



**MINISTRY OF ROADS AND TRANSPORT
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR ROADS
MECHANICAL AND TRANSPORT DIRECTORATE**

REPORT ON

**KENYA'S ACCESSION WORLD FORUM FOR HARMONIZATION OF
VEHICLE REGULATIONS (WP.29)**

SEPTEMBER, 2026

Executive Brief on Kenya's Accession World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29)

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Kenya's proposed accession to the United Nations World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) is a Strategic National Programme with implications extending beyond vehicle regulations. The move is aligned Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda contained in MTP IV (2023-2027) of Vision 2030. In addition to feeding into Kenya's Nationally Determined Contributions and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ascending to WP.29 reinforces government Agendas beyond Vision 2030. The endeavor provides an opportunity to strengthen road safety, environmental protection, energy efficiency, automotive systems and components manufacturing, automotive assembly, innovative technology development and access to regional and global automotive markets of Kenya made products while reducing the import burden. Of greater importance, accession to WP.29 feeds into Kenya's effort to create job and investment opportunities more so for local skilled labor and entrepreneurs in the whole lifecycle management of vehicles.

The current state of the automotive sector reinforces the case for action. The assessment records approximately 13,692 vehicles assembled in Kenya in 2025, vehicle imports valued at about KES 131.6 billion, and spare parts and related accessories worth approximately KES 18.4 billion, while domestic assembly is reported to operate at roughly 30% capacity. This indicates significant room for Kenya's sustainable development and growth through manufacturing and value addition of products, supplier development, products development and type approvals, technology transfer, enhanced export competitiveness, participation in emerging automotive technologies while ensuring sustainability and efficiency in environment, road transport and energy aspects.

Road safety is another immediate justification. Kenya's National Road Safety Action Plan reiterates the need to enhance road safety for all users by integrating road designs and vehicle designs and safety. WP.29 Framework complements Kenya efforts on reduction of road fatalities and injuries as it provides internationally recognized regulatory benchmarks covering vehicle construction, type approval and safety systems, together with mechanisms for conformity and recalls. By referencing on applicable WP.29 regulations and data systems on locally made and imported vehicle and vehicle components, Kenya will be better placed to surpass the 50% target reduction in road carnages by 2030.

The intervention is also timely reinforcing environmental protection and energy efficiency Agendas. The transport sector in Kenya currently accounts for approximately 13% of the nation's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and consumes about 72% of all imported petroleum products. To catalyze a low-carbon automotive sector, the primary environmental blueprint, the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) medium-term targets covering 2023-2027 directs Kenya's automotive sector toward fuel efficiency and decarbonization.

Kenya's transition towards cleaner, efficient and sustainable road transport makes international technical harmonization increasingly important. The endeavor also feeds

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into National Energy Policy 2025-2034 (Draft) strategic intents in addressing the challenges of energy access, affordability, security and environmental sustainability whilst promoting clean energy solutions thereby reducing Kenya's dependence on fossil fuels and driving green industrialization. With the implementation & upscaling of electric mobility, fuel efficient vehicles, as well as use of alternative fuels, it is envisioning the import bill of fossil fuels will reduce immensely.

RELEVANCE OF THE WP.29 AGREEMENTS

The WP.29 framework provides three principal multilateral agreements relevant to Kenya. The 1958 Agreement establishes a framework for vehicle type approval, UN Regulations, Conformity of Production and reciprocal recognition of approvals. The 1997 Agreement addresses periodic technical inspection and recognition of inspection certificates, strengthening roadworthiness and environmental performance of vehicles in use. The 1998 Agreement provides for the development of Global Technical Regulations and gives Kenya an opportunity to participate in shaping future international technical requirements while retaining national implementation arrangements. The three agreements offer complementing packages towards whole life cycle management of vehicles, systems and components. The three agreements catalyze industrial growth foreign policy and international trade.

The report therefore considers accession not merely as an international commitment but as a framework through which Kenya can progressively strengthen its domestic vehicle regulatory system and link regulation to promote safety, fuel efficiency, environmental protection and industrial development.

PROGRESS ALREADY MADE

Kenya has moved beyond initial awareness of WP.29 towards structured accession preparation. The initiative was introduced to the Mechanical and Transport Directorate in 2024. This was followed by consultations involving Government, industry and other stakeholders. The multistakeholder and multisectoral Technical Working Committee (TWC) domiciled in the State Department for Roads commenced formal operations in January 2026. The TWC undertook baseline assessments, regulatory Assessments, preliminary compliance assessments on technical advisory Services, testing and Conformity of Production arrangements as well WP.29 Frameworks detailed analysis. Attendance of Kenya in 196th and 198th Sessions of WP.29 and 131st Sessions of Working Party on General Safety (GRSG) expanded the knowledge base of the TWC. The strategic engagements between the TWC and the WP.29 Secretariats in charge of Passive Safety (GRSP), Pollution and Energy (GRPE), automated and Connected Vehicles (GRVA), and Noise and Tyres (GRBP) enhanced comprehension of WP.29 operational and regulatory frameworks. Kenya's participation in international sessions has also generated institutional learning from direct engagement with international experts. The assessment

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made noted institutional capabilities and capacities within government to support accession process. Further, the committee noted immense the complimentary nature of the WP.29 vehicle regulations to the automotive sector regulations from diverse department for sustainable transportation, and sustainable socio-economic development.

