



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# Code of Conduct for IPU Governance Officials

October 2023

# Table of contents

Page

- Governing the Inter-Parliamentary Union** ..... 3
- Introduction** ..... 3
  - I. Purpose of the Code ..... 3
  - II. Scope of the Code ..... 3
  - III. General principles ..... 4
    - Chapter I - Duty of care ..... 4
    - Chapter II - Honesty and integrity ..... 6
    - Chapter III - Accountability, transparency and openness ..... 7
    - Chapter IV - Dignity and respect ..... 9
  - IV. Reporting and enforcement ..... 11
- Annex I** ..... 14
- Annex II** ..... 15

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This policy may be revised periodically in the light of experience gained and technical developments. Any modification will be notified to the users in due course through policy amendment.

# Governing the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The aim of this Code of Conduct for IPU Governance Officials is to reinforce and sustain a culture of trust and mutual accountability on all levels – for and between Member Parliaments, between Member Parliaments and the IPU Secretariat, and within the Secretariat.

## 1. Vision

Governance Officials are charged with steering the IPU towards its vision.

A world where every voice counts, where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development.

## 2. Mission

The IPU expects the Governance Officials to guide the Organization towards its vision in a manner that is consistent with achieving the objectives spelled out in its Strategy.

The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. We promote democratic governance, institutions and values, working with parliaments and parliamentarians to articulate and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. We work for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.

## 3. Principles and values

To achieve the IPU's vision, it is of utmost importance that IPU Governance Officials act in the best interests of the IPU and abide by the Organization's core values (equality, inclusiveness, respect, integrity and solidarity), when exercising their governance and oversight duties over the IPU's committees, programmes, activities, missions and Assemblies. As the primary representatives of the IPU, Governance Officials must lead by example and strictly abide by the IPU Statutes and Rules and exemplify the IPU's principles and core values.

This Code of Conduct for IPU Governance Officials (the "Code") reflects the core values of the IPU.

## Introduction

### I. Purpose of the Code

1. The purpose of the Code is to assist all Governance Officials in the discharge of their obligations to the IPU, by:
  - (a) establishing the standards and principles of conduct expected of all Governance Officials in undertaking their duties;
  - (b) setting the rules of conduct which underpin these standards and principles and to which all Governance Officials must adhere; and in so doing
  - (c) ensuring public confidence in the standards expected of all Governance Officials and in the commitment of the IPU to upholding these rules.

### II. Scope of the Code

1. The Code applies to all Governance Officials in all aspects of their public life while carrying out their duties and responsibilities as an IPU Governance Official. It does not seek to regulate what Governance Officials do while carrying out their other professional duties or in their private lives.

2. The obligations set out in this Code are complementary to those which apply to all Governance Officials by virtue of the procedural and other rules of the IPU including its Statutes, Rules and the Personal Data Protection Policy.
3. Any potential allegation of harassment including sexual harassment by a Governance Official during IPU Assemblies or other events is governed by the *Policy to prevent and address harassment, including sexual harassment, at IPU Assemblies and other IPU events*.
4. The term Governance Officials comprises:
  - The President of the IPU
  - The Vice-Presidents of the IPU
  - The Presidents and Vice-Presidents of IPU Assemblies
  - Members of the Executive Committee
  - Elected members of IPU statutory and specialized bodies (e.g. Bureaus of Standing Committees, specialized committees, forums, boards, advisory groups, working groups, etc.)
  - Candidates for IPU Governance Official positions
5. The conduct of the Secretary General and other IPU personnel is governed by the *Code of Conduct for IPU Personnel*<sup>1</sup> as well as the *Fraud and Corruption Prevention and Control Policy*<sup>2</sup>, which are complementary to the Staff Rules, Regulations and other procedural rules.
6. This Code is a declaration of intent on behalf of all Governance Officials of the IPU. It is not legally binding, nor is it an agreement or oath. Instead, it is based on the assumption that all Governance Officials of the IPU accept that they shall follow this Code from the day they announce their candidature to become an IPU Governance Official.

