

CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Adopted at the 2016 General Meeting, Seoul Korea

PREAMBLE

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organization comprising National Social Work Organizations worldwide. The Mission of IFSW is to advocate for social justice, human rights and social development through plans, actions, programs and the promotion of best practice models in social work within a framework of international cooperation.

The current IFSW was constitutionally incorporated in 1956 in Munich Germany, succeeding the *International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers* dating back to 1932. The IFSW Constitution and By-Laws are subject to review by the General Assembly as they deem appropriate in order to ensure the effective operation of the Federation and continued relevance as the composition and roles of our Federation evolves over time.

Art. 1 NAME AND COMPOSITION

- a) The name of the Federation is; **International Federation of Social Workers**
- b) The Federation shall be composed of National Professional Social Work Organisations or National Co-ordinating Bodies.
- c) The Federation shall be a non-profit making organisation

Art. 2 INCORPORATION

The Federation shall be incorporated under the relevant Articles of the Civil Code in the country where it is seated. The Federation may, by decision of the General Meeting, incorporate under relevant laws in an alternative country

Art. 3 SEAT

The Federation's seat shall be in Switzerland, or at any such other place as may be determined by the General Meeting in accordance with the Federation's Articles

Art. 4 AIMS OF THE FEDERATION

Social workers make a unique, professional and critical contribution to society. They facilitate sustainable social outcomes that enable people and their communities to reach their potential for this and future generations.

IFSW supports social workers to achieve this through the following aims:

- **Partnerships:** Proactively building internal and external partnerships with people who use social work services and their wider communities; to ensure that social services recognize people's inherent strengths and build on them to meet individual, family and community aspirations. Building partnerships to work for global solidarity, also partnerships with other professionals and within IFSW.
- **Action:** Facilitating international and regional cooperation for shared learning and joint action.
- **Policy:** Developing ethical statements and policies that enhance best social work practice.
- **Advocacy:** Advocating at global, regional and national levels for social justice, and individual, group, civic and cultural human rights. Advocating professional social work values, standards, ethics, human rights, recognition, training and working conditions.

Art. 5 MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

- a) Membership is open to national Social Work Organizations of any country, whose core members must have completed post- secondary education in social work and must practice or intend to practice or have practiced social work.
- b) Membership of the Federation shall be limited to one National Social Work Association in any one country.
 - 1) If more than one Social Work Organisation in a country is interested in membership of the Federation only a national Coordinating Body representing every such organisation may be admitted as a Member of the Federation.
 - 2) If there is an existing Member from any country and another national Social Work Organisation from that country, otherwise fulfilling the eligibility criteria, confirms a wish to become involved with the Federation, the existing Member is obliged to endeavour to facilitate the development of a Coordinating Body to succeed it as the Member from that country, in accordance with the By Laws and any General Meeting resolution giving such direction. The existing member maintains their full standing as members until there is in fact formation of a coordinating Body and said Body is admitted as a full member
 - 3) All the Social Work Organisations wishing to be involved in a Co-ordinating Body must individually meet the criteria for full membership. If one or more organisation does not meet the membership criteria, the other interested organisation(s) may still pursue an application through a Co-ordinating Body.
 - 4) The Coordinating Body shall establish procedures with respect to Federation elections; voting at meetings; organization of international conferences; coordination of mailing lists; and identification of social workers to serve on Federation committees

Art. 6 RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

- a) All Members shall observe the Articles and the By Laws of the Federation, and the Statement of Ethical Standards
- b) Members in good standing (have paid their dues and have not been expelled or suspended) shall be entitled to receive direct communication and all member publications and materials from the Federation
- c) Members in good standing shall be entitled to full participation in Federation elections in accordance with these Articles and the By Laws
- d) Members in good standing shall be eligible to participate in the work of Federation committees

Art. 7 SUSPENSION, EXPULSION AND REINSTATEMENT

- a) A Member that does not pay its dues may be suspended by a majority decision of the Executive Committee.
- b) A Member that violates the Articles of this Constitution and/or the By Laws of the Federation or in any other form or manner counteracts the basic interests, aims and policies of the Federation or its Members may be suspended or expelled by a 75% majority of members of the General Meeting present and voting.
- c) A Member that was suspended because of non-payment of their dues may be reinstated to membership by a majority decision of the Executive Committee upon making satisfactory arrangements for repayment of dues in arrears.
- d) A Member that has been suspended or expelled because of a violation of the Articles of this Constitution and/or the By Laws of the Federation or because they have in any other form or manner counteracted the basic interests, aims and policies of the Federation or its Members, may be reinstated upon recommendation of the Executive Committee and by a majority vote of members of the General Meeting present and voting.
- e) Further procedures set out in the By Laws relating to suspension, expulsion and reinstatement shall apply.

