FinWise Exchange

The Voice of African Capital Markets

MAURITIUS–EAST AFRICA CORRIDOR

From Maritime Crossroads to Financial Gateway

> *…East Africa remains the continent's fastest growing region for the second consecutive year…*

By Mirella Gustave

Relationship Manager – International Banking, MauBank

Mauritius–East Africa Corridor: From Maritime Crossroads to Financial Gateway

The Mauritius–East Africa Corridor is more than a geographic linkage, says Mirella Gustave, Relationship Manager - International Banking at MauBank, which is now emerging as a strategic platform through which African risk can be better understood, structured and managed, while connecting investment opportunities in East Africa with international capital.

Long before balance sheets, investment funds and trade finance connected Mauritius with East Africa, the Indian Ocean did.

For centuries, Mauritius stood at the crossroads of one of the world's busiest maritime routes, connecting Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Merchants, explorers and naval powers recognised the island's strategic importance not because of its geolocation, but because of its ability to connect markets and facilitate commerce across continents. While the nature of global trade has changed dramatically since then, the principle has remained remarkably constant. Mauritius continues to create connections. Today, those connections are increasingly measured in investment flows, financial partnerships and cross-border enterprise.

The Momentum of the East Africa Corridor

According to the 2026 East Africa Economic Outlook report of African Development Bank Group, East Africa remains the continent's fastest growing region for the second consecutive year with regional growth accelerating from 4.3% in 2024 to an estimated 6.6% in 2025. For anyone structuring capital into the region, the question is no longer whether East Africa deserves attention, but how to navigate the fragmentation of local regulatory regimes, currency volatility, and jurisdictional risk.

Mauritius, with its extensive network of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) and Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (IPPAs) across Africa, has already channelled nearly USD40 billion in investments into the continent as of recent years. Similarly, the question is not whether Mauritius can serve as a gateway for the East Africa Corridor. It is how the island can deepen and future-proof that role in an increasingly competitive global structuring environment.

Mauritius IFC Competitive Landscape: Not a Default Choice

For global investors navigating multiple legal systems, currencies, regulatory environments and tax frameworks across East Africa remains complex. This is precisely where Mauritius creates value and has reinvented itself from a treaty-heavy offshore centre into a high-substance, OECD-compliant financial hub that functions as the essential "de-risking" architecture for the East Africa corridor.

For decades, the standard for African-bound capital was the Global Business Corporation (GBC). With the introduction of the Variable Capital Company (VCC) Act in 2022, Mauritius offers a paradigm shift in fund structuring. The agility to scale across the East African Community (EAC) without the friction of incorporating multiple standalone entities simplifies the "ticking fee" structures, and allows for distinct investment strategies, bringing the jurisdiction into direct parity with Luxembourg and Singapore.

Mauritius also functions as a regional-integration test case as much as a Financial Centre. There is a rise in "Headquartering Schemes" where East African firms move their C-suite and treasury functions to Mauritius. The political neutrality and absence of exchange controls make it a credible regional hub for treasury centres, cross-border syndicated loans and trade finance. This allows East African conglomerates to access global capital markets more effectively while utilising Mauritius's deep embedding in the COMESA–EAC–SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area to facilitate duty-free trade across the continent.

In an era of rising geopolitical fragmentation, the quality of financial infrastructure has become just as important as physical infrastructure: the independent credentials. Mauritius ranked among the top five financial centres in the Middle East & Africa region in the latest Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 39) published in March 2026.

A corridor is only as strong as its physical connectivity. Closing what had long been the weakest link in the corridor, Ethiopian Airlines launched direct flights between Addis Ababa and Port Louis since July 2026.

Staying Ahead

Mauritius is also no longer the only credible financial platform on the continent. To remain competitive, Mauritius must continuously upgrade regulatory agility, banking capacity, financial product innovation and substance that remain compelling relative to total cost.

