AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN ASSET RECOVERY PRACTITIONERS' FORUM

Advancing CAPAR Implementation through Transparency, Accountability and Community Participation

Abuja, Nigeria | 17–20 November 2026

We, the undersigned members of the Non-State Actors (NSA) Forum AUCPCC and civil society organisations and networks, submit this statement to the General Assembly of the African Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum.

Communities should be able to see what happened to recovered assets, how they were managed and used, and whether promised benefits reached their intended beneficiaries. This statement sets out civil society recommendations to make transparency, accountability and demonstrable public benefit central to Africa's asset recovery agenda.

This statement is an outcome of the Civil Society Strategy Meeting held in Abuja in hybrid format on 16 November 2026 and an online consultation. It brings together civil society experiences and recommendations on CAPAR implementation for consideration by the General Assembly of the African Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum.

Corruption and illicit financial flows undermine development, divert resources from essential services and deepen inequality. Recovery must therefore lead to transparent management and accountable use of assets for the benefit of affected communities.

We welcome cooperation among asset recovery practitioners, the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption (AUABC), national institutions and civil society. We recognise the contributions of investigators, prosecutors, courts, asset management institutions, journalists and community organisations to recovering assets lost through corruption.

We call upon the General Assembly to place the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) at the centre of its cooperation agenda. The AARP Forum should work with the AUABC and the Non-State Actors Forum to give practical effect to Articles 12, 16 and 22 of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) and to CAPAR's four pillars through practical commitments, inclusive participation and measurable results.

1. Make CAPAR implementation a clear institutional priority

We urge the AARP Forum, the AUABC and participating national institutions to translate CAPAR into operational priorities with clear responsibilities, realistic timelines, baseline indicators and measurable targets.

National implementation should connect asset tracing, recovery, management, return and utilisation within a coherent accountability framework.

We encourage opportunities for independent civil society contributions to the CAPAR reporting tool introduced at this General Assembly. Separately, we support wider dissemination and use of the civil society CAPAR Assessment Tool developed by CiFAR to support independent assessment, monitoring and advocacy. Both should inform dialogue on implementation while preserving the independence of civil society findings.

2. Establish structured engagement between the AUABC, AARP Forum members and civil society

We call for a transparent framework for civil society participation in the AARP Forum, consistent with its Charter. Institutional options, including a civil society advisory mechanism or representation in relevant governance structures, should be considered through the Forum's applicable procedures.

- We request that the General Assembly mandate the AARP Secretariat, in consultation with the AUABC, the Non-State Actors (NSA) Forum and other interested civil society organisations, to prepare and circulate a draft civil society participation procedure within 90 days of the close of this General Assembly, for consideration by the General Assembly and consistent with the Forum's Charter. This commitment should be reflected in the Assembly's communiqué.
- The procedure should provide for regular invitations, published participation criteria, independent observer applications, advance access to relevant documents and timely civil society interventions before decisions are taken. It should address written submissions, participation in open sessions and relevant working groups, consultation arrangements, and documented responses and follow-up on recommendations concerning the return and use of recovered assets. It should recognise contributions to evidence, legal reform and monitoring asset management and use. Member institutions would retain decision-making authority.
- The procedure should draw on practical experience from initiatives such as MANTRA, particularly access to information, independent monitoring, community feedback and institutional responses to findings.

The NSA Forum should facilitate collective engagement while preserving organisations' independence and opportunities to submit evidence and recommendations directly to the AARP Secretariat and the AUABC. Regular consultations should produce documented recommendations, clear responsibilities and follow-up arrangements, while allowing constructive scrutiny and differing assessments.

3. Strengthen state reporting on AUCPCC

We ask States Parties to include asset recovery in their annual reports to the AUABC and provide a channel for independent civil society evidence. Reporting should distinguish assets frozen, confiscated and actually returned, identify the institution holding or managing them, and provide evidence of community benefit.

