Press release – For immediate release

EAC, Japan and UNOPS Join Forces to Strengthen Border Security and Enhance Regional Trade

16 Japan-funded patrol vehicles will support border security operations across the eight EAC Partner States, contributing to safer cross-border trade and stronger regional cooperation.



© East African Community Secretariat, Sixteen border patrol vehicles were officially handed over to eight East African Community (EAC) Partner States on 23 October 2026 in Arusha, Tanzania.

Arusha, 23 October 2026 — The East African Community (EAC) Secretariat has handed over 16 patrol vehicles to the eight EAC Partner States, as part of regional efforts to strengthen regional border security, combat cross-border crime and illicit activities, and facilitate safe cross-border trade. The initiative is funded by the Government of Japan, implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) under the *Creating a Secure Trading and Customs Environment in the East African Community through Enhancing Border Security* project.

The initiative responds to operational challenges identified through technical assessments conducted by the EAC Secretariat at One-Stop Border Posts across the region. These

assessments highlighted gaps in transport and mobility that constrain border security operations and effective responses to cross-border crime.

By improving the mobility of border security personnel, the vehicles are expected to strengthen patrol operations, support more timely responses to security threats and enhance efforts to address smuggling, trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities.



© East African Community Secretariat, Representatives of UNOPS, the East African Community (EAC) and the Government of Japan stand in front of the delivered border patrol vehicles during the official handover ceremony in Arusha, Tanzania, on 23 October 2026.

Speaking during the official handover ceremony at the EAC Headquarters, **H.E Amb. Stephen Patrick Mbundi, EAC Secretary General,** expressed appreciation to the Government and People of Japan for their generous support towards the successful implementation of the project and to UNOPS for its efficiency in coordinating and delivering the vehicles.

The Secretary General noted that the findings of the technical assessment informed the decision to prioritise transport support for frontline officers across all eight Partner States. “We expect these vehicles to strengthen border operations and contribute to a safer and more enabling environment for cross-border trade. I urge all Partner States to ensure that the vehicles are deployed exclusively at designated border areas to serve their intended purpose,” said Amb. Mbundi.

The Secretary General added that the borders help protect our communities, combat smuggling, trafficking and other transnational crimes, while creating the confidence needed for legitimate trade, investment and the movement of people and goods to flourish.

Beyond their immediate operational use, the vehicles are also expected to contribute to the EAC's broader vision of regional integration by supporting a safer and more predictable environment for cross-border trade, investment and economic activity.

Each of the eight EAC Partner States is receiving two vehicles for use at key and porous border points. Beyond their immediate operational use, the vehicles are also expected to contribute to the EAC's broader vision of regional integration by supporting a safer and more predictable environment for cross-border trade, investment and economic activity.

The contribution by the Government of Japan directly supports the EAC's efforts to address these challenges through practical investments in border security infrastructure and equipment.

Jin Hashimoto, Head of Cooperation at the Embassy of Japan in Tanzania, reaffirmed Japan's commitment to regional peace and development. “Effective border management is essential not only for preventing illicit activities and ensuring security, but also for facilitating legitimate trade and the movement of people. Japan remains committed to being a trusted partner for African countries, working alongside them in accordance with their needs and priorities,” he said.

Through its procurement expertise, UNOPS supported the acquisition of the patrol vehicles to ensure the investment contributes to border authorities' operational readiness and the region's broader security priorities.

"The value of this partnership goes beyond the delivery of vehicles. Border security is not only about protecting boundaries; it is about creating the conditions for communities and economies to thrive,” said **Massimo Diana, Director of UNOPS East and Southern Africa Multi-Country Office**.

“By working alongside the Government of Japan and the EAC, UNOPS is translating shared regional priorities into practical solutions that strengthen institutional capacity, facilitate legitimate trade and advance economic integration across East Africa,” he added.

The handover reflects the shared commitment of the EAC, the Government of Japan and UNOPS to strengthening regional institutions and supporting safer, more secure and economically connected communities across East Africa.

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About UNOPS

UNOPS offers practical solutions across peace and security, humanitarian and development operations. We help the United Nations, governments and other partners to manage projects, and deliver sustainable infrastructure and procurement across the world. Read more: www.unops.org.

About Japan

Japan's development cooperation aims to work together with developing countries to address their development challenges and global issues common to all humankind based on equal partnerships, and to contribute to a peaceful, stable, and prosperous international community under a free and open international order based on the rule of law. Read more: https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/

About EAC

The East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Rwanda, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of South Sudan, the Republic of Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The EAC aims to expand and deepen economic, political, social, and cultural integration to improve the quality of life of the people of East Africa through increased competitiveness, value-added production, trade, and investment.