Spear of Integrity

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Towards a Corruption-Free Africa: Recalibrating the Leadership Mindset

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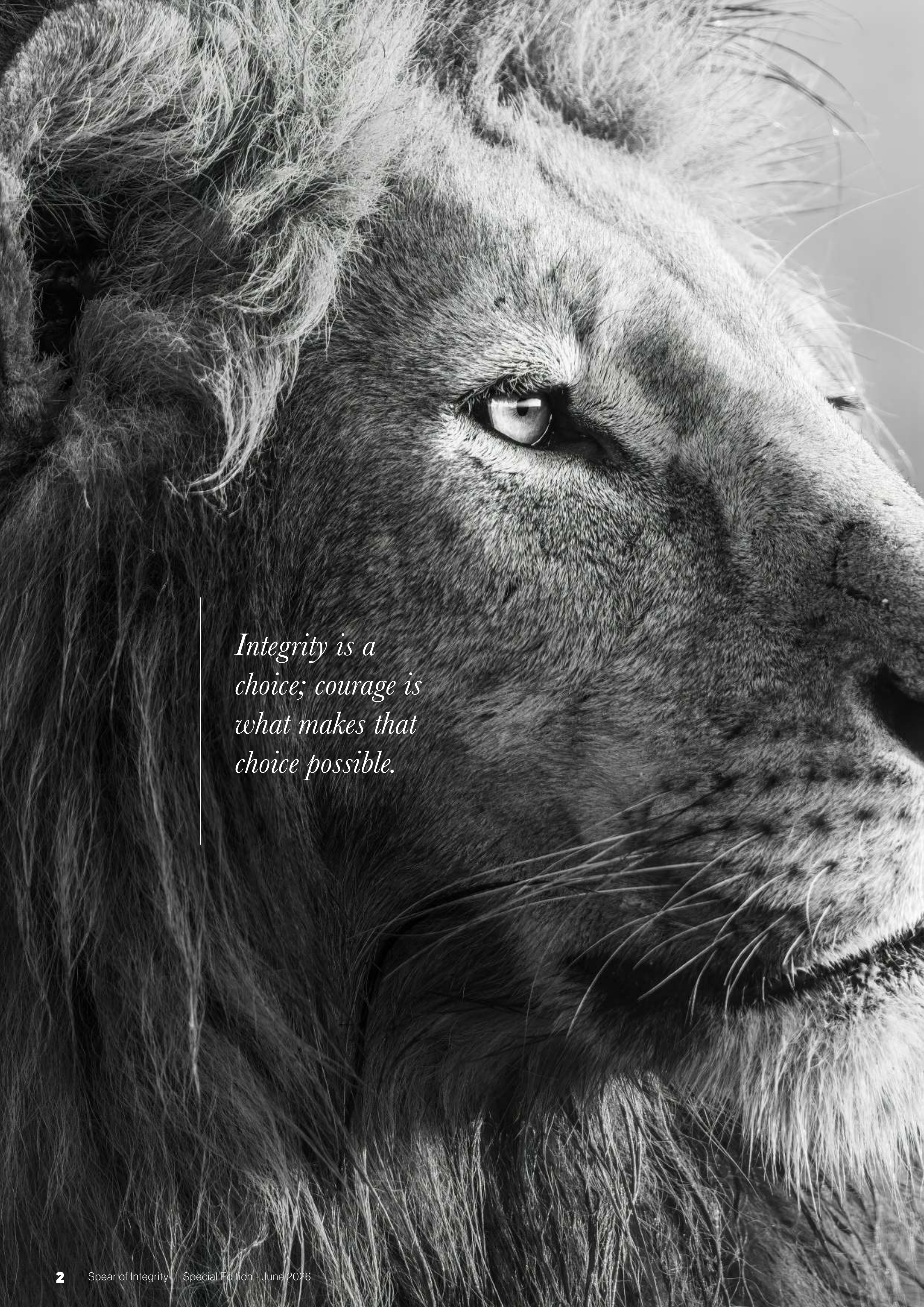

Integrity is a choice; courage is what makes that choice possible.

Editorial

Strengthening cooperation and institutional innovation for effective anti-corruption efforts in Africa

By Mr. Abdi Mohamud

The fight against corruption has evolved from a national governance concern into a continental and global imperative. Across Africa, corruption continues to undermine economic development, weaken public institutions, erode public trust, and divert resources intended to improve the lives of citizens. Addressing this challenge requires more than individual national efforts; it demands stronger cooperation, collective resolve, and innovative approaches that match the increasingly sophisticated nature of corruption.

The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption recognizes this reality by calling on African states to deepen cooperation and solidarity in pursuit of good governance and sustainable development. As corruption schemes increasingly transcend borders, anti-corruption responses must be equally coordinated and transnational.

The theme of the 8th Annual General Assembly of the Association of African Anti-Corruption Authorities (AAACA) — Strengthening Cooperation and Institutional Innovation for Effective Anti-Corruption Efforts in Africa — reflects the priorities that must guide the continent's anti-corruption agenda in the years ahead. Central to these priorities is the need to strengthen cross-border collaboration through information sharing, mutual legal assistance, joint investigations, and enhanced coordination among regional anti-corruption networks. Such cooperation is essential in confronting illicit financial flows and complex corruption schemes that operate across jurisdictions.

Institutional innovation is equally critical. Effective anti-corruption efforts depend on strong institutions capable of investigating corruption, supporting successful prosecutions, and working closely with judicial systems to ensure accountability. As citizens increasingly demand tangible results, anti-corruption agencies must continuously improve their effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness.

Asset recovery has also emerged as an important measure of impact. Recovering stolen public resources and returning them for public benefit not only restores lost wealth but also reinforces public confidence in anti-corruption institutions. Equally important is building the capacity to address emerging threats associated with digital financial systems, virtual assets, and rapidly evolving technologies that are increasingly exploited to conceal illicit wealth.

A significant milestone in advancing Africa's anti-corruption agenda is the establishment of the African Anti-Corruption Studies and Research Centre (CEREAC). As AAACA's research and analytical arm, the Centre provides a platform for evidence-based policy development, research, capacity building, and knowledge sharing. Its success will depend on the collective support and participation of member institutions across the continent.

Ultimately, the future of Africa's anti-corruption efforts lies in a shared commitment to cooperation, innovation, and accountability. By working together, African nations can strengthen institutions, protect public resources, and advance a vision of governance founded on integrity and service to the people.

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Shaping Kenya's integrity revolution

The fight against corruption remains one of the defining governance challenges of our time across Africa. Corruption undermines public trust, weakens institutions, distorts economic growth, and diverts resources intended for development. In Kenya, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) stands at the forefront of safeguarding public resources and promoting integrity as a foundation for sustainable development.

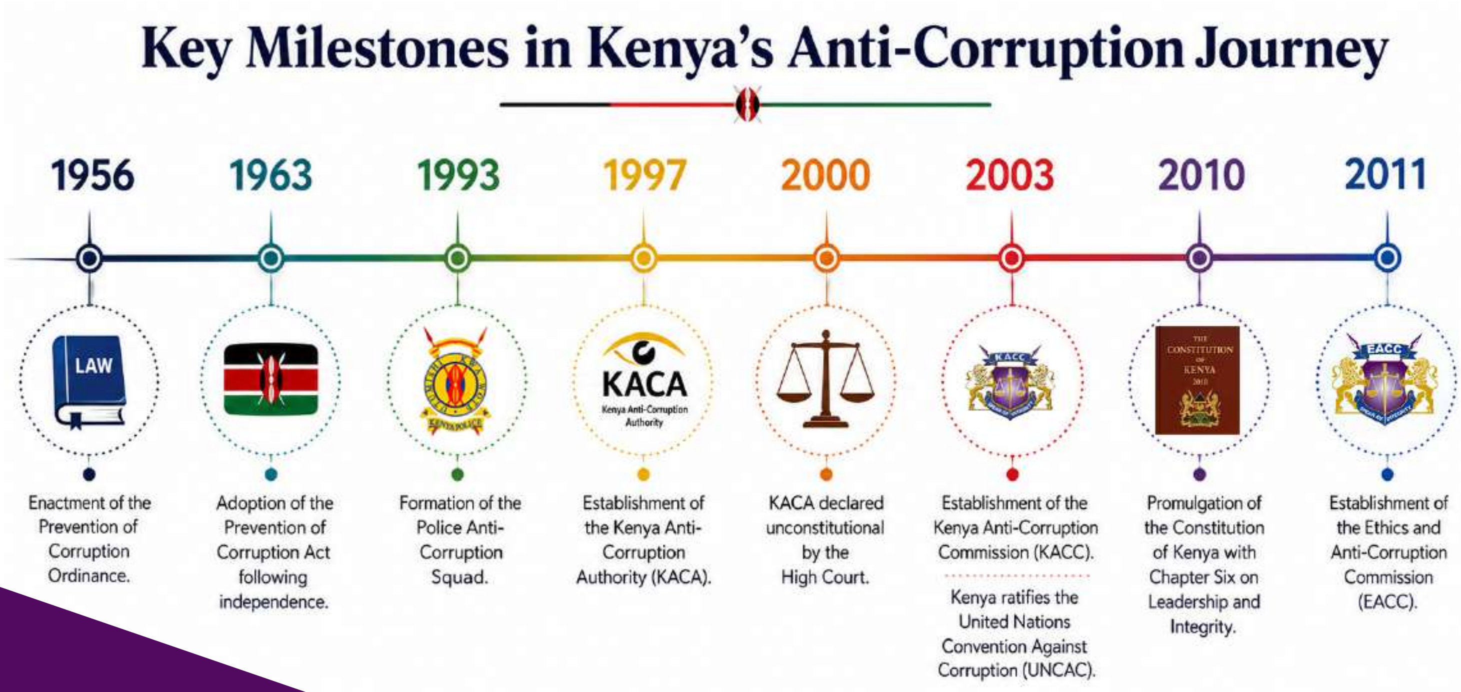
Established under Article 79 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, EACC is mandated to combat corruption and economic crimes through law enforcement, corruption prevention, public education, asset recovery, and the promotion of integrity in public service. Its establishment marked a significant milestone in Kenya's governance journey, reflecting the country's commitment to institutionalizing accountability and upholding the constitutional principles of leadership and integrity enshrined in Chapter Six of the Constitution.

A multi-pronged approach to fighting corruption

EACC adopts a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond investigations and prosecutions. The Commission's approach integrates enforcement, prevention, public education, systems reform, and institutional strengthening.

On the enforcement front, EACC investigates corruption and economic crime cases involving bribery, abuse of office, procurement fraud, conflict of interest, unexplained wealth, and embezzlement of public resources. The Commission works closely with prosecutorial, law enforcement, and judicial institutions to ensure accountability and effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

Asset tracing and recovery have also become critical components of Kenya's anti-corruption framework. Through civil recovery proceedings, preservation orders, and collaboration with domestic and international partners, EACC has facilitated the recovery of billions of shillings worth of illegally acquired public assets. These efforts not only restore public resources but also reinforce the principle that corruption should not pay.



