



African Union Commission

Political Affairs Peace and Security

OUTCOME STATEMENT

STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION ON ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ASSET RECOVERY PRACTITIONERS' FORUM FOR AFRICA

The African Union Commission -Political Affairs Peace and Security (AUC-PAPS), and the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption (AUABC) and in collaboration with the GIZ Global Program on Illicit Financial Flows (GP IFF program), convened Members States of African Union namely Heads of Anti-Corruption Authorities, Asset Recovery Agencies, Head of Prosecution Authorities, Asset Recovery Interagency Networks, regional and continental associations of anti-corruption authorities.

The meeting which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 28-30 May 2024 was a follow up to the Dakar 2022 meeting of asset recovery experts and prosecutors which recommended the establishment of a Forum that will bring together experts on asset recovery to facilitate the effective implementation of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) and contribute to the combatting of illicit financial flows in Africa.

The key objective of the meeting was to discuss the proposed framework (charter) that has been developed to guide the operations and general governance of the Forum.

The workshop facilitated the sensitization of stakeholders on the content of the Common African Position on Aset Recovery (CAPAR) and the role of the proposed Forum in its implementation to ensure stolen African assets which includes artefacts in a manner that respects the sovereignty of each African Union Member State. Further the meeting reviewed the proposed framework for the establishment of the African Asset Recovery Practitioners Forum including its mission, objectives, structure, governance, and sustainability.

Key Observations and Recommendations from Key Note Statement delivered by Prof. Bolaji Owasanoye, SAN, OFR, NPOM

Observations

1. The adoption of CAPAR as a policy instrument to guide the recovery, repatriation and management of recovered asset is crucial to the African Union and its Member States as it provides clear measures that will enhance the recovery of assets and contribute to the combatting of illicit financial flows in Africa.
2. The establishment of the Forum of asset recovery practitioners is very critical as capacity building and knowledge sharing which should be one of its objectives will facilitate the equipping of Member States with skills needed to implement CAPAR recommendations effectively.
3. To deal with key challenges to asset recovery, there is need to invest in enhancing legal framework, local and international cooperation, institutional capacity, capacity building and technical assistance, as well as functional justice system and judiciary, civic education and awareness and enhancing implementation of anti-corruption treaties such as the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combatting Corruption as well as United Nation Convention Against Corruption
4. A practical challenge in asset recovery is access to information. This underscores the need for collaboration, transparency and information sharing mechanisms amongst relevant stakeholders.
5. The imperative need for experienced professionals as the complexities of asset recovery amplify, necessitating seasoned practitioners equipped to navigate intricate legal, financial, and diplomatic landscapes to ensure successful outcomes.

Key Recommendations from Key Note Statement

6. AUABC should strategically leverage, engage and disseminate its position on asset recovery through established global platforms such as UNCAC- Conference of State Parties (COSP), Transparency International- International Anti-Corruption Conference (TI-IACC) , and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) enhancing advocacy efforts and garnering support.
7. The need to promote the establishment and utilization of escrow accounts as a tool in asset tracing and recovering in collaboration with African Development Banks, ensuring disputed funds can be secured and optimized for value addition.
8. AUABC together with AUC-PAPS should commence preparation for the next COSP, through aligning strategies meant to enhance progress especially on asset recovery initiatives hence promoting AU's positions effectively.

9. There should be institutional capacity building to enhance the tracing, negotiations and understanding approaches to asset recovery.
10. AUABC should register as observers at COSP and other pertinent platforms to actively contribute to discussions and advocate for inclusive asset recovery strategies.
11. To drive CAPAR advocacy and implementation at national level, resource mobilization and capacity building initiatives are needed for strengthening AUABC drive.
12. AUABC should strategically plan and execute activities during African Anti-Corruption Day to raise awareness about CAPAR and underscore its significance in combating corruption.

General Recommendations and Key Take Aways

13. Recommended and upheld the need to have an all-inclusive Forum and unanimously agreed that members of the Forum should be institutions that have a mandate on asset recovery.
14. The participants embraced the establishment of the Asset Recovery Practitioners Forum through the validation of the African Asset Recovery Practitioners Forum Charter subject to the various suggestions and amendments made and Member States are therefore encouraged to join the forum.
15. The need for Member States and development partners to commit to mobilizing resources to ensure the sustainability of the Forum, recognizing its continued importance.
16. An Interim Executive Council which included representatives from Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Zambia, South Africa, Uganda, AAACA and ARENEA were elected by the participants to facilitate the adoption and launch of the Forum in a spirit of unity and common purpose for its success and effectiveness.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

30th May 2024