

ABIDJAN BORDER FORUM 2026

"People at the Borders: Culture, Integration, and Security"

Co-organized by the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire through the National Border Commission of Côte d'Ivoire (CNFCI)
and the African Union Commission

Abidjan, October 20-22, 2026, Abidjan Exhibition Centre

HACKATHON FOR THE BEST BORDER AFFAIRS JOURNALIST

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND RULES OF PROCEDURE

I-Background and Rationale

As part of efforts to improve border governance, the Ivorian Government, through the Secretariat of the National Border Commission of Côte d'Ivoire (CNFCI), organized the first edition of the international border forum known as the “Abidjan Border Forum”.

This forum serves as a platform for dialogue among national and international experts, civil society representatives, practitioners, and academics to propose innovative ideas, inventions, or initiatives that could contribute to strengthening security, improving quality of life, and fostering harmonious development in border areas.

At the conclusion of this edition's proceedings, participants from various countries and organizations—primarily the African Union, through its program known as the African Union Border Program (AUBP)—as well as representatives of regional and subregional institutions, notably ECOWAS, UEMOA, and the Council of the Entente—supported by technical and financial partners—unanimously decided to make “Abidjan the capital of Africa's borders, with the conference to be held every two (2) years in Côte d'Ivoire.”

To give concrete expression to this shared commitment, the African Union Commission decided, during the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held on February 18 and 19, 2023, in Addis Ababa, to co-organize the second edition of the Forum with Côte d'Ivoire.

Co-organized by the CNFCI and the African Union from October 23 to 25, 2024, at the Abidjan Exhibition Center, under the theme: **“Green Borders: Between Shared Natural Resources and Security Challenges,”** this edition brought together 6,000 participants, including delegations from all African countries, developers, academics, practitioners, and students. It featured panels, conferences, B2B meetings, and networking opportunities.

It provided an opportunity to focus discussions on borders, global environmental realities, climate change and imbalances, and the management of shared natural resources in relation to human security, territorial security, and collective security.

At the conclusion of the conference, participants formulated recommendations and resolved to institutionalize the Forum as a biennial event to be held in Côte d'Ivoire.

As part of the joint organization (CNFCI–AU) of this third edition, scheduled for October 20–22, 2026, at the Abidjan Exhibition Center under the theme **“People at the Borders: Culture, Integration, and Security,”** three hackathons are planned to recognize stakeholders who have developed innovative solutions, resolved problems, and promoted social cohesion, communication, and development for the benefit of Africa's border populations. The three categories are: (1) the Hackathon for the best cross-border project implemented, (2) the Hackathon for the best border affairs journalist, and (3) the Hackathon for the best school project on border-related themes.

Schools and educational institutions play a vital role in promoting a culture of peace and integration across borders. This hackathon therefore aims to encourage citizen-led educational projects focused on border issues.

These terms of reference outline the procedures for implementing this competition.

II-General Objective

To promote journalistic work that enhances the visibility of Africa's border regions.

III-Specific Objectives

To encourage media coverage of border-related issues, recognize excellence in journalism on border affairs, and foster networks of Border Affairs Journalists.

IV-Target Audience

Journalists working in print, radio, television, and online media, including community correspondents.

V-Evaluation Criteria

- Journalistic rigor 30%
- Media impact: 25%
- Relevance of the topic: 20%
- Originality 15%
- Innovation in storytelling and presentation: 10%

VI-Expected Outcomes

One overall winner, a compilation of the best entries, and promotion of quality reporting on border issues.

VII-Rules and Procedure (see Appendix)

- Entries must have been broadcast between January 2023 and June 2026.
- Each applicant may submit only one production.
- Accepted formats: all formats
- Entries must be submitted by the deadline set by the committee.
- The jury's decisions are final and cannot be appealed.
- Winners will receive a trophy, a certificate, and support for a regional exchange program.

RULES AND PROCEDURE HACKATHON ABF 2026

Article 1: Organization

The purpose of these rules is to define the terms of participation and the conditions for conducting the Abidjan Borders Forum 2026 (ABF2026) Hackathon, organized as part of the third edition of the International Forum on Borders, scheduled for October 20–22, 2026, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

The event is organized by the National Border Commission of Côte d'Ivoire (CNFCI) and the African Union (AU) Commission, through the African Union Border Program (PFUA), in collaboration with several institutional, technical, and academic partners working to promote governance, security, and development in border areas.

Participation in the Hackathon implies full and unconditional acceptance of these rules and regulations as well as the decisions of the Organizing Committee.

Article 2 Participating Categories

These categories are open:

1. **Best Cross-Border Project:** a project already implemented in a border area and having a tangible impact.
2. **Best Border Journalist:** a journalistic piece (article, report, documentary, digital media) on border-related topics.
3. **Best School Project:** An educational initiative (elementary school, high school, university, graduate school, or training institute) promoting a culture of peace, integration, and cross-border citizenship.

