

13th Continental Essay Competition 2025/2026

The theme for the 13th Continental Essay Competition for the year 2025-2026 is:

“The role of harmonised standards in reducing Technical Barriers to Trade and in promoting fair and just trade within the Intra-African and Global Trade”



Zanzibar Bureau of Standards (ZBS) in collaboration with African Organization for Standardization (ARSO) is conducting an essay competition for the year 2025-2026 and welcomes all students from University/College within Zanzibar to participate in this 13th Continental Essay Competition.

INTRODUCTION

Harmonised standards are a powerful tool for creating fair, predictable, and efficient trading environment. In the African context, particularly under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), they are essential for removing non-tariff obstacles known as Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs). These barriers-differences in product regulations, certification requirements, and quality standards currently slow down intra-African trade, which remains at only 16% compared to higher regional trade volumes in other continents.

For African businesses, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), navigating varying regulations across different countries is costly and complex. Harmonising standards across the continent reduces these burdens, enabling smoother trade flows, lowering costs, and unlocking the full potential of the AfCFTA. In fact, the benefits of reducing TBTs could exceed the gains from tariff cuts alone.

Globally, harmonised standards also help companies integrate into value chains by ensuring products meet consistent quality and safety requirements. In Africa, inconsistent standards make regional value chains expensive and inefficient. A unified framework would allow African enterprises to compete more effectively, expand markets, and stimulate economic growth.

The AfCFTA Agreement already recognises this need, with its TBT and SPS requiring adoption of African Organisation for Standardization (ARSO) and African Electrotechnical Standardisation

Commission (AFSEC) standards. This commitment is not just a technical measure. It is part of the African Union's broader goal of building a fair and just trading system, aligned with its 2025 vision of "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations." By implementing harmonised standards, Africa can move from fragmented markets to a single, integrated economy that promotes equity, prosperity, and global competitiveness.

ENTRY RULES AND CONDITIONS

1. This competition is open to Citizens of Africa below the age of 35 years studying in Zanzibar in a University/College recognised by the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar.
2. Length of essays: Essays should be between **1000** and **1200** words
3. Presentation: Essays should be **double spaced** and presented in **Century Gothic, size 12**;
4. Language of essays: Essays must be submitted in **English**;
5. Information on the author: Authors may use up to 50 words to describe themselves. Information should include their **names, course** and **year of study, town and country** in which their university is located. (N. B: this will not be part of the 1000- 1200 words)
6. Contacts of authors: Authors should provide us with their **postal, physical, telephone** and **email addresses** on the first page of the essay together with the title of the essay and information on the author. Also kindly attach a copy of the **Identity Card or Pass port** and a completely filled registration form that can be obtained from the web pages of ZBS: (**www.zbs.go.tz**) and ARSO

(www.arso-oran.org)

7. Eligibility: The following essays are not eligible for this competition:

- Essays that have been published in any form.
- Essays that have been shown or accepted for other competitions.
- Essays that focus on the work of a particular person, organization or brand name.

8. Number of essays to be submitted: Participants are only allowed to **submit one essay**.

THE ESSAY SHOULD HAVE:

Introduction

We are looking for an introduction that goes beyond simply stating the topic; including clear, concise, and compelling opening statement and demonstrate a deep understanding of the theme's significance

Problems Towards the Theme: A Detailed and Evidence-Based Analysis

Comprehensive grasp of the challenges. We are looking for a grounded analysis, supported by data and specific examples, not just general statements; can you identify the root causes of the problem and understand its multifaceted nature

Solutions and Policy Framework: A Strategic and Action-Oriented Proposal

We would like to read a clear path forward; outlining concrete, actionable solutions and demonstrate an understanding of the existing institutional framework.

Conclusion: A Forward-Looking and Impact-Driven Summary

Provide a precise, powerful and inspiring final personal statement, reinforcing the importance of the theme and its potential for transformational change.

PRIZES FOR WINNERS

There will be three levels of winners

At National level

1st position – **Laptop and cash Tsh 400,000/=**

2nd position – **Tablet and cash Tsh 300,000/=**

3rd position – **Mini Tablet” and cash Tsh 200,000 /=**

4th and 5th positions – **Cash Tsh 150,000/= each**

Note: All participants will be awarded a certificate of participation

At Continental Level

1st position – **USD 1000**

2nd position – **USD 800**

3rd position – **USD 500**

Winners will be selected through a fair and impartial selection process by ZBS. The decision of the judges shall be final.

Please note that AI Generated Essays upon review on the **AI Checker** will be in admissible and will be automatically disqualified if the Score is more than 20% as per the AI Plagiarism Checker Software.

DEADLINE.

The deadline to submit the essay to Zanzibar Bureau of Standards (ZBS) is **2nd March 2026**. Students are required to submit their essay, copy of ID and filled registration form to the following address: -

Email: essay@zbs.go.tz

Or submit direct at the bureau's office at Maruhubi, Unguja or Chake Chake, Pemba.

For more information, please contact essay coordinator **+255678574635 or +255778081445**.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS:

National winners will be announced on Standard day celebration on March 2026 immediately after the completion of essay competition and selection of winners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:

- Zanzibar Bureau of Standards (ZBS) www.zbs.go.tz
- African Organization for Standardisation.....www.arso-oran.org

Zanzibar Bureau of Standards

