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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction and Background	2
2.	Priorities and Deliverables	3
2.1	Priority 1: Strengthen the Public Sector by Promoting Transparency, Integrity and Accountability	3
	Deliverables	5
2.2	Priority 2: Increase Efficiency of Asset Recovery Measures	5
	Deliverables	6
2.3	Priority 3: Enhance and Mobilise the Inclusive Participation of the Public Sector, Private Sector, Civil Society and Academia to Prevent and Combat Corruption	6
	Deliverables	7
2.4	Priority 4: Enhance Whistle-Blower Protection Mechanism	7
	Deliverables	8

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Corruption is a serious challenge that severely impacts domestic resource mobilisation, limiting the financial means available for development while impeding economic growth. Further to this, it threatens the integrity of markets and undermines fair competition. Corruption also erodes public trust, deepens inequality, and can contribute to conflict. The evolving complexity and forms of corruption can destabilise coordinated efforts by governments and undermine the global fight against corruption if left unattended. The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) in 2010 thus presented a significant development in G20 cooperation on this issue.

The ACWG's work is guided by the St. Petersburg Strategic Framework of 2013, which provides a foundation for the ACWG's Action Plans. The G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plans are periodically updated with fixed timeframes, identifying priorities for actions focused on practical and valuable contributions to international efforts to combat corruption and demonstrating the leadership and commitment of G20 countries. South Africa's Presidency will be guided by the G20 ACWG Action Plan 2025-2027.

In pursuing a comprehensive and holistic approach towards implementing anti-corruption measures, the ACWG acknowledges the important contributions of the G20 Engagement Groups and thus collaborates with the Business 20 (B20), Civil Society 20 (C20), Think 20 (T20), and Supreme Audit Institutions 20 (SAI20). The ACWG also works closely with relevant international organisations, namely the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the World Bank; the Financial Action Task Force (FATF); and the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL). among others, to provide guidance on G20 priorities and assistance to G20 members.

South Africa's Presidency will build on previous G20 commitments as well as enhance efforts to ensure the timely implementation of international legal instruments that G20 members are parties to. Taking into consideration commitments made in the ACWG Action Plan 2025-2027, South Africa's Presidency will endeavour to continue discussions on mainstreaming a gender perspective into the G20's anti-corruption efforts.

The theme for South Africa’s G20 Presidency is Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability. Effective anti-corruption measures are thus crucial for creating a more equitable, cooperative, and sustainable world by enhancing fairness, building trust, and ensuring the effective use of resources.

South Africa will use the opportunity presented by its Presidency of the G20 to advance the priorities of the African Union’s Agenda 2063, in particular, Aspiration 3: An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice, and the Rule of Law, which corresponds to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Co-chaired by South Africa and Brazil, the ACWG will hold three technical meetings in 2025 which will precede the Ministerial meeting. In line with the theme of its Presidency and the G20 ACWG Action Plan 2025-2027, South Africa’s Presidency, the ACWG will focus on the following four key priorities:

- Strengthen the public sector by promoting transparency, integrity, and accountability
- Increase efficiency of asset recovery measures
- Enhance and mobilise the inclusive participation of the public sector, private sector, civil society, and academia to prevent and combat corruption
- Enhance whistle-blower protection mechanisms.

2. PRIORITIES AND DELIVERABLES

2.1 PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHEN THE PUBLIC SECTOR BY PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Strengthening the public sector is key to promoting transparency, integrity, and good governance. It enables public officials to perform their duties conscientiously, fostering a strong sense of public service and an ethical commitment to the social and economic security of their countries.

While notable progress has been achieved, countries still face challenges in implementing effective measures to enhance transparency, integrity, and

accountability, as well as in developing standards of conduct and appropriate disciplinary measures.

Article 7 of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) calls upon States Parties to adopt, maintain, and strengthen systems for the recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion, and retirement of public officials based on principles such as efficiency, transparency, and objective criteria like merit, equity, and aptitude.

The importance of strengthening the public service was further emphasised in the political declaration titled *Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation* adopted by the UN General Assembly Special Session against Corruption in June 2021. In the declaration, countries commit to fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, legality, integrity, and fairness in the public sector. This commitment is to be achieved by applying anti-corruption obligations and measures, codes of conduct, and other ethical standards for all public officials, including executives, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, members of parliaments, and judicial bodies, while respecting their independence, especially those exposed to high corruption risks. The declaration also promotes the development of public ethics and integrity programmes for public bodies, taking into consideration their institutional characteristics and domestic legal frameworks. It also provides training to public officials and ensures that, where appropriate, public bodies have the mandate and capacity to effectively monitor the programmes.

Two resolutions adopted at the 10th session of the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) of the UNCAC in 2023, specifically resolution 10/1 titled *Atlanta 2023: Promoting integrity, accountability and transparency in the fight against corruption*, and resolution 10/5 titled *Measures to address corruption involving organised criminal groups* call upon States Parties to develop and foster measures to strengthen the integrity of their public sector institutions. Strengthening the public service requires sustained efforts, which may include institutional, legislative, and policy changes and developing education and training programmes to enable public officials to perform their functions effectively and efficiently.

G20 countries possess substantive expertise and resources to strengthen the public sector. To contribute to the global efforts in enhancing transparency, integrity, and good governance, the G20 ACWG 2025 proposes developing a

compendium on strengthening the public sector and a ministerial declaration to support countries in enhancing transparency, ethics and accountability within the public sector.

DELIVERABLES

- Compendium of good practices in promoting a transparent, ethical, and accountable public sector.
- Ministerial declaration.