Article 3: Objectives

The Hackathon aims to

- Highlight concrete border and/or cross-border projects that have had an impact on the populations of border areas;
- Encourage journalistic and educational content on border realities;
- Stimulate citizen-led innovation and regional integration through new solutions tailored to cultural, security, and development challenges at the borders.

Article 4: Jury

An independent jury, composed of experts in border governance, media, education, and social innovation, will be established to preselect applications and evaluate presentations of the selected projects. It will consist of five (5) members, including a Chair, a Secretary, and three (3) members

- The hackathon Subcommittee oversees the jury's work.
- The jury's decisions are final and binding.

Article 5: Application Requirements

1. Eligibility and Compliance

Any journalist who has produced and published or broadcast a major editorial piece (feature, investigation, report, interview, documentary, or magazine segment) on African border issues may participate in the Best Border Affairs Journalists category.

Each candidate or organization may submit only one project per category.

2. Application Package

The application package must include:

- An official entry form
- A link to or a copy of the work

All documents must be combined into a single PDF file

Accepted file formats for attachments are PDF, MP4, MP3, JPG

The files must be compiled into a single compressed folder (zipped) with a maximum size of 75 MB

Article 6: Procedure

6.1. Phase 1 (Online)

6.1.1 Official Launch, Registration and Participation Guidelines, Information Session

- The Abidjan 2026 Forum des Frontières Hackathon will be officially launched online on **July 8, 2026**. This phase will mark the start of official communications regarding the three competition categories, eligibility criteria, and the detailed schedule.

- The registration and application submission period will run from **July 10 through August 31, 2026**, inclusive. Registrations will be accepted exclusively online via the Forum's official platform (www.abf-africa.com) or by email at the dedicated address provided by the organizing committee.
- Information Session: A webinar or a series of information and orientation sessions for applicants will be held starting **July 15, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (GMT)**. The purpose of these sessions is to outline the competition's requirements, explain the evaluation criteria, and answer questions from potential participants.

6.1.2 Evaluation of Applications

Submitted applications will be evaluated by the Hackathon selection committee starting **September 1, 2026**, based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to the general theme "People at the Borders: Culture, Integration, and Security";
- Concrete impact on the lives of border communities;
- Innovation and originality;
- Feasibility, sustainability, and quality of the presentation or project;
- Clarity, thoroughness, and consistency in the presentation of the proposal.

6.1.3 Verification and validity

The Jury reserves the right to:

- Verify the identity and accuracy of the information provided;
- Reject or cancel any entry that does not comply with the terms and conditions of these rules;
- Exclude any project containing false or plagiarized information, or information that infringes on the rights of third parties;
- Cancel or postpone the event in the event of force majeure, an insufficient number of entries, or for reasons of national security.
- The results of the preliminary selection will be announced on **September 15, 2026**.

6.2 Phase 2 (in-person in Abidjan)

The three shortlisted finalists in each category will be invited to present their project during the ABF 2026 Forum from October 20 to 22, 2026, during a pitch or a dedicated session.

The awards will be presented during the forum's closing ceremony.

The name of the winner of each hackathon will be announced during the forum

Article 7: Awards

For each category, only one winner will be selected.

Each of the three (03) winners will receive

- An official AEF 2026 trophy,
- A joint CNFCI-UA certificate,
- A prize (financial or logistical) to be determined by the organizing committee,
- Networking opportunities with institutional, technical, and financial partners and stakeholders.

Ultimately, we will have the creator of an award-winning production, the publication of a collection of case studies, and regional promotion of the winning project.

Article 8: Rights and Obligations of Participants

- Participants agree to comply with these rules, the spirit of the competition, and the principles of equality, integrity, and collaboration.
- They guarantee that their project complies with intellectual property rights and does not infringe upon any third-party rights.
- They authorize the organizers to use their name, image, project, and related materials for communication and promotional purposes.
- Any violation, plagiarism, fraud, or unethical behavior may result in disqualification.

Article 9: Intellectual Property and Personal Data

- Participants agree to comply with these rules, the spirit of the competition, and the principles of equality, integrity, and collaboration.
- They guarantee that their project complies with intellectual property rights and does not infringe upon any third-party rights.
- They authorize the organizers to use their name, image, project, and related materials for communication and promotional purposes.
- Any violation, plagiarism, fraud, or unethical behavior may result in disqualification.

Cabinet du Premier Ministre

Article 10: Modification and Cancellation

- The organizing committee reserves the right to amend, postpone, or cancel the event or certain terms and conditions in the event of force majeure or for organizational reasons.
- Any amendments to these rules will be published before the official start of the hackathon.

Article 11: Governing Law and Dispute Resolution

- These rules are governed by the laws of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.
- Any dispute arising from the interpretation or application of these rules shall fall within the jurisdiction of the courts of Abidjan-Plateau.