Equally important is the Commission's preventive work. EACC conducts corruption risk assessments, systems reviews, and advisory services aimed at identifying and sealing institutional loopholes that facilitate corruption. By strengthening internal controls and governance structures within public institutions, the Commission helps reduce opportunities for corruption before they arise.

"...By strengthening internal controls and governance structures within public institutions, the Commission helps reduce opportunities for corruption before they arise..."

Through integrity clubs in educational institutions, public awareness campaigns, ethics training, and integrity mainstreaming programmes, EACC also continues to nurture a culture of ethical conduct among citizens and public officers. These initiatives recognize that lasting change requires not only robust enforcement but also a societal commitment to integrity and accountability.

Strengthening integrity in leadership

One of EACC's core constitutional mandates is the enforcement and promotion of Chapter Six of the Constitution on Leadership and Integrity. The Commission supports integrity vetting processes for individuals seeking appointment or election to public office and promotes compliance with ethical standards across the public sector.

This mandate reflects Kenya's recognition that sustainable anti-corruption success depends not only on punishing wrongdoing but also on ensuring that individuals entrusted with public responsibility demonstrate the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

By promoting ethical leadership and strengthening institutional safeguards, EACC contributes to building public confidence in governance and reinforcing the social contract between citizens and the state.

EACC MILESTONES: 2022-2025

Beyond enforcement: Honoured for walking the talk

H.E. President William Ruto presents an award to EACC Secretary/CEO Mr. Abdi A. Mohamud during the 30th Anniversary Celebrations of the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) held at State House Nairobi.

A proud moment for EACC as the Commission earned First Runner-Up honours in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Category at the DIAR Awards, underscoring its commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace

When discussions turn to anti-corruption success, attention often focuses on investigations, prosecutions, and asset recovery. Yet behind every effective anti-corruption agency lies something equally important: a strong institution that embodies the values it seeks to promote.

In recent years, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) has demonstrated that the fight against corruption extends beyond enforcement. Through a combination of inclusive workplace practices, strategic partnerships, sound financial stewardship, and transparent governance, the Commission has earned national recognition that reflects a broader commitment to institutional excellence.

One of the clearest endorsements of this approach came through EACC's consistent recognition at Kenya's National Diversity and Inclusion Awards and Recognition (DIAR). The Commission was named First Runners-Up in the Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices category in 2022 and 2024, and Second Runners-Up in 2023, reflecting a sustained commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace culture.

The accolades recognized EACC's efforts to embrace diversity, promote equal opportunity, and ensure that the values of fairness, representation, and inclusion are embedded across the institution. For an agency entrusted with promoting integrity in public service, such recognition highlights the importance of aligning internal culture with the principles it champions nationally.

That same commitment to accountability has also been reflected in the Commission's operational achievements.

In November 2025, EACC received national recognition during the Kenya Revenue Authority's 30th anniversary celebrations, earning the award for Most Facilitative Agency in Tax Enforcement. The honour underscored the growing importance of collaboration among public institutions in tackling complex financial crimes and protecting public resources.

EACC's commitment to transparency and accountability in financial reporting was recognized at the prestigious FiRe Awards, where CPA Joel Mukumu, Director, Finance and Planning, led the Commission team in receiving the award at Safari Park Hotel.

Shortly thereafter, the Commission was recognised at the 2025 Financial Reporting (FiRe) Awards, in the category for Commissions and Independent Offices applying International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) Accrual reporting.

The award followed the Commission's receipt of a clean audit opinion for the 2024/2025 financial year, reflecting adherence to high standards of financial reporting, transparency and accountability.

Together, these achievements paint a picture of an anti-corruption agency pursuing excellence on multiple fronts. They illustrate how effective corruption prevention and enforcement are strengthened by inclusive leadership, robust partnerships, transparent financial management, and adherence to the highest standards of public service.

These recognitions are more than awards. They are milestones on a continuing journey toward stronger governance, greater accountability, and more resilient public institutions; goals that resonate across Africa and beyond.

How EACC and the FBI are redefining transnational anti-corruption enforcement

Investing in excellence: EACC Secretary/CEO Mr. Abdi A. Mohamud joins 26 Commission officers for a group photo at the commencement of the Advanced Public Corruption Training at the renowned FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, USA.

In an era where corruption networks operate seamlessly across borders, jurisdictions, and digital platforms, the fight against graft can no longer be contained within national boundaries.

For Kenya's Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), one of its most strategic responses has been the deepening of collaboration with the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a partnership steadily reshaping the Commission's investigative and technological capabilities, and global reach.

What began as technical cooperation has matured into a multi-dimensional relationship anchored in training, intelligence exchange, institutional strengthening, and a shared commitment to confronting increasingly complex financial crimes.

A partnership grounded in trust and technical exchange

The strengthening of ties between the two agencies was publicly stressed in June 2024, during a high-level visit by FBI Director Christopher Wray to EACC headquarters at Integrity Centre in Nairobi. The visit signaled renewed U.S. support for Kenya's anti-corruption efforts and reaffirmed the value of sustained inter-agency cooperation.

"...These facilities are designed to enhance professionalism, strengthen evidentiary integrity, and improve the quality of investigative processes; critical foundations for successful prosecution of corruption cases..."

Discussions focused on expanding collaboration in transnational corruption investigations, asset recovery, and institutional capacity building. The FBI reiterated its commitment to support EACC through advanced training, modern investigative tools, and strengthened information-sharing frameworks aimed at tracing illicit assets across jurisdictions.

Building investigative capacity

The partnership has since expanded into structured skills development. In August 2025, 26 EACC officers undertook Advanced Public Corruption Training at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, one of the world's most respected law enforcement training institutions.

The programme focused on advanced investigative techniques, forensic analysis, anti-corruption strategy, and international cooperation frameworks. It also reinforced the importance of cross-border collaboration in addressing increasingly sophisticated corruption schemes.

EACC leadership also engaged with the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice on broader cooperation, including intelligence sharing and mutual legal assistance in transnational investigations. Emerging threats such as cross-border identity fraud and falsified academic credentials also featured in discussions.

Fighting technology with technology

EACC has prioritised technology-driven investigations in collaboration with FBI experts to tackle the ever evolving corruption landscape. Several specialized trainings have been organized on cellular analysis, virtual assets and transnational anti-corruption investigations, to tackle sophisticated encrypted communication systems, cryptocurrency platforms, blockchain obfuscation tools, and complex cross-border laundering structures.

The programme, delivered with FBI advisory support, brought together officers from EACC, the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), reinforcing a multi-agency approach to digital-era enforcement.

Enhancing investigative infrastructure

Beyond training and intelligence cooperation, the FBI, the United States Embassy, and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) have supported EACC in putting up state-of-the-art interview facilities.

These facilities are designed to enhance professionalism, strengthen evidentiary integrity, and improve the quality of investigative processes; critical foundations for successful prosecution of corruption cases.

Building integrity through partnerships: The role of Kenya's media and youth in the anti-corruption

Panel Discussion (From left): The Moderator, Nimrod Taabu; Youth Empowerment Program Initiative Executive Director Amani Katani; EACC CEO Mr. Abdi Mohamud; Principal Secretary for Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports, Fikirini Jacobs; and UNODC Crime Prevention Officer Asmert Tesfai.

A participant engages the panelists during the dialogue.

Zubeidah Kananu (second left) the President of the Kenya Editors' Guild (KEG), Linda Bach (left) the CEO KEG, Mr. Abdi Mohamud, EACC CEO and EACC's Director Legal Services and Asset Recovery David Too.

Across Africa and beyond, anti-corruption strategies are increasingly shifting from enforcement-only approaches toward more inclusive, society-wide models. In Kenya, this evolution is reflected in the work of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), an independent public institution mandated to prevent and combat corruption in both the public and private sectors.

Rather than relying solely on investigations and prosecutions, EACC has strengthened collaboration with two key societal actors, the media and the youth. This reflects a growing recognition that sustainable integrity systems are built not only through legal enforcement, but also through public participation, information sharing, and value formation.

The media as a transparency and accountability partner

On 3 April 2025, EACC convened a consultative forum at the Sarova Stanley Hotel in Nairobi under the theme "Turning the Tide: From Stolen Assets to Public Good." The meeting brought together senior editors and media leaders to discuss the role of journalism in exposing corruption and supporting the recovery of stolen public assets.

EACC Chairperson Dr. David Oginde emphasized the media's watchdog role in governance, comparing the protection of public resources to guarding a maize farm from persistent intruders, urging on the need for constant vigilance in safeguarding public wealth.

The forum included representatives from major media institutions such as the Kenya Editors Guild, Media Council of Kenya, Kenya Union of Journalists, and the Crime Journalists Association of Kenya. Discussions highlighted the importance of investigative journalism in exposing corruption, while also acknowledging challenges faced by journalists, including intimidation, threats, and resource constraints.

Participants stressed that while the media plays a critical accountability function, it must also be protected and supported to remain effective. Without strong investigative reporting, corruption becomes harder to detect and easier to conceal.

"...Without strong investigative reporting, corruption becomes harder to detect and easier to conceal..."

This partnership was further strengthened on 28 November 2025 during the 8th Annual Convention of the Kenya Editors Guild in Kilifi County, where EACC and the Guild signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The agreement formalized cooperation in investigative reporting support, capacity building, ethical journalism training, and structured information sharing, marking a shift toward institutionalized collaboration.

Youth as drivers of ethical transformation

EACC has also prioritized youth engagement as a long-term investment in building a culture of integrity. This reflects Africa's demographic reality, where young people form the majority and represent a powerful force for shaping governance outcomes.

On 12 June 2025, EACC and the National Youth Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding at Integrity Centre, Nairobi. The partnership established a framework for youth engagement in anti-corruption initiatives, including civic education, leadership development, and integrity promotion programs.

EACC leadership emphasized that young people bring energy, creativity, and influence essential for strengthening ethical values and accountability. The focus is preventive aimed at building integrity before misconduct occurs. This commitment was reinforced during Kenya's commemoration of International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December 2025 at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC) in Nairobi. Held under the theme "Uniting with Youth Against Corruption – Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity," the event brought together young people, government officials, development partners, and civil society actors.

A collaborative model for africa's governance future

These initiatives illustrate a broader transformation in Kenya's anti-corruption strategy, from enforcement-centered approaches to collaborative governance. In this model, the media strengthens transparency and accountability, while youth engagement fosters long-term ethical leadership and civic responsibility.

This approach aligns with emerging global best practices that recognize corruption as a complex societal challenge requiring multi-stakeholder solutions. Enforcement remains essential, but it is not sufficient on its own. Kenya's experience offers a relevant example for Africa and beyond: corruption thrives in silence, but weakens in the presence of informed citizens, empowered journalists, and engaged young people.

