

SIDE EVENT TO 39th AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT

THEME

From Leakage to Leverage: Africa's Fight Against Illicit Financial Flows

📅 February 13, 2026, 9:00am – 12:00pm 📍 Sheraton Hotel, Addis Ababa



BACKGROUND

It has been ten years since the publication of the widely accepted report by the African Union High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows (AU HLP – IFFs). The report not only brought to light the depth and breadth of illicit financial flows from Africa, but it also provided figures on the scourge. According to the report published in 2015, Africa loses an estimated USD 50 billion per year to illicit financial flows, which is double the total amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) being poured into the continent. The estimated losses stood at USD 89 billion in 2020 (UNCTAD, 2020)¹. While 65% of the total amount is lost through commercial channels, the remaining 35% is attributed to criminal activities and corruption.

Recognizing the importance of the issue, the African Union endorsed the report and issued a declaration in support of the Panel's efforts. With the high-level political commitment of the continental body, the AU HLP – IFFs continues to advocate for the creation of an effective national, continental and global system to combat IFFs. Its efforts mainly focus on enabling countries and regions to implement the recommendations in its report. Some of the recommendations include creating the right institutions and laws, establishing compliance processes, ensuring inter-agency cooperation, building continental partnerships, introducing financial reporting standards, creating shareable databases on corporate registration and enhancing the capacity of public officers dealing with customs and taxation.

A lot has changed in the last ten years. While many African countries established institutions tackling IFFs, such as Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), Transfer Pricing Units (TPUs), Corporate Registration Offices, Beneficial Ownership Databases and national-level transparency initiatives, there are still significant gaps in achieving effective inter-agency cooperation, law enforcement, fiscal transparency, due diligence of extractive contracts and asset recovery regimes. Therefore, Africa should attend these critical gaps, if it is to contain IFF and realize its domestic resources creation and mobilization endeavors.

Reflecting on past decade of experience, the Secretariat of the AU HLP-IFF published two important reports in 2025. The report *Successes and Challenges of Implementing the Recommendations of the African Union High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows* highlights the progress made and persistent impediments in implementing the recommendations of the AU HLP-IFFs. This report discusses the economic and political shifts that have occurred in the world, the difficulties in measuring IFFs at the national level, and the state of national policy actions. Based on the experiences of 16 African countries, the report identifies that Africa lacks platforms for coherent and coordinated action.

¹ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldcafrica2020_en.pdf

The other report *Five Years of Common African Position on Asset Recovery* specifically examines the issue of asset recovery since the introduction of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) by the African Union. The unanimous adoption of CAPAR by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in 2020 indicated continued support from African leaders for the anti-corruption and anti-IFFs agenda. The report compares the status of existing African and global asset recovery instruments, analyzes national level efforts to create an effective asset recovery regime and discusses the challenges of recovering illicitly lost assets, including litigating against multinational corporations.

Therefore, this side event to the 39th African Union Summit will highlight the key findings of the two reports and help consolidate collective action against IFFs.

OBJECTIVES

The broader objective of the side event will be to bring to light the main findings of the reports on IFFs and asset recovery. In doing so, CoDA/AU HLP – IFFs Secretariat aims to further consolidate Africa’s effort of creating a coherent and coordinated response to IFF from Africa.

Specifically, the event will help:

- To showcase the progress and systemic impediments of implementing the recommendations of the AU HLP – IFFs.
- To highlight the comparative standing of CAPAR as an asset recovery instrument in Africa and its utilization in Africa’s asset recovery endeavors.
- To consolidate policy, advocacy and legal actions against IFFs, including through creating responsive asset recovery regimes.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following are the main expected outcomes of the launching events:

- Policymakers and civil society sensitized on the successes and challenges of Africa’s fight against IFFs.
- Successful national level endeavors of fighting IFFs and creating responsive asset recovery regimes highlighted.
- Coordination amongst key African stakeholders in the fight against IFFs strengthened.
- Partnership with global stakeholders and platforms fostered through evidence-driven strategies.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants of the side event will include high-level international and national policymakers, civil society representatives, community leaders, professionals and media personnel who will be coming to Addis Ababa to attend the 39th Africa Union Summit. Approximately 15 to 20 participants will attend in person, while others interested will participate virtually.

FORMAT

The side event will be structured in the form of a panel discussion. A keynote address will be delivered by a high-level individual (i.e. former head of state or government), while a panel of eminent people will be discussing key findings of the two reports.

INTRODUCTIONS



Ms. Souad Aden-Osman
Executive Director of CoDA/AU
HLP – IFFs Secretariat

KEYNOTE ADDRESS



H.E. Dr. Abdalla Hamdok
Former Prime Minister of Sudan

PANELISTS



Prof. Florens Luoga
Retired Governor of Central Bank
of Tanzania



Amb. Dr. Adeyemi Dipeolu
Former Special Economic Advisor
to the President of Federal
Republic of Nigeria



Mr. Mikatekiso Kubayi
Researcher, Institute for Global Dialogue
(IGD) and Fellow, Institute of Pan-African
Thought and Conversation (IPATC)

Q and A

PLACE AND VENUE

The side event will be held in the Board Room of Sheraton Hotel, Addis Ababa, 9:00am – 12:00pm, on February 13, 2026.



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