### III. General principles

- Duty of care
- Honesty and integrity
- Accountability, transparency and openness
- Dignity and respect

#### Chapter I - Duty of care

1. The duty of care represents the obligation for Governance Officials to operate in the best interest of the IPU. This requires Governance Officials to fulfil their responsibilities in a way that is aligned with and serves the IPU's mission, objectives, strategy and core values. For members of IPU statutory and specialized bodies, acting in the best interest of the IPU is a critical part of their responsibility as custodians of IPU resources, to exercise overall accountability for the use of these resources (financial, physical, intellectual, digital and human resources).
2. Acting in the interest of the IPU
  - 2.1. While Governance Officials' responsibilities to their own parliaments are to be respected, they are expected to work in the best interest of the IPU, keeping in mind its independent, impartial and neutral nature. Governance Officials are expected to act with an understanding that the IPU's work is shaped by incorporating and balancing the interests of various constituencies with the intention of achieving the goals laid down in its strategic objectives.
  - 2.2. Governance Officials are expected to abstain from taking part in the IPU decision-making process when their obligations to their parliaments, or their own private interests, put them in direct conflict of interest with the best interest of the IPU.

<sup>1</sup> Link: <https://www.ipu.org/file/878/download?token=49h3uNlk>

<sup>2</sup> Link: <https://www.ipu.org/file/879/download?token=OEw8bNX4>

### 3. Safeguarding the reputation of the IPU

The behaviour of Governance Officials impacts the reputation of the IPU, whether they are acting in their capacity as Governance Officials or through their other professional duties. They are expected to act as role models and in a way that safeguards the reputation of the IPU.

### 4. Appropriate use of IPU resources

Governance Officials are custodians of IPU resources and must fulfil their duties in a way that promotes accountability over their use by all those involved in meetings, programmes, missions and activities financed by the IPU. Governance Officials may have access to resources, networks and information, including access to the IPU Members Directory, which is subject to the *IPU Personal Data Protection Policy and Procedures*<sup>3</sup>. These assets are to be used solely in the interest of the IPU.

### 5. Adherence to health and safety protocols established by the IPU

Governance Officials are expected to support measures taken by the IPU for a healthy and safe environment during IPU events. This may include adhering to health protocols in the form of health notes or precautionary measures that are to be taken before attending IPU Assemblies, events or conferences, including visits to the IPU Headquarters.

### 6. Governance Officials should:

- Discharge all their professional duties as IPU office holders with diligence and efficiency, to the best of their abilities, to enhance public trust in the IPU;
- Be well aware of the activities and operations of the IPU, and understand the IPU strategy, policies and core values in order to be able to make informed judgments on IPU affairs;
- Develop a shared understanding of risks, including financial, programmatic and reputational risks, and how they should be managed;
- Promote robust, fair and transparent decision-making;
- As appropriate, consider relevant evidence and the views of the stakeholder community in decision-making;
- Attend all meetings which they are required to attend, unless exceptional circumstances make attendance impractical;
- Never undertake any action which would cause damage to the reputation and integrity of the IPU as a whole or of its Members generally;
- Respect the culture, structures and customs of the communities and countries with which the IPU is working while complying with the IPU's codes of conduct and policies and bearing in mind applicable international human rights standards;
- Respect the reporting structure of the IPU and the functions and role of the Secretary General as set out in the Statutes and Rules of the IPU.

### 7. Governance Officials must:

- Make their decisions in good faith, based on a due process, which is fair, balanced and relies on relevant key facts;
- Work together in a democratic spirit showing mutual respect;
- Diligently prioritize and manage risks that could potentially affect the IPU as well as its programmes, missions and activities, including financial, programmatic and reputational risks;
- Protect and preserve the property, assets and resources of the IPU, and use these appropriately;
- Not use social or other media or any means of electronic communication irresponsibly or in a way that may unduly harm the reputation of the IPU and breach their confidentiality obligations;
- Avoid misrepresenting or releasing inaccurate data relating to the IPU or its programmes, activities or missions;
- Not commit the IPU financially unless officially authorized to do so;
- Use information received in confidence only in connection with their duties and in the interests of the IPU.