Reporting should address the full asset recovery process, including management, return and utilisation. States Parties should publish sufficient information for affected communities to verify what was returned, how it was used and who benefited. Reports, findings and follow-up recommendations should be publicly accessible, subject to legitimate and narrowly defined confidentiality safeguards.

4. Ensure transparency throughout recovered asset management

We call on national authorities to maintain reliable records of seized, confiscated and returned assets, clearly distinguishing their legal status.

Authorities should publish timely information on asset values, custodial arrangements, management costs, disposal procedures, return agreements and final utilisation. Disclosure should protect legitimate investigations, personal data and due process while enabling meaningful public oversight.

Independent audits, transparent procurement, conflict-of-interest safeguards and accessible complaints mechanisms should help prevent recovered assets from being mismanaged, diverted or lost through corruption again.

5. Place affected communities and public benefit at the centre

Decisions about the use of recovered assets should be informed by meaningful consultation with affected communities and grounded in transparent criteria.

Community participation should extend to identifying priorities, monitoring implementation and assessing results, with meaningful inclusion of women, young people, persons with disabilities and other historically marginalised groups.

Legislative and institutional reforms needed to implement CAPAR should, at a minimum, establish a broad and clear legal definition of victims (encompassing both individuals and harmed communities), guarantee

their right to timely access to information throughout proceedings, and provide clear legal standing to pursue restitution and compensation claims.

Member States should develop legal frameworks for the social reuse of confiscated and returned assets. These should establish transparent governance, clear procedures and objective eligibility criteria for beneficiaries and projects, with traceable expenditure and demonstrable public benefit.

Finally, authorities should demonstrate how recovered resources contribute to public benefit through accessible expenditure reports and independently verifiable results. Claims of community benefit must be supported by evidence.

6. Strengthen international cooperation and accountable asset return

We call on countries holding assets linked to corruption to cooperate promptly and effectively with countries seeking their recovery and return, consistent with applicable legal obligations and due process.

Cooperation should address avoidable delays, information gaps and capacity constraints. Return arrangements should be transparent and developed with meaningful opportunities for civil society and affected communities to contribute.

Safeguards should support accountable utilisation, respect national ownership and prevent renewed diversion. Cooperation should also enable the exchange of expertise and evidence needed to resolve complex cross-border cases.

7. Build an inclusive and accountable Non-State Actors Forum

We support the development of the Non-State Actors Forum–AUABC as a consultative platform connecting national experience with continental policy.

The Forum should map relevant organisations, facilitate national and regional focal points, and establish thematic working groups where useful. Participation should reflect Africa's regional and linguistic diversity and include grassroots organisations, independent experts and communities affected by corruption.

Its coordination arrangements should be transparent and accountable to participating organisations. An agreed consultative process should guide the transition towards a representative longer-term structure, with clear membership criteria, responsibilities and decision-making procedures.

8. Support independent monitoring and protect civic space

Civil society organisations, journalists, whistleblowers and community monitors must be able to contribute to asset recovery accountability without intimidation, retaliation, restrictive laws or arbitrary funding barriers.

Member States should establish effective whistleblowing mechanisms and safeguards against retaliation. The AUABC, peer governments and development partners should support a safe and enabling environment for independent civil society oversight.

ANEEJ's Monitoring of Recovered Assets in Nigeria through Transparency and Accountability (MANTRA) initiative provides a successful example of civil society participation in monitoring the use of returned assets. Its combination of civil society coordination, community-level monitoring and engagement with public institutions offers practical lessons on verifying delivery, identifying implementation concerns and strengthening accountability to intended beneficiaries. We encourage the AARP Forum and the AUABC to facilitate peer learning and adaptation of these methods to national contexts while preserving independent oversight.

Source: ANEEJ, MANTRA Project Final Report, August 2023. Read the MANTRA Final Report

We call for practical access to information, appropriate protection mechanisms and opportunities for independent monitoring throughout asset management and utilisation.