EXISTING NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND READINESS

Kenya possesses substantial legal and institutional foundations upon which WP.29 implementation can be built. Further, Kenya regulatory frameworks references on regional, Continental and Global vehicle regulations most of which derive their original texts from the work WP.29. The National Automotive Policy provides direction for local assembly, local content and component manufacturing, while the Draft National Green Fiscal Incentives Policy Framework seeks to promote life cycle or circular economy concept by introduction technologies that enhance process efficiency in terms of optimizing raw materials, and energy and water use, while also reducing waste and emissions in industrial and road transport sectors too. Moreover, the National Electric Mobility Policy, provides an opportunity to establish a stronger statutory and institutional framework. The environmental protection, energy efficiency, industrial growth promotion, and Safety regulations are also supported by a robust National policy intervention that also support International Trade, collaborations and partnerships on diverse subjects. In view of the milestones accomplished, the next step is to map these national and regional instruments against applicable UN Regulations and determine where requirements should be retained, revised or supplemented.

Given the importance of Kenya's alignment with international best practices, Kenya attained a provisional signatory to the Washington Accord in June 2025. The historic milestone for the country's engineering sector opened doors for local engineering graduates to participate in engineering projects across the world without retraining given that their credentials are recognized by fellow signatory countries. It is envisioned that Ascension to WP.29, by Kenya through leveraging of existing technical capacity in Kenya will open doors for Kenyan made products in the international market.

Despite strong indications on Kenya's strong legal, capacity and institutional base, there exists gaps and opportunities for development. Consequently, there is need to reference on elaborate design, testing, type-approval, and conformity evaluations of vehicles, parts and systems anchored on WP.29 Regulatory and Operational Framework. This will be critical in strengthening testing and technical services; Conformity of Production arrangements; and market surveillance, defect reporting, recalls and enforcement.

CRITICAL IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

The credibility of Kenya's accession will depend on its ability not only to adopt regulations but also to implement and enforce them effectively. The country must be able to approve

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vehicles and components, verify that production continues to conform to the approved type, identify non-conforming products, manage recalls and enforce corrective measures. Conformity of Production and market surveillance are therefore central to a credible WP.29 system.

The report recommends consolidating and strengthening existing institutions and programmes rather than creating parallel structures unnecessarily. A credible type-approval and conformity system could also transform Kenya's local-content agenda into internationally acceptable manufacturing. Opportunities identified include automotive component production, bus-body manufacturing, safety-critical parts, electric-mobility components and testing services, with potential for Kenya to develop into a Global centre for automotive testing, type approval and inspection on technical matters aligned to Safety, Energy efficiency and environmental protection.

PROPOSED ACCESSION AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The report proposes a phased approach aligned to Kenya's mechanisms established rather than attempting to implement the entire WP.29 framework simultaneously. During the pre-accession phase, Kenya should formalize governance arrangements, complete legal, institutional and technical gap assessments, identify priority UN Regulations and determine the resources required. Following internal approvals, the accession phase should involve preparation and submission of the relevant accession instruments and definition of the initial scope.

After the accession, Kenya should establish a Kenyan WP.29 Forum that will bring together Government departments, agencies and private-sector stakeholders. This will be followed by affirmation Type Approval Authority, Technical Services and relevant Periodic Technical Inspection (PTI) Centres, develop procedures and databases, train personnel and undertake priority legal amendments. Thereafter, continuous implementation should focus on operating Conformity of Production and market-surveillance systems, maintaining PTI arrangements, updating regulations, participating actively in WP.29 Working Parties (GRs), WP.29 Sessions, Informal Working Groups (IWGs), taskforces and where applicable initiate agendas towards promoting Kenya interests in the global Sustainable Transport Sector.

PRIORITY ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Technical Working Committee recommends that Kenya formally recognize WP.29 accession as a Viable and Strategic National Initiative and pursue the three-core WP.29 Agreements. This should be accompanied by legal and institutional harmonization, periodic regulatory review and immediate Phase II studies to be undertaken comprising of national compliance assessment and a macroeconomic cost-benefit analysis. The latter

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should establish infrastructure and investment requirements alongside the expected national economic benefits.

IN CONCLUSION

Kenya is not starting from a regulatory vacuum. Significant policy, industrial, standards and institutional building blocks already exist. There is a focus to ensure priority Sectors align with international best practices. While the move is positive especially in fostering international trade of Kenyan made products, the central challenge is to integrate and strengthen these foundations into a coherent and credible national vehicle regulatory system capable of meeting international requirements.

The Technical Working Committee therefore supports moving from exploratory assessment to coordinated implementation. Accession to WP.29 should be pursued as part of Kenya's wider road-safety, environmental protection, fuel efficiency, industrial growth, and International Trade Agendas, with implementation structured around legal alignment, institutional clarity, technical capacity, testing infrastructure, conformity assessment, market surveillance and stakeholder participation. Properly implemented, WP.29 can help Kenya improve vehicle safety and environmental performance and convert its automotive sector and local-content policies into internationally recognized and export-capable manufacturing.

Finally, the committee notes that ascension to WP.29 is one among many international ascensions that may strategically place Kenya as an authority in Transport, Industrial, Environment, Energy, Technology and Trade matters globally. Consequently, the committee recommends continuous efforts on evaluation and ascension of noble, objective and profitable ventures for Kenya's Socio-economic development.

Phase two activity Matrix