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<sup>3</sup> Link: <https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/statutes-and-rules-ipu>

## Chapter II - Honesty and integrity

1. Working with integrity requires transparency, impartiality, fairness and truthfulness. As part of this responsibility, all Governance Officials are required to safeguard the interests and objectives of the IPU, act without bias and demonstrate full transparency regarding any private interests that could give rise to actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest.
2. Governance Officials are said to have a conflict of interest when, by act or omission, their private interests interfere with the performance of their official power, role, duty or function within an activity, or with the integrity, independence and impartiality required of their role or position. For greater clarity, a Governance Official's advocacy for policy changes to benefit specific populations or on human rights issues does not raise a conflict of interest if done:  
(i) without putting his or her private interests at stake; and (ii) in a way that respects the IPU's principles, core values and best interests.
3. The IPU *Fraud and Corruption Prevention and Control Policy*<sup>4</sup> defines prohibited practices in which Governance Officials must avoid engaging in at all times.
4. In order to demonstrate integrity, all Governance Officials entrusted with IPU resources must act without prejudice and act in the best interest of the IPU when participating in decision-making processes.
5. Governance Officials should:
  - Take necessary measures not only in response to situations where actual or potential conflicts of interest may arise, but also in situations where the perceptions of conflict of interest can arise;
  - Promote compliance with applicable laws, policies and good governance practices in the conduct of programmes and activities financed by the IPU;
  - Be transparent about those seeking to influence them, including through lobbying practices, by seeking advice and making appropriate disclosures;
  - Never use their position as a Governance Official to obtain personal or professional gain of any sort for themselves, family or friends, associates, or any other organization with which they are involved;
  - Not benefit improperly or allow a third party to benefit improperly (whether directly or indirectly) from association with an enterprise or organization that engages in any business or transaction with the IPU (including association with the management or the holding of a financial interest). Any potential conflict of interest with a supplier, service provider, or business partner (such as family relations or shareholding) must be disclosed;
  - Generally not accept or receive gifts or favours of a value exceeding CHF 200 per gift, related to their position as an IPU Governance Official or receive through their position any hospitality that is not necessary for the performance of their duties (ref. Ch-II. 6).
6. Governance Officials must:
  - Be fully transparent about their private interests insofar as they relate to their position as an IPU Governance Official;
  - Submit to the IPU Director of Support Services in email address [declaration@ipu.org](mailto:declaration@ipu.org), a yearly declaration of all gifts, benefits and hospitality of a value exceeding CHF 200 extended to them while discharging their IPU functions (see form in Annex 2).
  - Not intimidate or exert undue pressure on Secretariat personnel or other Governance Officials to influence policy development, human rights cases (i.e. intimidation and pressure against complainants and other sources of information), or financial, operational or administrative decisions. Governance Officials shall follow the implementation and enforcement procedure described in this Code (Chapter IV);

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/statutes-and-rules-ipu>

- Conduct all official duties with integrity, free from any taint of dishonesty or corruption, including, but not limited to, not engaging in any act of favouritism, nepotism, cronyism or bribery<sup>5</sup>;
- Refrain from abusing their official roles, duties and functions;
- Refrain from providing preferential or unfair treatment;
- Refrain from engaging in the following prohibited practices:
  - (a) Corruption;
  - (b) Fraud;
  - (c) Coercion;
  - (d) Collusion;
  - (e) Abuse<sup>6</sup>;
  - (f) Obstruction;
  - (g) Retaliation;
  - (h) Financing terrorism,
  - (i) Engaging in money laundering
  - (j) Espionage.
- Refrain from unduly taking advantage of the reputation of the IPU to further their private interests or those of associated persons or associated institutions or, where applicable, their political or professional careers;
- Notify the IPU President of any current investigation, prosecution for criminal offences (except minor offences such as traffic violations). In the event that Governance Officials are called upon by the authorities to provide evidence or information, which they possess by virtue of their official position as a Governance Official of the IPU, to the extent permitted by law, they should immediately inform the IPU President, who shall consult with the Secretary General and if appropriate, take note of their guidance and act upon it.

