

## Statement of AR WG Chairs / UNCAC Coalition – CoSP 10

Honourable President, esteemed delegates

I am pleased for the opportunity to address the Conference and to give this statement on behalf of the Asset Recovery Working Group of the UNCAC Coalition, co-chaired by CIFAR the Civil Forum for Asset Recovery and Transparency International France.

As a working group of more than 80 organisations from around the world committed to advancing asset recovery, we would like to start by reiterating the importance of civil society as fundamental to the fight against corruption, as recognised in UNCAC Article 13, and the participation of civil society as an essential component of the asset recovery process.

Across the world, civil society has and is playing an important role in ensuring asset recovery is not only successful, but is carried out in a way that is accountable, transparent and that ensures the participation of the victims of corruption.

This has included developing research into cases and mechanisms for the return of stolen funds, creating guidelines for asset recovery, liaising with partners to identify blocks in cases and collectively working to address those blocks. Civil society has also engaged citizens to explain cases and processes, and started strategic litigation to open up new cases.

More though needs to be done. We need to see greater transparency in the process. We welcome moves made by some State Parties to increase information around asset recovery, but more information on amounts frozen, confiscated and returned needs to be made available. We also need to see greater public disclosure of strategies and agreements around asset recovery so that all stakeholders can understand what is taking place.

Further, we need to see greater accountability in the process. This can take many forms, but in all cases we need to have strong anti-corruption provisions and remedial action so that returned assets do not again become stolen assets. Related to this, we also need to ensure that robust mechanisms for managing assets are established in State Parties, both pre-and post-confiscation so that the value of stolen assets can be maintained.

Finally, we need more participation. Victims groups and civil society can and should give key insights, before the return, on priorities from affected communities, and identifiable victims, and victim groups, should be given standing to express their views in court cases.

This pre-return participation can ensure that victims are fully compensated for the harm caused and can work to have those communities and victims engaged in the return.

Participation should continue into the return itself, with civil society playing a key role in ensuring that returned funds achieve agreed aims.

In this regard, we welcome moves to hold a special session on asset recovery as a way to build greater cooperation around the return of stolen assets and urge for this to take place as soon as possible.

Done right, asset recovery is not only a remedial measure to address corruption, but is an active part of creating societies free of corruption in the first place. Including civil society in the process is essential to this.