



European Union

EU Statement

**Open-ended Intergovernmental
Working Group on Asset Recovery**

United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

Vienna, 3–5 September 2025

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: [...]

The European Union thanks the Chair for the opportunity to contribute to this important thematic discussion on beneficial ownership transparency, asset recovery, and innovative measures to combat corruption and organised crime.

Asset recovery remains a cornerstone of our efforts against corruption. The recent adoption in 2024 of the EU Directive on Asset Recovery and Confiscation is a major milestone. It sets common standards across EU Member States for tracing, freezing, and confiscating criminal assets, including unexplained wealth linked to organised crime. EU Member States will now develop national strategies to make this process more coordinated and effective mainly in order to facilitate cross-border cooperation

The EU recognises that effective asset recovery hinges on robust access to reliable beneficial ownership information. The EU Anti-Money Laundering Directives enhance transparency by requiring centralised registers of beneficial ownership information, accessible to competent authorities and, under certain conditions, to the public. These legislative measures address critical vulnerabilities exploited for the concealment of illicit assets and are aligned with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards on transparency. It is essential that ownership structures are transparent to trace illicit assets in order to facilitate their freezing, seizure and possible confiscation in criminal proceedings and ensure they can be recovered and returned.

Likewise, beneficial ownership transparency is critical for preventing and detecting corruption and money laundering. The need for adequate, accurate

and up-to-date information on the beneficial owner is a key factor in tracing criminals who might otherwise hide their identity behind a corporate structure. With a view to enhancing transparency for combatting the misuse of legal entities, the EU directives require that beneficial ownership information is stored in a central register.

The Protect EU Internal Security Strategy adopted last April underlines the need for stronger cooperation between EU Member States and EU agencies to tackle serious and organised crime, including through enhanced asset recovery mechanisms.

Chair,

In line with the thematic agenda of today's session, the EU also promotes the use of alternative enforcement approaches, emphasising the need for strengthened mutual legal assistance (MLA), and for enhancing the use of non-criminal judicial assistance, civil litigation, and considering mechanisms targeting illicit enrichment, which are key themes of agenda point (b). These tools complement traditional criminal procedures by providing flexible and effective means to recover assets in complex or multi-jurisdictional cases.

Moreover, the EU and its Member States further support international cooperation, capacity-building initiatives and technical assistance. We continue to work with partner countries to strengthen their ability to trace, freeze and recover illicit assets to improve Member States' and partners' abilities to collect, verify, and exchange beneficial ownership data, and to implement effective asset recovery mechanisms. We also support the development of secure, interoperable IT systems to enable seamless information exchange, which is crucial to overcoming jurisdictional fragmentation. Such cooperation ensures that asset recovery contributes meaningfully to sustainable development and the rule of law globally.

We need to collectively improve the implementation of existing anti-money laundering frameworks, and enhance coordination between financial intelligence units, law enforcement, and judicial authorities at both regional and international levels. The exchange of best practices and adoption of technological innovations remain priorities to increase the speed and success of asset recovery proceedings and return to the communities most affected by corruption.

In closing, the EU reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive, coordinated approach to asset recovery, one that combines transparency, innovation, and cooperation to uphold justice and the rule of law worldwide.

Thank you.