

**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS
GENERAL MEETING – PANAMA CITY – 1-2 APRIL 2024
MINUTES**

V.2024-05-11

approved by the 2026 General Meeting on 23 June 2026

1. WELCOME

1.1 Welcome from the Panama Association of Social Workers

On behalf of the Panama Association of Social Workers, Kenia Batista welcomed all to Panama and invited delegates to a dinner that evening.

1.2 Welcome from the President

Rory Truell noted that the IFSW President Joachim Mumba had been delayed because of a missed flight connection and that Global Vice President Joan Davis-Whelan will Chair the first day and that Joachim is expected to arrive in time to Chair the second day. Joan Davis-Whelan then formally opened the General Meeting and welcomed all participants.

1.3 Roll call

Rory Truell introduced this first hybrid event and explained the technical issues and asked for understanding and cooperation with a new and unfamiliar process.

It was noted that Bernard Mayaka is coordinating the online participation process drawing attention to delegates wishing to speak, working with Pascal Rudin (in Switzerland) to manage online voting.

ATTENDANCE

In Person	Virtual
Aotearoa New Zealand	Afghanistan
Azerbaijan	Armenia
Austria	Barbados
Brazil	Burundi
Bulgaria	Cameroon
Chile	China
Colombia	Democratic Republic of Congo
Costa Rica	Denmark
El Salvador	Finland
Germany	Gambia
Guinea Bissau (second day only in person)	Georgia
India	Ghana
Israel	Greece
Italy	Hong Kong (China)
Japan	Hungary
Mexico	Iran
Netherlands	Iceland
Norway	Ireland
Panama	Malaysia
Paraguay	Malta
Peru	Nigeria
Puerto Rico	Portugal
Romania	Rwanda
Singapore	Senegal
South Korea	Tanzania
Spain	Togo
Sweden	
Switzerland	
UK	

USA	
Zambia	

2. OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL MEETING

2.1 Housekeeping, Parliamentary, minute takers and screen notes, hybrid moderation

AGREED that:

- Nicolai Paulsen continues as Parliamentary for the duration of the meeting.
- David N Jones and Priska Fleischlin are minute takers.
- Rose Henderson and Jane Shears are responsible for screen notes.

NOTED that David N Jones is Elections Officer.

AGREED that Puerto Rico, Mexico and Spain will act as Tellers to count votes.

It was **NOTED** that votes on motions will be taken by show of hands in the room and online unless a poll is required.

2.2 Confirmation of agenda and organization of meeting

AGREED unanimously.

Report of Elections Officer

The Elections Officer referred to the written report of the Nominations Committee on the website. He gave a brief report on the process of managing nominations and explained that late nominations could go ahead on the ballot only with a vote with a majority of at least 75%.

The following late nominations had been received and were proposed:

To accept the late nomination of Yvonne Chase for the Executive position of IFSW North America Regional President
AGREED by a large majority by show of hands in the room and online.

To accept the late nomination of Joan Davis-Whelan for the Executive position of IFSW North America Regional Vice President
AGREED by a large majority by show of hands in the room and online.

To accept the late nomination of Jenny Linares for the Executive position of Regional Vice President in Latin America					
Yes: 16	In Person: 7 Online:9	No: 18	In Person: 15 Online: 3	Abstain:	
NOT AGREED by show of hands in the room and online.					

Late motion

A number of member organisations from IFSW Europe proposed to add an agenda item to set up a working group to clarify IFSW procedures and to promote transparency, accountability, and responsibility. Clarity about the intention behind the motion was provided during discussion.

To accept the late motion on good governance to be discussed under Any Other Business	
Proposed	Germany
Seconded	Sweden
AGREED by show of hands in the room and online.	

3. MINUTES FROM THE ONLINE 2022 IFSW GENERAL MEETING

The minutes had been available online. Senegal had asked to change the name of the association in the minutes. The Secretary-General noted that Senegal must send a letter from their board of the association, formally notifying IFSW of the change of name.

