



INTERNATIONAL
OMBUDSMAN
INSTITUTE

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES for IOI Public Communications

2026

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 General Objective

These guidelines establish the procedures for the preparation, consultation, approval, and publication of all communications issued in the name of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI). They serve to implement the IOI's strategic objectives in accordance with its By-Laws and are designed to ensure that the IOI acts in a timely and effective manner, balancing operational agility with professional oversight.

1.2 Complementarity

These guidelines complement existing IOI policies and working procedures. The adoption of these guidelines does not replace or override existing specialized procedures, nor does it impede their effective implementation. In cases of overlap, the more specific guideline shall prevail to ensure operational continuity.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To maintain the IOI's global credibility and safeguard its members, all communications shall be governed by the following core principles, which serve as the framework for evaluating the strategic timing of a release as much as its substance and diplomatic tone.

2.1 Institutional Unity

All communications shall foster a cohesive global identity for the IOI. To ensure the credibility of the Institute's international presence, regional insights shall, as far as possible, be harmonized with the IOI's official policy framework.

2.2 Alignment with Mission

All communications must support the IOI's mission to strengthen Ombudsman institutions.

2.3 Diplomatic Sensitivity

Communications shall be assessed for their diplomatic impact to avoid jeopardizing relationships between members and between members and their national authorities.

2.4 Do No Harm Principle

The IOI shall ensure, as much as possible, that its communications do not escalate risks or trigger reprisals against a member institution. The safety and institutional integrity of the member shall always take precedence over the publication of a communication.

2.5 Political Neutrality and Impartiality

The IOI shall maintain strict independence from partisan politics. Communications must remain objective, evidence-based, and free from alignment with any political party, ideology, or specific government interest.

3. THE EDITORIAL BOARD

3.1 Establishment

An Editorial Board is hereby established as a technical advisory body to the Secretariat and the Executive Committee. Its primary role is to review draft communications against the *Guiding Principles* in Section 2, and to advise on linguistic and diplomatic consistency. The Editorial Board does not replace the decision-making authority of IOI governing bodies and operates independently from the day-to-day production of content.

3.2 Composition

The Editorial Board consists of three members of the Executive Committee and shall be chaired by the First or Second IOI Vice-President. In addition to the Chair, two other members of the Executive Committee shall serve on the Board. Should more than two members express interest in these positions, a selection shall be made by the Executive Committee through a simple majority vote, ensuring a balanced geographic representation.

The Secretary-General acts as a non-voting operational advisor to ensure the link between the Secretariat's production and the Editorial Board's review.

3.3. Conflict of Interest and Recusal

To safeguard the impartiality and credibility of the Editorial Board, any member, including the Chair, shall be recused from the advisory process if a communication concerns their own person, their institution, or any situation involving a conflict of interest.

3.3.1 Replacement and Ad-hoc Appointments

In the event of a conflict of interest, an ad-hoc Editorial Board member or Chair shall be appointed from the Executive Committee by the President, subject to immediate notification of the Executive Committee, to ensure the Editorial Board remains fully functional and objective for the duration of that specific matter.

3.4 Decision-making Procedures

The Editorial Board shall strive for consensus in all its advisory opinions. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached within the required timeframe, the advice shall be formulated based on a simple majority of the Editorial Board members.

3.4.1 Dissenting Opinions

If an Editorial Board member disagrees with the majority view, a dissenting opinion can be formally recorded by the Editorial Board at the explicit request of that member. The Secretariat shall ensure this dissenting opinion is noted when the advice is presented for final approval.

3.4.2 No Objection Principle

In the case that an Editorial Board member does not provide feedback within the stipulated deadline, it shall be formally recorded as the member having 'No Objection' to the progress of the communication toward final approval, while not implying an active endorsement of the content of the communication.

3.4.3 Verification of Effort

To ensure the effectiveness of the No Objection principle, the Secretariat shall utilize multiple communication channels (e.g., official verified email or telephone) to ensure that the Editorial Board members are informed in a timely manner.

3.4.4 Deadlock Resolution and Escalation

In the exceptional event that the Editorial Board is unable to reach a majority decision, if the Chair is present but the vote is tied (for instance due to an even number of Editorial Board members during a recusal or an absence not yet filled under Section 3.3.1), the Chair shall have the casting vote to ensure procedural progress. If the Chair is unavailable (resulting in a 'No Objection' record for the Chair) and the remaining two members hold opposing views, the matter shall be immediately referred to the President of the IOI for a final determination.

