

The

# Eastern Africa

Journal of Policy and Strategy

## GLOCEPS

### Weekly Insights

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup>- Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2026

#### **Eastern Africa's Strategic Outlook: Investment Shifts, Global Risks, Climate Pressures, Security Challenges, and AI Transformation**

Eastern Africa is navigating complex shifts driven by investment, risk, security, climate, and technology. Rising U.S. investment focuses on infrastructure and private capital, creating financing opportunities but heightening negotiation risks and debt exposure without coordinated policies. Global risks, highlighted by the World Economic Forum, include conflict spillovers, climate shocks, digital disruption, and economic fragmentation, requiring resilience and regional cooperation. Organized crime, including trafficking and financial crimes, undermines governance and economies, demanding stronger cross-border responses. Intensifying drought exposes structural vulnerabilities in food systems. Meanwhile, the Nairobi AI Forum 2026 signals a shift from AI ambition to practical implementation across development sectors.

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## Leveraging U.S. Investment-First Strategy for Sustainable Growth in Eastern Africa

The U.S. investment first strategy and renewed engagement with Africa are reshaping influence by prioritizing bankable infrastructure and private capital over aid. In Eastern Africa, this accelerates financing and strengthens leverage with Washington amid intensifying Chinese and Russian competition. However, it also transfers developmental risks to host governments. Transactional diplomacy exposes states to asymmetric negotiations, regulatory capture, and enclave investments unless firm regional coordination exists. A weaker U.S. dollar may ease debt pressures temporarily, yet without export diversification and industrial upgrading, it risks igniting renewed borrowing

cycles. Policymakers must align U.S. capital with AfCFTA value chains while safeguarding autonomy.



Tuesday 3<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2025: Strategic Imperatives for Eastern Africa

The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2025 highlights intensifying geopolitical, economic, environmental, and technological risks. For Eastern Africa, these global trends amplify local vulnerabilities. The region faces conflict spillovers, climate shocks, economic fragmentation, societal polarization, and rapid digital disruption. These challenges threaten stability, livelihoods, and governance. Inter-connected crises, from extreme weather to misinformation and trade shocks, further strain sustainable development. Building resilience will require intensifying initiatives for regional cooperation, conflict prevention, economic diversification, climate adaptation, digital governance, and social

inclusion. By anticipating cascading risks and strengthening adaptive capacities, Eastern Africa can turn vulnerability into a strategic opportunity and protect growth, stability, and cohesion.



Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## Trafficking and Financial Crimes, most impactful in Eastern Africa

The 2025 Africa Organized Crime Index highlights human trafficking, arms trafficking, and financial crime as the most widespread and impactful illegal activities in Eastern Africa. These trends reveal deep-rooted cross-border vulnerabilities, institutional weaknesses, and sizable fiscal losses across the region. If not tackled, they could deepen violence, corruption, and public mistrust, and weaken formal economies. However, collectively addressing these threats through regional intelligence sharing, legal alignment, and community resilience building offers opportunities for reform. For Eastern Africa, organized crime is both a systemic threat and a strategic

challenge that, if managed effectively, can help reinforce state authority and promote long term regional stability.



Photo Credit: ISS Africa

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## Escalating Drought Conditions and Systemic Vulnerability in Eastern Africa: Toward Resilient Responses

Eastern Africa is becoming drier, and this trend is not seasonal but reflects deep structural weakness in food systems, livelihoods, and regional stability. Rainfall deficits in Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, and Tanzania are driving crop failure, pasture degradation, and mounting stress on water and energy supplies. Food prices continue to rise, displacement is increasing, and the risk of local conflict is growing. Governments must shift from crisis response to early, preventive action. This requires stronger warning systems, prepositioned reserves, protected pastoral routes, expanded irrigation, and drought-resilient agriculture. Coordinated regional cooperation through IGAD is also essential to safeguard lives,

economies, and long-term stability across the region.



Photo Credit: carnegie endowment

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## Advancing AI Execution in Eastern Africa: The Nairobi AI Forum 2026

The Nairobi AI Forum 2026, taking place on 9–10 February 2026 in Nairobi, marks a clear pivot from AI ambition to AI delivery in Eastern Africa. Rather than remaining at the level of strategy, it emphasizes aligning infrastructure, financing, and adoption to enable real-world deployment. For countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, which already have national AI strategies, the forum directly addresses the implementation gap between policy and impact. By prioritizing agriculture, education, and energy, it grounds AI in the region's core development challenges, positioning Eastern Africa not just as

an adopter of AI, but as a hub.



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