



Report of the IFSW Executive Committee on the Good Governance Review

Presented to the 2026 General Meeting

By Joachim C. Mumba

IFSW Global President

Introduction and Background

Delegates, colleagues, and friends,

At the 2024 General Meeting in Panama, member organizations adopted a motion calling for a comprehensive Good Governance Review of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). The motion, proposed by Germany and seconded by Sweden, reflected a shared recognition that our Federation had reached an important point in its development.

Over the past decade, IFSW has experienced significant growth in membership, global influence, partnerships, commissions, programmes, and advocacy activities. As our Federation expanded, so too did expectations regarding transparency, accountability, participation, responsiveness, inclusivity, and compliance with legal and ethical obligations.

The General Meeting recognized that while IFSW had been successful in advancing social work values and promoting social justice globally, there remained a need to strengthen the organizational systems, policies, and governance arrangements that underpin our work. Members expressed concerns regarding gaps in policies, procedures, accountability mechanisms, complaints management, financial governance, human resource management, information sharing, and decision-making processes.

The General Meeting therefore mandated the Executive Committee to:

- Consider concerns regarding the adequacy of governance structures and processes within IFSW;
- Establish a working group comprising members and staff to review governance arrangements and develop policies and procedures;
- Consult widely with the membership throughout the process;
- Present a report on governance developments, matters requiring decisions, and future proposals to the 2026 General Meeting; and
- Strengthen the Federation's capacity to respond to governance challenges and organizational risks.

Looking back, the Executive believes that the decision of the General Meeting was both timely and necessary. The review has provided an opportunity not only to identify gaps but also to strengthen the institutional foundations of our Federation for future generations of social workers.

Principles Guiding the Review

From the outset, the Executive agreed that the review should be guided by principles consistent with the values of social work and the vision of the People's Charter for a New Eco-Social World.

The review was therefore guided by the following principles:

- **Inclusiveness;** ensuring that diverse cultural, social, political, and regional perspectives are represented and respected.
- **Transparency;** promoting openness in decision-making and ensuring that governance processes are documented and communicated.

- **Accountability**; strengthening systems that enable individuals and bodies within IFSW to be accountable for their responsibilities.
- **Participation**; encouraging meaningful involvement of members in governance processes.
- **Responsiveness**; ensuring that organizational systems are capable of responding effectively to emerging issues and concerns.
- **Collective Responsibility**; fostering a culture in which decisions are respected and implemented collaboratively.
- **Alignment with IFSW Values**; ensuring consistency with the Federation's ethical principles, policies, and strategic priorities.

These principles became the foundation upon which the review process was built.

Establishment of the Good Governance Technical Working Group

Following the General Meeting mandate, the Executive through the Steering Group first developed a draft roadmap identifying priority governance areas requiring attention. Recognizing that the motion originated from the European Region, the draft roadmap was initially shared with the President and Vice-President of IFSW Europe for reflections and preliminary feedback. Their contributions helped strengthen the proposed approach before broader implementation.

The Executive subsequently requested each regional organization to nominate two representatives to participate in a Good Governance Technical Working Group. To ensure strong links between governance review and Executive oversight, one of the two nominees from each region was required to be a member of the Global Executive Committee. This approach enabled the Federation to establish a diverse and representative working group reflecting the geographical, cultural, and professional diversity of IFSW.

The Good Governance Technical Working Group consisted of:

Region	Representatives
Africa Region	* Abib Ndiaye * Mariana Josephat Makuu
Asia-Pacific Region	* Teoh Ai Hua * Roy Luntayao
Europe Region	* Ruth Allen * Birthe Povlsen
Latin America and the Caribbean Region	* Gabriela Rodríguez Vázquez * Jorge Arturo Sáenz Fonseca

Region	Representatives
North America Region	* Yvonne M. Chase * Barb Whitenect

The IFSW President and Secretary-General also participated as members of the technical working group. The President served as Chairperson of the Technical Working Group.

Work Undertaken

Recognizing the breadth of the assignment, the Technical Working Group established three smaller working groups to focus on priority governance areas identified as requiring urgent attention:

1. Complaints Management

This group was tasked with developing a framework that would:

- Provide clear reporting mechanisms;
- Define responsibilities and decision-making processes;
- Establish investigation procedures;
- Clarify timelines for resolving complaints;
- Outline possible outcomes and remedies;
- Address complaints involving elected officials, staff, appointed representatives, and member organizations.

2. Financial Governance

This group reviewed existing financial policies and procedures with the objective of strengthening:

- Financial accountability;
- Transparency;
- Internal controls;
- Reporting mechanisms;
- Governance oversight.

3. Human Resources Management

This group was tasked with reviewing employment-related policies and developing a more comprehensive framework for human resource management within the Federation.

The working methodology involved each subgroup developing draft proposals which were then submitted to the full Technical Working Group for detailed review, discussion, and refinement. Draft documents were circulated in advance to allow members sufficient time for reflection and

constructive feedback. Once consensus was reached within the Technical Working Group, the documents were forwarded to the Executive Committee for consideration and approval.

