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**SDGs KENYA FORUM**  
Coalition for Sustainable Development



# Civil Society Voices and Perspectives in Strengthening an Inclusive and Just Green Transition in Kenya

*"The transition to a green economy offers Kenya profound opportunities to advance climate resilience, economic diversification, and sustainable development."*

A member of the Inclusive Dialogue Mechanism

On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025 members of the Inclusive Dialogue Mechanism in the META action convened a Virtual EU-CSO Dialogue on Green Trade in Kenya to provide a structured platform for inclusive engagement between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the European Union Delegation in Kenya. The Dialogue aimed to foster collective reflection and strategic collaboration in advancing Kenya’s green transition through just and sustainable trade pathways.

<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Counties</b> ( <i>Baringo, Bomet, Elgeyo Marakwet, Embu, Garissa, Isiolo, Kajiado, Kakamega, Kisumu, Kitui, Kwale, Laikipia, Machakos, Makueni, Mandera, Marsabit, Meru, Mombasa, Murang’a, Nairobi, Nakuru, Nandi, Samburu, Tana River, and West Pokot</i> )	25
<b>Persons with disabilities</b>	1
<b>Youth &lt;35 years</b>	46
<b>Women</b>	48
<b>Men</b>	27
<b>Non-binary</b>	2

Building on the priorities of the EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society (2022–2025) and the Kenya-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the Dialogue sought to:

- Facilitate knowledge sharing on green transition policies, climate-resilient value chains, circular economy models, and the broader green trade agenda, helping CSOs deepen their understanding of the opportunities and challenges within the evolving Kenya-EU cooperation landscape.
- Identify key barriers faced by Kenyan CSOs, grassroots actors, and marginalized communities in participating in and benefiting from green trade and energy transition initiatives, with special attention to structural and policy barriers affecting women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
- Develop actionable recommendations to strengthen EU–Kenya cooperation frameworks, financing instruments, and programmatic approaches, ensuring that green transition efforts align with principles of social equity, local ownership, and community-driven development.
- Elevate the role of CSOs as essential partners in shaping Kenya’s green future, promoting their leadership in policy advocacy, project monitoring, rights-based approaches, and the design and implementation of inclusive green trade and energy solutions.
- Promote long-term collaboration mechanisms between CSOs, the EU Delegation, national and county governments, and private sector actors,

laying the groundwork for sustained and meaningful civil society participation in Kenya's green transition.

This session set the stage for the Dialogue by providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of how the European Union is supporting Kenya's green transition, particularly through its efforts to promote sustainable and inclusive trade and energy systems. The session focused on two key EU interventions: greening Kenya's horticulture value chain, and supporting the development of a green, resilient electricity system.

**i. Greening Kenya's Horticulture Value Chain:** The EU Delegation presented a multi-faceted strategy to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of Kenya's horticultural exports, which account for over KES 150 billion annually. The initiative aims to shift 50% of horticultural exports from air to sea freight by 2030, a move expected to reduce transport-related emissions by up to 40%. The key components of the approach include:

- **Climate-smart production:** Promoting sustainable agricultural practices, including the use of bio-inputs, efficient natural resource use, and organic farming techniques.
- **Aggregation, processing, and export readiness:** Enhancing aggregation models to ensure food safety, fair trade, and sustainability. Scaling up circular economy practices within the value chains and fostering sustainable packaging and processing innovations.
- **Cold-chain infrastructure:** Investing in cold chain logistics to enable the transition to sea freight, ensuring product quality and market competitiveness.
- **Regulatory harmonization and green certification:** Supporting the alignment of Kenyan regulations with EU standards on food safety, green packaging, and carbon footprint, while helping SMEs and smallholder farmers to access certification and compliance support.
- **Market diversification:** Encouraging value addition and the diversification of Kenyan exports beyond horticulture and tea, with growing opportunities in processed foods, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and climate-resilient agricultural products.

A strong emphasis was placed on ensuring that the transition is socially inclusive, creating opportunities for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and smallholder producers to benefit from greener, more competitive horticultural value chains.

- ii. **Green Resilient Electricity System Programme:** The EU also presented the Green Resilient Electricity System Programme, a €20 million initiative supporting Kenya's national target of achieving 100% renewable electricity by 2030. The programme focuses on strengthening Kenya's power grid and expanding green generation capacity through investments in geothermal, hydro, and solar energy.