As EACC deepens these partnerships, it signals a shift toward a more inclusive integrity ecosystem, one where accountability is not only enforced by institutions but sustained by society itself.

EACC reaffirms commitment to high-level capacity building as officer graduates from NDC

Assistant Director, Forensic Investigations (Micro) at the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), Mr. Mark Ndiema, has successfully graduated from the National Security and Strategy Course 28 (2025/26) at the National Defence College (NDC), Karen.

His graduation underscores EACC's sustained commitment to strengthening its human resource capacity through continuous, high-level professional development. Over the years, the Commission has consistently nominated senior officers to the NDC, reflecting its deliberate investment in advanced leadership training, strategic thinking, and inter-agency collaboration at the highest levels of governance and security management.

"...EACC's continued engagement with the institution highlights its focus on building a cadre of leaders grounded in professionalism, integrity, and strategic leadership..."

Previous participants include Director, Preventive Services, Mr. Vincent Okong'o (2021), Deputy Director for Forensic Investigation, Ignatius Wekesa (2022), and Deputy Director for Administration, Fatma Abdala (2024).

The NDC is Kenya's premier strategic-level training institution under the National Defence University–Kenya. It is mandated to prepare senior military and civilian leaders for national security and policy leadership roles.

The College brings together senior officers from the Kenya Defence Forces, National Police Service, intelligence and government agencies, as well as participants from allied countries, fostering a multidisciplinary and international learning environment.

Through its rigorous curriculum, the NDC equips participants with advanced competencies in security strategy, governance, leadership, and policy formulation, enabling them to operate effectively in complex national and global environments.

EACC's continued engagement with the institution highlights its focus on building a cadre of leaders grounded in professionalism, integrity, and strategic leadership, while strengthening collaboration with key national security and governance institutions.

Mr. Ndiema's graduation, therefore, adds to a growing cohort of EACC officers who have benefited from this prestigious programme.

Assistant Director, Forensic Investigations, Mark Ndiema (right), is joined at his graduation at the NDC, Karen, by the Director of Field Services, Jackson Mue.

The National Security and Strategy Course 28 (2025/26) cohort in a group photo with Senior Defence Forces Officers

A moment of knowledge exchange: Dr. David Oginde, EACC Chairperson, receives a publication from Musalia Mudavadi, Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, during an official engagement.

From left to right: Ms. Naluzze Aisha Batala, outgoing President of EAAACA and Inspector General of Government of Uganda; H.E. Musalia Mudavadi, Prime Cabinet Secretary of Kenya; and Mr. Abdi A. Mohamud, EACC CEO and the incoming President of EAAACA, during the official opening of the Regional Anti-Corruption Authorities Conference in Nairobi.

Strengthening regional cooperation in governance: A high-level delegation from the Kingdom of Eswatini visited Kenya to exchange knowledge and gain insights into anti-corruption strategies, public administration reforms, and institutional accountability frameworks.

A moment of camaraderie during discussions at the Integrity Centre, as UNODC's Francesco Checchi (left), Ms. Isatou Batnon, and Jennifer Githu (right) share a light moment while exploring opportunities for enhanced partnership and cooperation in the fight against corruption.

EACC Secretary/CEO Mr. Abdi A. Mohamud with Andrew Bailey, Deputy Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), during a courtesy visit to the Integrity Centre, where the two leaders held discussions on strengthening cooperation in the fight against corruption and transnational crime.

Following the money: EACC, through its training hub, the Kenya Ethics and Anti-Corruption Academy (EACA) and in collaboration with partner institutions, convened a financial investigations dialogue aimed at equipping law enforcement and justice sector agencies with advanced skills to trace illicit financial flows and recover proceeds of crime in Nairobi.

Strengthening partnerships for good governance: EACC Chairperson Dr. David Oginde and Dr. Ed Barnett, MBE, Chargé d'Affaires at the British High Commission, pose for a group photo after productive discussions at the Integrity Centre in Nairobi. (Left to right: Joyce Munene, Head of KLIF; Ms. GalLevin, Countering Illicit Finance Advisor, British High Commission(BHC); Dr. David Oginde, Chairperson, EACC; Dr. Ed Barnett, ChargédAffaires; and Ms. Linda Oloo, Anti-Corruption Advisor, BHC)

Hon. Dorcas Oduor, Attorney General of the Republic of Kenya, presents a publication to EACC Secretary/CEO Mr. Abdi A. Mohamud, underscoring the importance of knowledge-sharing and institutional collaboration.

Towards a corruption-free Africa: Recalibrating the leadership mindset

By Dr. David Oginde

Many sad tales have been told about Africa, painting a very grim picture of our continent. Yet, this continent is so well endowed that it stands among the highest league of nations. Several paradigms have been presented as antidotes to our challenges.

The first is the education paradigm. The founding fathers of our nation believed that one of the most critical pillars for developing into a developed nation was education. As Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

And indeed, many of our countries have consistently prioritised education in their national budgets, thereby not only raising an educated workforce, but also some of the top scholars globally.

But has education resolved our problems? The truthful answer is – No!

It would appear that as Africa has become more educated, so also have our problems multiplied. Too many children still walk dusty roads to classes under trees, many mothers lie in clinics with no medicine, and too many dreams are extinguished by the weight of poverty. Yet, this is not because Africa is poor – No! It is because Africa is being looted – looted by a few greedy but highly educated individuals.

Sadly, as a Nigerian proverb says, “When the roots of a tree begin to decay, it spreads death to the branches.” Hence, as highly educated leaders and professionals have engaged in such corrupt practices, our children have developed the wrong perception that the primary purpose of education is to usher you into the place of privilege and self-aggrandizement.

Executive management of Eastern African anti-corruption agencies pose for a group photo with H.E. Musalia Mudavadi, Prime Cabinet Secretary, during the official opening of the Regional Anti-Corruption Authorities Conference in Nairobi.

The other paradigm that has been proffered is the Legal Framework – the belief that a strong governance structure, backed by a robust legal system, will sort out our ethical and integrity challenges. Unfortunately, in my short stint in the 'Corruption Industry', I must admit that, whereas laws are important for setting standards for ethical living, they have absolutely no power in producing a people of integrity. Some of the most notorious corruption perpetrators are lawmakers and custodians of ethics and values! Why is this?

In her book, Leadership and Power, Janet Hagberg defines integrity as a quality or state of being of sound moral principle, honest, sincere, and upright. Thus, a man or woman of integrity is a person who has made the personal choice to be honest, sincere, and upright in all their dealings. The implications are profound! If we are going to develop men and women of integrity, we must move from mere rational education or legal sanctions. Instead, we must work on building a deep reservoir of emotional sensitivity to ethics and morality. This requires a paradigm shift—a Mindset Change.

Leadership in Africa is shaped not only by political systems, legal architecture, or socioeconomic frameworks but also by the mental pictures that leaders bring into governance. Listening to many Africans, whether in informal conversations or in high level discourse in global platforms, several mental frameworks naturally manifest.

The first of such is the victim mindset – a world view in which we blame all our problems on the colonialists. Whereas there is no doubt that colonialism is a significant contributor to many of our sorrows, it cannot be that at 60 years of age, we should still be blaming our circumstances. It is a mindset we must debunk.

According to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, decolonization must begin in the mind. For a colonized mind breeds inferiority. Instead, a leadership mindset rooted in African identity, pride, and sovereignty is a must for empowering people towards economic independence.

Another persistent reality among Africans is the scarcity mindset—a belief that resources are scarce while the future is uncertain, therefore, I must get as much as I can while I can. The consequence is the scramble to amass wealth and riches whenever one gets into leadership. Scarcity mindset is the key driver of the rampant corruption that we see across the continent. Yet, a simple Mindshift will reveal that we have adequate resources to support all of us. You do not need to steal public resources to secure your future.

One of the most divisive factors across Africa is the My People Mindset – a perspective premised on the falsehood that when I ascend to any position of leadership, my first responsibility is to My People. Opportunities and resources must of necessity go to my people first. This has been the source and cause of many wars in Africa – a fight for leadership, resources, and opportunities.

For Africa to enjoy peace and prosperity, we need a paradigm shift – from a My People to the Ubuntu philosophy as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu exemplified.

The truth is that no matter how lofty our dreams, and irrespective of how passionate we may be about realizing our aspirations, we are headed nowhere unless the moral foundation of our dream is solid.

A careful study of the successful nations such as Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, much of Europe and North America, reveals that these nations got to where they are today because, as a people, they chose to embrace some basic moral values that have guided their social, economic, and political intercourse. Their patriotic zeal drove them to subdue their personal desires for the sake of the national good. The truth is that no individual, family, community, or nation has ever risen to greatness without a sound moral ethic. This calls for a mindset shift.

"...no individual, family, community, or nation has ever risen to greatness without a sound moral ethic..."

Writer is Chairperson, Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Unmasking beneficial ownership in the fight against corruption in Africa

