



International Ombudsman Institute
Institut International de l'Ombudsman
Instituto Internacional del Ombudsman

INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTE (IOI)

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2020

presented to the General Assembly

in Bangkok, in November 2016

INTRODUCTION

The General Assembly held in Wellington in November 2012 endorsed the development of a longer term strategic plan to guide the IOI's operations and to help focus its work in the coming years.

The present document constitutes the first strategic plan of the IOI. It covers the 4-year period between General Assemblies, i.e. from 2016 to 2020, and was presented to the General Assembly in Bangkok on 15 November 2016.

While the IOI's mission and vision remain faithful to the IOI's core values of independence, objectivity and fairness and can be seen as the fundamentals on which this plan is based, the strategic goals identified are to be considered the IOI's most relevant priorities and will therefore guide the organisation's operations in the next four years.

The present document will be interpreted as general directions to be taken within the next four years; detailed plans and projects to implement the different priorities and goals will be defined and developed by the IOI's governing body, the IOI Board of Directors, and may change over time to reflect emerging events, feasibility and resources.

The key strategic goals which will guide the IOI's operation during the next four years are set out in more details in this document. The IOI General Secretariat aspires to align its activities towards achieving these goals while taking the IOI's mission and core values into account. The IOI Board of Directors and the IOI General Secretariat share responsibility for implementing the IOI's strategic plan while taking into account practicality and available resources as well as new developments.

MISSION AND VISION

The IOI strives to increase its presence, to further develop its influence, to strengthen its authority and to be **the** authoritative body on Ombudsman matters worldwide. It endeavours to be recognized as the voice of Ombudsman institutions within the international community.

The IOI is committed to promote the Ombudsman concept and encourage the creation of Ombudsman institutions where they do not exist, to promote best practice and innovation, to facilitate and foster information exchange and shared learning through conferences and training initiatives, to fund research and regional projects on Ombudsman-related topics, to support colleagues worldwide, especially when they are operating under challenging circumstances, to engage in an ongoing dialogue with key international organisations and stakeholders, to address Ombudsman-related topics and consider policy areas that are of specific importance to its members and to be a truly international organisation in a multi-linguistic as well as pluralistic sense.

By engaging on the international stage and with international partners, the IOI seeks to sensitise governments and stakeholders about its core values and the importance and relevance of being a member.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- **Goal 1:** Widening membership
- **Goal 2:** Supporting Ombudsmen under threat
- **Goal 3:** Training and exchange
- **Goal 4:** Communication and publications
- **Goal 5:** Financial good health
- **Goal 6:** New challenges

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: WIDENING MEMBERSHIP

One of the values that inform the IOI's purpose and work is inclusivity. The IOI recognises the diversity of Ombudsman institutions and acknowledges that different models and concepts have been developed in response to particular constitutional arrangements and cultures. With a view to become a truly pluralistic and international organisation, the IOI will reflect this diversity in its membership, while not losing sight of the core values which underpin the Ombudsman model. To widen its membership, the IOI proposes the following strategic approach:

- Strengthen the cooperation with relevant regional Ombudsman associations as well as international partner organisations by signing **Memoranda of Understanding**. Leverage this cooperation to lobby for IOI membership within the respective region and/or organisation.
- Continue **disseminating information** on the IOI's work and the incentives and services it offers to members, in order to emphasize the benefits and relevance of becoming a member.
- Utilise the **regional Boards** and their knowledge of colleagues in the respective region for that purpose.
- Work to **identify specialist public service Ombudsman** institutions (e.g. Children's Ombudsmen, Police Ombudsmen etc.) which qualify for membership and encourage them to join. Where specialist groupings exist, work with these to encourage membership and possible memoranda of understanding.
- Advertise the **IOI's regional subsidies** program as a clear service to the Ombudsman cause. Investing money in projects that bring about the advancement of the Ombudsman concept is not only to the benefit of one particular region, but have proven to be adaptable and have been of benefit to the wider membership as well. Utilise this program as a "sales" tool in terms of recruiting new members.
- Facilitate multi-lingual access to the IOI and its services. **Pave the way for an equal participation** of colleagues within the three official languages of the IOI (English, French, Spanish) and – as a consequence – be prepared to extend translation services to realise the organisation's multi-lingual ideal.

- Provide **advice and mentored guidance** to turned-down membership applicants as opposed to uninformed rejection. Inform institutions in question about the possibility of non-voting membership. Offer them advice regarding necessary improvements (e.g. through mentored assistance by peers or by the IOI's Pool of Experts) and present them with an opportunity to re-apply at a later stage to get upgraded.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: SUPPORTING OMBUDSMEN UNDER THREAT

The IOI acknowledges the general need to support Ombudsmen coming under threat, facing reprisals or operating under difficult circumstances as a part of its core business. When supporting a member in need, the IOI will give due respect to its values and apply a “do-no-harm” principle. In doing so, the IOI will take all existing contextual elements into account and act with the necessary flexibility and the appropriate discretion. In its endeavour to lend support and assistance to colleagues in need the IOI proposes the following strategies to support this goal:

- **Raise awareness** among its members about the situation of specific offices, but also about generally worrying developments in the Ombudsman world. Encourage members to contact the IOI whenever they have concern about a possible threat to their institution or to a fellow Ombudsman institution.
- Being a champion for the international Ombudsman community by **adopting supportive declarations** at General Assemblies on topical issues.
- **Establish principles** to guide a general course of action to coordinate IOI support to Ombudsmen operating under difficult circumstances. Clarify all options available as well as the procedures to be followed should a case present itself.
- Foster a close and **continuing dialogue and cooperation with relevant international partner organisations** (e.g. Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe etc.) and join forces to ensure best possible support for Ombudsman institutions as core elements of democracy.
- Embark on **fact finding missions** to gain more insight on the specific situations at hand, to raise awareness on a national as well as international level and to ensure that support is demand-driven, sustainable and effective for the colleague concerned.

- Develop and publish a series of IOI “**best practice**” **papers** on relevant topics (e.g. a guideline on independence of offices) aimed at bodies responsible for the creation of Ombudsman institutions and to advocate the importance of high international Ombudsman standards.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: TRAINING AND EXCHANGE

With the view to strengthen its members’ capability and to foster the exchange of expertise among Ombudsmen worldwide, the IOI acknowledges the importance of training, exchange and shared learning as a key priority for its members and for the international standing of the organisation itself. The IOI proposes the following strategies to support this goal:

- Identify on an on-going basis the training needs that are of specific concern to Ombudsman institutions and take account of the fact that member institutions in different world regions have different realities and therefore also **different training needs** to address the practical aspects and problems of their work.
- Document any **new developments** and emerging practice areas for Ombudsmen worldwide (e.g. NPM mandates or mediation functions) and make these topics a priority for (new) training formats.
- Utilise the existing expertise within the membership of the IOI to develop training formats with a view to offering them to IOI members as well as other organisations and/or institutions. **Encourage members to share their good practices** in this regard and incorporate them in the development of in-house training initiatives.
- **Encourage regions to utilise training on a regular basis**, e.g. by submitting project proposals within the IOI’s subsidies program (either by one single institution, by a group of institutions or by the Regional President on behalf of the entire Region).
- Identify training providers and negotiate **standing offers for “package deals”** available to the regions without further negotiations.
- Identify and negotiate **multi-lingual training options** or the possibility of offering certain training formats in language pairs (e.g. English-French for the African region or English-Spanish for the Caribbean & Latin American Region).

- Utilise the **IOI Pool of Experts** more actively to support exchange and training of colleagues in need of assistance and expertise.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION & PUBLICATIONS

The IOI acknowledges the general need to foster communication among members but also to the world, in order to bring the IOI to the attention of important stakeholders and to increase its standing as an international organisation representing Ombudsman institutions worldwide. The IOI is also mindful of the general wish to re-introduce scholarly papers on Ombudsman-related topics. To strengthen the goal of communication and publications, the IOI proposes the following strategic approach:

- Encourage **effective communication among members** through instruments such as the IOI website, the IOI newsletter and the IOI case database and strives to raise the knowledge of IOI members to a uniform level by using these communication tools.
- Foster **communication with international partner organisations** and important stakeholders and disseminate information on benefits and services with a view to strengthen the standing and reputation of the IOI.
- Produce and **publish guidance material** in the form of a series of best practice papers to address the key features which inform strong and independent control mechanisms.
- Produce **scholarly papers** on certain aspects of Ombudsmanship on a more regular basis.
- Promote cooperation with academia to **carry out research** on issues of mutual interest and concern.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: FINANCIAL GOOD HEALTH

In order to provide its members with the full range of services and the best assistance possible, it is essential that the organisation operates on a sound financial basis. This solid financial basis became a reality, when the IOI headquarters were transferred to Austria in 2009. Since then, the overhead costs of the IOI General Secretariat have been covered by the Austrian authorities and this has allowed that money generated from IOI membership fees to be of direct benefit to members in the shape of regional subsidies, scholarships for training or the funding of Ombudsman-related studies. To support the goal of financial good health the IOI proposes the following strategies:

- Develop a culture within the organisation where **generating income by marketing in-house expertise and research products** (e.g. training, publications, conferences on a fee-basis etc.) becomes a possibility.
- Recruit members (see strategic goal 1) and **increase the annual income through membership fee payments**.
- Develop an **investment strategy for funding** (i.e. an IOI policy on external funding) and explore options of external funding more actively in order to increase the organisation's funding base.
- Engage in **joint ventures with partner organisations** (e.g. the World Bank or regional Ombudsman Associations etc.) to get co-funding for important projects.

STRATEGIC GOAL 6: NEW CHALLENGES

The IOI acknowledges the general fact that Ombudsman institutions will face new challenges in their work in the years to come. The IOI therefore demonstrates its willingness and preparedness to deal with emerging issues of concern (e.g. privatisation, security issue etc.) as an organisation and in doing so, seeks to put the focus on how such changes and developments can or may affect the citizens concerned and their right to redress.