

A recent [declaration](#) made by the East African Community (EAC) Secretary General reveals that plans to admit Somalia into the East African regional block are entered into an advanced stage. Among the advantages that the Somalia accession to the EAC can bring to the Community, the Secretary General points out the strategic position of the country, noting that with his about 3,200 Km. of coastline, the landlocked and semi-landlocked partner States of the Community (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda), will gain access to other ports in addition to Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam, that currently handle most of their trade, as also discussed in this [video](#).

In this regard, a positive news is that starting from 1th January 2023, the western parts of the Indian Ocean (which include the Gulf of Aden and the Somali basin) [have been removed](#) by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) from the list of the piracy-high risk areas, due to a significant reduction of pirates' attacks in the latest years in these waters. This is expected to have a positive impact on shipping costs in the region, as insurance costs and other security costs incurred by vessels transiting in such waters are expected to go down significantly.

Other advantages that the accession of Somalia to the EAC is expected to produce are:

- the integration of the country in the EAC Customs Union will lead to a reduction of both tariff and non-tariff barriers that currently impede trade between Somalia and its territorial neighbor and regional hegemon in the EAC, Kenya. Such barriers are at the moment so high that almost the totality of trade between the two nations currently occurs informally;
- Somalia accession to the EAC will make possible to integrate such country into the future Community's [road sub-sector projects](#), infrastructure projects that are aimed to improve interconnection links between EAC partner States in order to boost regional trade and reduce transportation costs in the region.

It worths to be remembered that Somalia is attempting to join the EAC since 2012. The bloc initially refused the application by motivating the refusal with the political instability, the frequent internal conflicts and weak institutions in the country. In July 2022, the Somali President Hassan

Sheikh Mohamud

[re-submitted](#)

an official request for membership to the EAC which was welcomed by the EAC Heads of States at the 22

nd

ordinary Summit of 22 July 2022, who issued a

[communiqué](#)

where the EAC Council was directed to fast track the accession. Lastly, in a

[statement](#)

issued on October 2022, the Somali President urged the East African Community (EAC) to accelerate the process for his country's admission into the EAC, highlighting the historical language and culture linkages that the country shares with some EAC states, especially with Kenya, which hosts a large Somali community.

According to article 3.2 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC, in order to become a member of the EAC, an assessment of the potential contribution to the strengthening of integration within the East African region and on the compatibility of the social and economic policies with those of the Community needs to be conducted. Accession conditions include respect for universal principles of good governance, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and other civil liberties. This assessment is typically undertaken by a specifically appointed EAC verification team, consisting of a number of experts from each EAC partner state. Once completed, a report is presented by the verification team to the EAC Council of Ministers who then tables it before the Summit of EAC Heads of State for the adoption of the formal decision on the access to the Community.