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Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative

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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

In Washington, D.C.:

Nadine Ghannam

Phone: (202) 473-3011

E-mail: [nsghannam@ifc.org](mailto:nsghannam@ifc.org)

### **Strategic Reforms Crucial for Stolen Asset Recovery, Finds World Bank Study**

**Washington, D.C., June 21, 2011**— Recent revolutions and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa have raised questions about the capacity of financial centers to stop the flow of resources generated by corruption. *Barriers to Asset Recovery*, released today by the World Bank Group and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) Initiative, advises policy makers on reforms that will enable the recovery of stolen assets.

The study recommends eight strategic actions and other recommendations for policy makers, legislators and practitioners. They include the implementation of new policies and operational procedures to foster trust and mentor other jurisdictions, legislative reforms to facilitate freezing and confiscation of stolen assets, and better application of existing anti-money laundering measures.

A complex process, asset recovery depends on rapid international cooperation and often involves the exchange of sensitive information. It also requires practitioners to be familiar with legal tools and procedures in their own country as well as partner countries.

"There are many obstacles to asset recovery. Not only is it a specialized legal process filled with delays and uncertainty, but there are also language barriers and a lack of trust when working with other countries," said Kevin Stephenson, World Bank Senior Financial Sector Specialist and lead author of the study. "In jurisdictions that do not prioritize these cases, practitioners do not develop the necessary expertise and agencies are not adequately resourced."

The authors consulted over 50 practitioners around the globe, who gave information based on their practical experience. The study analyzes the barriers to recovering stolen assets in foreign jurisdictions, and introduces examples of good practices. It also provides information about asset recovery regimes in various financial centers.

"This study is a powerful tool to help policy makers design a comprehensive strategy for stolen asset recovery, and implement the necessary reforms," said Jean Pesme, Manager of the World Bank's Financial Market Integrity Program and StAR Coordinator. "It can also aid practitioners by showing them how to use existing asset recovery tools more effectively."

The report can be accessed at: <http://issuu.com/world.bank.publications>

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