



PRESS RELEASE

ESAAMLG and Open Ownership partner to strengthen the effectiveness of transparency frameworks for companies

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New agreement signals increased efforts to improve transparency in Eastern and Southern Africa

KIGALI, Rwanda - The Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) and Open Ownership today announce their new partnership to improve transparency of company ownership in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The announcement of a new Memorandum of Understanding between the organisations comes during the ESAAMLG Annual [meetings](#) in Kigali, Rwanda. Open Ownership also delivered a session for ESAAMLG member countries during the week.

This collaboration aims to support ESAAMLG member countries to strengthen beneficial ownership transparency frameworks and their implementation, ensuring the true owners of companies and other legal arrangements are disclosed, and data is used by law enforcement and competent authorities, in line with Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Standards.

Key aspects of the partnership include technical assistance and training to member countries, regional research on measuring the effectiveness of beneficial ownership frameworks, and promotion of best practices and peer learning. It is expected that this partnership will enable ESAAMLG member countries to achieve desired outcomes for beneficial ownership transparency reforms. This partnership will also pave the way for new knowledge on these crucial issues to support other actors working on this in the region and internationally, due to the cross-border nature of illicit flows.

Thom Townsend, Open Ownership's Executive Director, noted: "Anonymous ownership structures feature in the majority of major cross-border corruption cases, making it critical that beneficial ownership data is accurate, accessible, and connected both across national agencies and internationally. This kind of collaboration is vital to ensuring that beneficial ownership reforms deliver meaningful results in the fight against financial crime and corruption."



Photo: ESAAMLG and Open Ownership announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. Pictured (left-right): Karabo Rajuili, Open Ownership's Director of Country Implementation; Adv. Xolisile Khanyile, Chair of Open Ownership's International Advisory Board; Ms. Fikile P. Zitha, Executive Secretary of ESAAMLG; and Christine Wachira, Regional Manager for Africa, OO.

The Executive Secretary of ESAAMLG, Ms. Fikile P. Zitha, said, "This partnership will strengthen the institutional capacity of ESAAMLG member countries by bringing specialised expertise and practical knowledge. It will support member countries in translating FATF requirements into effective national frameworks, improving compliance with Recommendations 24 and 25 and strengthening effectiveness under Immediate Outcome 5."

In her capacity as Chair of Open Ownership's International Advisory Board, Advocate Xolisile Khanyile added: "This partnership is a key step for improved use of ownership data by law enforcement actors, prosecutors, financial intelligence units and tax agencies in the region."

Drawing on Open Ownership's hands-on, practical experience working with countries across the region, this partnership will support ESAAMLG and its member countries in more effectively implementing the FATF Standards on transparency and beneficial ownership transparency, serving as a bridge between the written standards and their practical, on-the-ground implementation.

About ESAAMLG: ESAAMLG is an intergovernmental, FATF-Style Regional Body with 22 member countries that promotes the effective implementation of FATF and other international standards to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, proliferation financing and other financial crimes.

About Open Ownership: global non-profit organisation is driving the global shift towards transparency over who owns and controls legal vehicles, known as beneficial ownership transparency. To achieve this, our team of implementation, technology, policy, and research experts: provides technical assistance to implement BOT reforms, builds capacity to use BO data, and conducts research and advocates to shape global policy and practice.

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