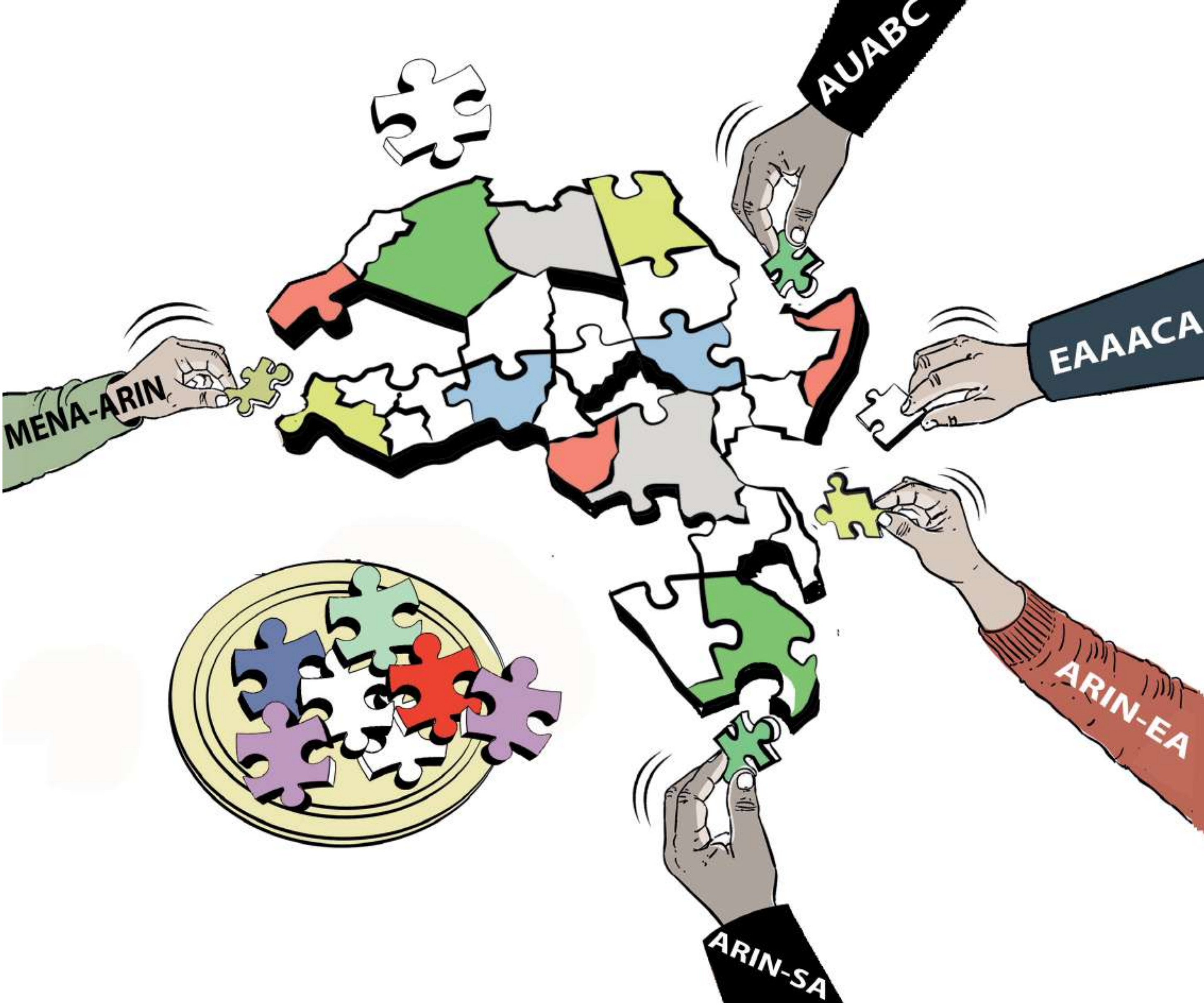
By Samuel Bwana

Revealing beneficial ownership sits at the very heart of Africa's struggle against corruption and illicit financial flows, as corruption continues to erode public trust, drain scarce resources, and undermine inclusive development across the continent.

Yet behind every grand corruption scheme, inflated procurement contract, stolen public dollar, or hidden asset lies a common denominator: an individual who has chosen to hide behind companies, trusts, nominees, shell corporations, and complex cross-border structures.

Until we expose who truly owns, controls, and benefits from these structures, the fight against corruption will remain incomplete.

Beneficial ownership transparency (BOT) is a powerful reform because corruption today is increasingly sophisticated. Public officials rarely keep the proceeds of corruption in personal bank accounts. Instead, illicit funds move across borders through anonymous companies registered in permissive jurisdictions, complex corporate webs that frustrate investigators, professional intermediaries who exploit legal loopholes, and weak corporate registries coupled with poor inter-agency data sharing.



In Africa, this manifests itself through stolen public funds hidden in real estate investments, procurement fraud masked by front companies, and natural resource revenues siphoned through opaque joint ventures, among other schemes.

Without knowing who the real beneficial owners are, investigators chase shadows, asset recovery stalls, and accountability evaporates. BOT is therefore not optional; it is foundational.

Two sides of the same coin

There can be no effective asset recovery without BOT. Asset recovery depends on answering three pertinent questions: Who actually owns the asset? How was it acquired? Where is it hidden now?

Opaque ownership structures defeat all three, resulting in failed mutual legal assistance, delayed freezing and confiscation orders, collapsed court proceedings for lack of proof, and unreachable stolen assets.

Conversely, accurate and accessible beneficial ownership information yields faster tracing of illicit assets, stronger evidentiary chains, improved cross-border cooperation, and more successful asset recoveries. Transparency compresses impunity and accelerates justice.

"...Accurate and accessible beneficial ownership information yields faster tracing of illicit assets, stronger evidentiary chains, improved cross-border cooperation, and more successful asset recoveries..."

Africa's progress and existing gaps

Africa has made important strides. Many African countries have adopted beneficial ownership requirements in company laws, committed to international standards under the Financial Action Task Force, and integrated ownership disclosure into procurement and extractive sectors.

We must, however, be honest about the gaps. Registers exist but are difficult to verify. Data is collected but not readily accessible to investigators. Updates are infrequent, enforcement remains weak, sanctions for false declarations are minimal, and registers are often disconnected from procurement, banking, and tax systems.

More often than not, beneficial ownership reforms exist to satisfy compliance checklists rather than to disrupt corruption networks.

Other key challenges must also be confronted. Data quality and verification remain significant concerns, as registers that rely solely on self-declaration invite abuse. Without systematic verification, false ownership information can become institutionalized.

Information is also fragmented. Ownership data may sit in one ministry, procurement data in another, bank records elsewhere, and land registries in isolation, allowing corrupt actors to exploit the gaps.

Investigative access remains limited, with many anti-corruption agencies and prosecutors lacking real-time, automated access to beneficial ownership data, thereby reducing its operational value.

Cross-border capacity is another challenge. Assets move across borders faster than information-sharing mechanisms can respond. Without regional and international interoperability, stolen assets can escape accountability.

From commitment to impact

If BOT is to become a weapon rather than a slogan, Africa must focus on implementation with intent.

Among other measures, registers must be made more reliable through verification using national identity card systems, tax databases, and banking records. Meaningful penalties should also be imposed for false declarations.

"...The battle against corruption is ultimately a battle against secrecy. As long as corrupt actors can hide behind anonymous companies and opaque corporate structures, stolen assets will remain beyond the reach of justice..."

Registers must be rendered more usable by ensuring direct access for anti-corruption agencies, Financial Intelligence Units, prosecutors, and asset recovery offices. Authorities should be able to search across linked datasets, including company records, contracts, land registries, and litigation records.

Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen regional and international cooperation. This would promote harmonized standards across jurisdictions and enable data sharing under clear legal safeguards.

Transparency must also be embedded where corruption most often occurs by requiring beneficial ownership disclosure in public procurement, public-private partnership contracts, and natural resource licensing.

Beneficial ownership is not merely an anti-corruption agenda; it is also a development reform. It protects public finances, strengthens fair competition, builds investor confidence, improves service delivery, and restores citizen trust.

Every school not built, every clinic not supplied, and every road abandoned because of corruption is linked, somewhere in the chain, to hidden ownership. Unmasking beneficial ownership means returning resources to their rightful owners: the citizens.

The role of the World Bank

The World Bank is playing a central, multi-layered role globally, and increasingly in Africa, in unmasking beneficial ownership, strengthening anti-corruption systems, and facilitating the recovery of stolen assets. Its approach combines policy reform, operational requirements, technical assistance, investigative support, and international coordination.

The World Bank has, for instance, helped shape global and African policy direction on beneficial ownership. The institution has formally recognized BOT as essential to combating corruption, illicit financial flows, and tax evasion. It contributes to analytical work on BOT and provides policy guidance to governments on legal and institutional reforms, including alignment with FATF and UNCAC standards on ownership disclosure.

The battle against corruption is ultimately a battle against secrecy. As long as corrupt actors can hide behind anonymous companies and opaque corporate structures, stolen assets will remain beyond the reach of justice. By making beneficial ownership transparency a practical reality rather than a compliance exercise, African countries can strengthen accountability, recover stolen wealth, and ensure that public resources serve the citizens for whom they were intended.

Writer is Manager, Integrity Vice Presidency (INT), the World Bank Group. This article is adopted from his keynote address at the Eastern African Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities Anti-Corruption (EAAACA) Conference and AGM in April, 2026, in Nairobi.

Advocate Andy Mothibi, Head of South Africa's Special Investigating Unit (SIU), (who was appointed National Director of Public Prosecutions in South Africa in February 2026) during a courtesy visit to the Integrity Centre, where he held discussions with EACC leadership on enhancing regional collaboration in anti-corruption efforts.

EACC Secretary/CEO Mr. Abdi A. Mohamud with Advocate Andy Mothibi, former Head of South Africa's Special Investigating Unit (SIU), who was appointed National Director of Public Prosecutions in South Africa in February 2026. The two leaders have worked closely within regional and international anti-corruption platforms to advance accountability and the fight against corruption.

EACC Chairperson Dr. David Oginde addresses delegates during the inaugural African Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum (AARP-Forum) in Nairobi, underscoring the importance of regional collaboration in tracing, recovering, and returning stolen assets.

Delegates from across Africa attend the inaugural African Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum (AARP-Forum) in Nairobi, a platform aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in asset recovery and the fight against corruption.

Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhaté, Chairperson of the AUABC, alongside the EACC CEO and other dignitaries, leads a panel discussion during the African Asset Recovery Practitioners' Forum (AARP-Forum) in Nairobi, highlighting the importance of regional cooperation in asset recovery and the fight against corruption.

Group photo of the Heads of Anti-corruption agencies from the Eastern Africa region.

EACC Secretary/CEO Mr. Abdi A. Mohamud and Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhaté, Chairperson of the AUABC (2023–2025), formalize a partnership through the signing of an agreement to enhance collaboration on anti-corruption initiatives across Africa.

OPINION

Reimagining integrity through systems-based controls

By Robert Kikenyi

Kenya's digital transformation is not happening in isolation. Across the world, governments are discovering that technology is more than a service delivery tool, it is a governance tool. From Estonia's digital government to Singapore's integrated public services and India's digital identity ecosystem to Rwanda's Integrated Electronic Case management system, the message is clear: digital systems improve efficiency, accountability, and transparency.

As a cybersecurity expert, I do not interact with systems the way most users do. While others click buttons, I inspect logs, trace workflows, and investigate what happens behind the screen. It is a bit like being a mechanic who cannot pass a parked vehicle without wondering what is happening under the bonnet.

Working at the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) has taught me something interesting: corruption is remarkably confident until the system logs in. The moment automation arrives, corruption suddenly develops network issues.

Corruption's least favorite word: Automation

Manual processes have long been corruption's favorite playground. Files mysteriously disappear. Approvals depend on who knows whom. Payments require unexplained follow-ups and endless "check back tomorrow" conversations. Automation changes the rules. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, digital approval workflows, biometric attendance systems, and electronic document management platforms do not play favorites. They do not accept "facilitation." They simply enforce predefined rules or put differently: "If it is not in the system, it did not happen."

"...Through the Adili Online Platform, public officers can submit their wealth and income declarations from virtually anywhere. No queues. No bulky forms. No frantic last-minute searches for a working printer. Just a few clicks and the system takes over..."

Digital justice: A case study in transformation

Nowhere is this transformation more visible than in Kenya's justice sector. The Judiciary's e-Filing system has fundamentally changed how cases are initiated and managed. Litigants no longer need to carry stacks of documents from registry to registry. Cases can be filed online, fees paid electronically, and progress tracked digitally.

