

25th May 2018



(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

Media Contact: Abdul-Kudus Husein
Communications Officer
Tel: +233 (0) 244770983
Email: akudus@gaccgh.org

Open letter to African leaders: 157 CSO's demand an end to corruption now!

Attention:

H.E. Hon. Moussa Faki Mahama, Chairperson, African Union Commission

H.E. President Paul Kagame, Chairperson, African Union and President of the Republic of Rwanda

H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari, Champion of the 2018 AU theme and President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Hon. Begoto Miarom, Chairperson, AU Advisory Board on Corruption

Dear Hon. Moussa Faki Mahama,

We welcome the African Union's 2018 theme, Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation. It provides a critical opportunity to make progress in the fight against corruption and to mitigate its corrosive impacts on prosperity, growth, security and the fight against extreme poverty. We urge the African Union and Member States to seize this opportunity and deliver meaningful anti-corruption commitments at the July Summit.

The African Union's focus on combating corruption comes at a critical juncture. African citizens consistently place corruption among their top concerns. Corruption among government officials and bureaucracies has increased over the last decade according to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance. The Panama Papers and other recent investigative leaks have exposed numerous flaws in anti-corruption regimes across the continent. The 2015 report issued by the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, led by former President Thabo Mbeki, estimated that more than US\$50 billion illicitly flows out of the continent every year.

The AU's Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, adopted in 2003, outlines a robust set of principles, including rooting out corruption, strengthening democratic principles, institutions, and the rule of law, and increasing transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs. Yet implementation of the Convention's principles has been uneven and inadequate across the continent.

State effectiveness and legitimacy are critical for building African government systems that are responsive and accountable to the needs of their citizens. Yet these key ingredients of lasting development remain weak across the continent. Roughly half of the respondents to the most recent Afrobarometer survey report having little or no trust in legislative bodies, courts, police, national electoral commissions, and opposition parties. Roughly two-thirds believe their government is doing a poor job of improving the living standards of the poor and in fighting corruption. Nearly a third believe people fail to report corruption because they are afraid of the consequences.

Africa is at a critical tipping point. The continent's population is expected to double by 2050, with half of those under the age of 25. An estimated 22.5 million Africans will enter the workforce each year. This poses an opportunity or risk to the continent, depending on whether African governments are able to harness the potential of their youth. The ability and willingness of governments to be responsive to their citizens and invest in measures that create lasting economic growth and development will determine Africa's future.

To rebuild citizen trust in governments and to enable citizens and governments to work together to build a better future, citizens must be able to track budgets and follow the money from resources to results, and citizens, an independent media, and appropriate judicial and legislative checks and balances must be able to hold leaders accountable.

Meaningful steps toward making this vision a reality must be taken in 2018. It is imperative that concrete progress to combat corruption be made at the AU Heads of State Summit in July 2018. Vague or rhetorical promises to fight corruption will be insufficient to rebuild citizen trust in government and ensure that all Africans have equal opportunities to thrive.

We, the below signatories, call on the African Union and Members States to deliver an ambitious declaration at the 2018 July summit that includes concrete commitments to prevent further corruption, give credible anti-corruption bodies and law-enforcement agencies the arsenal needed to effectively combat corruption, and that ensure that citizens have the information necessary to restore confidence in government institutions.

We urge you to seize this opportunity to make progress in the fight against corruption. We stand ready to play an active and constructive role as you plan this important event.

Yours Sincerely,

Signatories - 157 NGOS from 37 Countries in Africa

####

Note to Editors

- 157 CSO's from 37 African countries have written an open letter to African leaders demanding an end to corruption and to ensure an ambitious outcome from the African Heads of States summit to be held in Mauritania in July.
- 2018 is the AU year of winning the fight against corruption. It provides a critical opportunity for African governments to go beyond rhetoric and deliver concrete action to combat corruption. Africa's leaders have long paid lip service to tackling corruption – it's time for action, not talk.
- According to respondents to the most recent Afrobarometer survey:
 - Two-thirds believe their government is doing a poor job of improving the living standards of the poor and in fighting corruption.
 - Roughly half report having lost trust in legislative bodies, courts, police, national electoral commissions, and opposition parties.
 - Nearly a third believe that people do not report corruption because they are afraid of the consequences.[1]
- The ONE Campaign's Trillion Dollar Scandal report estimates that developing countries lose more than \$1 trillion annually to corruption and shady deals, many involving the use of anonymous companies.[2]
- Civic space for citizens' participation is critical to ensure that citizens can monitor public resources to improve accountability.
- Openness in government procurement, tax and company ownership transparency to help end illicit financial flows out of Africa are key demands from CSOs across Africa.

[1]Afrobarometer, 2014/15 survey, <http://afrobarometer.org/>.

[2]The ONE Campaign, 2014, "Trillion Dollar Scandal," [https://s3.amazonaws.com/one.org/pdfs/Trillion Dollar Scandal report EN.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/one.org/pdfs/Trillion_Dollar_Scandal_report_EN.pdf).