issa | INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION

ISSA Good Governance Charter

Adopted by the 30th ISSA General Assembly, 2010
Amended by the ISSA Bureau, 2013

BACKGROUND

Good Governance Charter

Following the request of the members of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), the Council of the Association determined in September 2007 in its programme of activities for the period 2008-2010, to include "Governance" as a priority for the Association.

In the frame of the governance priority, the programme contains a project on developing a Good Governance Charter for the ISSA as an important tool in improving accountability and transparency within the ISSA, particularly in times when the ISSA wishes to strengthen its work on governance of social security schemes and works towards guidelines of good governance. It is therefore important that the ISSA undertakes the necessary measures to promote good governance internally.

This document was approved by the ISSA Bureau at its 101st meeting and was adopted by the 30th General Assembly of the ISSA.

This Charter takes into consideration the fact that the Secretariat is located in the premises of the International Labour Office (ILO), and that the ISSA Secretariat staff hold an employment contract with the ILO.

Consequently, ISSA Secretariat staff have to comply primarily with the United Nations' standards of conduct for the international civil service. In addition, ISSA Secretariat staff have to comply with the "Staff Regulations", "Principles of Conduct" and the internal governance guides and regulations of the ILO.

It is fitting to recognize that while this Charter is inspired by the ISSA Constitution, the exact text is not reproduced.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The International Social Security Association (ISSA) is a non-profit international organization consisting of institutions, government departments, agencies and other entities administering one or more aspects of social security.

The objective of the Association is to co-operate, at the international level, in the promotion and development of social security throughout the world, primarily through its technical and administrative improvement, in order to advance the social and economic conditions of the population on the basis of social justice.

The ISSA promotes high standards of performance, accountability, and a culture based on strong ethical principles and values.

The ISSA Secretariat provides a skilled, capable and professional team committed to providing advice and support to ISSA members in every aspect of the development, implementation and communication of the ISSA vision.

The ISSA acknowledges that a strong working relationship between members, elected officers and the General Secretariat requires the essential elements of goodwill, a clear understanding of each other's roles, good communication and agreed structures and protocols.

The ISSA Secretariat acknowledges that their responsibility is to support the ISSA members in all endeavours and faithfully implement the decisions of the ISSA statutory bodies.

The ISSA *Good Governance Charter* has been introduced to establish the principles and practices which provide the foundations for an effective, ethical and committed organization.

The system of good governance should underpin the strategic guidance of the entity, the effective monitoring of activities and accountability to the ISSA membership.

The objective of this Charter is to promote a responsible and credible environment for ISSA member organizations.

I. GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE ISSA

The objective of good governance principles is to:

- Advance the public reputation of ISSA through enhanced transparency and accountability.
- Strengthen members and public confidence in the ISSA.
- Support the ISSA's continuous improvement commitment.
- Appreciate and manage risks associated with activities, projects and strategies to minimise the negative aspects and maximise the opportunities.
- Assist in the prevention and detection of fraudulent, dishonest and/or unethical behaviour.

Governance is the means by which the behaviour of an organisation is regulated. It comprises the systems used to manage, control and stimulate performance.

Good governance generally refers to the processes by which organisations are directed, controlled and held accountable. It encompasses authority, accountability, stewardship, leadership, direction and control exercised in the organisation.

Good governance includes the process by which:

- Strategic goals are determined and significant decisions are made.
- Key relationships are maintained - with the member organisations, elected officers, and internally with staff.
- An ethical culture is established enabling the performance of the Association to be measured.
- Compliance with relevant ISSA's norms, policies and processes is ensured.

The achievement of good governance ensures that the ISSA has control of its strategic objectives, is transparent and accountable, and has well-defined procedures. It is important that the processes that lead to these outcomes must have embedded in them some means by which an appropriate level of members' participation occurs.

1.1 Governance Practice

Good governance practice requires the integration and communication of processes that support accessibility, evidence accountability and promote transparency in decision-making. Best practice suggests that a Charter of Good Governance can be a catalyst for improvement in these areas and recognises that ISSA's commitment to good governance should be a high priority.

The aim is to meet the ISSA members' expectation that the ISSA is accountable and easily monitored. The priority is improving accessibility. At the same time, the organisation is confronted with the challenge of transferring knowledge that is clearly presented and easily accessed.

1.2 Principles of Good Governance

The governance principles Accountability, Transparency, Predictability, Participatory and Dynamism are articulated to reflect the governance priorities of the ISSA.