The NSA Forum could support common reporting tools, coordinate voluntary country contributions and consolidate regional findings. These arrangements should complement independent submissions by individual organisations.

Exchanges on monitoring methods, legal analysis and lessons from asset returns should include collaboration with independent media, including Africa in Fact, to strengthen accessible public reporting while respecting editorial independence.

9. Develop a joint CAPAR and civil society engagement roadmap for 2027

We propose that the AUABC, the AARP Forum and the NSA Forum jointly develop a 2027 engagement roadmap through consultation with African civil society organisations.

The roadmap should cover country engagements, CAPAR monitoring, research, capacity development, community participation and advocacy. It should specify measurable outcomes, baseline information where available, indicators, responsible institutions, delivery dates and resource requirements. Monitoring should assess implementation and community benefit using independent civil society evidence and feedback from affected communities.

We propose that the AARP Secretariat and the AUABC establish a technical consultation process with Non-State Actors AUCPCC to contribute to the development, testing and periodic review of the CAPAR Assessment Tool and Reporting Template. Participation should include reviewing indicators, proposing measures of transparency and community benefit, piloting the tools with national civil society partners, and submitting independent evidence alongside institutional reports. The process should distinguish CiFAR's civil society CAPAR Assessment Tool from the Forum's reporting instrument, while enabling complementary use. The 2027 roadmap should identify focal persons, consultation dates and a mechanism for recording how civil society recommendations are addressed, while preserving independent assessments.

The roadmap should include a practitioner–civil society learning exchange on MANTRA and other asset-monitoring initiatives to identify approaches for adaptation and testing. Early sharing of the AUABC's programme and advance notice of country engagements should enable meaningful input and sustained national follow-up.

10. Provide resources and track implementation

Effective participation requires timely access to documents, interpretation, online participation and reasonable support for organisations with limited resources.

We invite the AUABC to designate a civil society engagement focal person and help convene an initial joint working meeting with the AARP Secretariat, the NSA Forum and other interested civil society organisations within 60 days of the close of this General Assembly. Joint resource mobilisation should protect civil society independence.

We propose that, within 30 days after each General Assembly, the AARP Secretariat circulate civil society recommendations, institutional responses, responsible institutions and follow-up dates. A shared action tracker should record responsibilities, deadlines and progress. Periodic public updates and an annual CAPAR dialogue should review implementation, independent community evidence and public benefit, with progress considered at the next General Assembly.

11. Convene an African Annual Conference on Asset Recovery

We call on the AARP Forum, in collaboration with the AUABC, Member States and the NSA Forum, to establish an African Annual Conference on Asset Recovery. The conference should bring together

practitioners, civil society, affected communities, researchers, technology experts and international partners to review CAPAR implementation, share lessons and agree practical actions on asset recovery, management, return and use.

The conference should provide structured opportunities for independent civil society evidence and community perspectives, demonstrate promising approaches and review progress against agreed commitments. Its outcomes should identify responsible institutions, timelines and follow-up measures, and inform the AARP Forum's work programme and subsequent General Assemblies.

12. Integrate responsible use of technology in asset recovery

We call for the responsible integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and, where appropriate, blockchain into asset recovery systems. Potential applications should be assessed and tested: AI could support analysis of complex financial information and identification of leads for further investigation; blockchain could support tamper-evident records of asset management and disposal where it offers demonstrable value. Neither technology replaces reliable source data, legal authority or independent verification.

The AARP Forum and the AUABC should facilitate cooperation on practical guidance, capacity development and evaluated pilot projects. These should address data quality, interoperability, cybersecurity, privacy, lawful access to information, transparent procurement and cost-effectiveness. AI-assisted findings should remain subject to human review, due process and opportunities to challenge errors; sensitive personal information should not be placed on publicly accessible immutable records.