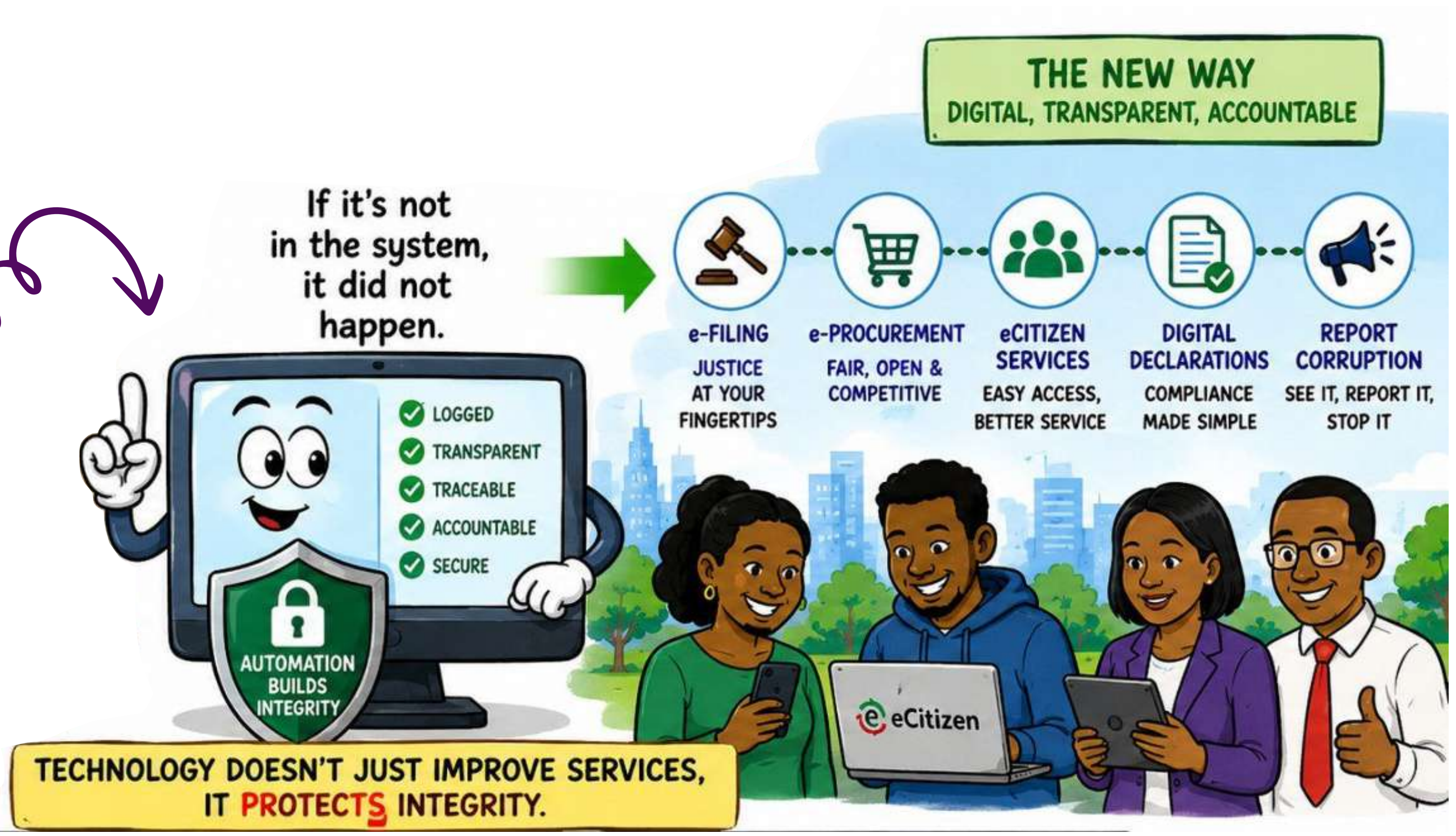
Virtual courts have further expanded access to justice. Advocates, witnesses, and litigants can participate remotely, reducing travel costs and minimizing logistical delays. Justice is increasingly becoming available at the click of a button rather than at the end of a long journey.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has also embraced innovation through the Uadilifu Case Management System, improving visibility, accountability, and information sharing throughout the prosecution process.

EACC has digitized key functions, including complaints management, investigations tracking, self-declaration submissions, approvals for opening & operating bank accounts outside Kenya, conflict of interest, and gift register management.

Through the Adili Online Platform, public officers can submit their wealth and income declarations from virtually anywhere. No queues. No bulky forms. No frantic last-minute searches for a working printer. Just a few clicks and the system takes over. Because in the digital age, compliance should not require a road trip.

Meanwhile, modern case-tracking systems, digital evidence management platforms, and emerging AI-powered transcription tools are reducing administrative burdens and improving operational efficiency. As technology advances, judicial officers can spend less time managing paperwork and more time delivering justice.



When Systems Communicate, Secrets Become Difficult

One of the biggest obstacles to accountability has always been institutional silos. When agencies operate independently, inconsistencies remain hidden, duplicate records go unnoticed, and oversight becomes difficult.

However, when systems communicate securely, a different picture emerges. Duplicate records become easier to identify. Decision-making becomes evidence-based. Creative accounting becomes significantly harder. This is why initiatives championed by the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) ICT Committee focus not only on digitization but also on interoperability, ensuring justice-sector systems can exchange information securely and efficiently. Because every loophole closed during system design is one less case requiring investigation later.

Procurement's toughest opponent

If corruption had a championship division, procurement would probably hold the title belt. Fortunately, procurement is also undergoing a digital makeover. Through the e-Government Procurement System (eGP), tender processes become automated, logged, and time-stamped from advertisement to award. No midnight miracles. No conveniently misplaced documents. No surprise winners appearing from nowhere. Just a digital trail with an excellent memory.

The bigger picture

Kenya's broader digital transformation agenda, through eCitizen, eGP, Government Cloud infrastructure, Ardhisasa, Uadilifu, and numerous sector-specific platforms, is steadily building a connected government ecosystem. The goal is no longer simply to digitize services. The goal is to create an environment where institutions can share information securely, citizens can access services seamlessly, and oversight becomes easier and more effective. As services go digital, discretion decreases and transparency increases.

> *"...The goal is no longer simply to digitize services. The goal is to create an environment where institutions can share information securely, citizens can access services seamlessly, and oversight becomes easier and more effective..."*

The future is logged

What makes automation such a powerful anti-corruption tool is that it does not accuse, it exposes. It creates records that cannot 'conveniently forget'. It standardizes processes that were once vulnerable to manipulation. It reduces opportunities for abuse while increasing opportunities for accountability. After all, you can negotiate with a person. You cannot negotiate with an audit log.

For ICT professionals across government, counties, state corporations, and the private sector, the challenge is simple: start where you are. Automate one process. Digitize one service. Strengthen one control. Digital transformation is not built through one massive system. It is built through many small improvements working together. The future is digital. If we build it well, it will also be transparent, efficient, accountable, and increasingly resistant to corruption.

And perhaps that is the greatest lesson of all: Integrity is not only enforced by people, it can also be engineered into systems.

Writer is a Cybersecurity Engineer at EACC

From theft to trust: How recovered assets can rebuild communities

By Anna Leinte

While corruption continues to cost Kenya an estimated Kes194 billion (USD 1.5 Billion) annually, according to African Development Bank Report, African Economic Outlook, 2025, it is important to pause and reflect on the tremendous work the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) has undertaken in response.

Over the past five years, EACC has recovered assets worth Kes28 billion (USD 216 Million) and is currently pursuing an additional Kes50 billion (USD 386 Million) suspected to have been acquired through corrupt means.

"...Over the past five years, EACC has recovered assets worth Kes28 billion (USD 216 Million) and is currently pursuing an additional Kes50 billion (USD 386 Million) suspected to have been acquired through corrupt means..."

This disparity between the amounts recovered and those lost underscores the magnitude and persistence of corruption in our country. It highlights the serious challenges we face in safeguarding public resources and delivering essential services.

These figures call for a more robust and coordinated approach to the fight against corruption, one that combines strong political will from the highest levels, enhanced investigative capacity, meaningful legal reforms, and preventive measures. It also requires institutional accountability, active public engagement, strong partnerships, and what I call "the I factor", my personal responsibility and role in this fight.

Without such measures, the political, economic, and social consequences of corruption will continue to undermine national development, weaken institutions, and diminish public confidence in governance. Worse still, the ordinary citizen will be left underdeveloped, their potential stifled and their dignity trampled on.

To some, the Kes28 billion (USD 216 Million) already recovered may appear modest compared to the overwhelming sums lost each year. However, this view overlooks the substantial legal, investigative, and institutional efforts required to trace, freeze, and ultimately recover assets stolen from the public. More importantly, it fails to consider what that amount could do for the ordinary Kenyan.

But I want to tell you a story, not of billions, but of one woman. Her name is Nkasupat. Nkasupat is a mother of five, living in a rural village in Samburu, an isolated region in Northern Kenya. She is illiterate but wise in the ways of survival. Every morning, she walks several kilometers to fetch water from a seasonal river. Two of her children attend a nearby school, if it can be called that, with no desks, no toilets, and some days, no lunch. One child tends to their five goats, while the other two herd livestock for relatives in exchange for a meal. Nkasupat sells milk and firewood where she can, walking from homestead to homestead in the scorching sun, hoping for buyers. Her beadwork, beautiful and time-consuming, brings in a little money, but never enough.

Her children suffer from malnutrition, and she from what I call "the sickness of the poor and defeated", a condition where pain is frequent, and the only affordable remedy is Mara Moja (the common painkiller).

She pays taxes, though she may not call them that, on soap, salt and sugar. She votes faithfully, always with hope. And yet, year after year, public services remain painfully out of reach. Her life is a reflection of countless others in forgotten corners of this country, defined by missing services and broken promises.

Nkasupat's story brings to mind Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a pyramid illustrating a hierarchy of human needs, beginning with

Transforming recovered assets into public value: EACC successfully recovered a 56-acre parcel of land along Mombasa Road in Nairobi's Industrial Area, valued at USD 38 million. Originally owned by the Meteorological Department, the land is now utilized for the development of 15,000 affordable housing units.

physiological needs; food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep. The second tier includes safety and security; health, employment, property, family, and social stability. The third is love and belonging, followed by self-esteem, and, finally, self-actualization.

The most basic human need is physical survival. Maslow emphasized that physiological needs are the most important; until they are met, all other needs remain secondary. Where then do we place Nkasupat and her like?

Across the African continent, meeting basic human needs remains a critical foundation for sustainable development. Access to food, water, shelter, healthcare, education, and security directly influences the well-being and productivity of individuals and communities. When these needs are unmet, the effects extend beyond economic challenges to include diminished human dignity, weakened social cohesion, and reduced opportunities for growth and innovation. When basic needs are addressed, communities move beyond survival and actively participate in building prosperous, resilient, and inclusive societies.