To approve the minutes	
Proposed	Canada
Seconded	USA
AGREED unanimously by show of hands and electronic recording of votes of online participants.	

4. IFSW EXECUTIVE REPORTS

4.1 IFSW Africa Region Report

The Africa President referred to the written report and drew attention to significant developments since the last meeting in Dublin in 2018, especially during the pandemic. He thanked member organisations for support during his term of office now coming to an end.

The report was **RECEIVED**.

4.2 IFSW Asia-Pacific Region Report

The Asia-Pacific President referred to the written report and drew attention to the significant recovery since the pandemic.

The report was **RECEIVED**.

4.3 IFSW Europe Region Report

The Europe President referred to the written report and drew attention to the formal legal body which existed in Europe intended to assist with generating income for projects and helpful for the relationship with the European Union.

The report was **RECEIVED**.

4.4 IFSW Latin America & Caribbean Region Report

The Latin America & Caribbean President referred to the written report and expressed special concern for the people of Haiti at this difficult time and colleagues working there.

The report was **RECEIVED**.

4.5 IFSW North America Region Report

The North America President and Vice President referred to the written report and described activity in the two countries.

The report was **RECEIVED**.

4.6 FINANCE

4.7 Finance Report 2022 & 2023

Victor Garcia, the Treasurer, read the written report noting a positive outcome to the year with a significant addition to balances as a result of staffing vacancies and lack of activity in the earlier period due to the pandemic. He invited questions.

Concern was raised initially by Austria and Romania expressing that the financial documents had been tabled very late and this made it impossible for delegates to consult their organisations and properly scrutinise the finances. The Secretary General apologised for the late submission of reports which was partly due to his sabbatical and his returning to office only within the last three weeks. He noted under these circumstances that the staffing shortage within the Secretariat had prevented some of the reports be able to be prepared and submitted in time.

It was requested that a balance sheet should be presented on the screen at future meetings. It was noted that a balance sheet was included in the formal documents.

The impact of currency fluctuations on IFSW finances and on member contributions was noted. The Secretary General reported that the Euro and US Dollar had significantly weakened against the Swiss Franc which had consequences for member organisations.

The Secretary General commented on the significant increase in organisational members in recent years as well as the added complexity of the Federation's focus and engagement with partners. He said while we can celebrate such growth and success the internal structures and budget had not significantly changed. He commented that this situation generated significant extra work but without additional resources. He highlighted the need for a review of internal policies and procedures to ensure timely functioning of operations and also ensuring staff wellbeing.

Concern was expressed by Austria that there had not been a presentation of the budget for this two-year period. The Parliamentarian advised that it was not a constitutional requirement to approve a budget. A request was made to distribute the budget as soon as possible after the meeting. The Secretary General supported the request.

It was proposed that the financial report should be available two months before the General Meeting. It was noted that the By-Law requires distribution of the financial report 40 days before the General Meeting. The Secretary General noted that the IFSW financial year ends on the 31st of December which created a very tight timetable for the submission of this year's financial reports when the General Meeting is held on the 1st and 2nd of April. He said this presented significant timing complications as the financial report need to include an external audited report and that this was a further reason for the late submission of the financial report.

The Parliamentarian advised that it was acceptable to propose a motion relating to a matter of concern which is also in the By-Laws. Such a motion does not change the By-Laws but indicates a preferred approach to be adopted.

After discussion, it was proposed:

That the Finance Report be presented in the IFSW official languages two months prior to the General Meeting and uploaded on the official IFSW website showing income, expenditure and projections.	
Proposed	Puerto Rico
Seconded	Panama

AGREED by a large majority

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That the Finance Report 2022 & 2023 be accepted.					
Proposed	India				
Seconded	USA				
Yes: 26		No: 16		Abstain: 4	
AGREED by show of hands and electronic recording of votes of online participants					

4.8 President's and Secretary-General's Report

It was agreed to postpone the report until the second day to enable to President to be present in person.

