



INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE

STATUTES

(Adopted at the 2016 International Council, 7 April, Melbourne,
Revised at the 2021 Extraordinary International Council, 7 April, Teleconference)

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PREAMBLE

A. Constitution

International Social Service (ISS) is a non-governmental, non-sectarian, non-profit and independent membership organisation, composed of representatives of national bodies pursuing common aims through a network of social work and legal services. It was established in Geneva in 1924 and is recognised as an Association by virtue of Article 60 et seq. of the Swiss Civil Code with its own Statutes and By-laws.

The head office of the Association is located in Geneva, Switzerland.

B. Vision

ISS strives to protect, defend, and support children, families and individuals separated as a consequence of cross border migration. ISS aims to ensure that respect for human rights is accorded to all individuals, particularly children.

C. Mission

The mission of ISS is to protect and assist people, particularly children, who, as a result of voluntary or forced migration or other social problems of an international character, have to overcome personal or family difficulties, the solution of which requires coordinated actions in several countries or, in some cases, action only in the country of residence of the persons concerned.

To fulfil this mission the functions of ISS include:

- a) To develop and maintain an international network of social work and legal services able to meet the needs of individuals and families who require the services of ISS.
- b) To contribute to the prevention of social problems linked to migration or intercountry mobility.
- c) To study from an international standpoint the conditions and consequences of migration in relation to individual and family life, and as a result of these studies to make recommendations or undertake any other appropriate action.
- d) To inform professionals and the public of the needs of migrant individuals and families.

D. Principles

- a) Commitment to the social and legal protection of the child and family.
- b) Promotion and defense of human rights and, in particular, children's rights.
- c) Respect for cultural diversity and enhancement of solidarity.
- d) Guarantee of confidentiality.
- e) Dedication to neutrality, independence and impartiality.
- f) Endorsement of voluntary commitment, responsibility and transparency.



PART A - MEMBERSHIP

Article 1: Composition

SECTION 1: VOTING MEMBERS

With the exception of individual honorary members (Section 5), all members of ISS are voting members and shall have the same rights and responsibilities (Article 3) as other members. Authorised delegates of each member shall have the right to participate fully in all ISS meetings and activities.

SECTION 2. CATEGORIES OF VOTING MEMBERSHIP

1. Non-Government Member: a body which, having legal status as a non-government organisation or entity according to its own national law and being engaged in functions compatible with the purposes of ISS, adheres to the Statutes and general principles of ISS, undertakes to promote all the aims of ISS and acts accordingly.
2. Government Member: a national government body (department, division or ministry) which, being engaged in functions compatible with the purposes of ISS, adheres to the Statutes and general principles of ISS, undertakes to promote all the aims of ISS and acts accordingly.

SECTION 3: MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION

In order to preserve the status of ISS as a non-government organisation a majority of members shall be non-government members.

SECTION 4: NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN A SINGLE COUNTRY

Unless specifically permitted by a resolution of the International Council, there shall be no more than one Non-Government Member and one Government Member in a single country.

SECTION 5: HONORARY MEMBERS

Honorary membership may be conferred by resolution of the International Council on individuals who have contributed significantly to uplifting the quality of human life, following proposals from one or more ISS members. Honorary Members shall have the right to participate in all ISS meetings and activities, but shall not have the right to vote or hold elected office.

Article 2: Admission to Membership

An applicant must only be admitted in accordance with these Statutes and the By-laws.

Any applicant wishing to become a member of ISS shall apply formally to the Governing Board and shall declare to respect the provisions of the Statutes. The request shall be sent to the General Secretariat in Geneva, who shall see to it that the request is formally handed over to the Governing Board at their next meeting.



The admission of a member is subject to decision by the International Council. An applicant may be admitted provisionally by the Governing Board until the International Council makes a final decision. A member admitted provisionally may take part in the work of ISS but has no voting right and cannot be elected to any official position. A member admitted provisionally is liable to remit 50% of the annual contribution required under Article 3, Section 3 j), pending a final decision by the International Council.

Article 3: Rights and Responsibilities of Members

In order to ensure ISS is able to fulfil its functions, and to guarantee the equal rights of its members, members of ISS have the following rights and responsibilities.

