

THE 13th ARSO CONTINENTAL ESSAY COMPETITION 2025-2026

Theme: " 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 "

1. BACKGROUND

African Organization for Standardization ARSO is an intergovernmental body, established by the African Union and UNECA in 1977 with the principal mandate to harmonize African Standards and conformity assessment procedures in order to reduce Technical Barriers to Trade and therefore promote intra African and international trade as well as enhance the industrialization of Africa.

A key point to highlight is the negative impact of diverse regulatory policies and standards across Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) resulting in the current low volume of intra-African trade, which stands at only 16% compared to other continents, as. Companies, particularly micro small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), face high costs and complexities when trying to navigate different regulations in each country.

Therefore, harmonizing standards is not just a technical fix; it's a strategic imperative to unlock the immense potential of the AfCFTA. Reducing TBTs could double the increase in intra-African trade, far exceeding the gains from tariff reductions alone.

In this regard, ARSO, being an African organization responsible for ensuring the well-being and safety of the African Community, undertakes all necessary efforts to bring together all stakeholders in the journey to shape sustainable solutions towards consumers' safety and trade promotion.

To promote the standardization culture and ensure youth are engaged and enlightened in all continental initiatives where ARSO plays an important role, ARSO organises Essay competitions on Standardisation on annual basis. This essay competition serves as a

platform for the youth to provide innovative ideas in the area of standardization which may support the industrial development in Africa and consumer safety.

The First Continental Essay Competition was held in 2013-2014, and since 2014 up to now Rwanda has consistently joined other African members' states in raising standardization culture among the educated youth through essay competition. It is against this background that ARSO is organizing and inviting members to participate in the 13th Continental Essay Competition under the theme, ***"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"***.

The Competition is organized at National level and the best five winners will proceed to the continental level for re-evaluation and selection of the final competition winners at continental level.

It is in this framework that Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) is entrusted to organise the competition at the National level.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF RWANDA STANDARDS BOARD (RSB)

In the running of this competition, RSB is responsible for:

- Engaging and sharing out the relevant documents to Colleges/ Universities or any other eligible higher learning institution having candidates with an interest to participate in the competition,
- Conducting awareness focusing on the theme of concern,
- Providing any information needed to facilitate competition contestants,
- Receiving, assessing and marking the essays from the participants at national level, and
- Awarding or giving recognition to the winners as appropriate.

For better and improved organization of the competition at national level, RSB will work closely with all interested higher learning institutions through their offices for students or career guidance in order to engage and direct all interested students to attend this competition.

3. ELIGIBILITY AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Open to all students **below the age of 35 years** living in Rwanda and studying in a University and Higher Learning Institutions recognized by High Education Council in Rwanda.

4. ENTRY RULES AND CONDITIONS

Basic Essay Requirements:

- I. **Length of essays:** Essays should be between 1000 and 1200 words
- II. Century Gothic, size 12
- III. English or French
- IV. **Information on the author:** Authors may use up to 50 words to describe themselves. Information should include their names, course and year of study, name, town and country in which their university is located.
N/B: this will not be part of the 1000 - 1200 words
- V. **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.
- VI. Kindly attach a copy of the Identity Card or Passport and a completely filled Registration Form

5. PLAGIARISM NOTE

Participants shall consider the following notes:

- a. Participants shall sign the **Disclaimer Notice** as they register for the Essay.
- b. For eligibility, the submitted essay shall not have been published anywhere or submitted to any other competition.
- c. Participants are only allowed to **submit one essay**.
- d. AI Generated Essays upon review on the AI Checker will be inadmissible and will be automatically disqualified if the Score is more than 20% as per the AI Plagiarism Checker Software.

6. SUBMISSION TIMEFRAME

- i. Deadline for submission of Essay at national level is **28th February 2026**, essay submitted after the deadline will be excluded from the competition;

Deadline for submitting the five winners by National Standards Bodies (NSBs) to ARSO is not later than **17th April 2024**

7. COPYRIGHT

Dear Contestant, please note that by entering the competition; you have assigned copyright of your essay to the organizers of this event who may publish it in whole or in part on their respective websites, websites of national standards bodies, a wide range of publications for circulation both inside and outside Africa.