4.9 Discussion / Motion to appoint the auditor

The Treasurer invited the General Meeting to approve BDO as auditor for the period until the next General Meeting. It was suggested that the virtual attendance of the auditor at the General Meeting would be helpful in future. In response to a question, the Secretary General observed that IFSW had changed auditor a few years ago by a tender process; it was agreed that this is good practice from time to time.

That BDO be approved as auditor for the period until the next General Meeting.	
Proposed	Switzerland
Seconded	Israel
AGREED by show of hands in the room and online.	

5. POLICY ON THE RELAUNCH OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Secretary General stated that this policy had initially been proposed by the whole Executive, but in the executive meeting the day before this General Meeting, it was noted that one of the regions had concerns about this policy. He said in the interests of all regions in the executive supporting this policy, the executive considered it to be important that this policy is not yet voted upon, but discussed in the General Meeting, with any feedback going back to the executive for further consideration. After further feedback, he noted, the executive would then send out the policy to members in an e-postal ballot.

Rose Henderson had been leading the review of the policy and spoke to the issues in the draft document. It was noted that the previous Human Rights Commission had been unable to agree a workplan due to a lack of clarity about the remit of the Commission, and in particular whether it had a remit to consider all human rights or whether the focus should be on the abuse of the human rights of social workers. Rose Henderson presented the rationale for a revised focus of the proposed Commission on Social Workers' Rights. It was noted that the original focus of the Commission under the first Commissioner, Terry Bamford, had been on situations where social worker rights were being abused.

Concerns were raised by several member organisations that there remains a need to promote human rights in general and this policy could imply a retreat at a time when human rights are under threat. Rose Henderson and the Secretary General stressed that human rights flow through all the work of IFSW. It will remain a core focus. The current debate is about the role of the Commission. The Secretary General noted that if IFSW did not have a focus on supporting the human rights of social workers then no entity would support social workers when their rights are abused. He noted several examples where social workers were imprisoned or worse for carrying out the same duties in countries with more freedoms. There was agreement that a focus on social workers as human rights

defenders is timely and relevant. There is a related need to focus on occupational health as social workers are employed to go into risky areas and experience violence.

It was noted that a revised document that considered this and further feedback will be sent to members in a e-ballot. Member organisations have 30 days to comment further on the proposal.

IFSW WORK ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

David N Jones, Chair of the research project steering group, reminded member organisations about the project and the initial findings suggesting that social workers have some of the worst working environments of any comparable profession. He urged member organisations to encourage their members to participate in the research using the online questionnaire on the IFSW website. The research closes at the end of May.

6. NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

6.1 Vote on applications

The Secretary General explained the review process for applications for membership from national social work organisations. In both the cases under consideration, the Ethics Commission and the Regional President have approved both applications.

Taiwan

The Secretary General advised that Taiwan is a disputed territory. That China considers Taiwan its territory and there is a strong independence movement in Taiwan that is also supported by a number of countries. In light of this sensitively he noted that this application had been delayed so that it could be fully discussed in this General Meeting. He added that when receiving the application, as an independent social work association, that he had notified the Chinese Association of Social Workers last August and invited them to put forward their perspective including to this meeting. He said that the member from China had communicated in the last days stating forcefully that Taiwan is not an independent nation and that they are shocked and have extreme concern that separate membership is being considered. A representative of the China Association participating online reiterated these points and noted that Taiwan membership application was posted online after the constitutional deadline. The Secretary General advised members that IFSW does not recognise national governments that we can only recognise national associations of social work. He commented that IFSW has a principal of self-determination and it was up to this meeting on how to interpret self determination at this global level. He added that in previous similar discussions, members had recognised independent professional social work associations in disputed contexts such as Palestine and Puerto Rico.

The Parliamentarian advised that it was necessary to vote on whether to accept the applications given that the papers had been published after the constitutional deadline.

