ZANZIBAR BUREAU OF STANDARDS (ZBS)

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14TH CONTINENTAL ESSAY COMPETITION 2026/2027

Topic: Advancing Intra - African Trade through Conformity Assessment and Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) - Unlocking the Full Potential of the Cotton - to - Clothing Value Chain under the AfCFTA

14th Continental Essay Competition 2026/2027

Zanzibar Bureau of Standards **(ZBS)** in collaboration with African Organization for Standardization **(ARSO)** is conducting an essay competition for the year 2026-2027 and welcomes all students from University/College within Zanzibar to participate in this 14th Continental Essay Competition.

THEME/TOPIC

The theme/topic for the 14th Continental Essay Competition for the year 2026-2027 is:
"Advancing Intra-African Trade through Conformity Assessment and Mutual Recognition Agreements **(MRAs)** — Unlocking the Full Potential of the Cotton-to-Clothing Value Chain under the AfCFTA"

INTRODUCTION

Intra-African trade is essential for promoting economic integration, industrial development and value addition under the African Continental Free Trade Area **(AfCFTA) (African Union, 2018).** The cotton-to-clothing value chain, which includes cotton cultivation, ginning, spinning, textile manufacturing, design and garment production, offers significant opportunities for African countries to add value to local cotton and expand trade in textile and clothing products **(UNIDO, 2024).**

However, effective trade requires products to meet common quality and technical requirements. Harmonized standards developed through the African Organisation for Standardisation **(ARSO)**, particularly through ARSO TC 53, help promote consistency and facilitate market acceptance **(ARSO, n.d.).** Conformity assessment activities, including testing, inspection and certification, verify compliance with these standards **(ISO 17000, 2020; ISO/IEC 17025, 2017),** while accreditation provides confidence in the competence of assessment bodies **(ISO/IEC 17025, 2017).**
Mutual Recognition Agreements **(MRAs)** further facilitate trade by enabling participating countries to recognize conformity assessment results from other countries, reducing unnecessary duplication of testing and certification **(WTO, 1995).**

Therefore, integrating harmonized standards, conformity assessment, accreditation and MRAs can strengthen trust in African textile products, reduce technical barriers to trade and unlock the full potential of the cotton-to-clothing value chain under the AfCFTA.

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. Essays should be:
   - 1000 and 1200 words, excluding references, cover page and appendices.
   - Century Gothic, size 12 font, 1.5-line spacing;
   - submitted in English;
3. Information of the author to be included on the cover page: names, institution/university, country, email and telephone.

THE ESSAY SHOULD HAVE:

Introduction

The introduction goes beyond simply stating the topic; including clear, concise, and compelling opening statement and demonstrate a deep understanding of the theme's significance.

Main body

The body of essay shall include depth of understanding of standardisation, conformity assessment and MRAs while addressing challenges, practical relevance and quality of policy/ implementation recommendations in relation to cotton-to-clothing value chain under the **AfCFTA.**

Conclusion

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

PRIZES FOR WINNERS

Nationally:

- 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 positions – Cash **Tsh 200,000/=**
- 5th positions – Cash **Tsh 150,000/=**

Note: All participants will be awarded a certificate of participation
The winners will compete in continental level

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.

SUBMISSION:

Submit your essay with following:

- Filled essay registration form that is available at https://www.arso-oran.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/14th-Continental-Essay-Competition-Registration-Form-2026.pdf and
- Copy of ID (National/Student ID) or Passport

Through:

- Email: essay@zbs.go.tz
  Or, at ZBS office, Maruhubi - Unguja/Chake Chake- Pemba

DEADLINE:

1ST March, 2027

NOTE: Plagiarised or substantially AI-generated submissions, if the score is more than 20% will be disqualified; sources must be properly referenced using a consistent citation style.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS:

National winners will be announced on Standard day celebration on March 2027 immediately after the completion of essay competition and selection of winners.

FOR MORE INFORMATIONS:

Contact essay coordinators with this number +255678574635 or +255653560720
Or visit the following websites

- Zanzibar Bureau of Standards (ZBS): www.zbs.go.tz
- African Organization for Standardisation https://www.arso-oran.org/ ova_dep/continental-essay-competition/

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