



**KENYA INSTITUTE
OF PLANNERS**

Making Kenya a Planning Society



**ADVANCING AFRICAN UNION PRIORITIES, REGIONAL
INTEGRATION, PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND
SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

FORGING A UNIFIED AFRICAN PLANNING PROFESSION

A Report on the KIP Side Event at the Second Africa Urban Forum 2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2nd Africa Urban Forum (AUF2), held in Nairobi in April 2026, marked a decisive shift from urban aspiration to technical implementation. At the heart of this transformation was the Kenya Institute of Planners' (KIP) strategic convening, which successfully positioned the planning profession as the central driver of AU Agenda 2063. This gathering of over 130 delegates from across the continent served as a catalytic herald, challenging the status quo of professional fragmentation and advocating for a singular, authoritative technical voice for Africa.

The current planning landscape is often technically sophisticated on paper but lacking the political and fiscal fuel to move. To bridge this execution gap, KIP has articulated a vision for fit-for-purpose planning. This paradigm shift demands that planners move beyond static land-use mapping to master the political literacy of budget cycles, legislative advocacy and self-effectuating plans that carry their own financial triggers. By decolonizing inherited frameworks and integrating the reality of the informal economy; which drives over 60% of some national GDPs; the profession is reclaiming the African urban narrative. The forum concluded by formalizing a renewed professional social contract.

Moving forward, the roadmap is clear: KIP will pursue continental legislative harmonization, advocate for unified accreditation and elevate the African planning voice at the World Urban Forum (WUF) 2026. The profession must cease to be a passive observer of urbanization and instead become influential in the political and fiscal frameworks that build our cities. The path toward a unified African planning profession is now open; it must be occupied with boldness, technical authority and unwavering professional solidarity.

These outcomes are directly anchored in the mandate of the Second Africa Urban Forum Nairobi Declaration, reinforcing a shared commitment to context-specific research, legislative harmonization and the inclusive integration of the informal economy into Africa's sustainable urban future.

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1. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

1.1: Background

The Africa Urban Forum (AUF) is the premier continental platform established by the **African Union** to coordinate and advance sustainable urbanization across the continent. Designed to bridge the gap between high-level policy and grassroots implementation, the AUF serves as the primary mechanism for translating global frameworks such as the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and AU Agenda 2063 into actionable local strategies.

The 2nd Africa Urban Forum (AUF2) was held at the Kenyatta International Conference Center (KICC) in Nairobi from 8th to 10th April 2026 under the theme "Adequate Housing for All: Advancing Socio-economic and Environmental Transformation". This event marked a critical pivot from aspiration to implementation. It focused on consolidating national efforts into a cohesive continental strategy to address the challenges of rapid urbanization, housing delivery and infrastructure development.

1.2: Event Overview

Against this backdrop, the Kenya Institute of Planners (KIP) hosted a strategic hybrid Side Event on Friday 8th April 2026, on **"Advancing African Union Priorities, Regional Integration, Professional Standards and Sustainable Urban Development: Forging a Unified African Planning Profession."** This session served as a catalytic herald for continental dialogue, positioning KIP as a central driver for elevating the planning profession from fragmented national advocacy to a **singular, authoritative technical voice**.

The event convened a distinguished delegation of more than **150 in-person** and over **200 virtual** professionals, policymakers and academics with significant representation from **Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa**, among others, to deliberate on how the profession can influence the global urban agenda and the successful execution of Agenda 2063.

1.3: Strategic Context

The convening was strategically designed to address the execution gap between the high-level policies discussed at AUF2 and the technical reality on the ground. While AUF2 provided the Continental Agenda, the KIP side event defined the Professional Capability required to execute it. The discourse was anchored in three primary strategic imperatives:

- ▶ **From fragmentation to authority:** The current planning landscape in Africa is disjointed by varying national standards. The event sought to consolidate these threads into a unified professional authority capable of speaking with a single, influential voice to international bodies like UN-Habitat.
- ▶ **Political literacy as a professional competency:** A defining takeaway was the recognition that technical excellence is insufficient in a complex policy environment. The session established political literacy, i.e. the mastery of legislative advocacy and political language, as a mandatory requirement for planners to break barriers and influence decision-makers.
- ▶ **Driving AU Agenda 2063:** Achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063 requires planners to transition from passive design roles to active urban governance leaders. The event emphasized that unified professional standards and cross-border regulatory harmonization are the necessary precursors to building inclusive, sustainable African cities.