SECTION 1: RIGHTS - VOTING MEMBERS

Each voting member shall be granted one vote in meetings of the International Council. Voting members shall have the following rights:

- a) To be represented at and to participate in the work of the International Council, with the right to vote.
- b) To stand for election and nominate candidates to all official bodies of ISS.
- c) To call upon and receive from ISS any of the services and information which ISS has the power and the ability to provide, in conformity with its vision, mission, functions, resources, and legal obligations.
- d) To submit, on their own initiative, in their name or in the name of a group of members, proposals to the International Council and to all official bodies of ISS.
- e) To call upon other members for support, advice and assistance in accordance with the applicable rules of co-ordination and co-operation.
- f) To attend and participate in all network events including training and conferences.
- g) To identify publicly as a member of ISS.

SECTION 2: RIGHTS - NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Honorary Members have the same rights as voting members, except they cannot vote and they do not have the rights stated in Section 1 b) of this section.

SECTION 3: RESPONSIBILITIES - VOTING AND NON-VOTING MEMBERS

All members have the following responsibilities:

- a) To act at all times in accordance with the Statutes and By-laws of ISS.
- b) To abide by the policies, decisions and rules adopted by the International Council and the Governing Board.
- c) To respect the territorial integrity and independence of other members.
- d) To support the network in upholding its good name and standing, credibility, visibility and effectiveness.
- e) To represent the ISS network in the member's country and attend regional or international events on behalf of ISS (as resources permit).



- f) To have governing and managing bodies (or equivalents) and inform ISS, through the Secretary General, of any proposed amendments to their Statutes and of the composition of their main governing and managing bodies as well as significant changes in their situation.
- g) To accept referrals from and provide agreed services to other network members, and to maintain appropriately high standards for services.
- h) To engage in or contribute to advocacy, research and other activities relevant to ISS's interests.
- i) To contribute to the ISS network's decision-making, planning and development.
- j) To remit an annual contribution to the Secretary General on a fixed date (the amount of the contribution to be determined by the Governing Board in accordance with Article 12 m)).
- k) To contribute to ISS-wide reporting and performance management systems and to provide the Secretary General with annual reports, audited financial statements and casework data when required.

SECTION 4: FINANCIAL LIABILITIES OF MEMBERS

The liabilities of the ISS Association are covered by its assets only, and no member can be held responsible for them.

Article 4: Cessation of Membership

Membership ceases when:

- a) A member is dissolved, or
- b) A member withdraws from ISS provided they give the Governing Board six months' written notice of withdrawal. The request shall be sent to the General Secretariat in Geneva, who shall see to it that the request is formally handed over to the Governing Board at their next meeting, or
- c) A member is expelled from ISS by decision of a two-thirds majority of the International Council in accordance with Article 6.

Article 5: Suspension of Membership

The Governing Board may decide to suspend a member from membership status in ISS. A member may be suspended if:

- a) It ceases to fulfil the conditions for admission provided for in these Statutes, or
- b) On its own initiative or under pressure from the government of its country it contravenes any of the aims of ISS, or
- c) It uses its membership and/or the name or the logo of ISS for a purpose which is not in conformity with any of the aims of ISS, or
- d) It persistently refuses to comply with its responsibilities under these Statutes.

A suspended member shall immediately lose its rights as a member. The Governing Board's decision is subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the International Council and may be appealed.

The Governing Board may revoke the suspension of the member when the reasons for suspension no longer apply.

Article 6: Expulsion of Members

When the Governing Board determines that the continued membership of a member is a grave risk to ISS, the Governing Board may recommend to the International Council, as a last resort, expulsion of that member. The Governing Board's recommendation to the International Council must be in writing and may be appealed by the member. The member's appeal will take the form of a written submission to the International Council, addressing the matters identified in the Governing Board's recommendation to the International Council, which must be shared with the member concerned.

An expelled member shall remain liable for all obligations to ISS which it incurred prior to its expulsion.

An expelled member shall immediately lose its rights as a member.

A member that has been expelled can reapply for admission following the procedures laid down in Article 2 once the reasons for expulsion no longer apply.

PART B - INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

Article 7: Role and Composition

The International Council acts as the General Assembly of ISS. It is composed of:

- a) The president of the governing body (or equivalent) of each Non-Government and Government Member, who may at the discretion of the member be represented by a substitute chosen from among the membership of the governing body.
- b) The executive director (or equivalent) of each Non-Government and Government Member.
- c) Honorary Members.