> East Africa remains the continent's fastest growing region

The greatest friction points in the Mauritius–East Africa corridor remain the complexity of cross-border payment flows and the global trend of "de-risking" by correspondent banks. For MauBank, this has meant treating correspondent relationship management and trade finance capabilities as a strategic priority rather than an operational afterthought. Reliable USD clearing without avoidable disruption to trade with East Africa by adding Standard Chartered as a US dollar correspondent banking network, along with operational improvements, digital investments and specialised expertise to support increasing complex trade structures. Payment efficiency is no longer simply an operational metric. MauBank's recent Elite Quality Recognition Award

By Mirella Gustave,
Relationship Manager - International Banking, MauBank

from J.P. Morgan reflects the significance of US payment operational excellence as a verifiable signal to investors that East African transactions routed through Mauritius will settle reliably, complementing jurisdiction-level regulatory guarantees with institution-level proof.

The credibility of the entire East Africa corridor depends on Mauritius continuing to meet, and being seen to meet, international anti-money laundering and financial crime standards. A new Bank of Mauritius Bill and Banking Bill are being introduced to strengthen governance, sharpen prudential regulation and support financial stability.

Merit, in practice, is often decided by onboarding friction. Continued collaboration between the regulator, banks and industry bodies toward a fully centralised national KYC repository, an initiative which Mauritius has signalled but not yet fully delivered, could make a real difference to how quickly capital moves and sharpen the ease of doing business.

East Africa's rapidly evolving fintech ecosystem is set to reshape the corridor, creating opportunities for Mauritius to strengthen its role by aligning with high-growth sectors such as technology and digital finance. The legislative recognition of electronic trade documents and electronic signatures, alongside the development of frameworks for stablecoins, asset tokenisation and Open Banking, reflects Mauritius' ambition to reinforce the innovation credentials of its International Financial Centre. As these initiatives progress, the regulatory framework will need to evolve into more detailed rules and practical implementation mechanisms to support adoption and provide greater clarity to market participants.

As East African wealth grows, a dedicated licensing framework for Wealth Management and Family Offices will support integrated services spanning advisory, succession planning, and cross-border structuring. Recent enhancements to family office licensing further position the jurisdiction for capital structuring across the corridor while managing intergenerational continuity. None of this comes without friction of its own. The Financial Services Commission' restructured fee framework for the Global Business sector, which raised annual licence fees for Global Business Companies and Authorised Companies from 1 July 2026, has drawn concern from stakeholders over competitiveness and operating costs, a reminder that Mauritius's edge has to be actively defended, not assumed.

A Live Proposition as Forward Outlook

The Mauritius–East Africa Corridor is more than a geographic linkage. It is emerging as a strategic platform through which African risk can be better understood, structured and managed, while connecting investment opportunities in East Africa with international capital.

Mauritius has an opportunity to further cement its position as a trusted International Financial Centre for institutional investors, banks, regulators and family offices seeking stability, efficiency and access to East African markets. Strategic fund structuring, innovative cross-border financing, efficient investment flows and private wealth management will be central to strengthening that proposition.

The Corridor is a live and evolving opportunity, and its long-term relevance will depend on the regulators, financial institutions and practitioners that continue to build the frameworks, capabilities and relationships required to support it. For MauBank, contributing to that evolution represents both a strategic priority and a long-term commitment.

MAU BANK

INTERNATIONAL BANKING

RELATIONSHIP BEYOND BORDERS

Businesses today need more than banking. They need a partner that can connect them to opportunities beyond borders.

Through our International Banking proposition, MauBank supports businesses and investors with specialised expertise, global connectivity, and a client-centric approach designed for today's increasingly interconnected economy.

Individuals/High-Net-Worth Clients

Global Business Companies (GBCs)

Authorised Companies

Special Licensees: Investment Dealers, Funds, VCC, PIS, etc

Foreign Incorporated Entities (IBC)

Trust, Foundations, Partnerships Law & Audit Firms

(+230) 405 9400 | 25, Bank Street, Cyber City, Ebene 72201, Republic of Mauritius

www.maubank.mu