### **Chapter III - Accountability, transparency and openness**

1. Accountability, transparency and openness are key organizational values and critical factors in ensuring that the IPU achieves its strategic objectives.
2. The IPU sees transparency as part of the larger process of informed governance and organizational learning. Transparency makes the IPU a reliable organization and partner and ensures its accountability towards its Members.
3. All Governance Officials are accountable for their decisions and actions and should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.
4. Governance Officials are expected to demonstrate accountability which requires them to:
  - Engage in open and honest communication about the IPU and its work, ensuring that the public feels confident and comfortable interacting with its Members and services;
  - Promote compliance with the policies and procedures of the IPU;
  - Keep up to date with relevant research and evidence related to programmes and activities financed by the IPU;
  - Practice and promote full compliance with restrictions around confidential or sensitive documents or deliberations;
  - Exercise the utmost discretion in regard to all matters of official business and handle all confidential and sensitive information with the greatest care;
  - Remain accountable to the IPU for all decisions and actions;
  - Cooperate with all investigations carried out in relation to any alleged violation of this Code and comply with any final decision (including any resulting action or measure) made in furtherance of such investigations.

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<sup>5</sup> The terms "favouritism", "nepotism", "cronyism", and "bribery" include, without limitation, such conduct as unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice, support or favour shown to friends and family (especially in making appointments), and acceptance, offer or consideration of any improper personal benefit.

<sup>6</sup> UN definition: Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviours that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure or wound someone.

5. Governance Officials must:

- Continue to participate in systems and approaches that promote privacy, integrity and transparency while working on the objectives and strategies of the IPU;
- Continue to focus on highly ethical, effective and transparent governance;
- Step up efforts to prevent, identify and respond to instances and allegations of behaviour that are contrary to the IPU's principles and values;
- Report to their respective parliaments promptly on IPU resolutions or activities undertaken by the IPU.

6. Financial support provided by the IPU to Governance Officials for the IPU Assemblies, meetings, conferences, events, or missions:

In principle, the IPU budget does not cover the costs incurred by Governance Officials. However, in exceptional cases where costs are not wholly borne by the Governance Official<sup>7</sup>, a parliament or an organization, the IPU Secretariat may accept requests to provide financial support. In such case, the following principles apply:

- a) Governance Officials are expected to check the applicable financial procedures with the IPU Secretariat prior to committing to expenses which will be borne by the IPU.
- b) Governance Officials are expected to use IPU funds in a reasonable way as required by ethical standards and only for IPU work-related purposes. These expenses must be authorized in advance by the Secretary General and supported by appropriate original documentation.

7. Communication with third parties and the public:

7.1 Governance Officials representing the IPU in their official capacity as office-holders shall respect outcomes, resolutions and positions adopted by the membership while making official statements. This is specifically important for communication on sensitive matters. For this purpose, Governance Officials shall make it clear to the relevant audience that any personal comments do not represent the position or have the endorsement of the IPU and discuss with the Secretary General before making any statements to media. Governance Officials are also encouraged to carry a disclaimer on social media profiles that makes it clear that any posts do not represent the IPU, and should also refrain from using the IPU logotype on social media accounts.

7.2 Governance Officials shall exercise the utmost discretion regarding all matters of official business and handle all confidential and sensitive information with the greatest care, including the information received during in camera meetings. They shall keep confidential any internal documents and/or proceedings, and not communicate such information to any person unless this information or documentation is already public, or the sharing of such information has received the prior approval of the IPU President. These confidentiality obligations continue after the expiration of their term as a Governance Official.

