

LAGOS DECLARATION ON ANTI-CORRUPTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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

PREAMBLE

We, participants in the High-Level Dialogue on Anti-Corruption and Accountability — drawn from African governments, anti-corruption institutions, civil society, academia, philanthropy, media, business, and women's and youth movements — convened in Lagos, Nigeria on 10–11 September 2026, convened by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD), the Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI) at Wits Business School, the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and other partners;

Recognising that three decades of anti-corruption agencies, laws and reforms have not stopped corruption, state capture and declining public trust — because accountability is broader than anti-corruption: a question of who holds power, in whose interest, and with what consequences when it is abused.

Concerned that formal institutions remain vulnerable to political capture, while African values of dignity, communal responsibility and ethical stewardship have been neglected in accountability practice.

Affirming that accountability is a responsibility of citizens, not only of governments and agencies, with women, youth, grassroots movements and journalists at its centre, built from below as well as enforced from above, and recalling the Dialogue's call to move from declaration to implementation.

Hereby adopt this Lagos Declaration on Anti-Corruption and Accountability.

DECLARATION

1. Reclaiming Accountability as a Practice of the People

Accountability belongs to the people, not only to governments and agencies. We commit to strengthening citizen agency, civic consciousness and collective action so citizens can demand answers from power.

2. Broadening the Agenda from Anti-Corruption to Accountability

Fighting corruption is necessary but insufficient. We commit to promoting political, institutional, social and economic accountability across public, private and civic institutions, and to partnerships between anti-corruption agencies and non-state actors.

3. Protecting Independent Institutions and the Rule of Law

We are concerned by the political capture of anti-corruption bodies. We call for transparent, merit-based appointments, adequate financing, operational and judicial independence, and sanctions against those who obstruct justice.

4. Making Corruption Difficult, Detection Likely, Consequences Certain

We commit to prevention over prosecution alone: stronger procurement, public financial management, audit, beneficial-ownership transparency and digital oversight, so corruption is difficult, detection likely, and consequences certain.

5. Confronting Political Corruption and State Capture



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Corruption cannot be defeated without reforming the political systems that sustain it. We call for transparent campaign financing, credible elections, and safeguards against the capture of public institutions.

6. Strengthening Accountability from Below, Centering Women and Youth

We affirm the central role of women, young people and grassroots movements in accountability, and commit to civic education, participatory budgeting, social audits and their leadership in accountability institutions and movements.

7. Protecting Civic Space, Whistle-blowers and Journalists

Accountability cannot flourish where citizens fear retaliation. We call on governments to protect civic freedoms and the safety of whistle-blowers, journalists, human-rights defenders and public-interest litigants.

8. Rebuilding a Culture of Public Integrity

Laws alone cannot produce accountable societies. We commit to promoting integrity and service as the ethos of public office, complementing legal instruments with sociological ones that reshape incentives and power relations, with accountability education starting early.

9. Confronting Illicit Financial Flows and Global Enablers

African corruption is not confined within national borders. We call for international cooperation on asset tracing and recovery, sanctions against facilitators, and an African Transparency Index on corporate corruption and bribery.

10. Developing African-Centered Approaches and Knowledge

We commit to interrogating the concepts underlying anti-corruption work and building African-grounded research and knowledge, without compromising universal standards of integrity and justice.

11. Harnessing Technology and Data for Accountability

We recognise the potential of digital technology and open data for budget transparency, procurement monitoring and citizen oversight, while guarding against digital exclusion and manipulation.

12. Extending Accountability to Private Power, Building a Pan-African Movement

Accountability applies beyond the state, to corporations, philanthropy and civil society alike. We commit to a Pan-African accountability movement connecting this work to development outcomes and citizens' everyday lives.

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITMENTS

Mindful of the call to “graduate from declaration to implementation,” we commit to a practical implementation framework with clear responsibilities, timelines and indicators; continued Pan-African dialogue; citizen-led initiatives led by women and youth; stronger independence of oversight institutions; expanded civic education; cross-border cooperation on illicit financial flows; use of technology and open data; protection for journalists and whistle-blowers; and periodic review of progress.

CALL TO ACTION

We call upon African governments, the African Union, parliaments, judiciaries, civil society, media, business, philanthropy and citizens across Africa to build a new accountability movement for the continent — with political leaders demonstrating that no one is above accountability and no public office is private property; citizens reclaiming their role as custodians of public power and resources; institutions guarding their own independence and integrity; civil



society and philanthropy building citizen-owned movements; the media strengthening investigative journalism; and young people and women helping lead its next generation.

OUR COLLECTIVE RESOLVE

Africa has not lost the anti-corruption and accountability debate — but must reclaim, reframe and revitalise it. The challenge is not the absence of laws or institutions, but translating them into political will, citizen power and measurable outcomes. We resolve to move:

From anti-corruption to accountability.

From accountability from above to accountability from above and below.

From institutional form to institutional integrity.

From prosecution alone to prevention and systemic reform.

From citizen spectatorship to citizen agency.

From imported prescriptions to contextually grounded African approaches.

From fragmented interventions to a Pan-African movement.

From declarations to implementation.

We envision an Africa where power is a public trust, institutions are stronger than individuals, citizens can demand answers, corruption carries certain consequences, and leadership is accountable to the people. This is the accountability future to which we commit ourselves.

DONE AND ADOPTED IN LAGOS, NIGERIA, THIS 11TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2026

Participants at the High-Level Dialogue on Anti-Corruption and Accountability

Lagos, Nigeria



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