



Minutes: 3rd Meeting of the General Assembly, 2023, Istanbul-Türkiye

OIC OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION (OICOA)

3rd Meeting of the OICOA General Assembly

6th October 2023, Istanbul, Republic of Türkiye

MINUTES

The 3rd meeting of the General Assembly of the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA) was held on 6th October 2023 at Istanbul, Republic of Türkiye. The meeting was presided by the President OICOA, His Excellency Mr. Seref Malkoc (Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye).

A comprehensive dossier containing all pertinent information was disseminated to all attendees prior to the commencement of the third session of the OICOA General Assembly.

The list of participants is attached as Annex-I.

Agenda Item No.3

Opening Remarks by His Excellency, President OICOA, Mr. Seref Malkoc

Following the solemn recitation of the Holy Quran, the esteemed President of the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA), His Excellency Mr. Seref Malkoc, who also serves as the Honorable Chief Ombudsman of the Republic of Türkiye, extended a warm and gracious welcome to the distinguished assemblage gathered for the third convening of the General Assembly.

Mr. Malkoc conveyed his profound gratitude to all those in attendance, extending his appreciation not only to the esteemed members but also to the honorable non-member delegates, including individuals from the United Arab Emirates, Ivory Coast, and newly inducted member nations.

Mr. Malkoc underscored the paramount significance of the OICOA as an institution ardently dedicated to the advancement of efficiency in its multifaceted pursuits. He accentuated the imperative for heightened collaboration among member institutes, emphasizing the need to collectively confront human rights violations and address the pressing issue of Islamophobia.

Furthermore, Mr. Malkoc highlighted the accomplishments stemming from the previous conference held in Ankara on the 10th Anniversary of Ombudsman Office of Türkiye. He played a pivotal role in coordinating a noteworthy diplomatic meeting between the Ombudsman of Ukraine and Russia. This

meeting ultimately facilitated productive discussions with the Hon'ble President of Republic of Türkiye, resulting in a successful prisoner exchange.

He offered commendations for the unwavering dedication and steadfast commitment of the OICOA Secretariat, under the leadership of OICOA General Secretary, Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah (Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan). Mr. Malkoc expressed admiration for the Secretariat's proactive stance in wholeheartedly embracing novel initiatives that harmonize seamlessly with the Association's overarching goals and objectives.

Agenda Item No.4

Remarks by His Excellency General Secretary OICOA, Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah

The General Secretary, His Excellency Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, delivered a comprehensive briefing to the General Assembly on the ongoing initiatives within the OICOA Secretariat, underscoring his unwavering commitment to assembling a proficient team of experts dedicated to ensuring the seamless functioning of OICOA.

Dr. Jah thanked the President OICOA, Mr. Seref Malkoc for generously hosting the 9th Board of Directors Meeting and 3rd General Assembly Meeting in Istanbul, Türkiye and he appreciated the highly commendable arrangements made for the delegates.

Dr. Jah provided the General Assembly with a comprehensive update on the recent advancements, encompassing the successful inauguration of the OICOA website, the establishment of official social media channels, and the monthly dissemination of informative e-newsletters.

Furthermore, he emphasized the critical importance of conducting training sessions aimed at bolstering the capabilities of Ombudsman offices in member institutes. Dr. Jah also noted the expansion of the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman's Trainings to include participants from OICOA's training sessions which will serve to be extremely beneficial in cross-border exchange of ideas.

Agenda Item No.5

Proceedings Conducted by Executive Secretary OICOA, Mr. Almas Ali Jovindah

The OICOA President handed over the reins to Mr. Almas Ali Jovindah, the Executive Secretary of OICOA, who took charge of the proceedings of meeting of the General Assembly.

Reflecting on the fruitful OICOA 9th Board of Directors meeting, he expressed gratitude for the active involvement of board members and conveyed his appreciation for the impeccably organized meeting.

Mr. Jovindah extended his acknowledgment to the General Assembly attendees for their dedicated engagement in the multifaceted initiatives undertaken by OICOA.