Art 8 Partner Organisations

The Federation may by decision of the General Meeting, extend to other organisations the status of a partner organisation.

- a) The General Meeting must be satisfied that the proposed organisation
 - I. Either shares goals and ethical principles that are consistent with those of the Federation and/ or does not have goals that are expressly oppositional to the Federation's.
 - II. There is no competition or conflict of interest with the Federation or its Members
 - III. There is clear recognition of and respect for the role of Federation as the peak body representing social work at an international level.
 - IV. There is agreement to enter into a formal compact/contract or memorandum of understanding; and
 - V. There is a set period to review the relationship
- b) A partner organisation shall be entitled to attend the General Meeting of the Federation as an observer and to receive all relevant paperwork pertaining to that meeting.
- c) A partner organisation shall not have the right to vote and may participate in the General Meeting with the leave of the President/Chairperson

Art. 9 SECRETARY GENERAL

- a) The Secretary General shall be appointed by the Executive Committee.
- b) The Secretary General shall report to and carry out duties assigned by the General Meeting, the Executive Committee and the President. She or he shall attend all Executive Committee meetings as well the General Meeting as an ex-officio member of such committee s.

Art. 10 FUNCTIONS OF THE GENERAL MEETING

- a) The General Meeting is the supreme and governing body of the Federation. It consists of delegates of Members and the Executive Committee Members
- b) The General Meeting shall receive the reports and audited accounts of the Federation for the past two financial years.
- c) The General Meeting ratifies the general and financial policies of the Federation for the coming two financial years, including the method of assessing the annual membership fees for Members.
- d) The General Meeting shall elect the Executive Committee Members by direct election of Global President & Treasurer and shall ratify nominations of the regional delegates meetings for the Regional President and Regional Vice-President of each region .
- e) The General Meeting shall elect a Nomination Committee consisting of an Elections Officer as chair of the committee and one representative from each of the regions of IFSW to organize and direct the election process
- f) The General Meeting shall elect a parliamentarian and other necessary persons to carry out duties as it may decide.
- g) The General Meeting shall approve amendments or additions to the Constitution by a 75% majority of eligible voters.
- h) The General Meeting may also approve any proposed amendments to the By-Laws by a 75% majority of eligible voters.
- i) The General Meeting may delegate any of its powers to the Executive Committee except the power to alter, amend or add to the Articles of the Constitution.
- j)The President presides at the General Meeting. In the event of absence, the Vice President shall preside and one representative from each of the regions of IFSW to organize and direct the electoral process

Art. 11 CONVENING OF AND ATTENDANCE AT GENERAL MEETINGS

- a)The General Meeting shall meet not less than once every two years. A preceding General Meeting shall normally decide the date and venue of the General Meeting or as shall otherwise be determined by the Executive Committee.

b) Special General Meetings may be called by the President, at the direction of the Executive Committee, or upon the written request of not less than one fifth of the Members in good standing. (having paid their dues and not currently expelled nor suspended)

c) Notice of the General Meeting, including its date and preliminary agenda, shall be dispatched to all Members and to the Executive Committee not less than 90 days before the date set for the meeting. Notice of a Special General Meeting shall also be 90 days but may be reduced to no less than 30 days by the decision of the President, and it's business is limited to the matters notified in the preliminary agenda.

d) A Quorum of the General Meeting shall consist of representatives, present in person at the opening of the General Meeting, of one third of the Members with voting rights and in good standing .