Through this engagement, KIP reaffirmed its position as an influential leader, setting a new precedent for Professional Associations to act as primary partners in shaping Africa’s urban transformation.



Picture 1: KIP President Plan. Fawcett Komollo and Mr. Ishaku Maitumbi, UN HABITAT Head of Sub-Regional Office in East & Horn of Africa, during the Side Event

2. STRATEGIC MILESTONES THROUGH SUSTAINED PARTNERSHIPS

The Kenya Institute of Planners (KIP) has transitioned from traditional professional advocacy to active participation in the governance of the built environment. These milestones reflect a shift toward sustained, multi-stakeholder partnerships that bridge the gap between technical planning and policy implementation.

2.1 Landmark Policy and Governance Milestones

KIP has strategically leveraged major regional and national forums to embed planning expertise into the core of governance and investment policy. By occupying these high-level spaces, KIP ensures that the planning voice is not merely consultative but central to legislative outcomes.

I. The Counties Dialogue on Land Governance and Land Use Planning: An initiative being implemented by KIP and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) under the European Union-funded Digital Land Governance Program (DGLP), in partnership with the Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, The Council of Governors and the National Land Commission. This program aims to strengthen the capacities of land governance and planning actors at the grassroots level in all 47 counties in Kenya. So far, the program has been implemented in 4 counties, with more than 4,000 citizens engaged, and more than 1,000 county officials sensitized on land governance and planning issues.

II. Nairobi Development Control Policy Framework: KIP alongside built environment professionals and neighborhood associations, partnered with Nairobi City County to shape a sustainable development control framework. A key recommendation was addressing the urgent need for Local Physical and Land Use Development Plans (LPLUDPs) for Nairobi's sub-centres and neighborhoods, and capacity building within the County's Planning Department to ensure long-term livability for Nairobi residents.

III. Advocating for the National Building Code 2024: At the Devolution Conference 2025, KIP led a panel discussion on the effective implementation of the National Building Code 2024 and issued a rallying call for professionals to master the Code and mainstream it into practice.

IV. Policy, Investment & Nature Governance: At the Biophilic Africa Conference 2025, KIP extended this advocacy by providing a planning perspective on the intersection of investment and nature. The Institute championed the alignment of African heritage, climate policy and capital investment, ensuring that nature-based urban development is treated as a strategic governance priority rather than an aesthetic afterthought.

2.2 Institutional Engagement and Professional Solidarity

Beyond technical policy, KIP has prioritized high-level diplomatic and professional engagement to elevate the visibility and authority of the planning profession.

I. The 19th Annual Regional Planners Convention 2025: This Convention served as a definitive milestone in KIP's push for professional unity. A centerpiece of this gathering was the adoption of Resolution 11, which mandates the strengthening of collaboration between KIP and African planning institutes through mutual recognition agreements and joint knowledge exchanges. This resolution explicitly calls for regional harmonization and a unified approach to managing transboundary infrastructure connectivity, migration, ecosystem management and climate adaptation.

II. KIP Awards and Recognition: This event was a vital nexus for KIP's leadership, development partners and government stakeholders. The ceremony was defined by the conferment of honorary memberships and prestigious institutional recognitions, celebrating individuals and organizations who have been instrumental in advancing the planning agenda. These honors served to underscore the critical importance of strategic partnerships, reinforcing the understanding that institutional progress is inextricably linked to the strength of KIP's collaborative alliances.

2.3 Inclusivity of Women and Youth Cohorts

The recent establishment of the Women in Planning Network (WiPNET), launched in November 2025, serves as a testament to KIP's commitment to diversity. WiPNET functions through three core pillars: Mentorship and Coaching, Leadership Advocacy, and Economic Empowerment.

I. Mentorship Frameworks: WiPNET will officially launch its comprehensive Mentorship Framework in April 2026, marking a long-term commitment to a diverse professional pipeline.

II. Youth-led innovation: The KIP Side Event successfully positioned the youth cohorts as drivers of modern partnerships. This underscores KIP's belief that the voice of young people is fundamental to creating the dynamic, digital-first planning frameworks required by the 60% of Africa's population that is youth.