Furthermore, Mr. Jovindah echoed the sentiments earlier voiced by the OICOA President and OICOA General Secretary, reiterating the triumphant implementation of OICOA's diverse initiatives. He attributed this success to the unwavering commitment of the diligent staff within the OICOA Secretariat, emphasizing that these initiatives had transitioned from mere concepts to tangible actions, encapsulating the essence of OICOA's mission and objectives.

Agenda Item No.6

Approval of the Agenda of the 3rd Meeting of the General Assembly of OICOA

Members were called upon to signify their approval of the General Assembly agenda through a show of hands, and they were given the opportunity to raise any objections, which would then subsequently be resolved by means of a vote.

Decision:

All members unanimously assented to the agenda, and no observations or remarks were put forth by any member.

Agenda Item No.7

Report of the President on the Activities of the OICOA

In recognition of the challenges imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Malkoc, addressing the General Assembly, discussed the setbacks faced by certain planned activities, which regrettably could not attain their maximum impact due to the pandemic. However, he fervently assured the Assembly of his unwavering commitment to resolving these hindrances, reaffirming his dedication to steering OICOA's activities on a course of resolute progress in the forthcoming days.

Furthermore, Mr. Malkoc took a moment to reflect on the fruitful outcomes of the previous international conference held in January 2023 in Ankara, entitled "The Future of Human Rights in the 21st Century." This significant event was jointly organized by the Ombudsman Institution (KDK) and the European Union, and it witnessed the active participation of numerous Islamic countries. This conference underscored OICOA's enduring commitment to fostering collaboration and engagement on an international scale, particularly in the realm of human rights, even amid the challenging backdrop of the pandemic.

Mr. Malkoc also shared his pivotal role in global humanitarian efforts during negotiations to resolve conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Alongside the Hon'ble President of Türkiye, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, he played a significant role in expediting the exchange of 40 war prisoners between His Excellency Mr. Dmytro Lubinets, the Human Rights Commissioner of Ukraine, and Her Excellency Ms. Tatiana Moskalkova, the Human Rights Commissioner from Russia.

During this diplomatic exchange, Mr. Malkoc strongly advocated for an immediate cease-fire and a dignified peace agreement that would safeguard Ukraine's territorial integrity. His diplomatic engagement culminated in substantial dialogue with the President of Türkiye, further highlighting OICOA's proactive role in advancing peace and humanitarian relief on the global stage.

Agenda Item No.8

A Brief of the Decisions & Recommendations taken in the 9th Board of Directors Meeting, held on 5th October 2023

a) Consideration of Applications for Membership of OICOA

It was apprised to the General Assembly that a matter of significant importance had been deliberated upon pertaining to the expansion of 'OICOA Membership' during the 9th OICOA Board of Directors meeting in which a proposed membership form was presented to the Board of Directors.

In addition to the proposed membership form, Board of Directors also deliberated upon the OICOA Membership Applications from Burkina Faso, Libya, Togo, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire which underwent in-depth discussion and subsequently garnered unanimous approval of the Board of Directors.

The aforementioned applications and Membership Form were then presented before the General Assembly for final endorsement and adoption.

Decision:

The General Assembly, in unanimous consensus, gave their approval and officially adopted these institutes into the fold of OICOA member states.

The General Assembly also approved the Membership Form earlier endorsed by the Board of Directors.

b) 'Membership Extension' among other OICOA Countries

To invigorate and propel the pivotal membership expansion initiative, all incumbent OICOA members and participants of the General Assembly were ardently encouraged to actively partake in the outreach, extending invitations via OICOA Secretariat to the new nations to join this esteemed organization.

Decision:

In this endeavor, the General Assembly approved the membership extension drive and the OICOA Secretariat pledged its steadfast support, ensuring a streamlined and efficient process for this outreach and integration.

In tandem with the fervent determination of the OICOA Secretariat, the attendees of the General Assembly also pledged to craft a seamless and efficacious journey for this

outreach and integration of new member states, thus forging the path to an even brighter future for the Ombudsman community of OICOA.

c) Proposed Amendment in the Statute and Formation of Working Group

The General Assembly was apprised that during the Board of Directors meeting, an amendment proposed by Mediateur de la Republique Djibouti was introduced. This proposed amendment pertained to the incorporation of an 'Islamic Perspective' section into the 'Objectives' of the OICOA Statute, aligning with Islamic principles, with the goal of enhancing the capabilities of the Mediators/Ombudsmen of OICOA Member States. The proposal advocated for Ombudsman Office Staff training guided by Islamic values and fundamental rights and freedoms.