2.2 PRIORITY 2: INCREASE EFFICIENCY OF ASSET RECOVERY MEASURES

The return of illicitly acquired assets to their rightful owners is a fundamental principle of UNCAC, which urges States Parties to afford one another the widest measure of cooperation and assistance. Recovered assets can be reinvested into the economy, providing resources for development projects that promote economic growth and improve living standards.

Guided by UNCAC, the G20's Nine Key Principles on Asset Recovery (2011), the High-Level Principles on Cooperation on Persons Sought for Corruption and Asset Recovery (2016), and the High-Level Principles on Strengthening Asset Recovery Mechanisms for Combatting Corruption (2023), G20 members remain committed to the strengthening of asset recovery efforts.

Asset recovery is a challenge for most countries as it often involves navigating complex legal systems and multiple jurisdictions, with countries having different laws and procedures for the tracing, freezing, confiscating, recovery, and return of the proceeds of crime. As encapsulated in the political declaration by the United Nations' Special Session of the General Assembly against Corruption, States Parties are encouraged to "remove barriers to applying measures for the recovery of assets, in particular by simplifying their legal procedures, where appropriate and in accordance with their domestic laws."

Limited resources and capacity, including a shortage of skilled personnel, advanced technological tools, and financial resources, hinder the ability of countries to effectively pursue asset recovery. In addressing these challenges, there is a need to build and strengthen institutional and operational capacity, including through technical assistance, in order to enhance the identification and management of seized and confiscated assets.

G20 countries, representing some of the world's largest economies, possess considerable knowledge and expertise in asset recovery. Strengthening efforts to share this valuable knowledge and skills with developing countries could significantly benefit those seeking assistance. In 2017, the G20 ACWG approved Brazil's proposal to map the G20's landscape on international assistance provisions. To this end, the G20 ACWG countries were requested to provide information on their potential and ongoing international assistance activities through a standard questionnaire. The South African Presidency seeks to build on this initiative by producing a follow-up report on technical assistance provisions, which will include tangible proposals for future capacity building.

DELIVERABLES

- High-Level Principles on the Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets.
- Follow-up report on impact of technical assistance support by G20 ACWG countries.
- Side event on Efficiency of Asset Recovery Measures.

2.3 PRIORITY 3: ENHANCE AND MOBILISE THE INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND ACADEMIA TO PREVENT AND COMBAT CORRUPTION

Corruption affects all members of society in different ways and therefore collective efforts by multi-stakeholders are crucial in combatting corruption, strengthening a culture of integrity and promoting sustainable economic growth worldwide. The meaningful inclusion of society in anti-corruption national and international efforts has demonstrated the important role society at large can play in preventing and countering corruption. In addition, the youth play an integral role in these efforts with their enthusiasm, creativity, commitment to justice and ability to adapt to emerging technologies in a changing world. Equally, education plays a crucial role in preventing corruption and raising awareness of its harmful effects, as reflected in Article 13 of UNCAC and as reinforced by the CoSP in resolution 9/8.

In its resolution 10/1, titled *Atlanta 2023: Promoting integrity, accountability and transparency in the fight against corruption*, the UNCAC CoSP reiterated that “the active participation of society is integral to complementing States’ efforts in the prevention of and the fight against corruption and promoting transparency, integrity and accountability.” States Parties were urged to “put in place and

effectively implement policies and practices, within their means and in accordance with the fundamental principles of their domestic laws, that allow individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental and community-based organisations, the private sector, academia, and media, to be able to contribute in this regard, also thereby promoting accountability, including through the full and effective implementation of Article 13 of the Convention.”

The G20 recognises that a shared commitment from multi-stakeholders, including stronger partnerships between the public sector, private sector, civil society, and academia, consistent with domestic laws, is necessary to effectively combat corruption. This priority will build on previous G20 initiatives, including the G20 High-Level Principles on Incentives for the Private Sector to Adopt Comprehensive and the Consistent Integrity Measures to Prevent and Combat Corruption adopted during the Brazilian Presidency.

DELIVERABLES

- A compendium of good practices on the role of multi-stakeholders in preventing and combatting corruption.
- Side event on the role of the public sector, private sector, civil society, and academia in preventing and combating corruption.

2.4 PRIORITY 4: ENHANCE WHISTLE-BLOWER PROTECTION MECHANISM

The protection of whistle-blowers and other categories of reporting persons is one of the key elements to better prevent, detect and prosecute corruption. However, the reluctance of individuals to report corruption for fear of retaliation has been identified by States Parties to the Convention as one of the challenges to better implement UNCAC.

Article 33 of UNCAC provides that each State Party shall consider incorporating appropriate measures into its domestic legal system to provide protection against any unjustified treatment for any person who reports in good faith and on reasonable grounds to the competent authorities any facts concerning offences established in accordance with the Convention. In December 2023, UNCAC CoSP adopted resolution 10/8 on the Protection of Reporting Persons, which highlights the importance of reporting and protecting the persons who report acts of corruption. It also recognises whistleblowers as a specific category of reporting

persons who report wrongdoing in their professional activity and work-related environment.

As a follow-up to the OECD Study on G20 Whistle-blower Protection Frameworks, the Compendium of Best Practices and Guiding Principles for Legislation (2011) and the G20 High-Level Principles for the Effective Protection of Whistleblowers (2019), the G20 ACWG, under South Africa's Presidency, will explore legislative reforms and other measures that G20 members have implemented to protect whistleblowers. This includes protection of the whistle-blowers' identities to ensure that citizens can report instances of corruption without fear of retaliation.

DELIVERABLES

- Accountability report with a focus on effective protection of whistle-blowers.
- Side event on effective whistle-blowers protection mechanisms.