Addressing these unmet needs requires more than awareness. It demands deliberate action at the heart of governance. And that action begins with how we plan, allocate, and use public money. So, when people ask, "What can Kes28 billion (USD 216 Million) really do?" I think of Nkasupat.

That amount could build thousands of kilometers of passable rural roads, connecting her home to health centers, schools, and markets. It could fund dispensaries stocked with medicine, ambulances, and trained staff, so she wouldn't have to walk for hours in emergencies or suffer preventable losses. It could construct classrooms with desks and toilets, and support school meal programs that keep her children learning. It could drill boreholes across dry lands like Samburu, sparing women and girls the daily burden of fetching water. It could support marketplaces with security, giving women like Nkasupat safer spaces to sell their goods and earn a decent income.

"...Let every recovered shilling be tracked, accounted for, and directed to real development that uplifts the lives of ordinary Kenyans. The real victory against corruption is not in the courtroom, but in the lives it restores..."

What is the potential of Kes28 billion(USD 216 Million)? It is the kind of money that can change the story of entire communities. That is what corruption robs us of, not just resources, but possibilities. And that is why every coin recovered matters.

When EACC or any other Anti-Corruption or Asset recovery agency recovers stolen public assets, it is more than a legal process. It is the restoration of public trust. It is a declaration that the poor are not invisible. It is a quiet but powerful message that the state still has a duty to serve its people.

But even as we commend the recovery of these billions, a pressing and sobering question remains: Will this money find its way back to the people who need it most, or will it quietly slip back into the hands of new gatekeepers, lost again in the very corruption it was rescued from?

Let recovered assets not become statistics buried in government reports. Let them become testimonies of justice served, visible, tangible, and transformative. Let every recovered shilling be tracked, accounted for, and directed to real development that uplifts the lives of ordinary Kenyans. The real victory against corruption is not in the courtroom, but in the lives it restores.

Writer is an Education Officer at EACC

Towards an Africa beyond corruption: Reflections on leadership, innovation and collective action

Mr. Abdi Ahmed Mohamud, the Secretary/ Chief Executive Officer of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), has contributed significantly in promoting good governance, corruption prevention and law enforcement for the last 24 years. The CEO sat down in a candid one-on-one interview to reflect on his vision for the anti-corruption fight.

1. What are the key priority areas for Kenya in the fight against corruption?

As a country, we are prioritizing five key areas as we continue implementing the National Ethics and Anti-Corruption Policy and the EACC Strategic Plan 2023-2028, they include;

Budget analysis and Monitoring of capital-intensive projects: EACC has deployed experts to analyze budget allocations, focusing on prevention and intelligence interventions. These efforts are facilitating timely detection and prevention of corruption in the identified projects.

Asset tracing and recovery: The Commission has intensified investigations on unexplained wealth and acquisition of public assets by profiling and undertaking lifestyle audits on public officers. The idea is to enhance recovery of proceeds of corruption and improve the management of recovered assets.

Tackling bribery at service delivery points: The Commission has scaled up intelligence gathering and surveillance targeting institutions that provide essential services and are prone to bribery. It is implementing targeted integrity testing and monitoring programs to reduce corruption in service delivery, thereby restoring public trust and improving access to quality services for all citizens.

Collaboration with regulatory and oversight agencies: EACC is deepening partnerships with regulatory and oversight agencies to leverage their compliance mechanisms and enforcement capabilities. This multi-agency approach fosters a more coordinated and effective response to corruption.

Public awareness programmes: Creating a culture of integrity requires proactive engagement. The Commission is equally scaling up engagements targeting the youth and the media to sensitize them on their role in fostering good governance and best practices in ethics and integrity in society.

2. Kenya continues to rank poorly on corruption indicators despite significant anti-corruption efforts. What gives you confidence that the fight against corruption is making progress?

The fight against corruption is a long-term undertaking, and success should not be measured solely by perception indices. We are seeing tangible progress in investigations, asset recovery, prevention initiatives, and prosecution outcomes. In the last three years, the Commission recovered assets worth Kes 10.1 billion($78.09 million), filed 188 asset recovery suits targeting Kes 22.73 billion ($175.7 million), and helped avert losses amounting to KES 24.1 billion ($186.3 million)through intelligence-led interventions.

Convictions also increased significantly, demonstrating growing effectiveness in holding offenders accountable. While corruption remains a serious challenge, these outcomes show that Kenya's anti-corruption framework is producing measurable results.

3. What are the challenges facing anti-corruption efforts in Kenya and what strategies are in place to address them?

The implementation of such broad and strategic objectives will not be without challenges, but again, I believe we can overcome them. Some of the challenges we face can be summarised as:

Resource constraints: EACC receives over 3,000 complaints annually for investigation against 200 investigators. The strength of the workforce is not commensurate with the work requiring our attention. The intervention has been to prioritize high-impact cases and employ resources to strategic areas.

Politicization and ethnicization of the fight against Corruption: Corruption investigations are often interpreted through political or ethnic lenses rather than on the basis of evidence and the rule of law. As a result, individuals facing corruption allegations may portray themselves as victims of political persecution or ethnic targeting, while their supporters mobilize along political or communal lines in their defence. The Commission has committed resources to continuous public education and awareness to elicit public support in this area.

Public apathy and impatience: Most people don't see corruption as a problem as long as it favours them while on the other hand they want to see instant results. The Commission has no power to jail people and has to work with other institutions. The Commission has therefore intensified public education programmes in collaboration with other sector players to create awareness on agency mandates in the justice chain.

Weak Legal framework: Corruption cases take inordinately long to conclude. However, EACC has proposed legal reforms via Anti-Corruption Laws Amendment Bill, 2025, which provides for completion of anti-corruption cases within 6 months, and appeals within 3 months. Further, the recent enactment of the Conflict of Interest Act, 2025 will enhance accountability and bolster the fight against Corruption.

EACC CEO Mr. Abdi Mohamud, receives the instruments of power from Ms. Naluzze Aisha Batala, outgoing President of the East African Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (EAAACA) and Inspector General of Government of Uganda, ushering in a new era of regional cooperation in the fight against corruption.

4. What has been your role in the Regional and Global efforts in the fight against Corruption?

I have represented Kenya in numerous international forums on anti-corruption, governance, asset recovery, and financial investigations. I currently serve as President of the Eastern Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (EAAACA), the regional body that brings together anti-corruption agencies across Eastern Africa. In this role, I provide leadership to promote collaboration among member states, strengthen cross-border investigations, enhance asset recovery efforts, and advance regional anti-corruption frameworks.

At the global level, together with my counterparts from South Africa, Mauritius, Morocco and Senegal, I serve on the Executive Committee of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) one of the world's leading anti-corruption networks established to support implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Through this position, I help shape international anti-corruption strategies, foster cooperation among anti-corruption agencies, and promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices across jurisdictions.

My international engagements have enabled me to contribute to collective efforts aimed at building stronger institutions, promoting integrity, and enhancing the effectiveness of anti-corruption systems both regionally and globally.

5. How important is international cooperation in combating corruption and illicit financial flows?

Corruption is increasingly transnational in nature. Assets acquired through corruption are often concealed across jurisdictions, making international cooperation essential. Through both informal and formal engagements with institutions across jurisdictions, EACC has closed a number of cases. Information shared has led to recovery of assets held abroad and conviction of suspects locally.

I have witnessed, through my global engagements, the importance of collaboration in intelligence sharing, mutual legal assistance, asset tracing, and recovery. No country can effectively fight corruption in isolation. Strong partnerships are critical to success.

6. Looking into the next decade, are you optimistic about Africa's ability to curb corruption and illicit financial flows?

I am.

Africa is witnessing growing political commitment, stronger anti-corruption institutions, enhanced regional cooperation, and rapid technological advancement. Many countries are strengthening legal frameworks, improving beneficial ownership transparency, digitizing public services, and enhancing systems for detecting and recovering proceeds of corruption.

At the same time, corruption and illicit financial flows are becoming more sophisticated, involving complex cross-border transactions, shell companies, digital platforms, and emerging technologies. Addressing these challenges requires stronger collaboration among anti-corruption agencies, financial intelligence units, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, regulators, and international partners.

7. What key reforms, innovations, and partnerships will be necessary to build a more transparent, accountable, and corruption-free continent?

Regional and international networks will be critical in promoting information sharing, joint investigations, mutual legal assistance, and asset recovery. Technology, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital forensics must also be leveraged to detect risks and trace illicit assets more effectively. Equally important is prevention through transparent institutions, ethical leadership, whistleblower protection, and a culture of integrity.

By strengthening institutions, deepening cooperation, and prioritizing integrity, Africa can significantly reduce corruption and unlock resources for sustainable development.

Strengthening integrity systems in Africa: UNODC's support to anti-corruption

By Jennifer Githu

Launch of the East Africa Anti-Corruption Platform, May 2024

Corruption remains one of the greatest obstacles to sustainable development in Africa, with the continent losing approximately USD 88.6 billion to illicit financial flows every year. It continues to undermine public trust, weaken institutions, distort markets, fuel illicit financial flows, and deprive citizens of essential public services.

As African countries pursue the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strengthening integrity, accountability, and the rule of law has become more urgent than ever. Against this backdrop, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works with Member States across the continent to prevent and combat corruption, strengthen integrity systems, protect economies from illicit financial flows, and support the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)—the most comprehensive and widely ratified global anti-corruption instrument.

"...Through technical assistance, capacity development, policy advice, research, and multi-stakeholder partnerships, UNODC supports countries in building transparent, accountable, and resilient institutions capable of delivering sustainable development and inclusive economic growth..."

Through technical assistance, capacity development, policy advice, research, and multi-stakeholder partnerships, UNODC supports countries in building transparent, accountable, and resilient institutions capable of delivering sustainable development and inclusive economic growth.

Regional hub for anti-corruption and financial crime

The UNODC Corruption and Financial Crime Hub for Africa, based in Nairobi, serves as a regional centre of excellence supporting Eastern, Southern, and Western Africa in addressing corruption, economic crime, money laundering, and asset recovery.

Its work is closely aligned with national priorities and ensures that recommendations from the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism are translated into concrete reforms.

The Hub also collaborates with key regional and sub-regional bodies, including the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption (AUABC), the East Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (EAAACA), the African Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (AAACA), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), among others.

This coordination strengthens regional peer accountability and reflects the transnational nature of corruption and illicit financial flows.

Since its establishment in 2023, the Hub has become a key platform for advancing regional cooperation.

It has developed three Regional Platforms covering East Africa, West Africa and the Sahel, and Southern Africa. These platforms bring together practitioners from UNCAC States Parties to identify priorities, define technical assistance needs, and mobilize resources.

In East Africa, the platform, coordinated jointly with EAAACA, has adopted a roadmap focusing on financial investigations and asset recovery, whistle-blower protection, public procurement integrity, and private-sector collective action.