That the membership applications of Taiwan and Cambodia be accepted on the agenda for decision.					
Proposed	Netherlands				
Seconded	USA				
Yes:	21	No:	9	Abstain:	5
AGREED by show of hands in the room and online					

That the membership application of Taiwan be approved.					
Proposed	Puerto Rico				
Seconded	Hungary				
Yes:	33	No:	7	Abstain:	6
AGREED by show of hands in the room and online					

The Secretary General reaffirmed respect for all member organisations and appealed directly to the Chinese association noting their importance to this international community. He reiterated that the vote was not intended to undermine China but the international social work community valued each

organisation's rights to be self-determining. He said he hoped that the China Association would remain in membership and to continue the long and positive relationship in IFSW.

That the membership application of Cambodia be approved.	
Proposed	United Kingdom
Seconded	Netherlands
AGREED unanimously by show of hands in the room and online	

The meeting adjourned.

The second day opened with a welcome to the President, Joachim Mumba, who had arrived after transport delays. The President thanked the Global Vice President for the effective chairing of the first day of the meeting.

7. ELECTIONS

7.1 Nomination's Committee Report

The Elections Officer introduced the report of the committee and drew attention to the issues which it is recommended require reflection.

More attention should be given to briefing and preparing the committee members, in particular regarding the interpretation of the constitutional requirements and preparation for issues which might arise. The committee must therefore be appointed by regions immediately after the General Meeting to allow time for these processes and also to be available if there is a need for an election following a resignation between General Meetings.

More thought is needed about the interpretation of the requirement that nominees must have 'at least two years' experience of IFSW'.

The constitution specifies that elections are decided on the 'first past the post' principle, meaning that there is one round of voting and the candidate who gets most votes, even if not a majority of votes, is elected. This can produce perverse outcomes when there are several candidates and a small number of electors. A system which produces one candidate with a majority of votes seems preferable for a membership organisation like IFSW. The Executive is invited to consider the preferred election principle and whether a constitutional change is required.

7.2 Introduction on how to cast your vote

Mayaka Bernard from the Secretariat explained how the online voting arrangements would work.

The Africa and European Regions met separately to hear statements by candidates. Members of other regions adjourned for regional conversations.

Announcement of Election results

Following closure of the electronic voting, the Elections Officer formally announced the results of the elections.

7.3 IFSW Treasurer

Griganesh Maralawaday Venkatanarasiah	India	ELECTED
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7.4 IFSW Africa Regional President

Oluwatoni (Toni) Modupe <u>Adeleke</u>	Nigeria	8	ELECTED
Abu (George) <u>Mansaray</u>	Sierra Leone	1	
John Mary <u>Ssekate</u>	Uganda	3	

It was noted that a call for nominations for the newly vacant role of Vice President would be issued soon after the end of the General Meeting.

7.5	IFSW Asia-Pacific Regional Vice President			
	<u>Teoh Ai Hua</u>	Malaysia		ELECTED
	<u>Il Kyu Park</u>	South Korea	(WITHDRAWN)	
7.6	IFSW Europe Regional President			
	Ruth Allen	United Kingdom		ELECTED
7.7	IFSW Europe Vice President			
	Tatevik <u>Karapetyan</u>	Armenia	3	
	Andreas P. <u>Kikvik</u>	Norway	16	ELECTED
	Alessandro <u>Monti</u>	Switzerland	2	
	Filip <u>Nývlt</u>	Czech Republic	2	
7.8	IFSW Latin America and Caribbean Regional Vice President			
	Gabriela Rodriguez <u>Vázquez</u>	Mexico		ELECTED
7.9	NORTH AMERICA PRESIDENT			
	Yvonne Chase	USA		ELECTED
7.10	NORTH AMERICA VICE PRESIDENT			
	Joan Davis Whelan	Canada		ELECTED

The Elections Officer concluded by thanking all the candidates for their commitment to social work and IFSW. He also thanked Pascal Rodin and Mayaka Bernard for overseeing the electronic voting process.

The Secretary General thanked David Jones for his service as Elections Officer and proposed that he be elected as Elections Officer for the period until the end of the General Meeting in 2026, having already indicated his willingness to do so.