OBSERVERS

Representatives of cooperating organizations, intergovernmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations which are not members may participate as observers in International Council meetings, by invitation of the Governing Board or the Secretary General.

Article 8: Functions

In carrying out its role, the International Council:

- a) Establishes the general policy of ISS and guidelines concerning its programs.
- b) May establish and amend categories of membership and make decisions about the admission and expulsion of members.
- c) Elects the International Treasurer.



- d) Elects the six other members of the Governing Board (excluding the Chair of the Professional Advisory Committee), who are members of the governance bodies of member organisations and elects as well three external members.
- e) Chooses the location of the office of the General Secretariat.
- f) Admits new members in countries where desirable and may on an exceptional basis admit more than one Non-Government Member or Government Member in a country, in accordance with Article 1, Section 3 4.
- g) Receives and approves reports from: the Governing Board, including the financial report of the International Treasurer; the Secretary General; and the Professional Advisory Committee.
- h) Amends the Statutes and the By-laws on the recommendation of the Governing Board.
- i) Ensures harmony between decisions made, necessary resources to implement them and available funding.
- j) May take all such other actions and do all such other things as may be required to ensure the mission and functions of ISS are carried out, provided such actions and things are legal and ethical.

Article 9: Meetings

The International Council shall routinely meet at least once every two years, at the place where the General Secretariat of ISS is located. However, the Governing Board may change the location of the meeting of the International Council.

Extraordinary meetings may be called by a decision of the Governing Board or at the request of more than one-half of the voting members.

Article 10: Voting

Members shall have votes according to Article 3.

Decisions of the International Council shall be valid when supported by the majority of the voting members attending. A decision to amend the Statutes, transfer the location of the General Secretariat, or dissolve ISS shall require an absolute majority of two-thirds of all the voting members attending in person or by proxy.

The Governing Board may decide that there shall be a vote by correspondence on questions which it has discussed but which fall under the competence of an ordinary meeting of the International Council.

Members who are in default of their full contributions for the year preceding International Council meetings shall have their voting rights suspended for as long as they are in default.

Members unable to attend may vote by proxy. To be valid, proxy votes must be authorised by the president (or equivalent) of the member's governing body and received by the ISS Secretary General at least 10 days prior to the meeting. The proxy must contain clear instructions on all voting items.

PART C - GOVERNING BOARD

Article 11: Role and Composition

The Governing Board governs ISS between the meetings of the International Council. The Governing Board is accountable to the International Council for all its actions.

In order to preserve the status of ISS as a non-governmental organisation, a majority of the Governing Board shall always be either independent (i.e. the International Treasurer and the three external members) or representatives of Nongovernment Members.

The Governing Board is composed of the following eleven members, and the Secretary General:

- a) The International Treasurer of ISS.
- b) Six members who are members of the governance bodies of member organisations.
- c) Three external members to cover specific areas of expertise or skill.
- d) The Chair – or, in case of absence of the chair, the Vice Chair – of the Professional Advisory Committee.

The Governing Board shall elect from among its members a Chair.

The Governing Board should seek to be representative of all the regions of the world. No network member may have more than one person representing it on the Governing Board.

The Secretary General shall have no voting rights.

Article 12: Functions

In carrying out its role, the Governing Board:

- a) Decides on any matter assigned or delegated to it by the Statutes or by the International Council.
- b) Appoints and dismisses the Secretary General.
- c) Defines, within the framework of the general policies determined by the International Council, the policies for the various fields of activity of the network.
- d) Draws up the provisional agenda of the International Council.
- e) Gives guidance and support to the Secretary General in implementing the decisions of the International Council.
- f) Provides oversight to and monitors the performance of the Secretary General.
- g) Reviews and approves the budget, working plan, activity reports and financial reports of the Secretary General.
- h) Ensures the financial statements and underlying annual accounts are certified by a registered and independent external auditor.
- i) Ratifies general agreements concluded with other international organisations.
- j) Provisionally admits new members.
- k) Ensures that a majority of members are non-government members.
- l) May suspend a member and as a last resort, recommend to the International Council that a member be expelled.

- m) Determines the annual contribution to be paid by each member based on a fair, equitable and transparent system.
- n) Declares in default members who have not paid their annual contribution in accordance with Article 3, Section 3 j).
- o) May at its discretion establish specific-purpose committees or other bodies necessary to the effective functioning of the network.
- p) In time sensitive cases, may take decisions on questions which, according to the Statutes, should be decided by the International Council; such decisions will be ratified by the International Council as soon as it meets.