Translating regional priorities into national impact

At the national level, the Hub provides targeted technical assistance to strengthen financial investigations, asset recovery, digital forensics, legislative reform, and corruption measurement.

Recent achievements include support for virtual asset investigations in Kenya, operationalization of Ethiopia's Asset Recovery Proclamation, enhancement of digital forensic capacity in Tanzania, and advancement of anti-corruption policy reforms in Botswana and Madagascar.

Kenya as a model for integrated reform

Kenya plays a leading role in advancing regional anti-corruption cooperation. As a major economy in East Africa, it has emerged as a hub for innovation, peer learning, and institutional reform. This regional work is complemented at the national level through the Programme for Legal Empowerment and Aid Delivery in Kenya (PLEAD II), a flagship partnership between the Government of Kenya, the European Union, UNODC, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Under these outcomes, the programme has strengthened investigative and prosecutorial capacities, improved inter-agency coordination, supported digitalization, and enhanced institutional accountability across the justice chain.

Key interventions include systems reviews of critical institutions such as the NPS, KPS, and Probation and Aftercare Service led by the EACC, as well as the development of integrity-focused initiatives such as the NCAJ Anti-Corruption Strategic Framework.

PLEAD II supports justice sector reform by strengthening institutions, improving access to justice, advancing digital transformation, and enhancing the effectiveness, accountability, and coordination of criminal justice actors. Its overarching goal is to reinforce the rule of law through more efficient, transparent, and citizen-centred institutions.

Launched in 2023 with a budget of EUR 35.3 million (approximately KES 3.5 billion), the programme covers 19 counties and supports key criminal justice institutions, including the Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), National Police Service (NPS), Kenya Prisons Service (KPS), Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), Witness Protection Agency, Directorate of Children Services, Probation and Aftercare Service, and the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ), alongside a civil society component implemented by UNDP.

"...As Africa confronts increasingly complex forms of corruption and financial crime, effective responses will require strong institutions, deeper regional cooperation, innovation, and sustained political commitment..."

Strengthening Kenya's anti-corruption ecosystem

PLEAD II is structured around four outcomes, all of which contribute directly to strengthening anti-corruption systems: enhancing the ability of the criminal justice system to fight corruption more effectively; improving coordination within the justice sector; increasing the competence and efficiency of justice institutions; and, expanding access to legal aid, particularly for vulnerable groups.

The programme has also promoted youth engagement in anti-corruption efforts through integrity clubs and supported integrity education initiatives implemented by the EACC.

A major area of support has been digital transformation. PLEAD II is currently supporting the development of an Integrated Case Management System (iCMS) for the EACC to improve case tracking, evidence management, workflow automation, and coordination across the anti-corruption value chain.

In addition, the programme has supported efforts to accelerate the investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of corruption cases, including the development of Guidelines for the Expeditious Trial of Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Cases.

It has also strengthened capacities in financial investigations, asset tracing, recovery, and management, key pillars of effective anti-corruption enforcement.

As Africa confronts increasingly complex forms of corruption and financial crime, effective responses will require strong institutions, deeper regional cooperation, innovation, and sustained political commitment. UNODC remains committed to supporting Member States in building transparent, accountable, and resilient institutions that serve citizens and advance sustainable development across the continent.

Writer is Associate Programme Management Officer, UNODC Corruption and Financial Crime Hub for Africa

The Migori case: A lesson in international cooperation against corruption

By Mwongela Mbiti

Between 2013 and 2017, it was alleged that approximately Kes2 billion was embezzled from the County Government of Migori. Investigations by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) revealed that the funds were siphoned through a web of 16 companies linked to close associates and proxies of the then County Governor, Okoth Obado.

These companies were awarded inflated or fictitious procurement contracts for goods and services that were never delivered. The proceeds were used to purchase high-end properties and luxury vehicles and to pay tuition fees for the governor's children studying abroad.

The scheme reflected a well-coordinated plan where public resources meant for local development were diverted into private gain, both within and outside Kenya.

A fire, paper trail, and the beginning of a long chase

The EACC launched investigations in 2017 after receiving intelligence reports suggesting massive financial irregularities in Migori County. Following a court order, the Commission obtained temporary freezing orders on several properties, including six Nairobi apartments, one townhouse, and 60 plots of land in Migori, reasonably believed to have been purchased using stolen public funds.

A major setback occurred when a fire broke out at the Migori County procurement office on the very day officials were expected to produce key financial records. Despite this, the EACC continued its investigations, securing extensions on freezing orders and gathering alternative documentation from land, company, tax, and personal registries.

Subsequent searches were conducted at the residences and offices of the governor and his main associates. The 16 implicated companies were given an opportunity to justify the tender awards they received from the county government, but they failed to provide satisfactory explanations.

By 2018, the EACC had filed a suit for forfeiture of unexplained assets under the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act, 2003.

Going global

Further investigations established that a significant portion of the illicit proceeds had been moved abroad. To uncover these international links, the EACC in May 2018 formally sought assistance from the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre (IACCC), a global multi-agency platform based in London that supports grand corruption investigations.

"...These findings not only corroborated domestic suspicions but also uncovered new investigative leads in multiple jurisdictions, allowing the EACC to expand its asset-tracing efforts..."

The EACC's request covered information on possible overseas bank accounts, property purchases, educational payments, and travel records linked to Governor Obado, his children, and close associates.

Within weeks, the IACCC mobilized its network of member agencies across several jurisdictions and initiated intelligence collection, including open-source and agency-based data.

In July 2018, the first IACCC intelligence report indicated strong connections to Australia, detailing financial products and accounts linked to Obado's associates, some of which were used to purchase property. A second report followed in August 2018, revealing further connections to the United Kingdom, including international bank accounts and travel records. The intelligence also traced substantial cash transfers to Obado's children studying abroad, confirming that the proceeds of corruption had financed their overseas expenses.

These findings not only corroborated domestic suspicions but also uncovered new investigative leads in multiple jurisdictions, allowing the EACC to expand its asset-tracing efforts.

The outcome

Armed with the IACCC intelligence, the EACC, supported by a technical advisor from the Basel Institute's International Centre for Asset Recovery (ICAR), drafted precise Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) requests to obtain admissible evidence from foreign jurisdictions.

This collaboration ensured that the MLA requests were specific and evidence-based, increasing their likelihood of a timely and positive response. The requested jurisdictions, notably Australia, England, and Wales, responded promptly between 2019 and 2020. They provided evidence from banks, universities, and property companies that confirmed the purchase of assets and payment of fees with illicit funds.

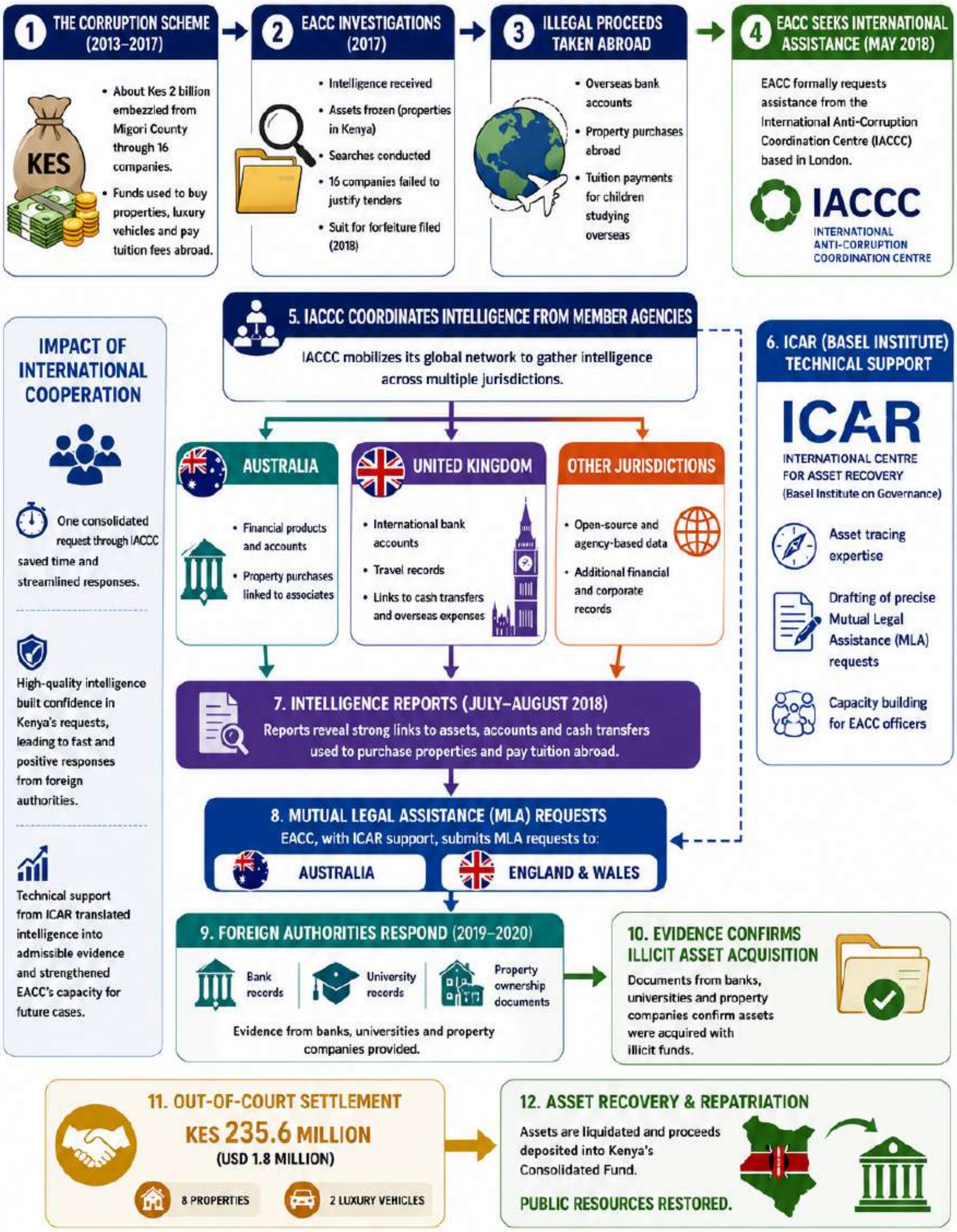
This documentary evidence became the foundation for negotiations leading to an out-of-court settlement valued at Kes235.6 million (USD 1.8 million), comprising eight properties and two luxury vehicles purchased abroad.

Upon liquidation, the proceeds are to be deposited into Kenya's Consolidated Fund, marking a successful repatriation of public assets lost through corruption.

The impact of international cooperation

The Migori case underscores the pivotal role of international cooperation mechanisms in combating cross-border corruption and recovering stolen assets.

Firstly, the IACCC's structure allowed the EACC to submit one consolidated request



rather than multiple, time-consuming appeals to individual countries. The IACCC streamlined responses from its member agencies, enabling the EACC to access fast, actionable intelligence and to refine its MLA requests. This approach saved months of procedural delays and ensured that the evidence gathered abroad could meet Kenya's evidentiary standards for asset recovery proceedings.