7.3 In case of doubt, advice should be sought from the designated official of the Secretariat responsible for Communications of the IPU. IPU templates and logos should be used on all IPU documents and emails.

8. Missions for the IPU

While carrying out official duties for the IPU, the Governance Official shall make the necessary arrangements for their missions or visits in close collaboration with the IPU Secretariat. Once the mission or visit is concluded the Governance Official shall submit a formal report to the Secretary General.

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<sup>7</sup> The terms for the IPU President are subject to specific administrative arrangements set out in an information circular.

## 9. Education and training:

Governance Officials have a duty to keep themselves informed of the IPU Statutes and Rules as well as the policies that apply to them in their capacity and to follow the training sessions or programmes that the IPU may organize for them. In case of doubt or uncertainty about the scope or contents of applicable rules or regulations, the Governance Official should consult with the Secretary General.

## 10. Security

Governance Officials acknowledge that, when attending meetings, representing the IPU at external meetings or carrying out missions on behalf of the IPU, they must adhere to the relevant in-country security regulations and any other security instructions.

# Chapter IV - Dignity and respect

## 1. Definitions

For purposes of this Code, the following definitions apply:

- (a) **Discrimination**<sup>8</sup> is any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status. Discrimination may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated or may manifest itself through harassment or abuse of authority.
- (b) **Bullying**<sup>9</sup> is a form of violence that can be defined as unwanted aggressive behaviour which involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. It is a behaviour that is repeated or carries the threat of being repeated over time. Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies (such as social media, messaging platforms and mobile phones).
- (c) **Harassment**<sup>10</sup> is any improper or unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment normally implies a series of incidents based on gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, physical appearance, ethnicity, race, national origin, political affiliation, age, religion or any other reason.
- (d) **Sexual harassment** is a specific type of prohibited conduct. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, non-verbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications, and may occur between persons of the same or different genders.
- (e) **Sexual exploitation** is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- (f) **Sexual abuse** means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

## 2. Examples<sup>11</sup>

Examples of physical, verbal, and psychological violence in an event setting, include but are not limited to:

- pushing and shoving;
- intentional abuse of power relations, offensive behaviour to humiliate or undermine an individual or group;
- aggressive language, profanity, shouting and threats.

Examples of harassment in an event setting, include but are not limited to:

- excluding or isolating a person from professional activities without reason or legitimate authority;
- persistent negative comments to a person or group, including rumour, gossip and ridicule, quid pro quo.

<sup>8</sup> UN Women <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/uncoordination/antiharassment.html>

<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/preventing-bullying-and-violence>

<sup>10</sup> UN Code of Conduct to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at UN System Events

<sup>11</sup> ILO code of conduct for prevention of all forms of violence and harassment at ILO events.

Examples of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment in an event setting, include but are not limited to:

- deliberate and unsolicited physical contact or unnecessarily close physical proximity;
  - sexually oriented comments or gestures about the body, appearance;
  - sexually explicit jokes or propositions and showing or displaying sexually explicit content;
  - comments, questions or insinuations about a person's private life;
  - hostile environment in an event setting leading to sexual harassment;
  - persistent invitations to social activities after the person made it clear they are not welcome;
  - any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another;
  - actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions, such as rape.
3. There shall be zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. Governance Officials must not engage in discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse.
  4. The right to freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental right that contributes to the observance of all other rights and is a critical foundation of democracy. However, the exercise of this right should not violate any of the rights and freedoms of others, including the right to equality and non-discrimination. Governance Officials shall follow the guidelines to manage the use of abusive language in IPU meetings endorsed at the 278th session of Executive Committee ([Annex I](#)).
  5. Governance Officials shall uphold the IPU's commitment to pursue efforts to end sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament and to serve as a role model and reference in this regard for national parliaments and other international organizations.
  6. Harassment, including sexual harassment and other abuses of power such as bullying, can lead to toxic work environments. Such behaviours can cause severe reputational harm to the IPU, its Members and partners. Governance Officials should ensure that such behaviour is not conducted nor tolerated.
  7. Governance Officials should:
    - Show understanding of varied cultures, beliefs and backgrounds in the exercise of their powers, duties and functions, while complying with the IPU's codes of conduct and policies and while bearing in mind applicable international human rights standards;
    - Value and leverage diverse perspectives with a view to making consensual decisions;
    - As part of their advisory and oversight role, ensure the IPU has a working environment based on mutual respect and openness;
    - Set an example as role models for the promotion of gender equality;
    - Embody the IPU's core values of equality, inclusiveness, respect, integrity and solidarity in all IPU-related settings, including field visits, advocacy events and governance meetings.
  8. Governance Officials must:
    - Never engage in bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or other abuses of their power;
    - Not exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour;
    - Act on the basis of equity and non-discrimination when engaging with organizations and individuals;
    - Practice and promote respectful deliberations, decision-making and social interaction at all IPU events;
    - Treat fellow Governance Officials, other delegates, partners, the IPU and host country personnel with courtesy and respect, without harassment, including sexual harassment, or physical or verbal abuse, and not exert undue influence on their activities.

## IV. Reporting and enforcement

The primary responsibility for complying with this Code lies with each Governance Official.

1. **General advice.** Should Governance Officials require guidance regarding potential, perceived or actual conflicts of interest or other ethical dilemmas, they should seek advice from the Secretary General of the IPU.
2. Principles
  - (a) **Disclosing misconduct:** Governance Officials must immediately disclose suspected or observed misconduct to the IPU President or where applicable the Vice-President of the Executive Committee. If they have witnessed harassment, including sexual harassment, at an IPU Assembly or event, they can immediately seek advice and support, and report the matter to the designated focal point(s) and/or to [speakout@ipu.org](mailto:speakout@ipu.org) which will forward the matter to the IPU Secretariat anti-harassment core group.
  - (b) **Discretion:** Governance Officials should show discernment and good judgement and avoid discussing their concerns openly.
  - (c) **Zero tolerance of retaliation:** Threats, intimidation or any other form of retaliation against a person who has made a complaint or provided information in support of a complaint are prohibited. The IPU will take appropriate action to prevent and respond to retaliation, in accordance with its applicable policy, regulations and rules.
  - (d) **False or misleading claims:** A complainant shall never knowingly make a false or misleading claim about prohibited conduct. Knowingly reporting false information is contrary to this Code and, if it is determined further to investigation that the allegations were based on malicious intent, sanctions may be applied (see paragraph 4 under “Informal procedure” below).
3. Due process

In the event of allegations of harassment, including sexual harassment, at an IPU Assembly or event, the complaint procedure as outlined in the *Policy to prevent and address harassment, including sexual harassment at IPU Assemblies and other events* should be followed. The complainant should immediately seek advice and support and report the matter to the designated focal point(s) and/or to [speakout@ipu.org](mailto:speakout@ipu.org), which will forward the matter to the IPU Secretariat anti-harassment core group.

In all other circumstances, the following applies:

### Step 1

## Reporting

Any potential violation of the Code of Conduct by any Governance Official can be reported to the Oversight and Ethics Committee by submitting it to the IPU President in writing.

If the potential violation is against the IPU President, or presented by the IPU President, then the allegation shall be brought to the attention of the Vice-President of the Executive Committee appointed under Rule 5.2 of the Rules of the Executive Committee.

A complaint should normally be filed promptly and at the latest within two years from either the date of the incident or, in the case of repeated incidents, the date of the most recent incident of alleged prohibited conduct.

