



SEACJF

SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA CHIEF JUSTICES' FORUM

Newsletter

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FOREWORD



It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of pride that I welcome you to the inaugural edition of the SEACJF Newsletter, a milestone that marks the beginning of a new chapter in how we share, reflect upon and document the work of our Forum.

The Southern and Eastern Africa Chief Justices Forum has, over the years, steadily grown into a respected regional platform for judicial cooperation, peer learning and promotion of the rule of law. As a Forum, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to strengthening judicial independence, integrity and accountability across our member jurisdictions. Through our conferences, capacity-building initiatives and strategic partnerships, we have built a strong voice in defence of constitutionalism and good governance.

This first issue of our newsletter seeks to capture the breadth and impact of our recent activities, including our participation in global legal gatherings, regional dialogues on electoral justice and commercial dispute resolution, and preparations for our upcoming Annual Conference and General Meeting in Gaborone. These events are a testament to the growing relevance of the Forum, not just within the region but also on the continental and global stages.

I take this opportunity to commend the Secretariat and all contributors for their efforts in bringing this publication to life. I also encourage all members and stakeholders to actively support and engage with this platform as we continue to build a more open, informed and collaborative judicial community.

May this first edition inspire continued dialogue, unity and excellence in the administration of justice throughout Southern and Eastern Africa.

Hon. Chief Justice Mbheki Maphalala
Chief Justice of the Kingdom of Eswatini
Chairperson, SEACJF

Editorial Comment

It is a distinct honour to present to you the first edition of the SEACJF Newsletter. The launch of this newsletter comes at an important time in the life of the Forum. Over the past few years, the SEACJF has deepened its role as a convenor of judicial leadership, a platform for dialogue and a catalyst for reform within our region. From hosting annual conferences and management committee meetings, to participating in global forums on constitutional justice and the rule of law, our footprint continues to grow; and with it, our responsibility to ensure that our actions are visible, our voices heard and our experiences shared.

This publication is not just a chronicle of activities. It is an invitation to reflect, to learn and to connect. It brings summaries of key events and updates on the institutional strengthening of the Forum itself. Importantly, it will also serve as a platform to highlight important stories, innovations and challenges within our justice systems and to celebrate the dedication of those who work tirelessly in pursuit of justice.

As Coordinator, I remain committed to ensuring that this newsletter becomes a reliable and engaging source of information for members, partners and the wider legal community. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Chairperson of the Forum, the Hon. Chief Justice Maphalala, the Management Committee and the entire membership of the Forum for the leadership and vision. To our member judiciaries for their continued and relentless support to the activities of the Forum.

We look forward to receiving your feedback, ideas, and contributions in future editions, and to building a culture of regular communication and shared learning across our region.



Warm regards,
Sangwani Nyimbiri
Coordinator, SEACJF

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Southern and Eastern Africa Chief Justices' Forum (SEACJF) serves as a formal platform and structured framework through which Chief Justices from Eastern and Southern Africa—and the broader continent—can collectively engage in dialogue on critical issues affecting justice delivery. It enables the development and adoption of coordinated action plans aimed at strengthening judicial systems in a systematic and sustained manner across the region. Since the Annual General Meeting held in October 2024, the Forum has continued to carry out its day-to-day activities. A summary of these activities is provided below.

2.0 SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES SINCE THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2.1. Participation in 7TH Congress of the Constitutional Jurisdictions of Africa (CJCA) (November, 2024)

The Forum was invited to participate in the CJCA Congress hosted by the Republic of Zimbabwe. The Chairperson of the Forum, in his address, made the following observation:

“The shared membership of the CJCA and the Forum further underscores the necessity for collaboration between the two organizations. Conferences like these constitute a vital platform for exchange, reflection and co-operation, as well as the broader convergence at the World Conference on Constitutional Justice (WCCJ).”

The Congress brought together a total of 150 participants, including members from forty (40) African Constitutional and Supreme Courts and Councils that are part of the CJCA. Also present were the Supreme and Constitutional Courts of Iraq, Russia, and Turkey, attending in their capacity as Observer Members of the CJCA, as well as the Constitutional Court of Austria, which participated as a special guest.

Key attendees included representatives from the African Union, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the World Conference on Constitutional Justice, and the Council of Europe's Commission for Democracy through Law. The Congress also featured regional groups active in the field of constitutional justice, such as the Union of Arab Constitutional Courts, the Asian Association of Constitutional Courts and the Conference of European Constitutional Courts.

Additionally, civil society organizations like the International Association of Constitutional Law and the World Law Foundation contributed to the gathering. The central theme of the Congress was: "Human dignity as a value and founding principle: A source of constitutional interpretation, protection, and application of fundamental human rights."



2.2. Facilitation of an Exchange Programme Between Angola and Namibia (November, 2024)

The Forum played a key role in facilitating a Judicial Exchange and Learning Initiative between the Republic of Angola and Namibia, aimed at enhancing Angola's judicial independence and efficiency. This exchange program, supported by the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), allowed Angolan judges to learn from Namibia's successful case management system and judicial appointment processes. By participating in this exchange, it was hoped that Angola will also actively engage in future SEACJF events, reinforcing its commitment to regional judicial cooperation and strengthening its role within the Forum.