Article 13: Meetings

The Governing Board shall meet at least twice per year, at a date and in a place which it itself or the Governing Board Chair designates. Meetings of the Governing Board may be in person or via teleconference (all members in simultaneous communication), however at least one meeting per year shall be in person.

A meeting of the Governing Board may also be called at the request of at least one-third of its members.

Article 14: Voting

Decisions requiring a vote will be decided by the majority of those members present, with a tied situation being settled by the vote of the Governing Board Chair.

PART D - SECRETARY GENERAL

Article 15: Identity

The Secretary General is the Chief Executive Officer of ISS and is accountable to and managed by the Governing Board.

In order to fulfil his/her duties, the Secretary General is supported by the staff and volunteers of the General Secretariat. The Secretary General shall establish the structure, and is responsible for the organisation and functioning, of the Secretariat, within the provisions of the approved budget.

Article 16: Functions

The Secretary General acts in accordance with decisions of the International Council and the Governing Board and has the following functions:

- a) Maintain and develop the international network of ISS.
- b) Develop and manage relevant international programs to give effect to ISS's vision and mission and to benefit ISS.



- c) Encourage and promote in every country the establishment and development of an independent and duly recognised member.
- d) Provide secretariat functions for the governing organs of ISS and its Committees.
- e) Represent ISS and develop and maintain partnerships with international and other organisations according to the working principles of ISS.
- f) Ensure cooperation and coordination among the members in areas such as advocacy, research, training, information, consultation, definition and development of standards of practice.
- g) Ensure the General Secretariat is effectively organised and efficiently operated for the maximum benefit of ISS.
- h) Where necessary assist members to recruit staff and volunteers, promote good management practices and raise awareness and understanding of ISS's vision, mission and principles.
- i) Present to the Governing Board the financial statements and underlying annual accounts certified by a registered and independent external auditor.

Further functions may be assigned to the Secretary General by the Governing Board in accordance with these Statutes.

PART E – PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Article 17: Role and Composition

The Professional Advisory Committee ('the Committee') provides expert knowledge and advice on matters relevant to ISS's mission and operations to the Governing Board via its elected Chair. It works in close cooperation with the General Secretariat and supports it in its tasks.

The Committee is composed of the executive directors / CEOs of all member organisations of ISS. The General Secretariat will participate in the Committee and provide secretarial functions.

Taking into account the total number of member organisations, the Committee may at its discretion establish regional sub-Committees and a representative structure in which the Committee is made up of elected representatives of the regional sub-Committees.

The Committee's Chair – or, in case of absence of the chair, the Vice Chair – serves as a voting member of the Governing Board.

Article 18: Functions

The specific functions and rules of procedure of the Committee are established by the Committee itself, in conformity with ISS's vision and mission and the Statutes and By-laws. The Committee must inform all organs of ISS of its agreed functions and rules of procedure in a timely manner. The Committee elects its Chair from among its members, in accordance with its rules of procedure.



Article 19: Meetings

The Committee shall meet at least twice per year, at a date and in a place which it itself or its Chair designates. Meetings of the Committee may be in person or via teleconference (all members in simultaneous communication), however at least one meeting per year shall be in person. The Chair of the Casework Coordinators' Group (Article 21) may attend meetings of the Committee, at the discretion of the Committee Chair, for the purposes of liaison and effective communication.

Article 20: Voting

Decisions requiring a vote will be decided by the majority of those members present with a tied situation being settled by the vote of the Chair. Election of the Chair will be decided by the majority of those present; a tied situation will require a second ballot.

PART F - CASEWORK COORDINATORS' GROUP

Article 21: Role and Composition

The Casework Coordinators' Group ('the Group') provides expert knowledge and advice on casework and other matters relevant to ISS's operations to the Professional Advisory Committee via an elected Representative. It works in close cooperation with the General Secretariat and supports it in its tasks.

The Group is composed of the Casework Coordinators (or equivalents) of all member organisations of ISS. The General Secretariat will participate in the Group and may provide secretarial functions.

Taking into account the total number of member organisations, the Group may, in consultation with the Professional Advisory Committee and the General Secretariat, establish regional sub-Groups and a representative structure in which the Group is made up of elected representatives of the regional sub-Groups.

