CIGOFA5

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH AND LAND GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE

CONCEPT NOTE

Theme

EMPOWERING THE PRESENT GENERATION OF LAND STEWARDS FOR A SECURED FUTURE

Harnessing technology and innovation in securing youth land rights

Nairobi, Kenya

20–23 octobre 2026

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The world is facing complex challenges ranging from climate change and rapid urbanization to food insecurity, resource scarcity, and youth migration. At the heart of these challenges lies a critical but often overlooked issue: **equitable and responsible access to land and secure land rights for present and future generations**, particularly for young people. Addressing these interconnected issues requires not only effective land governance but also innovative approaches that integrate technology, engineering, sustainable infrastructure, intergenerational dialogue and traditional knowledge.

In this context, **young leaders play a strategic role.** Through land administration, spatial data systems, participatory mapping, and fit-for-purpose land governance approaches, they contribute directly to securing land rights, improving land-use planning, and supporting inclusive decision-making. When combined with traditional and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, digital innovation can become a powerful enabler of people-centered and climate-resilient land governance.

The **5th International Youth and Land Governance Conference (CIGOFA) under the theme: "*Empowering the present generation of land stewards for a secured future",*** therefore marks a unique milestone and platform. It will bring together land professionals, youth networks, policymakers, civil society, development partners, academia and industry leaders to explore pathways for building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies through empowered and responsible land governance.

The month of October is particularly pertinent as it marks the celebration and commemoration of the World Food Day, International Day of Rural Women, International Day of Poverty Eradication, World Habitat Day, International Day of the Girl and the United Nations Day. The double commemoration of the International Year on Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) and the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF) in 2026, makes the conference even more relevant, offering an opportunity to highlight the leadership and contribution of young people, especially young women, Indigenous youth, young farmers and young pastoralists, in securing land rights and advancing resilient, equitable and sustainable food and land systems. The conference will be well aligned with the international agenda as it is being organized in the run-up to the African Union's commemoration, on 29 and 30 October, of Africa Food and Nutrition Security Day, which, in the spirit of the post-Malabo agenda, identifies land tenure and innovation as drivers of sustainable agriculture. The context is also marked by the reporting by States like Kenya on the CBD land indicator developed under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), providing an important opportunity to learn more on the centrality of land rights to meet biodiversity targets. Finally, the conference speaks to the *Mobility Matters* global campaign which pushes to recognize pastoral mobility in legal and policy frameworks, catalyze investments in rangelands, and shift narrative on mobility as a nature-based solution and land governance model.

Across the region, several national reform processes represent a relevant opportunity to position youth voices and expectations. Some of those countries include Kenya, South Sudan, Togo and Uganda where land policies are under review/development; Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda where pastoralists-related laws and policies are under review/development; to mention a few.

CIGOFA 5 builds on the outcomes of the fourth edition organized in Arusha, Tanzania in 2024, and calling for the creating youth-centered land policies, strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships, advocating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), and promoting knowledge and capacity building. This connection is reflected in the objectives, expected outcomes and methodology of CIGOFA 5 as described below.

2. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of CIGOFA5 is to empower young land rights leaders to harness innovation, technology, inclusive dialogue, and rights-based approaches to advance sustainable land governance and secure land rights for present and future generations.

3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the joint conference are to:

- Provide a platform where diverse youth voices, including women, youths, farmers, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized/ underrepresented communities/groups are heard and amplified in the context of the IYRP and the IYWF 2026.
- Influence relevant national and regional policy frameworks related to youths and land governance, by amplifying their perspectives and proposing actionable solutions building on lived experiences.
- Promote digital literacy and innovation hubs to equip youth with tools and skills for modern land management and responses to global sustainability challenges, including climate change and rapid urbanization.
- Strengthen intergenerational dialogue and collaboration between youth and traditional authorities and showcase the complementarity between traditional knowledge and digitalization.
- Strengthen partnerships between youth, governments, academia, private sector, and international organizations for youth-sensitive land governance.

4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Practical tools, methodologies, and case studies demonstrating how digital innovation and participatory planning can improve land tenure security for youth and contribute to climate resilience.
- Tools and frameworks to enhance intergenerational dialogue and inclusive decision-making in land governance.
- A youth-driven declaration on sustainable land governance, shaping regional and global dialogue.
- New partnerships and collaboration across regions, institutions, and sectors, for youth-sensitive land governance.
- Documentation of innovative case studies, research outputs, and policy recommendations.
- Increased visibility of young professionals' contributions to global sustainability agendas.