Key Achievements

The Executive is pleased to report that significant progress has been made during the reporting period. Three major governance instruments were successfully developed, reviewed, and approved by the Executive Committee:

a) Complaints Management Policy

The policy establishes a structured, transparent, and accountable framework for managing complaints within the Federation. The policy represents a major step forward in ensuring fairness, consistency, procedural integrity, and organizational accountability.

b) Employee Conduct and Accountability Policy

The policy provides clear expectations regarding professional conduct, ethical behavior, accountability, and responsibilities of employees working within the Federation. The policy strengthens organizational culture and provides greater clarity regarding standards of conduct.

c) Financial Policy and Procedures Manual

A substantially revised Financial Policy was approved to strengthen financial governance, improve accountability, clarify roles and responsibilities, and support sound financial stewardship across the Federation.

Together, these policies represent important milestones in strengthening governance systems within IFSW.

Areas Still Under Development

The Executive acknowledges that the governance review remains a work in progress. At the time of reporting, work on a comprehensive Human Resources Policy and Manual had not yet been completed. The review process revealed that Human Resources management is significantly broader and more complex than initially anticipated. The work requires consideration of:

- Recruitment and selection procedures;
- Employee welfare and support systems;
- Leave and Absence Management: Updating guidelines for annual leave, sick leave, parental leave, and emergency absences.
- Performance Management: Assessing how annual performance appraisals, continuous feedback loops, and promotion criteria are executed.
- Salary and Pay Structures: Evaluating regular pay cycles, performance-linked rewards, and bonus eligibility.

- Remote and Hybrid Work: Formalizing expectations around working from home, flexible hours, and core operating times.
- Health, Safety, and Wellbeing: Evaluating physical workplace safety guidelines alongside mental health support systems and substance use policies.
- Staff development and training;
- Workplace conduct and wellbeing;
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures: Ensuring there are clear, multi-step pathways for employees to raise complaints and for management to investigate issues fairly
- Termination and Separation: Clarifying the legal grounds and formal protocols for exit processes or redundancy.
- Compliance with Swiss labour legislation and other applicable legal requirements.

One important lesson learned was that Human Resources should not have been treated as a single policy area. Instead, it would have been more effective to divide the work into several interconnected components with separate development timelines.

The Executive therefore recommends that this work continue beyond the 2026 General Meeting.

Lessons Learned

The Good Governance Review has generated valuable insights about organizational development and governance within a global membership federation.

- ✓ First, governance reform requires time, expertise, commitment, and sustained engagement. Because most members of the Technical Working Group served on a voluntary basis, availability was often constrained by professional and personal responsibilities. This occasionally resulted in delays and cancelled meetings.
- ✓ Second, the contribution of Secretariat staff proved essential to the success of the process. Staff provided institutional knowledge, documentation, administrative support, interpretation services, drafting assistance, minute-taking, scheduling, and technical coordination.
- ✓ Third, the review highlighted the importance of prioritization. While the original motion identified numerous governance issues requiring attention, experience demonstrated the value of focusing first on high-risk areas where improvements could be implemented quickly and effectively.
- ✓ Finally, the review reinforced an important organizational lesson: strong organizations are not built solely on trust, goodwill, or the dedication of individuals. Sustainable organizations require clear systems, transparent procedures, well-defined responsibilities, and robust accountability mechanisms. Trust remains essential, but trust is strengthened not weakened, when supported by clear governance frameworks.

Matters for Decision by the 2026 General Meeting

The Executive Committee respectfully requests that the General Meeting:

1. Receive and adopt this report.
2. Endorse the governance developments completed since 2024.
3. Acknowledge the adoption of:

- the Complaints Management Policy;
 - the Employee Conduct and Accountability Policy; and
 - the revised Financial Policy and Procedures Manual.
4. Endorse the continuation of the Good Governance Review process beyond 2026.
 5. Mandate the Executive Committee to continue development of:
 - Human Resources policies and procedures;
 - Risk management frameworks;
 - Policy review and monitoring mechanisms;
 - Governance structure reviews where required; and
 - Other governance priorities identified through consultation with members.

Looking Ahead

The Executive believes that the Good Governance Review has already strengthened the Federation and laid a stronger foundation for future growth. However, governance is not a destination; it is an ongoing commitment. As our Federation continues to evolve, our systems, policies, and structures must evolve alongside it. The work undertaken since 2024 demonstrates what can be achieved when members, regions, staff, and elected leaders work together in a spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I wish to express sincere appreciation to all members of the Good Governance Technical Working Group, regional representatives, Secretariat staff, and member organizations who contributed their time, expertise, and commitment to this important process. Together, we are building a stronger, more accountable, more transparent, and more resilient Federation that is better positioned to serve social workers and communities throughout the world.

Joachim C. Mumba

President

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)