This proposal underwent rigorous examination among the Board of Directors, with some members deeming it unnecessary due to the clarity of existing OICOA statutes addressing human rights and Islamic values, while others believed that the matter warranted further and more extensive deliberation.

Consequently, the recommendation from Djibouti was presented before the General Assembly for further consideration. A comprehensive discussion ensued among the General Assembly attendees regarding the proposed amendments to the OICOA Statute.

Decision:

It was collectively agreed by the General Assembly that the recommendation presented by Djibouti was already encompassed in the preambles and objectives of the OICOA Statute. Notably, Representative of Djibouti itself was absent from the 3rd Meeting of the General Assembly, raising the possibility that they might not have had access to the updated OICOA statute that reflected the observations and recommendations they had initially put forth for consideration. It was also decided to provide a translated version of OICOA Statutes to all the members for future reference.

d) Fixation of 'Annual Fee' and Budget Allocation for the Secretariat Business Affairs & Remuneration of the Office Staff

During the General Assembly meeting, the matter of membership fees, which had been previously discussed by the Board of Directors, was presented. The Board engaged in a thorough discussion, with some members expressing concerns about the financial capabilities of certain Member Institutes and issues related to banking transactions. Nevertheless, the prevailing sentiment within the majority of the Board was that Membership Fees were essential to fund OICOA's operations and Secretariat initiatives. To address the financial constraints faced by some Member Institutes, Article 7(5)(e) of the OICOA Statutes was invoked, granting the Secretary-General the authority to provide a one-time fee waiver, rather than a complete exemption, and a second fee waiver may also be granted under exceptional circumstances.

Consequently, it was resolved that an annual Membership Fee of \$1000 would be introduced, with provisions for fee waivers for Members experiencing financial hardship. Additionally, it was proposed and discussed that the General Secretary should be authorized to utilize \$1000 per month as the approved budget for operating the OICOA Secretariat, in accordance with Article 16(8) of the OICOA Statutes. This article allows the Secretary General to incur expenses within the approved budget to ensure the smooth functioning of the Secretariat and the Association's functions. However, any expenditures exceeding the approved budget would necessitate ex-post facto approval from the Board of Directors, as outlined in Article 16(9) of the OICOA Statutes.

Decision:

This proposal was presented to the General Assembly for deliberation and received unanimous approval.

e) Establishment of a Resource/Research Centre at the OICOA Secretariat

Under this agenda point, the establishment of a dynamic resource and research center within the OICOA Secretariat which was also a topic of pivotal discussion at the 9th Board of Directors Meeting, was put forth before the attendees of the General Assembly

Resounding commitments were made by His Excellency Justice Dr. Zabiullah Khodaeian, the distinguished President of the General Inspection Organization (GIO) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who extended a generous hand in collaboration, offering a treasure trove of resources cultivated by GIO's well established research center.

His Excellency, Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah (Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan) passionately affirmed his unwavering dedication to the continuous contribution of substantial research assets to the OICOA Secretariat's Resource/Research Centre initiative.

The Executive Secretary and General Secretary of OICOA, in a harmonious and resounding chorus, provided assurance to the General Assembly while demonstrating their resolute commitment. They pledged to orchestrate an agile, responsive, and robust research center.

Decision:

The aforementioned proposal for Establishment of Research/Resource Centre at OICOA Secretariat was presented to the General Assembly, which sparked lively deliberation, the exchange of creative ideas, and culminating in a unanimous and resounding approval. The General Assembly attendees also added a note of unparalleled promise in furthering the pursuit of OICOA's Research initiative. They vowed to actively engage the staff in their respective ombuds offices, invoking a thorough and meticulous research approach towards pertinent issues that are intrinsically tied to the advancement of OICOA's objectives.

f) Input for OICOA E-Newsletter & Web Page and 'Social Media' Initiatives for OICOA

Addressing the attendees at the General Assembly meeting, the Executive Secretary emphasized the paramount importance of embracing contemporary digital communication tools, with a

specific focus on e-newsletters and social media accounts which was discussed earlier with the Board of Directors.

