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GA 2: Economic and Financial Committee (ECOFIN)

Research Report

Topic 3: Recognising the pressing need for better frameworks to eradicate corruption in East Africa



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Introduction

Countries located on the Eastern part of Africa have been facing high levels of corruption, the corrupt activities taking place include but are not limited to bribery, sextortion for land access, and illegal displacement of smallholder farmers. Corruption in societies has different forms and is not concretely defined, but all scholars can agree that its meaning is similar to an “abuse of power in order to conduct illegal activities.” A result of corrupt governments in East Africa has been hunger and malnourishment, economic downturn, lack of stability, and declining sustainability and growth rate as well as a rise in gender inequality, violence against minorities, and lower life expectancy.

Therefore, to hopefully improve this current situation, this research report will further explain the problem of the third topic, mention the countries involved and their way of involvement, as well as briefly explain the previous resolutions and attempts to solve this issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Bribery: Bribery refers to the offering, giving, soliciting, or receiving of any item of value as a means of influencing the actions of an individual holding a public or legal duty.

Sextortion: The practice of extorting money or sexual favours from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity.

Economic downturn: An economic downturn is a period of declining economic activity characterized by a reduction in GDP, employment, and consumer spending.

Capacity Building: The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations, and communities need to not only survive, but also adapt and thrive.

Background Information:

Corruption remains a challenge for governments in many East African states as it affects economic growth, public service delivery, and trust in public institutions. Transparency International's regional bribery surveys show widespread bribery in public services such as law enforcement, tax,

and licensing. This highlights how deeply corruption is embedded in everyday interactions between citizens and government officials.¹

Efforts to strengthen regional cooperation have been created such as the **Eastern Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (EAAACA)**, to improve cross-border cooperation, asset recovery, and integrity in public procurement. However, the corruption rate remains high in many Eastern African states because of the abuse of power and status in these countries. Certain workshops and associations lack the structure and systematic approach, as well as power and authority, to make significant difference, and are in need of international recognition and cooperation in order to improve the corruption state in East Africa²

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): The DRC struggles with large-scale corruption in natural resource management and public administration, which undermines development and regional security.

Somalia: Somalia experiences severe corruption driven by prolonged conflict, weak state institutions, and reliance on donor funding. Somalia is statistically known as “the most corrupt country in the world.”

South Sudan: Widespread corruption linked to conflict and oil revenue management has severely undermined governance in South Sudan.

United States: The U.S. supports anti-corruption reforms in East Africa through development aid, sanctions, and governance programs, viewing corruption as a threat to regional stability and economic growth.

¹ Transparency International, *Uganda tops East Africa in corruption*, press release, accessed December 24, 2025, <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/uganda-tops-east-africa-in-corruption>

² Eastern Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (EAAACA), *About EAAACA*, accessed December 24, 2025, <https://eaaaca.com/>

United Kingdom: The UK promotes transparency and anti-corruption initiatives in East Africa through aid programs and financial oversight, particularly to prevent illicit financial flows through global banking systems.

Germany: Germany funds governance and institutional capacity-building programs in East Africa, emphasizing transparency as a prerequisite for sustainable development and investment.

China: China has significant infrastructure investments in East Africa

United Arab Emirates: The UAE is involved due to its role as a financial and trade hub linked to East African capital flows.

Norway: Norway supports transparency and anti-corruption reforms, particularly in natural resource governance, to ensure sustainable development and prevent misuse of public funds.

Relevant UN Resolutions

1. [Resolution 58/4 – General Assembly \(2003\)](#)

(only some relevant clauses are mentioned)

“3. Urges all States and competent regional economic integration organizations to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption as soon as possible in order to ensure its rapid entry into force.

“6. Requests the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to address the criminalization of bribery of officials of public international organizations, including the United Nations, and related issues, taking into account questions of privileges and immunities, as well as of jurisdiction and the role of international organizations, by, inter alia, making recommendations regarding appropriate action in that regard.”