2.3. Participation in the 3rd Annual East African Court of Justice Judicial Conference, Kigali, Rwanda (February, 2025)

The two-day judicial conference, held at the Marriott Hotel in Kigali, focused on the theme “Justice, Ethics, and Enforcement of Decisions: A Judicial Pathway for Regional Development.” The event brought together Chief Justices and judges from national and regional courts, cabinet ministers, attorneys general, heads of EAC organs and institutions, members of the East African Legislative Assembly, lawyers, academics, representatives from civil society organizations, the private sector, development partners, and other key stakeholders from the East African Community and across Africa.

In his keynote address at the Conference, the Chairperson noted that the Forum, recognizes the doctrine of separation of powers between the executive, the legislature as well as the Judiciary. He also observed that the principle of the independence of the Judiciary is enshrined in the national constitutions of most member countries of the Forum. He added that, notwithstanding the existence of the doctrine of separation of powers and the principle of the independence of the judiciary, the three arms of government do have specific areas of cooperation and collaboration particularly in areas involving public finances and the construction and maintenance of capital projects.



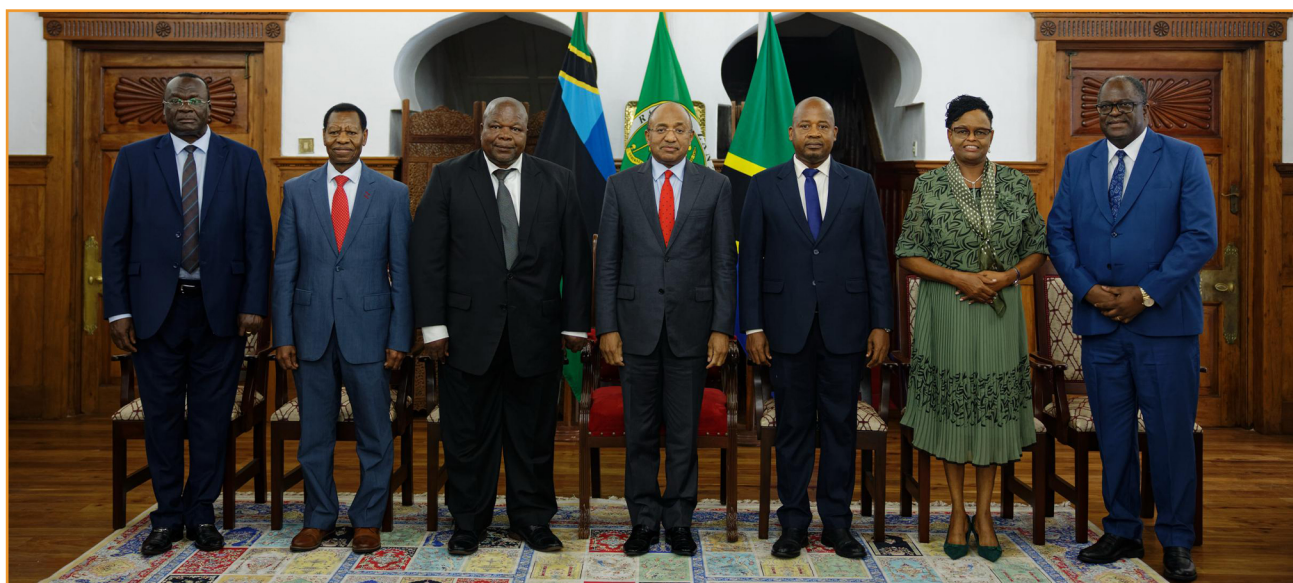
2.4. Management Committee Meeting (April, 2025)

The Management Committee of the Southern and Eastern Africa Chief Justices Forum (SEACJF) convened in Zanzibar on 28th April 2025. The meeting was attended by all members of the Committee namely; Hon. Chief Justice B. Maphalala, Kingdom of Eswatini (Chairperson), Hon. Chief Justice Peter S. Shivute of Namibia (Immediate Past Chairperson), Hon. Chief Justice Alfonse Owiny-Dollo of Uganda (Member) and Hon. Chief Justice Dr. Mumba Malila, SC of Zambia (Member).

Some of the key issues discussed during the meeting included the concerns regarding reports of threats and attacks on Judiciaries in the region. The Committee expressed serious concern over increasing reports of threats and attacks on judiciaries across the region. In response, the Committee established a subcommittee to develop recommendations on how SEACJF can support member judiciaries in safeguarding against such threats and preventing future occurrences.

The Committee also reviewed the latest report from the Southern and Eastern Africa Judicial Administrators Association (SEAJAA), noting progress made and areas requiring further improvement. The Committee guided that SEAJAA must ensure that all its activities adhere, strictly, to the provisions of their Constitution. They noted that most of the objectives mirror those of the Forum.