Key highlights included:

- Renewable energy expansion: Scaling up generation from renewable sources and improving grid stability, with a focus on addressing energy access disparities between urban and rural areas.
- Grid equity: Prioritizing underserved counties and regions to promote equitable access to reliable, affordable green energy, particularly in marginalized and arid/semi-arid areas.
- Community engagement and FPIC: Ensuring that all energy projects adhere to the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and involve meaningful consultation with Project-Affected Persons (PAPs).
- Comprehensive ESIA: Strengthening the quality and scope of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) to prevent displacement, safeguard community rights, and promote just and inclusive energy transitions.
- CSO role in monitoring: Encouraging civil society participation in monitoring the implementation of ESIAs, supporting community feedback mechanisms, and ensuring that energy projects contribute to local development priorities.

The session highlighted the EU's commitment to supporting a just energy transition in Kenya one that not only decarbonizes the power sector but also advances community empowerment, gender equality, and social equity.

### **Reimagining the Role of Civil Society in Driving a Just Green Transition**

The session also surfaced practical ideas for how civil society can be better positioned to drive inclusive green trade and energy outcomes:

- The need for flexible, grant-based financing mechanisms that are truly accessible to community-based organizations (CBOs), women- and youth-led groups, and grassroots innovators.

- Suggestions included allowing simplified application processes, the use of verbal/video submissions, and access to seed grants in the range of USD 5,000–20,000 to support local green innovations.
- The proposal to establish a dedicated Kenya-EU CSO Green Transition Fund, co-managed by CSO and EU representatives, using participatory budgeting models and prioritizing projects that deliver strong social and environmental impact at the grassroots level.
- The need for long-term accompaniment of CBOs and local actors, moving beyond short-term training workshops to provide ongoing mentorship, coaching, and organizational strengthening.
- The importance of ensuring that CBOs and community groups lead project implementation in their contexts, through co-design, co-management, and inclusive governance structures, rather than being relegated to passive recipients or subcontractors.
- The development of community-friendly monitoring and evaluation (M&E) toolkits to enable grassroots actors to track progress, flag risks, and contribute to accountability in green transition programs.

## **CSO Recommendations;**

### **1. Inclusivity and participation:**

- Intentionally engage women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), Indigenous communities, and grassroots actors across all stages of green transition processes, including policy design, project implementation, and impact monitoring.
- Embed a disability lens and broader intersectional approach into all green trade and energy transition initiatives.

### **2. Accessible financing for local actors:**

- Simplify EU funding mechanisms to ensure that community-based organizations (CBOs), women- and youth-led groups, and local innovators can access financial support.
- Introduce flexible, grant-based financing instruments, including small seed grants (USD 5,000–20,000), that accommodate localized application processes (e.g., verbal/video proposals).

### **3. Safeguarding community rights:**

- Strengthen Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and ensure the rigorous implementation of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) in all energy, trade, and infrastructure projects, with robust CSO monitoring and community feedback mechanisms.

- Address legacy risks of displacement, social exclusion, and inequitable benefit-sharing in green energy and trade projects.

#### **4. Prioritise CSO leadership:**

- Position CSOs as core partners in policy advocacy, project design, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and capacity strengthening across the green transition ecosystem.
- Ensure that CSOs are systematically included in multi-stakeholder governance structures linked to EU-funded and government-led green programs.

#### **5. Community engagement and knowledge sharing:**

- Develop and disseminate community-friendly toolkits on green trade, circular economy, and energy transition concepts, in formats and local languages accessible to rural populations.
- Align green trade interventions with County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) priorities, and grassroots needs.
- Conduct county-level listening forms in underrepresented counties and marginalized communities to validate and expand dialogue recommendations, surface additional community insights and priorities and facilitate two-way knowledge sharing on green transition opportunities and risks.

#### **6. Establish a Results Matrix for Monitoring Progress:**

- Develop a Results Matrix or Accountability Scorecard to track the uptake and implementation of Dialogue recommendations across policy frameworks, financing mechanisms, community engagement practices, project design and delivery models, and provide periodic progress updates through the CSO-EU Dialogue platform and public reporting.

#### **Reflections from CSO representatives:**

*“A green transition that is not inclusive, just, and community-driven risks reinforcing patterns of inequality and exclusion.”*

*“Green trade engagements in Kenya must be accessible, transparent and participatory. The communities most*

affected must have agency as active co-creators, not passive recipients of Kenya's green future."

"Institutionalise lessons learnt and strengthen structured engagement mechanisms where grassroots voices, CSOs, the EU Delegation, and government actors co-create solutions and hold each other accountable."