In an era characterized by the rapid dissemination of information, the Executive Secretary highlighted the potential of these channels to serve as potent instruments for effectively conveying OICOA's mission and message to a global audience.

Beyond achieving unanimous consensus on the creation of social media profiles, the members exhibited a deep-seated dedication to upholding the quality of content, particularly within the E-Newsletter. The explicit goal of OICOA's E-Newsletter is to elevate the organization's communication efforts to international standards, ensuring the dissemination of information that concisely and informatively reflects the essence of the organization's mission.

Furthermore, the Executive Secretary urged the General Assembly to recognize the significance of inclusivity and decided to make the e-newsletter available in multiple languages. He apprised the attendees with the decision taken by the Board Members that tools like Google Translate and the collaboration of member institutes, would ensure translations of E-Newsletters of OICOA to accommodate the diverse linguistic preferences within OICOA member institutes.

Decision:

The proposal, embodying this collective vision for enhanced digital communication, was presented for approval to the General Assembly and received unanimous assent, signifying a significant stride towards modernizing and globalizing OICOA's outreach efforts.

g) 'Training & Capacity Building' Workshops for the Member Institutions & Their Staff and 'Internship Program' for Youth among Member Institutes

Under this agenda item, the General Assembly was informed of the commencement of OICOA training sessions, which are currently underway and slated to become a recurring component of the organization's future activities. Notably, these training sessions are conducted online to ensure accessibility for all members.

In addition to the emphasis on multilingualism for the E-Newsletters, the importance of multilingualism was extended to the training sessions, as discussed during the Board of Directors Meeting. It was collectively resolved that these sessions should be conducted in multiple languages to foster inclusivity.

To optimize the effectiveness of these training sessions, a comprehensive strategy was proposed. Prior to each session, trainers' presentations will be shared with participants in advance. These materials will be translated into French, English, Arabic, and Turkish, leveraging both Google Translate and the active participation of the attendees themselves. During the training sessions, translated presentation slides will be displayed alongside the original materials, while questions or queries raised by participants will be concurrently translated.

Shifting the discussion to another facet of this agenda point, the General Assembly considered the proposal of an internship program within OICOA member states, intending to expand it into an international exchange initiative. It was unanimously agreed that member institutes would facilitate cross-cultural experiences and knowledge exchange by sending their interns to another member country. Under this arrangement, interns would bear the cost of airfare, with the host country providing essential support, including lodging, boarding, and transportation. The interns would be accommodated in the residences of staff members during their one-month stay. The inaugural launch of this internship initiative will be spearheaded by Morocco and Pakistan.

Decision:

This proposal, embodying a commitment to enhanced training and cross-cultural exchange of interns, was presented to the General Assembly and met with unanimous approval, signifying a momentous stride towards broadening educational horizons within OICOA.

h) OICOA Representation in Important Forums, including United Nations

Under this pivotal agenda item, the General Assembly attendees engaged in a significant discourse regarding the OICOA forum as an instrumental platform for conveying the organization's message to a global audience.

They were informed of the observation made in the Board of Directors Meeting, where it was discussed that, considering the substantial demographic of around 8 billion people worldwide and the compelling need to actively participate in international forums such as the United Nations, OICOA could exponentially expand its reach and influence on a global scale.

Furthermore, it was underscored that, in strict accordance with Article 6(5) of the OICOA Statutes, all members not only possess the entitlement but also bear the obligation to harness their utmost efforts in advancing OICOA's objectives by "entering into agreements with other international organizations and bodies dedicated to the cause of Ombudsmanship and human rights."

Decision:

The culmination of these discussions led to a unanimous decision to accentuate and champion the accomplishments and pursuits of OICOA at an international level. This mission was acknowledged as a collaborative endeavor, uniting all members and the OICOA Secretariat in a collective effort to elevate the organization's dedication to fostering positive change and raising awareness on paramount issues related to Ombudsmanship, human rights, and international cooperation.