2. [Resolution 9/4 – Conference on the States Parties \(CoPS\) \(2021\)](#)

(only some relevant clauses are mentioned)

“6. Requests States parties to take appropriate measures, within their means and in accordance with fundamental principles of their domestic law, to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption and to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption.

“10. Requests the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, to continue and expand its regional approach methodology and establish further regional platforms, upon request by States parties, bearing in mind the characteristics of each region and the fact that its objective is not to duplicate activities but rather to build partnerships with other relevant technical assistance providers.”

3. [Political Declaration S-32/1 – General Assembly Special Session on Corruption \(UNGASS\) \(2021\)](#)

(only some relevant clauses are mentioned)

“1. We recognize the need and reaffirm our responsibility to take urgent action to prevent corruption from occurring by putting in place preventive measures, policies and practices as outlined in chapter II of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and by strengthening practical tools, continuing to gather and share good practices and enhancing efforts and resources for education and training in the public and private sectors, while acknowledging the role of all individuals and groups outside the public sector engaged in prevention as one of the main pillars in the fight against corruption. We will promote transparency, accountability, integrity and a culture of rejection of corruption at all levels of society as a basis for preventing corruption and ending impunity.

“6. We will strengthen our efforts to prevent, identify and manage conflicts of interest, including by assessing and mitigating corruption risks and through effective and transparent financial disclosure systems, with information disclosed by appropriate public officials made available as widely as possible, and we will use innovative and digital technology in this field, with due regard for data protection and privacy rights.”

“17. We will take measures to prevent the financial system from being abused to hide, move and launder assets stemming from corruption, including when vast quantities of assets are involved. Those crimes undermine the integrity of the financial system, and we commit to promoting the implementation of the Convention and our respective applicable international obligations.”

Previous Attempts to Address the Issue

UN General Assembly Special Session on Corruption (UNGASS): The Resolution 58/4 established the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). As the first global and legally binding anti-corruption instrument, the UNCAC focuses on identifying specific acts of corruption that should be established as criminal offences by every State adhering to the Convention. Additionally, it sets norms, standards, and obligations for States Parties to prevent as well as penalise corruption, strengthen transparency and accountability in public affairs.

The resolution also established a Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) that adopted further resolutions on corruption, like Resolution 9/4.

UNODC: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime leads regional anti-corruption initiatives. These initiatives help governments follow specific United Nations Commission Against Crime (UNCAC) requirements and support institutional capacity building, as well as promote asset recovery and transparency efforts.

Donor-supported anti-corruption programmes: To reduce corruption, anti-corruption programmes were created. These programmes consist of funding institutional reforms, establishing governance conditionalities³ connected to aid, and developing the abilities of courts, police, and

³ Refers to the practice of International Organizations and States of making aid agreements with another State, subject to conditions based on the recipient States' financial stability, good governance, respect for human rights, democracy, or its current state of peace and security.

auditors. The World Bank, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the EU, and bilateral donors were the main sources of funding for the programmes.

East Africa Anti-Corruption Authorities Association (EAACAA): This association created a professional network of anti-corruption agencies from East Africa and it initiated an exchange of best practices, joint anti-corruption investigations, and capacity building.

Possible Solutions

Strengthening the implementation of the UNCAC could be achieved by making the UNCAC's peer reviews⁴ more extensive and more frequent. This could be extremely beneficial, as the Conventions' enforcement is weak and unequal.

Integrating anti-corruption targets into Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and national development plans. This would make corruption a core development issue and guarantee its eradication in East Africa. If corruption was seen as a core development issue, a straightforward way to ameliorate the countries' economy would be to limit, or abolish corruption.

Assuring International asset recovery and financial transparency. This could be achieved by expanding the UNODC- led asset recovery cooperation. As a result, this could reduce corruption and restore stolen wealth to public use, since stolen public funds are often hidden abroad.

⁴ The UNCAC peer review mechanism helps parties assess their national anti-corruption laws, processes, as well as institutions. The peer reviews also empower corrupt nations to learn from and help each other.

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