The Group's Chair may attend meetings of the Professional Advisory Committee at the discretion of the Committee's Chair (Article 19).

Article 22: Functions

The specific functions and rules of procedure of the Group are established by the Group itself, in conformity with ISS's vision, mission, principles and the Statutes and By-laws. The Group must inform the Professional Advisory Committee of its agreed functions and rules of procedure within 30 days of adoption or amendment. The Group elects its Representative from among its members, in accordance with its rules of procedure.



Article 23: Meetings

The Group shall meet at least twice per year, at a date and in a place which it itself or its Representative designates. Meetings of the Group may be in person or via teleconference (all members in simultaneous communication), however at least one meeting per year shall be in person.

Article 24: Voting

Decisions requiring a vote will be decided by the majority of those present with a tied situation being settled by the vote of the Representative. Election of the Representative will be decided by the majority of those present; a tied situation will require a second ballot.

PART G - MISCELLANEOUS

Article 25: Organs of ISS

The organs of ISS are:

- a) The International Council.
- b) The Governing Board.
- c) The Secretary General.

Geographical representation and gender balance shall, as much as possible, be ensured in the distribution of positions and appointments within these structures.

Article 26: Finances

The financial resources of ISS shall consist of:

- a) Regular contributions from the members.
- b) Special contributions from the members.
- c) Contributions from organisations with which it collaborates.
- d) Fees for professional services rendered.
- e) Subsidies for programmes.
- f) Donations, gifts and legacies which it may receive.
- g) Such other contributions, fees, subsidies or income as may be obtained from time to time.
- h) Other contributions or income as may be agreed from any financial agreement.

Article 27: Modification and Application of the Statutes

The Statutes may be amended by the International Council only in accordance with the provisions of Article 10. Any proposals for amendment of the Statutes must appear on the agenda of the meeting of



the International Council and be submitted to its members at least two months in advance. Amendments to the Statutes adopted by the International Council come into force immediately.

If a difference of opinion arises with regard to the interpretation of the Statutes, the matter shall be settled by reference to the Governing Board, and in the event of a continuity of the dispute, by reference to the International Council.

Article 28: By-laws

The Statutes will be complemented and extended by By-laws which establish more detailed procedures and processes for the functioning of ISS's organs and other bodies, and other matters.

To the extent there is any disagreement between the Statutes and the By-laws, the Statutes shall prevail, as ISS's fundamental document.

The By-laws may be amended in the same way as the Statutes, except that only a vote by a simple majority (half plus one) of the voting members present at the International Council only is required.

Article 29: Elections

1. Elections for each of the following posts shall be held every four years:
 - a) International Treasurer.
 - b) Members of the Governing Board excluding the Chair of the Professional Advisory Committee.
2. The term of office of all elected positions is four years. It begins at the close of the session of the International Council at which the incumbents have been elected and expires at the close of the session of the International Council which elects their successors.
3. The International Council elects the International Treasurer in a personal capacity. A person who has served two consecutive four-year terms as International Treasurer is not eligible to stand again for election until a further four-year term has elapsed.
4. The International Council elects nine members of the Governing Board. They may serve a maximum of two terms of four years.
5. The Professional Advisory Committee elects its Chair who serves on the Governing Board. The Committee Chair may serve a maximum of two terms of two years.
6. The Casework Coordinators' Group elects its Chair who may attend meetings of the Professional Advisory Committee at the discretion of the Committee Chair. The Group Chair may serve a maximum of two terms of two years.



Article 30: Dissolution

The dissolution of ISS may be decided by a majority of two-thirds of the members of the International Council. Any proposal to dissolve ISS must appear on the agenda of the meeting of the International Council and be submitted to its members at least two months in advance.

In the event of dissolution, the International Council shall decide at its last session the use to be made of its records. The assets of the organisation shall be divided among organisations actively engaged in the provision of social work services enjoying tax exemption status similar to that of ISS and designated by the International Council.

Article 31: Entry into Force and Review

The present revised Statutes shall come into force at the end of the International Council held in Melbourne, Australia on 6 and 7 April, 2016, at which time the former version of the Statutes shall stand repealed. The Statutes shall be subject to review at a frequency to be decided upon by the International Council.

*Approved and incorporated at the **2016 ISS International Council**.*

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