Secondly, the intelligence obtained through the IACCC gave foreign central authorities confidence that Kenya's requests were specific, proportionate, and founded on credible preliminary findings. This facilitated expedited review and execution of MLA requests, bridging the gap between intelligence and evidence. An IACCC representative noted that because Kenya's requests were informed by verified intelligence, they were treated as high-quality and precise, prompting swift responses from authorities in the UK and Australia.

Thirdly, the Basel Institute's ICAR provided embedded, casebased mentorship to EACC investigators, guiding them through the complexities of tracing financial flows across jurisdictions and preparing admissible MLA documentation.

ICAR's technical support proved instrumental in translating raw intelligence into prosecutable evidence, while simultaneously strengthening the institutional capacity of EACC officers to manage future transnational corruption cases.

Conclusion

The Migori County corruption case exemplifies how strategic international cooperation can bridge investigative gaps in complex, cross-border corruption schemes.

Through the concerted efforts of the EACC, IACCC, and ICAR, Kenya successfully traced and recovered assets hidden abroad, demonstrating that even sophisticated corruption networks can be dismantled through collaboration and intelligence sharing.

Writer is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya

How new laws are reshaping the fight against corruption and asset recovery

By Lavina Lodompui

A step forward for accountability and good governance. H.E. President William Ruto signs the Conflict of Interest Bill into law at State House, Nairobi, reinforcing transparency and integrity in public service.

President William Ruto, Deputy President Kithure Kindiki, members of the Cabinet, the Speakers of the National Assembly and Senate, Members of Parliament, and the leadership of the EACC display copies of the newly signed Conflict of Interest Act at State House, Nairobi.

The year 2025 marked an important turning point in the nation's long-standing battle against corruption and the recovery of illicit assets with the enactment of two significant laws: The Conflict of Interest Act and the Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASP) Act. These laws represent Kenya's attempt to modernize its anti-corruption framework by tackling both traditional corruption and emerging digital financial crimes.

For decades, individuals and networks have exploited gaps in governance to turn public office into private gain, inflating project costs, distorting policies, hiding proceeds of corruption through digital assets, and enriching elites at the expense of citizens. The new Acts promise to close those loopholes.

"...Through the Adili Online Platform, public officers can submit their wealth and income declarations from virtually anywhere. No queues. No bulky forms. No frantic last-minute searches for a working printer. Just a few clicks and the system takes over..."

The Conflict of Interest Act provides a comprehensive framework for preventing corruption before it occurs, requiring public officers to declare conflicts of interest, avoid participating in decisions where personal interests may influence public duties, and recuse themselves whenever conflicts arise.

It also bars public officers from entering into contracts with their agencies and from acquiring financial or beneficial interests in private companies that contract with their agencies. This Act has been hailed as a "phenomenal blow" against graft, primarily because it criminalizes the use of proxies by corrupt public officers. For decades, politically exposed persons evaded accountability by hiding behind shell companies or relatives to secure lucrative government tenders.

Enforcement has also been strengthened. The law empowers the EACC to monitor compliance, institute proceedings for forfeiture of undeclared and unexplained assets, investigate violations, and recommend sanctions. Penalties are tough: individuals face fines of up to Kes4 million (USD31,000), imprisonment of up to 10 years, or both. For individuals and body corporates found guilty may be compelled to pay double the benefit gained or the loss suffered by the State.

These reforms align Kenya with international best practices. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has long stressed that strong conflict of interest frameworks are essential to prevent state capture and promote fair governance. Kenya now has one of the most robust systems in the region.

The Virtual Assets Service Providers Act, 2025, on the other hand, regulates cryptocurrency exchanges and other digital asset providers by requiring licensing, customer identification procedures, and reporting of suspicious transactions. These requirements create transaction records that investigators can use when tracing illegal financial flows. Only vetted and licensed entities are now legally permitted to operate. Corrupt individuals or politically exposed persons (PEPs) can no longer easily set up shell companies or use unregulated exchanges to launder public money without leaving a distinct regulatory footprint.

Beyond the borders, the VASP Act serves a critical geopolitical function: securing Kenya's exit from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) "grey list." Kenya was placed on this watchlist in February 2024 due to strategic deficiencies in tracking illicit finance. Analysts from Bowmans law firm note that the VASP Act aligns Kenya with FATF Recommendation 15, positioning it among the first African nations to bring crypto within a formal regulatory perimeter.

Ultimately, the VASP Act represents Kenya's decision to govern digital finance through principles of trust, security, and accountability. This positions the country as a pioneer and regional model for regulating the digital economy.

If implemented boldly, these laws can help Kenya move from a governance culture that rewards privilege to one that values trust, transparency, and accountability. The laws are in place. The opportunity is clear. What remains is the zeal to act decisively.

Writer is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya

EACA expands regional footprint as Africa's hub for capacity building

By Faith Mituki

The Kenya Ethics and Anti-Corruption Academy (EACA) is rapidly emerging as a leading regional centre for ethics, integrity, and anti-corruption training, positioning Kenya at the forefront of governance and accountability capacity building in Africa.

Established by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), EACA serves as the Commission's premier training and skills development hub. Registered under the Ministry of Education's Technical and Vocational Education and Training Act (TVETA) and accredited by the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), the Academy has continued to strengthen institutions and professionals through specialized training programs tailored to address contemporary governance challenges.

In a major step towards expanding its reach, the Academy is currently deploying an Electronic Learning Management System (e-LMS), a transformative digital platform that will enhance the accessibility, scalability, and impact of its ethics and anti-corruption training programmes. The platform is expected to extend EACA's services beyond geographical boundaries, enabling professionals across Africa and beyond to access world-class training remotely.

The Academy's growing influence is already evident across the region. EACA has trained legislators and parliamentary staff from Uganda, built the capacity of officers from the Malawi Anti-Corruption Bureau, and convened two international virtual conferences that attracted participants from various countries. These engagements underscore the increasing recognition of EACA's curriculum and expertise beyond Kenya's borders.

To cater for diverse professional needs, EACA offers three categories of courses: Executive Courses are designed for executive leaders and managers responsible for governance oversight, policy formulation, and strategic decision-making. Law Enforcement Courses target officers in investigation, prosecution, intelligence gathering, and judicial sectors. The law enforcement courses have expanded to include courses being financed under the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in the country to empower investigators. FATF leads global action to tackle money laundering, terrorism, and proliferation financing. Finally, the Academy offers standard courses for middle-level managers, ethics and compliance officers, integrity assurance officers, and members of various professional bodies. Additionally, the Academy develops customized programmes tailored to the unique requirements of individual institutions.

"...the Academy offers standard courses for middle-level managers, ethics and compliance officers, integrity assurance officers, and members of various professional bodies..."

The Academy's success is anchored in continuous learning and international benchmarking. EACA continues to benchmark and collaborate with globally recognized anti-corruption institutions, including the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), Hong Kong International Academy against Corruption (HKIAAC) and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), enabling it to develop training programmes that meet international standards and respond to emerging governance trends.

Strategic partnerships have also played a significant role in strengthening EACA's impact. The Academy works closely with professional bodies such as the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Kenya Institute of Supplies Management (KISM), and Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM) to provide targeted training programmes for their professionals. Notably, in collaboration with ACCA Global, EACA has successfully delivered three virtual Continuous Professional Development programmes for accountants, further enhancing professional integrity and accountability standards.

The Academy's strategic significance is set to grow even further following Kenya's successful bid in 2024 to host the Centre for Research and Anti-Corruption Studies in Africa (CEREAC). The Centre will coordinate anti-corruption research institutions across the continent and serve as a knowledge hub for evidence-based approaches to combating corruption. EACC is the host institution, EACA will play a pivotal role through its mandate of conducting research on emerging corruption trends and unethical practices.

As demand for ethics and anti-corruption expertise continues to rise, EACA is steadily positioning itself as a continental centre of excellence; equipping leaders, professionals, and institutions with the knowledge and tools needed to build ethical, transparent, and accountable societies.

Writer is a Programmes Officer at the Kenya Ethics and Anti-Corruption Academy (EACA)

AAACA convenes in Nairobi for major anti-corruption summit

The Association of African Anti-Corruption Authorities (AAACA) is a Pan-African body that brings together institutions mandated to prevent and combat corruption across the continent. It serves as a key platform for inter-institutional cooperation, the exchange of expertise, and the strengthening of institutional capacity to support transparency, accountability, and good governance. With 42 member countries spanning North, West, Central, East, and Southern Africa, the Association reflects a broad continental commitment to integrity in public life.

AAACA operates within the framework of major regional and international legal instruments, particularly those adopted by the African Union and the United Nations. These include the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. Through this work, the Association supports its member institutions in translating these commitments into practical action at a national level.

Its mandate focuses on four main areas: strengthening cooperation among national anti-corruption authorities; building the technical, institutional, and operational capacity of member institutions; facilitating the exchange of information, expertise, and best practices; and supporting the development, implementation, and evaluation of national anti-corruption policies and strategies.

The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), in collaboration with AAACA Secretariat, is hosting the 8th Annual General Assembly, the Executive Committee Meeting, and the launch of the African Anti-Corruption Studies and Research Centre (CEREAC) in Nairobi, Kenya, from 16th to 18th June 2026. The meeting brings together anti-corruption leaders from across Africa for high-level discussions on progress made in implementing continental anti-corruption commitments.

"...it signals Africa's collective commitment to strengthening institutions, fostering innovation, and building a future anchored on integrity, accountability, and sustainable development..."

The Assembly provides a strategic platform for member states to deepen peer collaboration and align on emerging priorities, including asset recovery, illicit financial flows, and institutional resilience. Under the theme "Strengthening Cooperation and Institutional Innovation for Effective Anti-Corruption Efforts in Africa," the gathering underscores the need for stronger coordination and innovation in the fight against corruption.

A major highlight of the event is the official launch of CEREAC, which will be based at CBK-IMS in Nairobi, Kenya. The Centre is set to become a continental hub for anti-corruption research, knowledge generation, and capacity building. It will serve as a specialized institutional mechanism that supports public policy through research and analysis of corruption prevention, anti-corruption action, and illicit financial flows.

CEREAC will also coordinate applied research to generate evidence, conduct strategic analysis, and develop practical recommendations to help member states design and implement policies aligned with regional and international standards. In addition, the Centre will contribute to the development of harmonized analytical tools, performance indicators, and methodological frameworks for governance and anti-corruption work.

Hosting the 8th AAACA Annual General Assembly and the launch of CEREAC highlights Kenya's growing leadership role in the continental fight against corruption. More importantly, it signals Africa's collective commitment to strengthening institutions, fostering innovation, and building a future anchored on integrity, accountability, and sustainable development.

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ETHICS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

EACA is the training arm of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission

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