That David N Jones be elected as Elections Officer for the period until the end of the General Meeting in 2026.

Proposed Germany

Seconded Austria

AGREED unanimously

The 2024-2026 Executive consists of the following members:

IFSW Global President: Joachim Cuthbert Mumba, Zambia

IFSW Global Treasurer: Sriganesh Maralawady Venkatanarasiah, India

IFSW Africa President: Oluwatoni Adeleke, Nigeria

IFSW Africa Vice President: vacant

IFSW Asia-Pacific President: Machiko Ohara

IFSW Asia-Pacific Vice President: Teoh Ai Hua

IFSW Europe President: Ruth Allen

IFSW Europe Vice President: Andreas Pedersen Kikvik

IFSW Latin America and Caribbean President: Kenia Batista

IFSW Latin America and Caribbean Vice President: Gabriela Rodríguez Vázquez

IFSW North America President: Yvonne Chase

IFSW North America Vice President: Joan Davis-Whelan

8. IFSW COMMISSIONS' REPORTS

8.1 Report from the IFSW Education Commission

Vasilios Ioakimidis (Commissioner) referred to the written report. The Commission had supported universities to implement the revised global standards and had supported pilot studies.

8.2 Report from the IFSW Ethics Commission

Jane Shears (Commissioner) referred to the written report. The Commission had supported membership applications by reviewing the ethical codes, had disseminated the work of the Commission in webinars and meetings, had considered ethical issues arising from the pandemic and had participated in activities to support continuous professional development. Future activity will consider the implications for social work practice of global digital developments.

8.3 Report from the IFSW Indigenous Commission

Hilary Weaver (Commissioner) referred to the written report and noted some organisational difficulties arising from a lack of organisational clarity which was being resolved. The Commission had made a presentation at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as the only accredited organisation representing social work. The Commission has issued statements on Human Rights Day (including respect for the natural world), Indigenous Peoples Day and Orange Shirt Day (remembering children who had died in residential schools).

8.4 Report from the IFSW UN Commission

Priska Fleischlin (Commissioner) referred to the written report and noted the involvement of 20 members from eight countries. There is an IFSW volunteer presence at several locations of United Nations office, including New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, and Bangkok. The Commission would welcome a representative in Santiago de Chile. It was noted that improved links are being developed with the World Health Organisation. It was stated that the UN is very aware of the key role of social workers in delivering a number of UN instruments and policies. Improved coordination between the representatives in different countries ensures a more consistent approach to the UN as a whole.

8.5 Report on the paused IFSW Human Rights Commission

The future arrangement for the IFSW HRC had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

That the reports of the IFSW Commissions be adopted	
Proposed	Canada
Seconded	Panama
AGREED unanimously	

9. POLICY ON THE STRUCTURE OF COMMISSIONS

The Secretary General stated that like the policy discussed yesterday, that this policy had initially been proposed by the whole Executive, but it had been recently highlighted that one of the regions had concerns about this policy. He said the executive was therefore seeking discussion with any feedback going back to the executive for further consideration. After further feedback the executive will then send out the policy to members in an e-postal ballot.

Rose Henderson referred to the paper on the website setting out a new policy which aimed to clarify the position of the Commissions within the governance and operations of the Federation. The Commissions are operational and voluntary, supported by the Secretariat. After discussion, it was agreed that the deadline for responses to the revised paper would be 30th May 2024.

10. OTHER REPORTS

10.1 Ambassadors Message

The Ambassador referred to her written report and welcomed the in-person event.

The report was RECEIVED.

10.3 COSW Report

The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) is a formal partner organisation with IFSW. Board member David N Jones welcomed the 20-year partnership with IFSW and referred to the written report. He noted that a Memorandum of Understanding is close to being agreed. He referred to the implementation of new COSW governance arrangements and hoped that IFSW member organisations in the Commonwealth would play a key role. The Commonwealth, including COSW, is very conscious of the legacy of colonialism; COSW has a statement on human rights and respect for all on its website and works closely with IFSW and others to address human rights and other issues. The flagship young carer project and Commonwealth Charter were emphasised. The report highlighted the close working relationship with IFSW and the fact that COSW supported and promoted IFSW policies and concluded with thanks to IFSW for the continued close working relationship.