8. SELECTION OF WINNERS

Winners will be selected through a fair and impartial selection process by the organizer. The decision of the judges shall be final, on the awarding procedures and process.

8.1 SELECTION OF WINNERS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The roadmap of activities related to the selection of winners at the national level is hereto attached as Annex I.

8.2 SELECTION OF WINNERS IN REGIONS

The selection of winners at regional level will be done according to the UNECA clustering of African states as follows: Central Africa, Eastern Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa. Please refer to www.uneca.org.

8.3. SELECTION OF CONTINENTAL WINNERS

The exercise of selecting winners at Continental level is exclusively entrusted to the African Organization of Standardization (ARSO) secretariat and it is the organ on charge of provision of the awards to the winners.

9. ANNOUNCEMENT & SELECTION OF WINNERS

National winners will be announced through their emails and they will be awarded during the celebration of World Standards Day Celebration on **14 October 2026**.

Continental winners will be announced during the Africa Standards Day Celebration held yearly during the ARSO General Assembly Events in the **32nd ARSO General Assembly Events in Kampala, Uganda — June or July 2026**.

10. PRIZES FOR CONTINENTAL WINNERS

There will be two levels of winners:

1st Position

- USD 1,000
- Economy Class Return Air Ticket and Accommodation to the General Assembly Events in Kampala, Uganda — June or July 2026
- Recognition and Awarding During the General Assembly
- Publishing of the Essay on the ARSO Website

2nd position

- USD 800
- Recognition and Awarding During the General Assembly
- Publishing of the Essay on the ARSO Website, Publishing of the Essay on the ARSO Website

3rd Position

- USD 500
- Recognition and Awarding During the General Assembly
- Publishing of the Essay on the ARSO Website

Annex I: Proposed competition roadmap at NATIONAL LEVEL (RWANDA)

S/NO	Activity to be done	Description	Timeframe	Responsible
1	Publish the competition document on RSB website and X platform	Prepare announcement and flyer to be posted on the website and X platform	31 st December 2025	Standards publication & marketing Officer
2	Consult Universities and Higher Learning Institutions	Explain to the institutions the purpose of the competition and request for their commitment in its organization and collaboration to engaging as many competent students as possible	By 15 th January 2026	Standards publication & marketing Officer in collaboration with other relevant assigned staff .
3	Organize sessions for raising awareness on the theme of the competition	Online sessions will be organized to ensure the relevant students willing to attend competition understand the theme and will be directed on how to write essay	28th January 2026 & 29th January 2026 (Agenda to be established)	-Standards publication & marketing Officer In collaboration with relevant assigned staff with expertise in the theme
4	Fill in registration forms and their submission	-The contestants fill the forms and send them back via arsocompetition@rsb.gov.rw	By 23 rd January 2026	Contestants
5	Write essays	Interested students from universities/higher learning institutions	By 20 th February 2026	-Essay writers

		write essays in accordance with the provided guidance and assisted by the relevant RSB assigned staff		-Standards publication & marketing Officer -Students affairs offices
6	Submission of essays	The essays sent via the provided email: arsocompetition@rsb.gov.rw	By 28th February 2026	Standards publication & marketing Officer
7	Marking of submitted essays and selection of national contestants	The RSB assigned team will mark submitted essays as per the ARSO guidelines and select the five first contestants to be recognized as national winners	By 15 th March 2026	Standards publication & marketing Officer/Assigned team of markers
8	Report of the competition (at national level)	Prepare the report with the list of winners and submit it to the RSB DG Office for approval.	By 30 th March 2026	Standards publication & marketing Officer Director of SPTTA
9	Submit the report to ARSO secretariat	The approved report will be submitted to ARSO highlighting the list of 5 contestants selected to represent Rwanda at Regional level.	By 17 th April 2026	Standards publication & marketing Officer Director of SPTTA NSD Manager
10	Award the students who participated in the competition	Prepare certificate and provide awards for the winners	By 14 th October 2026	RSB management

PROPOSED ORGANIZING TEAM:

- KANYANGE Marlene
- UWIMANA Clement
- Dr NDAYAMBAJE Jean Damascene
- NSENGIYUMVA Francois
- MUKABAYIZERE Denyse Joy
- NDABAVUNNYE Aloysie
- HAKIZIMANA Emmanuel