5. METHODOLOGY APPROACHES

The proposed methodological approach combines **panel discussions, side events, specialized training sessions, the Land Oscars Night, and field visits.**

As a pre-event activity, a **specialized training session** will be organized one day before the official opening of the conference to strengthen participants' capacities on specific topics related to youth land rights, land governance, and sustainable land management.

The training will be followed will field visits, allowing participants to draw lessons from lived experiences that feed the conversations during the in-door sessions.

The **panel discussions** will provide a platform for young people, youth organizations, and key stakeholders to share their experiences, challenges, lessons and innovative solutions related to youth land rights and access to land. These sessions will foster dialogue and knowledge exchange among participants from different countries and sectors.

The **side events** will offer partners, institutions, and organizations an opportunity to showcase their projects, initiatives, and best practices related to the conference theme and youth land governance.

The event will conclude with the **Land Oscars Night**, an award ceremony recognizing outstanding organizations, institutions, and leaders that have made significant contributions to the promotion of youth land rights and inclusive land governance in Africa.

6. TOPICS

Topics are organized in 4 tracks as follows:

Track 1: Youth land rights and inclusive land governance

- Securing land rights for youth in rural, urban, and peri-urban contexts
- Youth access to land for housing, livelihoods, and food systems
- Indigenous, farmers and pastoral youth land rights and territorial governance
- Gender equality and young women's land rights
- Fit-for-purpose land administration for youth-inclusive development.

Track 2: Technology and innovation for secure land tenure and biodiversity conservation

- Digital surveying, mapping, and geospatial tools to support land rights and biodiversity conservation
- Participatory and community-based mapping with youth
- Youth-led innovation hubs for improving rural and urban economies
- Responsible use of AI, remote sensing, and data systems in land governance
- Open-source GIS and accessible technologies for tenure security
- Ethical and inclusive digitalization of land information systems
- Digitalizing the protection of young land rights defenders

Track 3: Youth leadership, employment, and the future of the land profession

- Youth leadership in land governance institutions and professional bodies
- Education and capacity building for rights-based land governance
- Employment, entrepreneurship, and decent work in the land sector
- Mentorship, professional development, and ethical leadership
- Youth-driven innovation and social entrepreneurship for land justice.

Track 4: Intergenerational, Indigenous, Pastoralism and traditional knowledge systems

- Intergenerational dialogue in land governance practice
- Integrating Indigenous and customary land tenure systems into formal frameworks
- Traditional ecological knowledge and climate-resilient land use
- Youth-elder collaboration in rangelands, pastoral, and farming systems.

Across all tracks, we have cross-cutting priorities which are:

- Youth land rights as a foundation for sustainable development
- Gender equality and social inclusion
- Climate resilience and environmental stewardship
- Policy relevance and global impact.

6. PARTICIPANTS

- Young land professionals from all regions
- Civil society organizations and community-based groups
- Policymakers, government representatives, and development agencies
- Academia and research institutions
- Private sector actors and technology innovators.
- Media

7. ORGANIZER

- Youth Initiative for Land in Africa (YILAA)

8. DATE AND VENUE

- 20 to 23 October 2026, Nairobi, Kenya

9. ATTENDANCE

- Participants must register via the registration link to confirm attendance.

10. PARTNERS

- International and regional institutions:
    - International Land Coalition (ILC)
    - Youth and Land Multi-Stakeholder Platform in Africa (YLMPA)
    - Land Portal
    - Kadaster International
- National institutions/organisations:
    - Kenya National Land Coalition (KNLC)
- Local and international youth-led organizations
- Indigenous and pastoralism organizations
- Academic and research institutions
    - Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA)
- Development partners and donors

CONCLUSION:

As the land governance community stands at the threshold of its next decade of youth-driven impact, the 5th International Youth and Land Governance Conference offers a landmark opportunity to reflect, innovate, and pave a sustainable and secure path forward. Under the theme *"Empowering the present generation of land stewards for a secured future" and the subtheme "Harnessing innovation and technology to secure youth land rights",* the event will equip young professionals with the tools, knowledge, and networks they need to shape a resilient and inclusive future.