These collective milestones demonstrate that KIP's effectiveness relies on its ability to weave professional expertise into the fabric of national development, ensuring that the "Africa We Want" is not just a vision, but a planned reality.



Picture 2: *The women and youth voices at the KIP Side event*

2.4 Expanding the Collaborative Ecosystem through Ongoing Initiatives

KIP’s commitment to building a unified profession is anchored in a suite of multi-stakeholder activities designed to solidify the Institute as a central node in the regional development network. These initiatives provide critical opportunities for sustained collaboration with government, development partners, private sector and community-based organizations.

The current priority initiatives include:

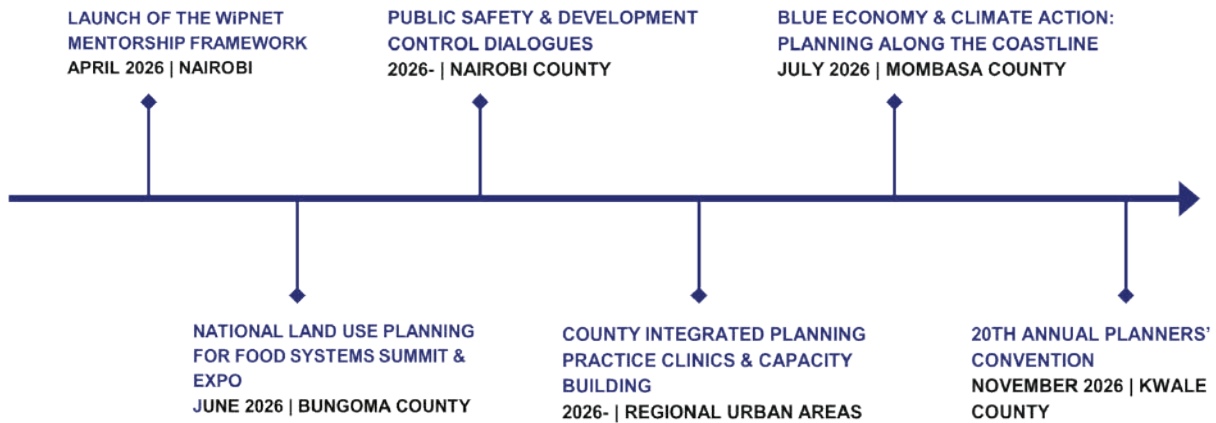


Figure 1: Partnership opportunities and strategic engagements 2026



Picture 3: Delegates listening in on the side event

3. THE DRIVE FOR A UNIFIED AFRICAN PLANNING PROFESSION

The KIP-AUF2 side event crystallized a growing consensus: the current fragmentation of African planning which is a relic of colonial administrative divisions, is fundamentally ill-suited to the scale and speed of the continent's 21st-century urbanization.

KIP leadership, in dialogue with continental peers, has articulated a strategic vision for a unified professional authority capable of transcending borders and reclaiming the African urban narrative.



Picture 4: Panel discussion at the KIP Side Event

3.1 Overcoming the barrier of fragmentation

The planning profession in Africa remains largely bifurcated by the colonial legacies of British Common Law (Anglo-African) and French (Francophone) administrative systems. These inherited frameworks often fail to reflect the **reality of African cities**, where informal economies and rapid population growth define the landscape. Most current planning systems are beautifully designed on paper but **lacking functional relevance, implementation budgets or political buy-in**.

A **unified profession must rationalize standards across the continent**. This involves developing **common practice manuals, legislative harmonization and reciprocal registration** to enable planners to move and practice freely, and is especially vital for the integrated management of transboundary corridors.

3.2 Decolonizing and modernizing frameworks

The call for a unified planning profession finds its highest-level political backing in the AUF2 Nairobi Declaration¹, which mandates that Member States move beyond ill-suited imported models toward context-specific research. This modernization effort requires:

- ▶ **Authentic placemaking:** Ending the tendency to produce and replicate foreign design principles that ignore the authentic character of African spaces.
- ▶ **Integrating the informal:** As 60% of Nigeria's GDP is derived from the informal economy, planning must move beyond exclusionary city-center focus to capture the reality of where urban residents actually live and work.
- ▶ **Leveraging technology:** Integrating AI and emerging spatial technologies into policy frameworks to manage the growing complexities of urban data.

