OPENING REMARKS ADDRESS BY MR. ISSAKA GARBA ABDOU, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, PEACE AND SECURITY (AUC)

AT

THE STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ASSET RECOVERY PRACTITIONERS’ FORUM FOR AFRICA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
28 May 2024
Good morning!!!

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to address you on behalf of H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union, on this solemn occasion of the opening ceremony of the stakeholders meeting for the establishment of a Pan African Asset Recovery Practitioners’ Forum in Africa here in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

At the outset, I would like to convey to you the warm and respectful greetings of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union and his best wishes for the success of this gathering.

First and foremost, I would like to express the African Union deep appreciation to the Government of Ethiopia for hosting this stakeholder consultative meeting. This demonstrates Ethiopia’s commitment to fostering the ideals and aspirations of the African Common Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR).

I would also like to thank partner (GIZ) for its financial and technical support in the organization of this meeting.

Distinguished Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Africa is a continent very rich in natural and financial resources, which have attracted the interest of domestic and foreign investors. However, these resources are not converted into wealth for Africans as one might expect.

Lack of equitable access and limited control have resulted in the plundering of resources and their transfer, intentionally or unintentionally, out of the continent to places where they are not available for the benefit of African populations.

IFFs have been shown to reduce efforts to improve domestic resource mobilization, cancel out investment flows, and contribute to low social development indicators, including poverty and inequality.
While these problems are not unique to Africa, it is on the continent that the phenomenon is likely to have the greatest impact due to the small size of its economies and the fragility of their financial systems.

**Distinguished Experts,**
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

For many years, African countries have witnessed and continue to witness the sending of huge proportions of their resources to foreign jurisdictions without proper compensation or returns.

As a continent with precious resources, Africa deserves better deals and should be better able to leverage its resources for inclusive and sustainable growth. But this will never be possible if we continue to allow our resources to be taken without proper compensation.

Sometimes, these assets are recovered and seized by foreign governments but are not repatriated to their home countries. This practice is counterproductive, as these assets are used to finance foreign economies at the expense of the true owners. Given the scale and cross-border nature of IFFs, an ambitious multilateral approach to the recovery of assets lost through IFFs channels is needed.

It is for this reason that the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, at its 33rd session in February 2020, approved the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) to guide African countries in the recovery and management of stolen assets. The Assembly also mandated the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (ACACAC) to implement CAPAR by developing the necessary tools to operationalize decision-making and to report regularly to the Assembly on progress.

CAPAR is a policy, strategy and advocacy instrument to facilitate the identification, repatriation and effective management of Africa's assets for the common good of citizens, in accordance with Africa's development agenda, national laws and other legitimate government objectives, while respecting the sovereignty of Member States.

CAPAR sets out recommended measures and actions to effectively address the continued loss of African assets and to effectively identify, recover and manage African assets that are in or have been recovered from foreign jurisdictions, in a manner that respects the development priorities and sovereignty of African Union Member States.

CAPAR is based on four pillars, which highlight priorities for asset recovery in Africa: (i) asset detection and identification, (ii) asset recovery and restitution, (iii) asset recovery management, and (iv) cooperation and partnerships. It has been approved and is now a formal instrument to be implemented. However, if we don't educate people about it, many won't know it exists and may not know how to interpret and use i
Excellencies
Distinguished Experts

Since then, a number of significant strives have been achieved by the international community (AU, GIZ, relevant UN agencies, etc.) through our joint efforts in supporting AU Member States to implement this tool notably through the sensitization workshop on CAPAR held in Dakar, Senegal in 2022, the first stakeholders consultative meeting on the establishment of the Pan African Asset Recovery Forum held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania in January 2024 and the technical meeting on the development of the Communication Strategy on CAPAR held in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2024.

All these initiatives, were carried out in recognition of the crucial role and importance of the CAPAR to recover our missing assets/funds, in order to use them for developmental purposes in our African Member States/Countries.

It’s important that we are keeping work together to ensure that our collective actions on the implementation of CAPAR, are equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by this historic process. You will all agree with me, that CAPAR is central in Africa’s domestic resource mobilization as what belongs to Africa should rightfully return to Africa.

Distinguished Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Throughout the three (3) day meeting, we will have the opportunity to engage in discussions, share experiences, and showcase initiatives that have been carried out by different organizations/agencies in the area of asset recovery. By doing this, its our aim to inspire our Member States in not only accepting or acknowledging this tool but also implement it at national level.

I encourage all participants to actively participate in the presentations, and discussions that will take place during the three-day meeting. Let us seize this moment to reflect on our respective missions and objectives in order to attain desired results.

I wish to challenge all of us, to take the valuable knowledge and insights gained here today and translate them into practical expressions, empowering themselves and their constituency to drive positive change and create tangible impact through concrete recovery actions and initiatives where applicable. I am certain that we will take advantage of the expertise we all have and ensure that we have solid recommendations by the end of our meeting.

Distinguished Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen

As I conclude, I am confident that the establishment of the Pan African Asset Recovery Practitioners’ Forum will offer a real platform for dialogue and discussion on effective strategies for CAPAR implementation and reporting.
It will also help launch new alliances, partnerships and collaborations on the recovery and return of stolen assets to Africa.

I wish you all a productive and fruitful deliberation.

I thank you for your kind attention!