The report was RECEIVED.

10.3 Partnership with the World Health Organisation and call for involvement

The Secretary General drew attention to correspondence with WHO and to IFSW an invitation to play a key role in a new WHO initiative to establish a Commission for Social Relationships. The intention is to focus on the social determinants of health and on building trust with communities, noting the experiences in the pandemic and lack of trust of medical communications and interventions, exacerbated by social media. It was noted that WHO had traditionally focussed on partnerships with qualified medical practitioners and had seemed reluctant to engage with social professionals. He urged IFSW member organisations to respond positively to this invitation.

In response, the meeting noted the benefit of including experts by experience and the threat to communities arising from landmines.

During this agenda item Senegal and Gambia expressed concern about the lack of translation into French during this meeting, which was effectively excluding francophone countries. It was noted that there is a plan to hold a conference on FGM for francophone countries. The Secretary General expressed regret that translation for French was not available in this meeting. He affirmed the intention to explore translation options for French for the 2026 meeting and conference. The Elections Officer provided a response in French.

The WHO invitation was NOTED.

4.8 President's and Secretary-General's Report (rescheduled from yesterday)

The President referred to the written report noting that it had been a challenging time. He said that he had been asked to comment on his travel and outlined the visits made to member organisations, events and conferences. He thanked all members for their support.

The Secretary-General thanked individuals and members for their support while he took sabbatical leave. He provided an overview of the changes in the Federation in recent years, including the large shift in membership, from those coming predominately from high-income countries to most member organisations now coming from low-income countries which reflected the global realities. He observed that in our stream of development recent IFSW policies and statements focus more on community development approaches and articulating a broader frameworks of rights not just individual focused approaches. He said that the Federation had gained international applause for this developments. He noted that the Federation underwent a big change in 2016 when it revised the Constitution to be more outward and action orientated co-working with partners, noting the significant success with the Peoples Global Summit for a New Eco-social World which has become a major international instrument for change. He said that these new ways of working also brought some challenges and noted that we have learn that when working in specific crisis situations we require more internal policies to be developed. The Secretary-General noted the need for a wide-ranging review of how IFSW conducts business to unlock the full potential that already exists in our structures. He added that IFSW can be proud of bringing forward global themes from indigenous movements and noted that the Federation is continuing to learn from and build on Ubuntu with this year's theme Buen Vivir. He said it was important to embrace this learning and concluded that, when Member organisations reconvene in the 2026 General Meeting, we should all focus on the further consolidation of this vision and the aligned new internal policies as IFSW moves to the 100th anniversary in 2028.

11. FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

11.1 SWSD Conference 2026

It was announced that the three global partners had agreed that the 2026 world conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya. [The dates were later confirmed as 26-30 June 2026.

11.2 IFSW Africa Regional Conference 2025

The IFSW Africa President announced that the African regional conference will be in April 2025 at a location to be decided.

11.3 IFSW Asia and Pacific Regional Conference 2025

The Asia Pacific President announced that the next regional conference will be held in Sri Lanka in November 2025.

11.4 IFSW Europe Regional Conference 2025

The Europe President announced that the next regional conference will be held in Oslo, Norway, in October 2025 with a focus on Eco social work, the SDGs and indigenous issues, including an element in the far north of Norway.

11.5 IFSW Latin America and Caribbean Regional Conference 2025

The Latin America and Caribbean President announced that the next conference will be held in Chile to celebrate the 100th anniversary of social work in Chile.

11.6 IFSW North America Regional Conference 2025

The North America President and Vice President provided information about national events and an online free regional conference.

12.1 MOTION FROM THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The United Kingdom (BASW) introduced the motion which had been proposed and published on the website in accordance with the constitution.

