

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028

MAIN GOALS TO INFORM
THE PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE IOI

INTRODUCTION

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), established in 1978, is the only global organisation for the cooperation of more than 200 independent Ombudsman institutions from more than 100 countries worldwide.

The IOI's strategic plan covers the period in between General Assemblies and sets out the IOI's main goals and objectives for working as an international institution and with its members and partner organizations. The IOI will continue its strategic focus for the period 2024-2028 as outlined in this document and aspires to align its activities towards achieving these goals.

Based on the priorities set out in this document, the IOI Board of Directors and the respective IOI Committees and Working Groups will develop and implement detailed activities to drive forward the IOI's main strategic goals. These activities may change over time to reflect emerging trends, feasibility and resources.

MISSION AND VISION

The IOI is committed to promoting the Ombudsman concept and to foster strong and independent Ombudsman institutions around the world, with a view to guaranteeing good governance and transparent and accountable public administration, protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and upholding democratic values and the rule of law.

The IOI strives to promote best practices and innovation, facilitate and foster the exchange of knowledge and shared learning among its members, and address Ombudsman-related matters that are of specific importance to the international Ombudsman community.

The IOI aspires to be a truly international and inclusive organization and to strengthen its visibility as the authoritative body on Ombudsman worldwide.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The IOI Strategic Plan 2024-2028 is based on the following main goals:

- GOAL 1:** Promote the Ombudsman concept and raise visibility
- GOAL 2:** Support, strengthen and protect Ombudsman institutions
- GOAL 3:** Unite Ombudsman to collaborate and exchange experiences
- GOAL 4:** Ensure professional, well-governed and efficient operations

The IOI aspires to align its activities towards achieving these goals by implementing and delivering activities as lined out in the following. These activities may change over time to reflect emerging trends, feasibility and resources.

GOAL 1: PROMOTE THE OMBUDSMAN CONCEPT AND RAISE VISIBILITY

RAISE VISIBILITY: The IOI is the voice of Ombudsman institutions within the international community and will continue its efforts to increase its presence, strengthen its influence, and enhance its recognition as the authoritative body on Ombudsman matters worldwide. The IOI is committed to promoting the Ombudsman concept. With this in mind, the IOI will further deepen its relations with international, multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations, the OSCE, or the Council of Europe, to strengthen its position as the only global network for the representation and cooperation of Ombudsman institutions.

RAISE STANDARDS: The IOI will continue to advocate for the effective application of internationally recognized standards, such as the UN Resolution on the Role of Ombudsman and mediator institutions and the Venice Principles. The IOI will work with its members and assist them in their quest for continuing improvement. It will support member institutions in reviewing their legislation in light of the above-mentioned standards.

CONTRIBUTE EXPERTISE: With a membership of more than 200 Ombudsman institutions, which span across all regions of the world, the IOI can tap into a vast pool of knowledge, experiences and practices. The IOI is therefore uniquely placed to contribute expertise on various Ombudsman-related matters and to seek active involvement and collaboration with international partners.

GOAL 2: SUPPORT, STRENGTHEN AND PROTECT OMBUDSMAN

TRAINING AND SHARED LEARNING: With a view to strengthening its members' capability and to foster the exchange of expertise and best practices among Ombudsman worldwide, the IOI acknowledges the importance of training and shared learning as one of its key priorities. The IOI will continue to identify new training providers and initiatives, analyse what training content is of specific concern to its members, and utilise the existing experience within its membership to foster shared learning. Furthermore, the IOI will seek to enhance the use of new communication formats and tools when offering training to its wider membership and look into providing training options in all three languages of the IOI.

PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNICATION: The IOI acknowledges the need to increase its standing as an international institution representing Ombudsman worldwide by supporting publications on Ombudsman-related matters, for instance through its series of Best Practice Papers. The IOI is mindful of the exceptionally fast changing world and will seek to enhance the use of new communication formats and tools in its publication and communication strategy, with a view to enhancing its visibility and to reach out to its members efficiently.

REGIONAL SUBSIDIES PROGRAM: The IOI offers funding for Ombudsman-related projects in the regions on a regular basis. The high number of applications and projects funded by the IOI within this regional subsidies program shows the increasing need for direct financial aid. The IOI will thus continue its annual regional subsidies program to support Ombudsman-related projects in the regions.

SUPPORTING OMBUDSMAN UNDER THREAT: Unfortunately, cases where Ombudsman colleagues come under threat is a recurring issue. The IOI has lent its support and spoken out on behalf of colleagues operating under difficult circumstances on various occasions. The IOI will continue to raise awareness about the difficult situation of specific offices and lend its supports to colleagues under threat according to its respective guidelines. It will advocate for the UN Resolution on Ombudsman and the Venice Principles as the globally recognized standards to inform strong and independent Ombudsman and continue its cooperation with relevant international partner organisations in these cases (e.g. the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the Global Alliance of NHRIs, or regional Ombudsman associations) to ensure that the voices of colleagues in need are heard and addressed.

GOAL 3: UNITE OMBUDSMAN TO COLLABORATE AND EXCHANGE

CONFERENCES AND EXCHANGE: The IOI is a network for Ombudsman around the world to meet, collaborate, and learn from each other. The IOI fosters the practical and lively exchange of knowledge and practices among its members by hosting events on a regular basis at the regional level and every four years through the IOI World Conference. The IOI connects its members with partner organizations to facilitate bilateral cooperation if requested.

COOPERATION WITH PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS: The IOI will continue to forge closer ties with partner organizations both at the regional and international level and to identify, build and strengthen these partnerships on shared priorities. In its ongoing cooperation with international partner organizations, the IOI will consider policy areas that are of importance to its members.