Art. 12 PROCEDURES IN GENERAL MEETINGS

a) Each Member shall be entitled to three delegates each of whom is entitled to speak. Observers to the General Meeting may be admitted with the permission of the President, but may not speak unless the President so decides.

b) Each Member shall have one vote, which may be exercised, in person by the delegate, or by proxy, or through agreed electronic means.

c) A Member may act as proxy for other Member not in attendance. The instrument appointing a proxy must be in the form specified in By Law 10.

d) Votes of the General Meeting shall be by simple majority, except where otherwise specified in the Constitution. In the event of a tied vote the President shall exercise a decisive vote.

e) Election procedures, including voting, shall be as prescribed in the By Laws.

f) No Executive Committee Member shall have any vote in a General Meeting in such capacity (subject to any casting vote of the President provided by the Constitution)

Art. 13 VOTES BY BALLOT

a) The vote of the general membership on an issue may be taken by postal ballot or other agreed electronic means. In order for the vote to be valid, one third of the Members must return a ballot with the stipulated time period. Decision will be made by a simple majority unless otherwise stipulated in the constitution or by-laws.

b) The Executive Committee may take decisions by postal and/or email ballot. The vote is valid only if ballots are returned by 66% of those entitled to attend Executive Committee Meetings, within the stipulated time period. Decision is by simple majority unless otherwise stipulated in the constitution or by-laws.

Art. 14 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

a) For organizational purposes, the Federation is divided into five geographical Region: Africa, Asia & Pacific, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean and North America.

b) Each Region shall have a President and a Vice-President serving on the Executive Committee.

c)) The Executive Committee Members will comprise of a Global President, a Global Treasurer and the two representatives from each geographical region.

d) The nomination for all members of the Executive must come from members in good standing. Only social workers with a minimum experience of two years within the Federation are eligible for nomination or election to the Executive.

e) The Executive Committee shall elect one of the presidents of the Regions to serve as Global Vice-President.

- f) There shall be established a steering committee which shall comprise the Global president, the Treasurer, the Vice-President and the Secretary General as an ex-officio member.
- g) The term of office of the Regional Presidents and Regional Vice-Presidents shall all be four years and they may be re-elected to the same or another executive position for a second term for a maximum of eight years.
- h) The term of office of the Global President and Treasurer shall all be four years and executive committee members having served a maximum of eight consecutive years shall be eligible to run for this position, thus giving them a maximum of twelve years if elected.
- i) The term of office of the global Vice- President shall all be two years and he or she may be re-elected to the same position by the Executive Committee for a maximum of eight years as long as they remain a member of said Executive Committee.
- j) A vacancy in the following executive positions arising between General Meetings, which the Executive Committee considers should be filled before the next General Meeting shall be filled as follows: -
- 1) **Global President**- global Vice President assumes position
 - 2) **Global Vice President** – Executive Committee election of one of the remaining Regional Presidents
 - 3) **Treasurer** – Executive Committee election of an existing member of the Committee or by appropriate Executive committee co-option.
 - 4) **Regional President** –Regional Vice-President from same region
 - 5) **Regional Vice-President** - appointment of new Regional Vice-President duly nominated by same region
- k) An interim appointment to fulfill the original existing term shall be counted for the purpose of calculating the maximum number of terms as well as years as a member of the executive committee which is two terms or eight years.
- l) Executive Committee Members who have not communicated nor justified their absence from the committee for a period of over 120 days shall be considered to have resigned the position to which they were elected.

Art. 15 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

- a) The Executive Committee shall have delegated authority to conduct the affairs of the Federation between General Meetings, in accordance with the general policies laid down by the General Meeting.
- b) The Executive Committee shall consider and approve an annual budget subject to review as and when needed.
- c) The Executive Committee shall determine the duties and powers of the Steering Committee (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary General as an ex-officio member), subject to these Articles and the current By Laws of the Federation.
- d) The Executive Committee shall have delegated authority to decide on the signing authority on behalf of the Federation.
- e) The global Vice President shall substitute for the President in case of the President's absence.
- f) The Executive Committee may establish such committees, and appoint such persons, as may be necessary to carry out the program and specific activities of the Federation.
- g) The Executive Committee shall be responsible for preparation of the By Laws and such additions and amendments as may be necessary for approval by the General Meeting. Such additions and amendments shall, if approved by a three quarter majority of the Executive Committee, be adopted and implemented prior to their being considered for approval by the next General Meeting.

