

MEDIA BRIEFING

African Leaders, Civil Society and Citizens Adopt the Lagos Declaration on Anti-Corruption and Accountability

High-Level Dialogue on Anti-Corruption and Accountability | Lagos, Nigeria | 10–11 September 2026

Lagos, Nigeria – 11 September 2026 – Participants at the High-Level Dialogue on Anti-Corruption and Accountability today adopted the Lagos Declaration on Anti-Corruption and Accountability, a continental call to move Africa's anti-corruption work “from declaration to implementation.”

The two-day Dialogue, held under the theme “Have We Lost the Anti-Corruption and Accountability Debate? Reflections on Power, Politics and Three Decades of Anti-Corruption Work in Africa,” brought together senior government and anti-corruption officials, civil society organisations and social movements, academics, philanthropy, media, business, and women's and youth leaders from across Africa.

WHY IT MATTERS

- After three decades of anti-corruption agencies, laws and reforms, corruption, state capture and illicit financial flows persist across Africa — raising the question of whether the continent's accountability architecture has kept pace with how power and corruption have evolved.
- The Declaration argues accountability is broader than anti-corruption: it is about who holds power, in whose interest, and with what consequences when it is abused.
- It calls for accountability to be reclaimed as a practice of citizens, not only governments and agencies, with women, youth and grassroots movements central to enforcing it “from below.”

CONVENORS

The Dialogue was convened by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD), in partnership with the Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI) at Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand; the Open Society Foundations (OSF); and other partners committed to accountable governance and Africa's democratic and developmental transformation.

HEADLINE COMMITMENTS IN THE DECLARATION

- Reclaiming accountability as a right and responsibility of citizens, not only governments and agencies.

- Widening the lens from anti-corruption to accountability — how power is acquired, used and sanctioned.
- Defending the independence, financing and integrity of anti-corruption institutions and the judiciary.
- Making corruption “difficult, detection likely and consequences certain” through prevention rather than prosecution alone.
- Tackling political corruption and state capture, including campaign-finance transparency and safeguards on public appointments.
- Centring women, young people and grassroots movements in accountability “from below.”
- Protecting whistle-blowers, journalists and civil society from intimidation and retaliation.
- Confronting illicit financial flows and their global enablers, including a proposed African Transparency Index tracking corporate corruption and bribery on the continent.
- Developing African-centred approaches to accountability, grounded in African values, without compromising universal standards of integrity.
- Building a Pan-African accountability movement linking this work to development outcomes and the social contract.

IN THE DECLARATION'S OWN WORDS

“We conclude that Africa has not lost the anti-corruption and accountability debate. But the continent must reclaim, reframe and revitalise it.”

“We call especially upon political leaders to demonstrate that no person is above accountability and no public office is private property.”

“Every resource diverted through corruption represents lost opportunities for health, education, infrastructure, jobs and human wellbeing... inflated contracts and diverted resources translate directly into clinics not built, teachers unpaid and infrastructure not delivered.”

BACKGROUND

Over three decades, African countries have built an extensive anti-corruption architecture — commissions, financial intelligence units, procurement reforms, asset-declaration regimes, freedom-of-information laws and investigative journalism. Yet corruption, state capture and weakening public trust persist. The Dialogue asked participants to consider not simply whether Africa has lost the anti-corruption debate, but whether corruption and power have evolved faster than the strategies developed to confront them.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Participants committed to developing a practical implementation framework for the Declaration, with clear responsibilities, timelines and indicators; strengthening Pan-African collaboration on accountability;

expanding civic education; advancing cross-border cooperation on illicit financial flows and asset recovery; and periodically reviewing progress.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The full text of the Lagos Declaration on Anti-Corruption and Accountability is available on request.
- Interviews with Dialogue participants and organisers can be arranged.
- High-resolution images from the Dialogue are available on request.

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