As part of its official programme, the Management Committee paid a courtesy call on the President of Zanzibar, His Excellency Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi. The members briefed the President on the objectives and work of SEACJF. In response, the President expressed his appreciation for the Forum, describing it as an excellent initiative that fosters the sharing of experiences and ideas among judiciaries in the region. He also welcomed the idea of the Forum's 2026 Annual Conference and General Meeting to be held in Zanzibar.





2.5. World Law Congress – Dominican Republic (4th May, 2025 to 6th May, 2025)

The Forum participated in the World Law Congress, held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, from May 4th – 6th, 2025. The event, convened by the World Law Foundation, brought together a diverse array of legal professionals, judicial leaders, scholars and organizations from around the world to engage on pressing global legal issues under the theme of promoting the rule of law as a cornerstone of peace and democracy.

Importance of SEACJF's Participation:

- Provided the Forum with an opportunity to contribute to global dialogue on the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, core values at the heart of SEACJF's mission.
- Created a platform for networking and collaboration with other regional judicial networks and international legal organizations.
- Amplified the voice and experiences of Southern and Eastern African judiciaries in shaping global legal norms and reform agendas.
- Strengthened visibility and credibility of SEACJF as an active actor in global rule of law advocacy.





2.6. African Continent Commercial Court and ADR Summit – Kampala, Uganda (May, 2025)

SEACJF also participated in the Inaugural African Continent Commercial Court and ADR Summit, held in Kampala, Uganda, from July 25th – 27th, 2025. The summit, hosted at Speke Resort Munyonyo, brought together judicial leaders, including Chief Justices, Judges, and Judicial Officers from over 31 African countries, to discuss and advance the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms within the continent's commercial justice systems.

Why Participation Was Key:

- The Summit aligned with SEACJF's commitment to promoting judicial efficiency and enhancing access to justice, especially in the commercial sector.
- Enabled the Forum to learn from emerging best practices in ADR and Commercial Court innovation being adopted across Africa.
- Provided an opportunity to explore strategies for reducing case backlogs and promoting investor confidence through timely and fair commercial dispute resolution.
- Reinforced SEACJF's role in shaping regional discourse on judicial reform, innovation, and regional economic integration through sound dispute resolution frameworks.





3.0 Upcoming Events

3.1. AEJN Conference on Elections

Date: 9th – 13th September 2025

Venue: Avani Victoria Falls Resort, Livingstone, Zambia

Theme: *Reflecting on Past Election Dispute Resolution in Africa: Charting the Future of Electoral Justice in the Age of AI and ICTs*

SEACJF will actively participate in the Africa Electoral Justice Network (AEJN) Conference, which will bring together senior members of the judiciary, electoral commissions, legal scholars, and civil society actors to discuss electoral dispute resolution mechanisms and the evolving role of the judiciary in electoral processes across Africa.

Significance of Participation:

- Aligns with SEACJF's strategic focus on the judiciary's role in sustaining democratic governance and managing electoral disputes.
- Provides a platform for peer learning and sharing of jurisprudential developments and best practices in electoral adjudication.
- Reinforces SEACJF's commitment to judicial independence in politically sensitive matters such as elections.
- Enhances regional cooperation and knowledge exchange on strengthening legal

3.2. SEACJF Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Date: 7th – 10th October 2025 (Conference), 11th October (AGM and Side Meetings)

Venue: Gaborone, Botswana

Theme: *Judicial Independence and Accountability in Safeguarding the Rule of Law*

The Annual Conference and AGM is SEACJF's flagship event, providing a critical platform for judicial leaders from the region to deliberate on pressing legal and institutional issues affecting their jurisdictions. This year's gathering will be hosted by the Judiciary of Botswana.

Key Objectives:

- Review the state of judicial independence and accountability within member jurisdictions.
- Facilitate cross-jurisdictional exchange on legal reforms, case management innovation, and judicial capacity building.
- Conduct the Forum's statutory Annual General Meeting, including adoption of policy resolutions and institutional reports.
- Strengthen partnerships with regional and international judicial bodies and development partners.

3.3. World Conference on Constitutional Justice (WCCJ)

Date: 28th – 31st October, 2025

Venue: Madrid, Spain

Host: Constitutional Court of Spain

Organiser: Venice Commission of the Council of Europe

SEACJF will participate in the 6th World Conference on Constitutional Justice (WCCJ), a triennial gathering of constitutional courts, councils, and supreme courts, focusing on global issues of constitutionalism, the rule of law, and judicial review.

Importance of Participation:

- Offers the Forum an opportunity to contribute to global constitutional discourse and showcase African jurisprudence on constitutional justice.
- Enables interaction with over 100 constitutional jurisdictions from around the world, fostering mutual learning and solidarity.
- Reinforces SEACJF's visibility and influence within global judicial networks.
- Strengthens the Forum's advocacy for constitutional governance and judicial integrity within the African context.



Thank you

For reading the inaugural SEACJF newsletter. This first edition marks a significant step in our commitment to fostering greater communication and collaboration across the judiciaries of Southern and Eastern Africa. We are excited to build on this momentum and will continue to share updates on our shared mission to strengthen judicial independence, enhance justice delivery, and uphold the rule of law for all citizens.