Art. 16 CONVENING AND ATTENDANCE AT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

- a) The Executive Committee shall meet not less than once in each calendar year. It shall be convened to any suitable place or by electronic means as decided by the Executive Committee
- b) Notice of the Executive Committee Meeting, including its date and preliminary agenda, shall be sent not less than 30 days before the date fixed for the meeting.
- c) A Quorum of Executive Committee shall consist of more than one half of the Executive Committee Members and shall be confirmed at the beginning of the meeting.
- d) Observers may be admitted with the permission of the President, but may not speak unless the President so decides

Art. 17 VOTING IN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- a) The Executive Committee shall make its decisions by simple majority of the Executive Committee Members attending the meeting, except where otherwise required by this Constitution.
- b) The President, as Chair, shall exercise a casting vote

Art. 18 REGIONS

- a) The five(5) geographical Regions Africa, Asia & Pacific, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean and North America shall each be individually responsible for assessing the eligibility for membership of any applicant referred to it. Provided the Region considers the applicant to meet the criteria for membership it shall recommend to the Executive Committee that the applicant should be admitted as a Member of the Federation and that it should be assigned to that Region.
- b) Members may make a request for membership of a region other than their own on grounds other than geography.
 - 1) The transfer request shall be considered through procedures prescribed in By-Laws and approved by the Executive Committee by a 75% majority of the Executive Committee.
 - 2) If a transfer request fails to gain the support of a 75% majority, the Executive Committee shall submit the request to the next General Meeting for discussion and voting.
 - 3) Such a request shall be considered by the General Meeting and approved by a 75% majority of the General Meeting.
- c) The Members of each Region shall, when circumstances allow, appoint a Regional Committee and determine the frequency, content and conduct of meetings within the Region.
- d) Each region shall make arrangements for nominations of their President and Vice-President for the purpose of Article 13b) in accordance with procedures set down by the Nomination committee

Art. 19 BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a) The financial year of the Federation shall be 1 January to 31 December.
- b) The Secretary-General shall in conjunction with the Treasurer carry out the following responsibilities:
 - I) Collection of annual dues from Members;
 - II) Preparation of accounts for the Auditors;
 - III) Preparation of the budget for submission to the Executive Committee;
 - IV) Receipt, deposit and withdrawal of all funds of the Federation under the direction of the General Meeting or

- the Executive Committee;
- V) Preparing and making available a statement of receipts and expenditure to each Executive Committee Meeting and each General Meeting;
- VI) Maintaining true and regular current accounts of the Federation's monies
- VII) Making a written report on all assets and liabilities of the Federation and on any other such financial matter as may be determined by the Executive Committee or General Meeting.

Art 20 AUDITING ARRANGEMENTS

- a) The General Meeting shall appoint Independent auditors.
- b) The auditors shall submit a certified report to each General Meeting.
- c) The auditors may conduct an informal audit of the Federation's financial records at any time. They shall report irregularities to the Executive Committee

Art. 21 AMENDMENT of Articles in CONSTITUTION

- a) Articles may be amended only by decision of the General Meeting. A proposal to amend the Articles will be accepted only if supported by 75 % of the voting Members including votes by proxy at the General Meeting.
- b) Any proposed amendment to the Articles shall be circulated in writing to the Members not less than 90 days before the date fixed for the General Meeting

Art. 22 DISSOLUTION

- a) A decision to dissolve the Federation may be made by the General Meeting.
- b) Acceptance of a proposal to dissolve the Federation shall require a majority of 75% of Members present, or represented by proxy, at the General Meeting.
- c) Any proposal to dissolve the Federation shall be circulated in writing to the Members not less than 90 days before the date fixed for the General Meeting.
- d) If the General Meeting decides on dissolution of the Federation it shall also decide on the disposal of the Federation's funds and assets.

Art. 23 FINAL DISPOSITIONS

- a) These Articles shall replace those adopted at earlier General Meetings and shall be in force from **2 July, 2016**.
- b) These Articles, together with any By Laws currently in force as a result of approval by a General Meeting, shall be known as the Constitution of the International Federation of Social Workers.
- c) In any question of ruling on the Constitution, the President shall be advised by the Parliamentarian. The President's ruling shall prevail, except if it is contested by all other Executive Committee Members of the Federation, or by a 75% majority of all organisations eligible to vote.
- d) For purposes of interpretation of this Constitution the English language version shall be regarded as authoritative