global trade commitments and regional transformation frameworks?

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What are the key challenges facing Uganda and other African countries in the negotiations?

The key challenges facing Uganda and other African countries in the negotiations are the self-centred interests of developed countries and the lack of coherence between multilateral and global trade commitments and regional transformation frameworks.

How can Uganda and other African countries overcome these challenges?

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Life | Interview

DAILY MONITOR | TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2025

World Trade warning 'Don't mortgage your development agenda'

These shifts raise substantive questions regarding competitive neutrality and the scope of policy space available to negotiating countries within the existing multilateral framework. For Uganda, the East African Community (EAC) and the wider African Group members, these trends intersect with the existing multilateral framework, posing production risks, commodity dependence, and increased support schemes are increasingly being deployed by high-income to protect their markets.

What should Uganda and the African Group approach with caution while at MC14?

This is a high-stakes negotiation phase. Plurilateral initiatives are being advanced by some developed economies, including digital trade, e-commerce, and investment facilitation, which may sideline Africa's development priorities.

Evaluate 'Uganda and peers must evaluate the long-term impact of permanently constraining its ability to levy customs duties on digital imports.'

Uganda and other African countries should evaluate the long-term impact of permanently constraining its ability to levy customs duties on digital imports, as this could undermine its development agenda.

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For Development (DTP) initiative, which takes care of the most developed economies' interests at the expense of LDCs' economic development and industrialisation, legal and policy implications.

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For more information please contact

Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute –
(SEATINI) Uganda | P. O Box, 3138, Kampala, Plot 806, Block 213, Bukoto-Kisasi
Road – Kampala | Email: info@seatiniuganda.org | Tel: +256 414 540856 | Website:
www.seatiniuganda.org