Civil society and affected communities should help shape and independently assess these initiatives. Technology should strengthen accessible public reporting and community oversight without excluding people who lack digital access. Lessons from pilots should be shared through the proposed annual conference and incorporated into the 2027 roadmap.

Immediate requests to the General Assembly

We respectfully request that the General Assembly:

1. Receive this statement and reflect its principal recommendations in the Assembly's outcomes and communiqué.
2. Affirm CAPAR implementation, transparent asset management and demonstrable community benefit as priorities for cooperation.
3. Request the AARP Secretariat, in consultation with the AUABC, the NSA Forum and interested civil society organisations, to prepare and circulate a draft participation procedure within 90 days of the close of this General Assembly, consistent with the Forum's Charter, covering regular invitations, independent observer applications, timely interventions, written submissions, follow-up and options for advisory or representation arrangements.
4. Invite the AUABC to designate a focal person and help convene an initial joint working meeting within 60 days to agree coordination arrangements and begin the 2027 roadmap.
5. Support a 2027 roadmap with measurable outcomes, clear institutional responsibilities, monitoring of implementation and community benefit, periodic public updates and review at the next General Assembly.
6. Support direct submission of independent civil society evidence to the AARP Secretariat alongside collective engagement facilitated by the NSA Forum.
7. Support the establishment of an African Annual Conference on Asset Recovery, with meaningful civil society and community participation, to review CAPAR implementation, exchange experience and track agreed actions.
8. Support responsible integration of AI and, where appropriate, blockchain through practical guidance, capacity development and evaluated pilots, with safeguards for privacy, due process, human oversight and independent scrutiny.

9. Support asset recovery reporting in annual reports to the AUABC, a channel for independent civil society evidence, and disclosure enabling communities to verify returns, use and beneficiaries.
10. Establish a technical consultation process for Non-State Actors AUCPCC to contribute to the development, testing and review of the CAPAR Assessment Tool and Reporting Template, with clear focal persons, consultation dates and responses to civil society recommendations.

Proposed wording for the Abuja communiqué

We call on the African Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum to work with the AU Advisory Board Against Corruption and the Non-State Actors Forum to give practical effect to Articles 12, 16 and 22 of the Convention and to CAPAR's four pillars. We ask States Parties to include asset recovery in their annual reports to the Board, provide a channel for independent civil society evidence, and publish sufficient information for affected communities to verify what was returned, how it was used and who benefited.

"The General Assembly requests the AARP Forum Secretariat, in consultation with the AUABC and the NSA Forum, to prepare within 90 days a draft procedure consistent with the adopted Charter for consideration by the General Assembly. The draft should provide for regular invitations, independent observer applications, timely civil society interventions and follow-up on recommendations concerning the return and use of funds."

Our commitment

We commit to contributing credible evidence, sharing expertise, facilitating community participation and monitoring agreed actions. We will uphold independence, transparency and accountability in our own coordination and advocacy.

We stand ready to work constructively with public institutions and international partners to ensure that recovered assets deliver justice, restore public trust and contribute to Africa's development.

Recovered assets are public resources. Their recovery must lead to accountable management and demonstrable public benefit.

Signatories

Members of the Non-State Actors (NSA) Forum AUCPCC

Donald Omondi Deya — Chief Executive Officer, Pan African Lawyers Union / Chairman, NSA Forum AUCPCC

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Statement signatories

AHDIS – Action Humaine pour le Développement Intégré au Sénégal, Senegal

ASEPA – Alliance for Social Equity and Public Accountability

CAPAR Civil Society Network

CiFAR – Civil Forum for Asset Recovery

CISLAC – Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre, Nigeria

Transparency International Kenya

HEDA Resource Centre

Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP)

Centre for Fiscal Transparency and Public Integrity

African Centre for Governance, Asset Recovery and Sustainable Development

CLEEN Foundation

Grassroots Center for Rights & Civic Orientation (GRACO)

Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy and Development (FENRAD)

21st Century Community Empowerment for Youth and Women Initiative