

Land Policy Review should Bequeath Kenya a Futuristic Framework

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Diverse regional issues

In an East African Community forum held in August last year in Uganda's capital city of Kampala, Kenya reported to have started reviewing its 2009 national land policy. The forum had been organized by the EAC in partnership with the African Land Policy Center to provide EAC Partner States the opportunity to share lessons and best practices in land policy development, in keeping with the African Union Declaration on land. I provided technical support to the process and therefore had opportunity to appreciate the diversity of issues informing land policy review within the region.

Rwanda reviewed its 2004 national land policy in 2019. In doing so, it gave priority attention to matters relating to land use planning, digitization of land services, use of mediation in land dispute resolution and the integration of gender. Tanzania's process to review the 1995 land policy started in 2016 and was ongoing. Tanzania wishes to embrace new mechanisms of housing investments, the management of the 200 meter band of land along coastlines, lakes and international boundaries. The review will also establish an institutional framework for the management of geographical information and an eco-friendly mechanism of managing Tanzania's islands and beaches. Other countries of the region are at different stages of revising their land policies, based on their current jurisdictional issues and priorities.

Kenya's policy review process

Domestic issues held back the review of Kenya's land policy which should have kicked off in 2019. However, a recent stakeholder meeting held in Naivasha under the Lands Ministry provides good evidence that indeed the review process has started in earnest. Related activities

by the National Land Commission attests to the development. The Commission recently released a comprehensive document on its recommendations to the policy review. An online stakeholder meeting, followed by an in-person meeting at Safari Park Hotel, were then held to validate the recommendations. It is anticipated that these recommendations will feed into the wider policy review process, which should be kept inclusive enough.

Need progressive, futuristic recommendations

Kenya's land policy document should undergo review after every ten years. This provides opportunity for the country to take into account any lessons learnt, new priorities and emerging global issues. Ongoing land grabs, evictions, land fragmentation and land acquisition for infrastructural development projects underscore the need to prioritise land issues in our national agenda. In speaking to the review process, stakeholders and experts must go the extra mile to map out gaps in the existing policy, and be innovative enough to tweak it to support a land management regime that enables today's generation to enjoy a wider continuum of land rights, adequately supports development projects at national and county level and secures land rights. Let them be bold enough to make progressive recommendations, even if radical, to ensure that our land, the space below and above it, our lake and ocean shores, are used in the interests of Kenya's social-economic, environmental and strategic needs. Let the process bequeath Kenya a futuristic policy framework.

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