It was agreed that a specific reference be included to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This General Meeting, in the spirit of Buen Vivir, notes with concern:

- The continuing climate emergency including the threat to the existence of island states and coastal communities;
- The escalation of wars, conflicts and tension on all continents;
- The large numbers of people on the move (migrating) because of conflicts, climate change and economic pressures;
- The increased use of hate speech and violent rhetoric in political dialogue amplified through mainstream and social media in many countries and international dialogues;
- The rise of populist politicians who exploit cultural and racial differences for political gain, resulting in continued discrimination and racially targeted violence;
- Historic situations in the recent past when social workers were complicit in implementing social policies which did not respect human rights and were abusive.

IFSW therefore resolves:

- to continue the campaign to support The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World and its principles and recommended actions;
- to continue to value and engage with international organisations, such as the United Nations and its agencies, and regional bodies ;
- to promote the importance of the international conventions which establish the principles of Human Rights for all peoples, including the United Nations Refugee Convention, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- to call on all leaders and politicians to show respect for the human rights of all peoples, to base their arguments on evidence not conjecture, to use careful and respectful language in political dialogue, and to avoid inflaming racial and cultural tensions;

- to encourage member organisations to continue to promote the global ethical principles of social work, to challenge hate speech and to provide mutual support to achieve these objectives;
- to support member organisations in challenging false and simplistic narratives and to counter conspiracy theories lacking evidence on climate change, race and culture;
- to facilitate mutual support for member organisations facing challenging circumstances and to make further statements on these matters as required.

Proposed United Kingdom (BASW)

Seconded Romania

AGREED

12.2 MOTION ON GOOD GOVERNANCE

This late motion had been accepted on the agenda at the start of the meeting. Proposed by Germany and seconded by Sweden, the motion stressed the importance of developing policies and procedures which ensure good governance and compliance with legal requirements. It was noted that IFSW is a diverse, growing, complex, global membership organisation which needs a strong framework of formal policies and procedures.

There is no standard international definition of good governance for NGOs, but inspiration may be drawn from the United Nations Human Rights Council, (addressing governments and other political and social actors) which recommends the following framework:

Ensuring that organisations have structures, processes, procedures, leadership practices and cultural norms in place that promote:

- transparency
- responsibility
- accountability
- participation
- responsiveness
- inclusivity (added)

Member associations should expect IFSW to be a model of good governance with these characteristics, further underpinned by the ethical code and values. Many governance policies and procedures also relate to legal obligations.

It was suggested that there are significant gaps in policies, procedures, rules, and accountability (e.g. in how decisions are taken, how information is shared, how leadership is exercised, how existing protocols are being upheld, how internal and external complaints are handled, data protection, protecting the rights and guarding the safety of all involved in the Federation, how members are consulted etc). Such gaps pose significant risks to the organisation.

The pressure on staffing and voluntary member resources was acknowledged alongside the severe impact of the Covid period, including on the ability to meet and work together at global level and ensure shared understanding. It was argued that a renewed focus on good governance within IFSW would create a stronger organisation, fit and competent for current and future challenges.

It was proposed that the Executive Committee of IFSW global shall:

- consider the above concerns raised about the nature and sufficiency of good governance structures and processes within IFSW global
- establish a working group of members and staff to review governance and to develop policies and procedures – and their implementation - according to a prioritised list
- ensure consultation with the wider membership as the work progresses
- work towards presenting a full report on good governance developments, matters for decision and proposals for future developments at the 2026 General Meeting

The Secretary General welcomed the motion as contributing to improved governance and organisation and also stated that a wide scale review should include The People's Charter for a New Eco-Social World as a reference point.

There was lengthy discussion about the balance of membership of the working group. It was proposed that there should be at least one person from each region on the working group. Switzerland proposed that the motion should include a clear reference to the People's Charter for a New Eco Social World. It was also proposed that 'the wider membership' should be replaced by 'the member organisations'. These amendments were accepted by the proposer and seconder without a vote.