Accountability refers to being able to hold public officials responsible and liable for the management of the social security programme.

Transparency refers to the availability of information to stakeholders and the general public, and clarity in rules, regulations, processes and decisions.

Predictability refers to the consistent and uniform application of the law and its supporting policies, rules and regulations, which enhances stakeholder certainty in the programme.

Participatory refers to the effective involvement of stakeholders with a view to making the programme ever responsive to their needs and concerns.

Dynamism refers to the element of change in the institution. The foregoing four elements may be present in any status quo. Over time, however, it is the element of dynamism that propels the institution to improve itself.

1.3 Governance Priorities

- **Build strong relationships between the ISSA members, ISSA elected officers, management and staff**
  Build on the foundation of positive working relationships between ISSA members and the ISSA elected officers, management and staff to deliver the respective roles and responsibilities.

- **Respect the interests of members**
  Consider the interests of ISSA members and encourage active co-operation among the members and between the members and statutory bodies in creating sustainability. Acknowledge obligations to members and encourage constructive input from all members of the Association.

- **Structure the ISSA to deliver excellent performance**
  Have an effective structure that provides for members' accessibility and effective participation to enhance the reputation of the ISSA as an inclusive and engaging Association and implement the decisions of the ISSA faithfully and without undue delay.

- **Pursue continuous improvement with courage**
  Promote high standards of accountability and a culture that values empathy, integrity, open to change and service oriented.

- **Deliver timely and accurate disclosure**
  Uphold the standard of timely, accurate and objective disclosure of all material matters.

- **Ensure credibility in financial reporting**
  Maintain a mechanism for improving the credibility and objectivity of financial reporting, that assists the ISSA Treasurer and the General Secretariat to discharge its responsibility to exercise due care, diligence and skill in relation to financial reports.

- **Review and manage risk**
  Ensure that the controls, processes and systems used to monitor and manage are sound.

II. ETHICAL FRAMEWORK, VALUES

2.1 Ethical Framework

Good governance must also have an ethical base. A strong ISSA depends on generating and maintaining a strong foundation of trust between the membership and those who have been elected as officers, members of the statutory bodies, and designated as managers and staff. The need for transparency in governing processes underlies this trust, as does the honesty and integrity of the elected representatives and the General Secretariat.

ISSA statutory bodies' members and officers are democratically elected to represent the diverse of the membership bringing a variety of views, experiences and expectations to the decision-making functions of the ISSA.

Following ethical principles introduces more certainty into organisational endeavours and, at the same time, acts as a means of preventing corruption in its various forms. Where possible, it is desirable to set, maintain, and improve ethical standards by means of self-regulation.

The ethical principles of Honesty, Impartiality, Tolerance, Loyalty and Balance underlie good governance.

2.2 Values

Organisational values are important to the ISSA both internally and externally as an expression of expected behaviour. It is important to have values to which staff can relate personally, create a sense of belonging and a notion of deeper meaning. It will greatly enhance success for the Association if ISSA staff can identify, embrace and act on the values.

To establish this notion of deeper meaning, values must be clearly identifiable behaviours that exist in day-to-day activities. Describing what types of behaviour are unacceptable adds merit to an organisationally agreed values system. Such behaviours, acceptable and unacceptable, should be observed consistently and monitored.

The application of the common behaviours articulated for ISSA's General Secretariat will reflect the different roles and responsibilities

The four key values most important to the ISSA General Secretariat are: **Empathy, Integrity, Open to Change and Service Oriented**. To implement the values in the General Secretariat, it requires the four values to be integrated into purpose, strategic planning, performance planning and management.

2.3 Conflict of interest

A potential conflict of interest can arise where an ISSA staff or Officers' personal relationships or position in external entities can compromise or be seen to compromise objectivity and impartiality in the discharge of official duties for the ISSA (e.g. roles, activities or participation in bodies or groups dealing with ISSA matters and activities, close personal ties with members or ISSA oversight bodies, etc.). Financial interests of staff and officers as a result of family and personal relationships, gifts, benefits and hospitality received from outside sources, as well as through other business interests such as partnerships and family businesses, are also considered to be one of the main causes of conflict of interest in a public administration.

A conflict of interest arises when a person has a real, potential or perceived direct or indirect competing interest with the role, function or activities of the ISSA. This competing interest may result in the person, or someone related to the person or entities in which the person has an interest, being in a position to benefit from the circumstances, or in the ISSA not being able to achieve a result which would be in its best interests, or both.

