Africa Civil Society Statement presented by Non State Actors AUCPCC at the African Asset Recovery Practitioners' (AARP) Forum General Assembly held on the 19th November, 2026 in Abuja, Nigeria.

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Chairperson, distinguished delegates, representatives of the AUABC, fellow practitioners and civil society colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Africa Civil Society Statement, developed through the Civil Society Strategy Meeting held in Abuja on 16 November 2026 and an online consultation.

Our central message is simple: communities should be able to see what happened to recovered assets, how they were used and whether the promised benefits reached their intended beneficiaries.

We recognise the work of investigators, prosecutors, courts and asset recovery institutions. We call on the African Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum to work with the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption (AUABC) and the Non-State Actors (NSA) 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, clear responsibilities and measurable results.

Our statement advances five connected priorities.

First, institutionalise meaningful civil society participation. We request that the General Assembly mandate the AARP Secretariat, in consultation with the AUABC, the NSA Forum and interested civil society organisations, to prepare and circulate a proposed 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.

The procedure should provide for regular invitations, published participation criteria, independent observer applications, advance access to relevant documents and opportunities for timely civil society interventions before decisions are taken. It should also address written submissions, participation in open sessions and relevant working groups, consideration of advisory or representation arrangements, and documented follow-up on recommendations concerning the return and use of recovered assets. Member institutions would retain decision-making authority. The NSA Forum should facilitate collective engagement while preserving organisations' independence and their ability to submit evidence directly to the AARP Secretariat and the AUABC.

Second, make transparency and community benefit central to asset management. Authorities should publish timely information on recovered assets, management costs, disposal, return agreements and final utilisation, with appropriate confidentiality safeguards.

Affected communities must have opportunities to shape priorities, monitor delivery and assess results. We ask States Parties to include asset recovery in their annual reports to the AUABC, 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. Reporting should distinguish assets frozen, confiscated and actually returned, identify the institution holding or managing them, and provide evidence of community benefit. We also call for effective international cooperation for accountable asset return.

Third, strengthen independent monitoring and protect civic space. Civil society organisations, journalists, whistleblowers and community monitors must be able to work without intimidation or retaliation.

ANEEJ's MANTRA initiative provides a practical example of civil society participation in monitoring returned assets. Its experience in community monitoring, verification and engagement with public institutions offers lessons that can be adapted across countries. We also support wider use of CiFAR's civil society CAPAR Assessment Tool, alongside opportunities to contribute to the Forum's reporting processes.

Fourth, establish a clear follow-up mechanism. We invite the AUABC to designate a civil society engagement focal person and help convene an initial joint working meeting within 60 days.

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.

That meeting should begin a joint 2027 roadmap, with measurable outcomes, institutional responsibilities, deadlines and resources. We propose that, within 30 days of each General Assembly, the AARP Secretariat circulate civil society recommendations, institutional responses, responsible institutions and follow-up dates. A shared action tracker, public progress updates and an annual CAPAR dialogue should enable review of implementation and independent community evidence, with progress considered at the next General Assembly.

Fifth, promote sustained learning and responsible innovation. We propose an African Annual Conference on Asset Recovery, bringing together practitioners, civil society, affected communities and partners to exchange experience and review commitments.

We also call for responsible integration of artificial intelligence and, where appropriate, blockchain, through evaluated pilots and capacity development. These initiatives must protect privacy, preserve due process and human oversight, and strengthen public accountability.

Chairperson, we respectfully request that this statement be received and that the Assembly's outcomes and communiqué record these commitments: a proposed civil society participation procedure within 90 days, strengthened asset recovery reporting to the AUABC, a channel for independent civil society evidence, and public information on the use of recovered assets and community benefit.

As civil society, we commit to contributing credible evidence, sharing expertise, supporting community participation and monitoring agreed actions.

Recovered assets must deliver justice, restore public trust and produce demonstrable public benefit.

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."

Thank you.