The amended motion was put to a vote

The Executive Committee of IFSW global shall:

- consider the above concerns raised about the nature and sufficiency of good governance structures and processes within IFSW global
- establish a working group with members from all regions, and staff to review governance and to develop policies and procedures – and their implementation - according to a prioritised list in accordance with the People's Charter for a New Eco Social World
- ensure consultation between the working group and the member organisations as the work progresses
- work towards presenting a full report on good governance developments, matters for decision and proposals for future developments at the 2026 General Meeting

Proposed Germany
Seconded Sweden

AGREED with 5 abstentions by show of hands in the room and online

12.3 APPOINTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARIAN 2024-2026

The Secretary General proposed that Nicolai Paulsen be reappointed as Parliamentarian for the period until the end of the General Meeting in 2026.

This was AGREED by acclamation.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Statements on the Gaza crisis

The President stated that it had been agreed to allow two statements about the conflict in Gaza.

The Israeli Association informed the meeting that it rejects the statement on the Gaza conflict published by IFSW. It was noted that Hamas continues to attack Israel, and Israel has responded. The circumstances of the murder of 2 social workers and the continued holding of 134 Israeli hostages were mentioned. The meeting was informed that social workers continue to work with many who have been displaced or experienced trauma. The Israeli Association requested that IFSW calls for the immediate release of the hostages and the resumption of negotiations.

Spain observed that terrorism is shocking and wrong, but the response of the Israeli state to the terrorist attack had been shocking and disproportionate. Whilst respecting the perspective of the Israeli colleagues, the destruction of Gaza and the large number of deaths, including many non-combatant women and children, was seen as unacceptable.

The Secretary General observed that every person has the right to have a voice. He also noted that it was evident that trauma was present for the members concerned. He stated that IFSW has a longstanding position on Israel and Palestine which has been agreed at previous General Meetings

and successive executives. This recognises the full rights, freedoms and security of both peoples in the region and that we encourage our members to continue to recognise one another's rights for self-determination and set a civil society example for others to follow. He commended both members for having recognised each other's rights at differing times. He noted that the solution to this conflict must involve the peoples of Palestine and Israel and that our role is to support them in continuing to build their relationship based on respect and working towards peace. He then asked members in the General Meeting not to heighten the trauma and appealed for a calm approach that held and supported our members.

13.2 Other Business

Austria proposed an evaluation process to gather feedback on the meeting, with a summary of findings to use in future planning. This was recognised as a helpful suggestion which will be considered by the Secretariat.

Spain proposed that consideration should be given to making a constitutional change to ensure that at least 40% of all Executive and Regional Executive are held by women. Denmark observed that this should not be seen as a binary issue; other expressions of identity need to be considered.

Farewell to exiting and welcome to new Executive Members

The President thanked departing Executive Members for their hard work and commitment and presented a token gift to each person.

Victor Garcia had been Treasurer for 9 years.

Ana Radulescu had been a long-serving and very active President of Europe.

Noel Muridzo had been a long-serving President of Africa and had led transformation of the region.

Tania Maria Ramos had made a significant contribution as President of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Sriganesh M. V. had served as Vice President of Asia Pacific and was returning to the Board as the Honorary Treasurer.

Joan Davis-Whelan had served as President of North America and Global Vice President and returns as Vice President of the region.

John Brennan had resigned as Vice President of Europe and had participated in this meeting online. His contribution to the Executive had been full of wisdom.

Silvana Martinez was also acknowledged by the Secretary General as the first Global President from Latin America and the Caribbean. He noted that this acknowledgement was not possible in a face-to-face context when she ended term during the pandemic.

Support was shown by applause.

The new Executive, which had been announced earlier in the meeting, was welcomed to their new roles.

Germany voiced thanks to the Secretariat and all the people involved in the administration of the meeting including the technical aspects, the interpreters, and screen notes and minute takers. This was endorsed by warm applause.

The President declared the meeting concluded and participants gathered for a group photograph.