

EAC Partner States have been called upon to fast-track the adoption of EACPass, a harmonized system to facilitate cross-border movement, in a bid to end persistent border traffic snarl-ups disrupting intra-EAC trade.

EAC Secretary General, Dr. Peter Mathuki, said that as the region strives to rebound from the Covid-19 pandemic, constant trade impasses at EAC border points were reducing the gains made in integrating the region, adding that Partner States need to prioritise the adoption of a regional coordinated approach in handling the pandemic.

“Harmonization of Covid-19 charges and coordinated waiting time for Covid results is critical to facilitate business continuity and ease the cost of doing business,” said Dr. Mathuki.

This happens in the background of an ongoing trade impasse at the Kenya-Uganda border points of Busia and Malaba that has disrupted cross-border trade. The two borders on the Northern Corridor also serve Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and South Sudan.

Dr. Mathuki emphasised the need for Partner States to adopt the EACPass, a system that integrates all EAC Partner States negative test results for Covid-19 and those vaccinated, easing turnaround time at border points.

“The EACPass is directly integrated to all the six (6) Partner States central depository (National Laboratories) and only national accredited laboratories are approved to carry out PCR Covid-19 tests for travelers. This is set to build confidence in all Partner States since certificates are digitally authenticated from all accredited laboratories in region,” he added.

The EACPass works by consolidating the results of all travelers and passengers undertaking mandatory Covid-19 testing in the designated accredited laboratories in each EAC Partner State. The authorized and accredited testing facilities in each country upload Covid-19 data to their respective Ministry of Health (MOH) repository. Only PCR Negative Covid-19 results for travelers are pushed automatically to the EACPass which is accessible digitally and is verifiable at all ports of entry and exit.

Currently, EAC Partner States have finalized the technical integration of accredited laboratories within the Community to EACPass and digital certificates can be shared

across the region to facilitate easy movement of EAC citizens within the region.

“The piloting of EACPass has started in Republic of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi while the other Partner States are finalizing the internal processes to start the piloting of the same,” said Dr. Mathuki.

The 21st Meeting of the Sectoral Council of Ministers responsible for Health held on 10th December, 2021 approved the EACPass as a regional platform to facilitate movement of all travellers in the region and beyond and also directed EAC Partner States to facilitate the implementation and use of EACPass as a platform for quick verification of Covid-19 test certificates and vaccination status for travelers.