3.4.5 Order of Succession

If the President of the IOI has a conflict of interest, or is unavailable, the authority described in section 3.4.4 shall pass to the next ranking Officer who is not a member of the Editorial Board and is not personally involved in the matter. This follows the order of succession starting with the First Vice-President, followed by the Second Vice-President, and finally the Treasurer.

4. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

To ensure and emphasize a clear distinction between operational execution, technical advice, and decision-making, the following roles are defined:

- **The Secretariat:** Acts as the primary operational lead. The Secretariat is responsible for the initial drafting, editing, and technical production of all IOI communications. It ensures that basic factual accuracy and institutional branding are maintained.
- **The Editorial Board:** Acts as a technical advisory body and provides advice on linguistic nuances and diplomatic consistency. It reviews drafts specifically against the Guiding Principles to mitigate reputational or safety risks before a text proceeds to the approval phase.
- **The Executive Committee:** Holds the ultimate mandate and final decision-making authority on all substantive and policy-related communications. The Executive Committee ensures that the global voice of the IOI remains representative of its membership.

- The Officers: Act collectively as the delegated executive authority for urgent matters. To maintain the IOI's agility in crisis situations, the Officers are authorized to grant final approval on behalf of the Executive Committee, provided these guidelines are followed and the Executive Committee is formally notified of the final text within 24 hours of publication.

4.2 General Rule

The standard procedures for consultation and approval as established in existing IOI policies and by-laws shall apply to all non-urgent communications.

4.3 Fast-Track Procedure

These guidelines provide a specific framework for an accelerated consultation mechanism reserved for time-sensitive communications that require an immediate high-level technical international response. It allows the IOI to maintain its mandate as a global advocate and to react effectively to urgent developments, while ensuring a strategic level of diplomatic advice. Examples of urgent developments include:

- The arrest, detention, or direct physical threat to an Ombudsman or their staff.
- An acute and imminent threat to the legal or financial independence of a member institution.
- The removal or resignation of an IOI Officer due to integrity-related issues or serious misconduct.
- A major international event or crisis that requires an immediate IOI policy position to remain relevant.

4.4 Timelines and Global Time Zones

To balance operational agility with the IOI's commitment to global inclusivity, the following protocols shall apply to Editorial Board reviews:

- Standard Urgent Window: The consultation period shall normally be a minimum of 48 hours. This timeframe is specifically designed to ensure that all Editorial Board members, regardless of their geographic location, have a fair opportunity to review and respond within their respective business hours.

- **Extreme Urgency:** In cases of demonstrable and acute crisis, this period may be shortened to a minimum of 36 hours.
- **Time Zone Sensitivity:** When initiating a Fast-Track request, the Secretariat shall proactively account for the diverse time zones of the Editorial Board members to maximize the window for meaningful feedback.

5. CLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBER CONTENT

To ensure that IOI resources are focused on high-impact communications and to maintain operational efficiency, different categories of statements are subject to different review protocols.

5.1 Ceremonial and Informational Statements

This category includes routine updates and informational content (e.g., anniversaries, member admissions). The Secretariat publishes these independently as part of its operational mandate. These communications do not require formal review by the Editorial Board unless the Secretariat determines that the political or regional context warrants a diplomatic check. The relevant Regional President shall be informed as a courtesy.

5.2 Member-Contributed Content

This category includes, among other things, news, reports, or updates explicitly attributed to an individual member institution. The IOI recognizes and respects the independence and freedom of expression of its members within their respective jurisdictions. The Secretariat may publish these directly but shall consult the Editorial Board if it assesses that the content involves potential breaches of the *Guiding principles*.

5.2.1 Disclaimer of Responsibility

All member-contributed content shall be clearly attributed to the originating institution and accompanied by an appropriate disclaimer stating, among other things, that it does not necessarily reflect the official position of the IOI.

5.3 Substantive Statements

This category involves high-level communications concerning IOI policy, strategic positions, or issues concerning member institutions. Consultation with the Editorial Board is required when the *Fast-Track Procedure* (Section 4.3) is invoked, to ensure immediate alignment with the Guiding Principles. In non-urgent cases, the Secretariat may seek the advice of the Editorial Board at its discretion.

6. REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Executive Committee, having considered the advice of the Editorial Board, shall conduct a first evaluation of these guidelines two years after their entry into force. Thereafter, a review will take place when needs arise to ensure ongoing alignment with the IOI By-Laws and evolving strategic objectives.