

Concept Note

International Close-Out Conference on Measuring and Curbing Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs)

From Measurement to Policy Action: Lessons, Results and the Way Forward

Venue: Africa Hall, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Date: 22-24 September 2026

Organizers: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

1. Background

Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) continue to undermine sustainable development by eroding domestic resource mobilization, weakening governance systems, and constraining investments in economic and social development. Recognizing the importance of addressing this challenge, the United Nations Development Account Project 15 on *Measuring and Curbing Illicit Financial Flows* was launched to strengthen the capacities of developing countries to measure IFFs, report on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 16.4.1, and formulate evidence-based policies to reduce IFFs.

Over the course of the project, nine pilot countries from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Arab region received technical support in statistical capacity development, methodological implementation, institutional strengthening, and policy design. Participating countries established national technical working groups, applied internationally endorsed methodologies, produced preliminary estimates of illicit financial flows, strengthened inter-agency collaboration, and, in several cases, developed policy measures and monitoring frameworks to address identified IFFs risks.

As the project reaches completion, Output OP3.4 envisages an international knowledge-sharing policy forum and close-out conference to be hosted by ECA in Addis Ababa. The conference will bring together participating countries, regional commissions, United Nations entities, experts, and development partners to review achievements, share lessons learned, showcase methodological and policy innovations, and discuss strategies for sustaining national and global efforts to measure and curb illicit financial flows beyond the project period.

2. Rationale

Significant progress has been made in recent years toward developing internationally agreed concepts, definitions and methodologies for measuring IFFs. However, many countries continue to face challenges in institutionalizing measurement systems, producing regular estimates, reporting on SDG Indicator 16.4.1, and translating analytical findings into effective policy interventions.

Experiences from the pilot countries have demonstrated that sustainable progress depends on several key factors, including political commitment, strong institutional coordination mechanisms, effective technical working groups, access to relevant data, analytical capacity, and continued knowledge exchange among countries and international partners.

The close-out conference will therefore provide a timely platform to:

- Present the key achievements and results of the project;
- Share national experiences and lessons learned in measuring IFFs;
- Showcase policy responses, risk assessments and institutional reforms developed under the project;
- Present the refined statistical framework, methodologies and implementation guidance;
- Discuss pathways for institutionalizing national IFFs measurement systems and reporting mechanisms;
- Strengthen the emerging global community of practice on IFFs measurement and policy responses.

3. Objectives

Overall Objective

To strengthen international cooperation, knowledge exchange and policy engagement on measuring and curbing IFFs, while promoting sustainable implementation of evidence-based strategies and reporting on SDG Indicator 16.4.1.

Specific Objectives

The conference aims to:

1. Share lessons learned from project implementation across participating countries and regions.
2. Present national experiences in measuring IFFs and compiling SDG Indicator 16.4.1.
3. Showcase evidence-based policy responses designed to mitigate and prevent IFFs.
4. Discuss methodological advancements and enhancements to the global statistical framework for measuring IFFs.

5. Consolidate and strengthen the Community of Practice on IFFs measurement and policy action.
6. Identify opportunities for future partnerships, technical cooperation and resource mobilization to scale up efforts beyond the project lifecycle.

4. Expected Outcomes

The conference is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Enhanced knowledge exchange among participating countries, regional institutions and international organizations.
2. Increased awareness of practical approaches and good practices for measuring and reducing illicit financial flows.
3. Wider dissemination of project findings, methodologies and policy innovations.
4. Strengthened regional and interregional cooperation on IFFs measurement and policy responses.
5. Development of recommendations for sustaining and institutionalizing national IFFs measurement systems.
6. Reinforcement of the global Community of Practice and knowledge-sharing platform on IFFs.

5. Participants

The conference is expected to convene approximately **60-80 participants**, including:

- Government officials, statisticians and technical experts from participating pilot countries;
- National and international project consultants;
- United Nations Resident Coordinators and representatives of UN Country Teams;
- Representatives of the regional commissions (ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA);
- SDG 16.4.1 custodian agencies, namely UNCTAD and UNODC;
- Development partners, research institutions, academia, civil society organizations and other stakeholders engaged in governance, statistics and domestic resource mobilization.

6. Key Deliverables

The conference will produce the following key outputs:

1. A comprehensive conference report documenting discussions, findings and recommendations;
2. A synthesis report on lessons learned and good practices emerging from pilot countries;
3. Recommendations for strengthening national capacities to compile and report on SDG Indicator 16.4.1;
4. A roadmap for sustaining and institutionalizing national IFFs measurement systems;

5. Strengthened collaboration and networking through an enhanced global Community of Practice on IFFs measurement and policy responses.

7. Conclusion

This conference constitutes the culminating activity under **Output OP3.4** of the Development Account Project on Measuring and Curbing IFFs. It will serve as a unique platform for participating countries and partners to present methodologies, share national experiences and policy responses, exchange lessons learned, and identify priorities for future action. By bridging the gap between measurement and policy implementation, the conference will contribute to advancing national, regional and global efforts to combat illicit financial flows and support sustainable development outcomes.