3.3 The political imperative: From technocracy to advocacy

A recurring theme was the necessity for planners to stop lamenting from the sidelines and enter the political frontier. It was emphasized that **until planners are politically empowered, decision-making will remain the greatest hurdle.**

Planners must **master the political language** of budget allocation and legislative advocacy, and organize to approach politicians directly and amplify their voices through civil society and public participation. Planners must also build political relationships with decisionmakers and legislators to ensure planning remains a priority in Integrated Development Plans and annual budget cycles.

Additionally, planning must move beyond static space-mapping, to become self-effectuating; designed with built-in programs and financial triggers that activate upon adoption, ensuring they do not languish on shelves waiting for external funding.

3.4 Bridging the academic-practice divide

Unity in the profession must start at the foundation of **academic collaboration**, to bridge the gap between academia and practice, ensuring students are trained in local realities rather than inherited colonial systems. KIP is operationalizing this mandate by championing a regional research agenda co-led by African universities, effectively bridging the Nairobi Declaration's political goals with the technical requirement for decolonized, fit-for-purpose planning frameworks.

¹ Second Africa Urban Forum Nairobi Declaration. (2026, April). https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/46115-wd-AUF2-_Draft_Declaration_English_0.pdf

3.5 Synthesis: What does Unity look like in practice?

By integrating these perspectives, KIP is positioning itself to lead a movement that replaces the dilute planning of the past with a bold, unified and fit-for-purpose continental authority.

Feature	Current State (Fragmented)	Future State (Unified)
Standards	Nationally siloed, colonial roots	Rationalized, Pan-African manuals
Practice	Restricted to national borders	Reciprocal registration/mobility
Scope	Often limited to land-use/compliance	Integrated placemaking & socio-economic design
Political role	Passive/Technical/Excluded	Active/Advocacy-led/Budget-influencing



Picture 5: Voices from across Africa weighing in on the side event discussions

4. STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The AUF2 side event concluded by formalizing a renewed social contract between the planning profession and the stakeholders; policymakers, researchers, financiers and citizens; who shape the built environment. The dialogue transitioned from abstract theory to a tangible roadmap for institutionalizing KIP's influence.

I. Validation of the professional social contract

The session underscored that planning is a socio-political mandate. By convening a multi-disciplinary cohort, KIP validated that the future of African urbanism relies on a cross-sectoral effort that integrates spatial design with fiscal accountability.

II. Technological integration

KIP recognizes that managing the rapid pace of African urbanization requires digital agility. Following a strategic partnership with AAL Innovation (Hong Kong) on how Artificial Intelligence can support the Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) sectors, KIP announced an upcoming AI Needs Assessment. This evaluation will determine how emerging digital tools can be integrated into existing policy frameworks to enhance data-driven decision-making.

III. The roadmap for continental integration

The session set the stage for deepening engagements with the African Union and Regional Economic Communities. The objective is to develop a comprehensive continental charter for standardized planning laws, ensuring that professional standards remain consistent even as urban agglomerations span across borders.

4.1 Actionable Commitments

The following commitments define the strategic agenda moving forward:

- 1. Legislative Harmonization:** Pursuing a unified framework for accreditation and professional standards across African states to facilitate the free movement of planners and shared technical expertise.
- 2. Global Representation:** Elevating the African planning voice at the World Urban Forum (WUF) 2026 in Baku, Azerbaijan, to ensure that the continent's specific challenges are represented in international policy.

3. Bold Technical Advocacy: Transitioning the profession to lead on of fit-for-purpose urban growth, moving beyond compliance to influence the very legislative environments in which planners operate.

4.2 The Call to Action

The mandate for the planning profession is clear: We must cease to be observers and become influential in the political and fiscal frameworks that build our cities. KIP calls upon all members, academic partners and government allies to:

Engage the political frontier by building proactive, solution-oriented relationships with local and national legislators to influence budget allocations for urban development.

The tools for change are in our hands; the path toward a unified African planning profession is now open. We must occupy this space with boldness and technical authority.



Picture 6: Delegates at the KIP Side Event on 8th April 2026




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