The proposal, calling for international collaborations and representation, was formally presented before the General Assembly, where the attendees resoundingly assured their commitment to propelling OICOA onto global platforms.

Agenda Item No.9

Consideration of Dates and Venue for the 4th Meeting of the General Assembly, to be held next year and OICOA Calendar of Activities

During this agenda item, it was heartening to witness the generous offers from both Pakistan and Iran to host the upcoming Board of Directors and General Assembly Meetings. The decision reached by the Board Members, designating Islamabad as the venue for the OICOA Board of Directors meeting in January 2024 and scheduling the OICOA General Assembly meeting for 2025 in Iran, was presented to the General Assembly for their thoughtful consideration and approval.

Decision:

In a unanimous display of support, the General Assembly endorsed this proposal regarding the dates and venues for the forthcoming Board of Directors and General Assembly meetings, signifying an accord that was met with collective assent.

Agenda Item No.10

Conduct of OICOA Elections 2023

Under this pivotal agenda point, the General Assembly was apprised of the proceedings related to the Board of Directors elections, which had earlier received unanimous endorsement from all Board members.

It was conveyed to the General Assembly that within the composition of the seven board members, two individuals stood as unopposed candidates for the roles of President and Vice President. Moreover, the Secretary General, nominated by the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman, was duly confirmed for the position. Additionally, nominations from Morocco and Azerbaijan faced no opposition for the two member slots.

The unopposed nominations featured OICOA President (His Excellency Mr. Seref Malkoc, Chief Ombudsman of the Republic of Türkiye), OICOA Vice President (His Excellency Justice Dr. Zabiullah Khodaeian, The President of the General Inspection Organization-Iran), and OICOA General Secretary (His Excellency Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan).

The remaining two unopposed nominations for the Member slots were from Her Excellency Ms. Sabina Aliyeva, (Commissioner for Human Rights, Azerbaijan), and His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Benalilou, (Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco).

Given the unopposed nature and strong credentials of these nominations, the necessity for balloting was deemed superfluous.

Furthermore, for filling the remaining two slots of Member seats, during the General Assembly, two new member institutes, Republic of Indonesia (His Excellency Mr. Mokhamed Najih) and Kingdom of Bahrain (Her Excellency Ms. Ghada Hameed Hassan), volunteered for the positions.

Decision:

The General Assembly unanimously approved their inclusion as board members for the forthcoming four-year term, effectively replacing Sudan and Djibouti.

Afterwards, President Seref Malkoc, extended an invitation to all the newly elected Board Members, encouraging them to share their vision for the organization over the course of the next four years with the General Assembly. They expressed their thanks to the General Assembly for electing them and providing them with an opportunity to play an important role to make OICOA an effective entity among the Ombudsman Community.

Agenda Item No.11

Vote of Thanks

In the concluding moments of the 3rd OICOA General Assembly Meeting, President Seref Malkoc extended his heartfelt appreciation and profound gratitude to all the distinguished attendees.

He recognized the invaluable contributions, insightful visions, and shared aspirations of the assembled members, which have played a pivotal role in shaping the organization's direction and charting the course of its future. He acknowledged that their presence and active participation were instrumental in fostering a spirit of collaboration and unity within the assembly and the insights shared during the discussions have not only enriched our collective understanding but have also ignited a collective commitment to Ombudsmanship, human rights, and international cooperation.

President Malkoc emphasized that it is the dedication of OICOA's esteemed members, the tireless efforts of the Board of Directors, and the collective wisdom of the General Assembly that have allowed the organization to thrive and evolve.

He concluded by saying that he is looking forward with great anticipation to the numerous accomplishments and successes that will be achieved in the years to come through the collective efforts of the OICOA community.

The 3rd General Assembly Meeting concluded with the remarks of OICOA General Secretary, Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah on behalf of all the participants and President Mr. Seref Malkoc thanked the participants and the organizers of the 9th Meeting of Board of Directors and the 3rd Meeting of the General Assembly in Istanbul, for their generous hospitality and making these meetings a resounding success.