## Step 2

# Investigation

The IPU President, or when applicable the Vice-President of the Executive Committee, will refer the potential allegation of prohibited conduct to the Secretary General and will inform the Governance Official against whom the allegation has been made.

The Secretary General, with the assistance of the designated responsible officer of the Secretariat, will engage an independent external investigator to investigate and report.

The Secretary General will submit the investigation report to the IPU President or the Vice-President of the Executive Committee where applicable.

If the allegation of prohibited conduct is credible and verifiable but does not merit an investigation, the IPU President can issue a warning to the Governance Official against whom the allegation was received.

If the potential allegation of prohibited conduct is not credible or verifiable, no action is required.

## Step 3

# Review and Sanction

The President or the Vice-President of the Executive Committee will submit the findings of the independent external investigator to the Oversight and Ethics Committee for final review and possible sanctions.

The Oversight and Ethics Committee will review the investigation report with the logistical and administrative support of the designated responsible service of the Secretariat.

The Oversight and Ethics Committee, based on a majority vote, will decide on the possible sanction in accordance with this Code and inform the Governing Council.

- **Recusal.** Should the prohibited conduct directly or indirectly relate to a member of the Oversight and Ethics Committee, the individual concerned will recuse himself/herself from the deliberations and decision on the matter. In addition, if a complainant or an alleged offender is from the same country as one of the members of the above-mentioned Committee, that member must recuse him/herself from taking part in the deliberations and decision on the matter in question.
- **Anonymity.** The identity of the complainant shall be shared, when necessary, with those directly involved in the investigation, but shall not be made public during the investigation, or on publication of the report, unless the complainant gives written consent. Those involved in the investigation are under an obligation to protect the identity of the complainant and a failure to do so may constitute a breach of this Code. All parties to the complaint are under an obligation to protect the identity of any person who provides evidence and a failure to do so may constitute a breach of this Code. When a Governance Official is being investigated in relation to allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, the identity of that Governance Official will be kept confidential until the conclusion of proceedings.

### Informal procedure

1. Should the complainant choose to engage first in an informal procedure, the President, or where applicable the Vice-President of the Executive Committee, may offer the following options:
  - Approach and attempt to rectify the matter with the alleged offender.
  - Involve a third party to facilitate a discussion with the alleged offender.

2. An unsuccessful attempt to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the lodging of a formal complaint.
3. If a complainant wishes to withdraw a complaint at any stage, a written request must be made to the President, or Vice-President of the Executive Committee where applicable.

### **Potential consequences of misconduct**

If a Governance Official acts in a way that is not consistent with the expectations and requirements of this Code, remedial actions shall be determined according to a proportionate, precedent-based approach, and may include the following:

- Formal reprimand by the IPU President or Vice-President of the Executive Committee, in the form of an official letter to the Governance Official concerned and his or her Parliament and the President of his or her geopolitical group.
- Removal from IPU governance duties until certain conditions are satisfied, which could include attending training and workshops.
- Time-bound or indefinite removal from IPU governance duties and IPU Assemblies, events, conferences and meetings.
- Conveying the elements of the complaint to any investigative or disciplinary authority with jurisdiction over the offender, as well as to relevant national authorities, particularly when the investigation concludes that there are credible allegations of criminal conduct.
- Suspending the possibility to hold an official governance position within the IPU.
- The complainant may also seek help from other relevant authorities, such as the police, bearing in mind the applicable legal framework.