GOAL 4: ENSURE WELL-GOVERNED AND EFFICIENT OPERATIONS

WIDENING MEMBERSHIP: Widening membership is a high priority and the IOI was able to raise the number of members considerably since its headquarters were moved to Vienna. With a view to becoming a truly pluralistic and international organisation, the IOI strives to widen its membership further by applying the following approach: raising awareness about the IOI's services and advertising member benefits; strengthening cooperation with regional Ombudsman associations and international partner organisations; and promoting the Ombudsman concept. Within this key priority, the IOI will also monitor tendencies and developments, which could result in a decrease of its membership, such as the abolishment of Ombudsman offices or decisions to withdraw from IOI membership due to budget restraints. The IOI will be mindful of such developments and seek to counter them.

FINANCIAL GOOD HEALTH: In order to provide its members with the full range of services and the best assistance possible, it is essential for the IOI to operate on a sound financial basis. Financial good health therefore remains one of the IOI's strategic goals. The broad membership base and the good payment morale of IOI members will see the institute fiscally stable over the years of this strategic plan. The IOI's goal to widen its membership will contribute to the positive development of the IOI's financial basis.

COHERENCE WITH THE REGIONS: The IOI is organized in six regional chapters: Africa, Asia, Australasia & Pacific, Caribbean & Latin America, Europe, and North America. It recognizes the diversity of contexts and needs in these regions and remains dedicated to support them all in an equal way. The IOI strives to reach out actively to the members in the regions via the respective Regional President, with the aim of identifying specific needs regarding the objectives of this strategic plan and to ensure that each region is included in the IOI's strategic work (e.g. by way active involvement in committees and/or working groups).

NEW CHALLENGES: Things like the Covid-19 pandemic or the rapidly advancing developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence show the capacity of Ombudsman around the world to be adroit and innovative, when such new situations present themselves. With this in mind, the IOI will continue to closely monitor emerging issues of concern and seek to facilitate exchange on how such challenges/developments impact on Ombudsman colleagues and best practices to counter/solve such situations.

IOI' STRATEGIC GOALS 2024-2028 – OVERVIEW OF OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIC GOAL			
1. Promote the Ombudsman concept and raise visibility	2. Support, strengthen and protect Ombudsman around the world	3. Unite Ombudsman to collaborate and exchange expertise	4. Ensure well-governed and efficient operations

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES			
1.1 raise visibility	2.1 training and shared learning	3.1 conferences and exchange	4.1 widen membership
○ Continue efforts to enhance IOI presence at the international level by disseminating information about the Ombudsman concept, the IOI and its work ○ Deepen relations with partner organizations at the UN level through the UN Working Group ○ Deepen relations with partner organizations at the regional level with a specific focus on joint projects (mainly with MoU partner organizations) ○	○ Survey IOI membership to identify training content of need ○ Continue efforts to offer 1-2 training courses to IOI members each year (either in-person or online, either in the regions or for all members in Vienna) ○ Widen training offer for French- and Spanish-speaking members ○ Identify new training content and initiatives as well as new training providers (e.g. by establishing a Working Group for this matter) ○ Utilize existing experience and knowledge of IOI members to organize active exchange and shared learning ○	○ Ensure an interesting and practical exchange on relevant and topical matters during the quadrennial IOI World Conference ○ Connect members around the globe for knowledge exchange and shared learning ○ Facilitate cooperation of IOI members with IOI partner organizations when and where requested ○	○ Continue efforts to present benefits of IOI membership to offices which are not yet members of the IOI (with active involvement of the regions) ○ Counter a possible decrease of membership by monitoring tendencies to abolish Ombudsman offices, or to withdraw from membership for budgetary reasons ○ Lend active support to member institutions seeking reform and/or improvement of their relevant legislation and thus also their IOI membership status ○

1.2 raise standards	2.2 publications and communication	3.2 foster collaboration and relations with partner organizations	4.2 financial good health
○ Raise awareness among IOI membership about internationally recognized standards, such as the UN Resolution on Ombudsman and the Venice Principles ○ Deepen collaboration with the Council of Europe (CoE) and its Venice Commission with a view to promote the Venice Principles ○	○ Continue the IOI Best Practice Paper series and identify new topics and authors to add to it ○ Improve knowledge management on events, projects and activities through online channels such as the website and newsletter ○ Develop, update and publish annual reports, as well as other information and promotional material ○	○ Continue the webinar collaboration with the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) ○ Continue the training collaboration with the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) and look into other possible joint projects to promote the torture prevention concept ○	○ Continue to ensure the good payment morale of IOI members ○ Inform members with budgetary constraints about the possibility of fee waivers to alleviate their cost burden and avoid a decrease in membership for financial reasons ○
1.3 contribute expertise	2.3 regional subsidies		4.3 coherence with the regions
○ Educate about the contributions Ombudsman make to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goal 16) ○ Seek involvement in the next High-Level Panel of the President of the UN General Assembly in 2026 ○	○ Continue the IOI's annual regional subsidies program to support Ombudsman-related projects in the regions ○		○ Identify and acknowledge the diversity of contexts and needs in the six IOI Regions (together with the Regional Presidents) ○ Ensure full regional representation and balance in the different IOI committees and working groups to consider specific regional perspectives in IOI-related matters ○

	2.4 support Ombudsman under threat		4.4 new challenges
	○ Raise awareness about the difficult circumstances some Ombudsman offices face in exercising their mandate ○ Support Ombudsman who come under threat, face reprisals or are otherwise at risk in exercising their mandate ○ Seek collaboration with partner organizations when supporting colleagues under threat ○		○ Continue to monitor emerging trends and issues of concern for Ombudsman around the world ○

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