## 138th Assembly<sup>12</sup>

### Managing abusive language in IPU meetings

*The right to freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental right that contributes to the observance of all other rights and is a critical foundation of democracy. However, the exercise of this right should not violate any of the rights and freedoms of others, including the right to equality and non-discrimination. Identifying ways to reconcile the need to protect and promote the right to freedom of opinion and expression in IPU meetings while combating discrimination and incitement to hatred is a permanent challenge. The Chairs of Geopolitical Groups and Standing Committees are invited to discuss the following guidelines to manage hate speech and expressions of intolerance in IPU meetings.*

#### **IPU regulations on abusive language**

According to the IPU Rules of the Assembly, the President of the Assembly has the prerogative to call a speaker to order when the latter does not keep to the subject under discussion or prejudices the debate "by using abusive language". The sanction foreseen for a delegate in case of using abusive language is the withdrawal of his/her permission to speak by the President, who may also request that the objectionable words be removed from the record (Rule 24 of the Rules of the Assembly). The President of the Assembly has the responsibility of taking "any measure required" to re-establish the normal working of the Assembly (Rule 25 of the Rules of the Assembly). Similar provisions exist in the Rules of the Governing Council (Rules 24 and 25), the Standing Committees (Rules 30 and 31) and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians (Rules 17 and 18).

These rules constitute the legal framework for managing abusive language in IPU meetings; however, they remain vague and do not define what should be considered as "abusive language". In light of the above, the following guidelines are proposed to facilitate a coherent and more effective implementation of IPU regulations on this matter.

#### **Guidelines to manage the use of abusive language in IPU meetings**

1. The conduct of Members shall be characterised by mutual respect, be based on the values and principles of the IPU as laid down in its IPU Statutes and Rules and shall respect the dignity of all people. Furthermore, it shall not compromise the smooth conduct of business.
2. During debates held in the context of IPU meetings, speakers shall clearly identify themselves, wear their identification badges visibly, and shall refrain from using defamatory, intolerant, racist or xenophobic language.
3. The presiding officer of the meeting (PO) shall call to order any speaker who disrupts the smooth conduct of the proceedings. If the offence is repeated, the Chairperson shall call the speaker to order a second time, and the fact shall be recorded in the minutes.
4. If the disturbance continues, or if a further offence is committed, the speaker may be denied the right to continue to speak. The PO may decide to deactivate the speaker's microphone.
5. Should disturbances threaten to obstruct the business of the IPU meeting, the PO shall close or suspend the sitting for a specific period to restore order. If the PO cannot make herself or himself heard, she or he shall leave the chair; this shall have the effect of suspending the sitting.
6. In serious cases of disorder or use of expressions that clearly incite to hatred<sup>13</sup> during an IPU meeting, the PO shall suspend the sitting. The PO may order the deletion from the record of those parts of a speech that contain defamatory, intolerant, racist or xenophobic language or those expressions that clearly incite to hatred.

<sup>12</sup> Adopted at the 278th session of Executive Committee

<sup>13</sup> The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has defined the following elements as essential when determining whether an expression constitutes incitement to hatred:

- the real and imminent danger of violence resulting from the expression;
- the intent of the speaker to incite discrimination, hostility or violence; and
- careful consideration of the context in which hatred was expressed.



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## **THE IPU'S GIFT/BENEFIT/HOSPITALITY/SPONSORED TRAVEL REPORT FOR GOVERNANCE OFFICIALS**

**The reportable item received/offered is:**

- A gift
  - A benefit
  - Hospitality
  - Sponsored travel
- 

**Details of Gift / Benefit / Hospitality / Sponsored Travel**

Received from/offered by:

Name:

Position:

Organization/on behalf of:

Source:

- Parliament
  - Government
  - Private
- 

**Please provide a brief description of the gift / benefit / hospitality / sponsored travel received / offered:**

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**Please provide a brief description of the circumstances under which the gift / benefit / hospitality / sponsored travel was / will be received and why it was not / cannot be refused (please attach further supporting documentation if necessary)**

**VALUATION**

**Assessed value of gift / benefit:**

(Please provide both local currency and conversion to CHF)

Local currency:

CHF:

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**RECIPIENT:**

**Proposed action**

- Accept/retain – personal use
- Accept/retain – official use

Recipients signature:

Name:

Position:

Date:

For further assistance contact the Director of Support Services of the Inter-Parliamentary Union via [declaration@ipu.org](mailto:declaration@ipu.org)