A conflict of interest exists when the person's other private interests or activities create an incentive for the person to act in a way that may not be in the best interests of the ISSA, such as participating in a tendering process when a bid has been submitted by a business owned by a close relative. In this example, a conflict exists between the official's interests in supporting a close relative and securing the best possible purchasing agreement for the ISSA.

All issues concerning a potential conflict of interest involving the ISSA staff are covered by the provisions of the ILO regulations on this matter.

All issues concerning a potential conflict of interest involving elected members of the ISSA statutory bodies shall be communicated to the ISSA President and consequently presented to the Bureau for consideration.

III. MEMBERSHIP

The ISSA Constitution stipulates that an institution, government department, agency or other entity that administers any aspect of social security shall be eligible for admission to the Association as an affiliate member and that an organization (other than an international organization) whose objectives are compatible with the objective of the ISSA, but which is not qualified to become an affiliate member under the terms of the ISSA Constitution, shall be eligible for admission to the Association as an associate member.

3.1 Rights, Benefits and Obligations of the Members

The ISSA members have the following rights and benefits:

- Participate in the exchange, networking and knowledge sharing platforms that the ISSA provides:
  o World Social Security Forum
  o Regional Social Security Forums
  o International Conferences
  o Technical Seminars

- Unlimited access to all ISSA publications and social security knowledge transfer:
  o ISSA publications
  o International Social Security Review
  o Social security information databases
  o Good practice database
  o ISSA Website and ISSA Extranet

- Access to ISSA advisory and support services
  o Technical information and support
  o Facilitating member-to-member exchange and twinnings

- Collaborate and network with other ISSA members on a technical and/or regional basis:
  o Technical Commissions in more than 10 technical areas of social security
  o Regional structures

- Be elected for the posts of ISSA Officers under the rules established by the ISSA Constitution.

- Propose their organizations as a host of the ISSA statutory, regional and technical activities.

The ISSA members have the following obligations:

- Accept and comply with the ISSA Constitution, regulations and procedures
- Pay contributions on time

- Promote the ISSA and its activities
- Assist the ISSA Secretariat in efforts to recruit to extend and broaden the ISSA membership
- Inform the ISSA regularly of changes and progress made by their organizations in the social security field

IV.   STATUTORY BODIES

Article 4 of the ISSA Constitution stipulates that the statutory bodies of the Association are the General Assembly, the Council, the Bureau and the Control Commission.

The ISSA statutory bodies shall be managed and perform autonomously.

4.1   The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the highest statutory body of the Association.

The General Assembly is the only body that can amend the Constitution of the Association subsequent to an examination of the Bureau of any proposed amendment.

The General Assembly alone shall be competent to decide on the dissolution of the Association and to determinate the liquidation procedure to be followed.

The General Assembly is composed of delegates appointed by the affiliate members. Associate members and observers can participate in a consultative capacity in the General Assembly sessions.

4.2   The Council

The Council is the electoral body of the Association.

In accordance with the principle of democracy, the Council is composed of titular delegates from each country in which the Association has at least one affiliate member. There is one titular delegate from each such country.

Every three years, the Council elects the President, the Treasurer, the members of the Bureau, and the members of the Control Commission of the Association.

The Council elects, reviews the appointment and termination of the appointment of the Secretary General, in strict accordance with the ISSA Constitution.

The Council also determines, on the basis of proposals made by the Bureau, the programme of activities and budget of the Association for the three-year period until the next session of the General Assembly, and the rate of contributions for each year in that period.

The Council adopts the financial report submitted by the Treasurer on behalf of the Bureau for the three-year period since the previous session of the General Assembly and give discharge to the Treasurer on the proposal of the Control Commission.

4.3　The Bureau

As the governing body of the Association, the Bureau is elected by the Council to provide leadership for good governance by establishing regulations, strategic objectives and monitoring their compliance and achievement. These aspects of governance are further reinforced in its obligation to maintain the ISSA viability by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner.

Responsibilities of the Bureau:

- To establish a clear process, timetable and guidelines for the development of the programme of activities, budget and annual rate of contributions which it will propose to the Council.
- To identify the priorities for the programme of activities.
- To monitor and evaluate actual performance against the programme of activities and budget determined by the Council.
- To make any adjustments that are required to the programme of activities and budget determined by the Council.
- To adopt Financial Regulations.
- To establish any other administrative regulations required to carry out the functions assigned by the Constitution.

The Bureau shall establish the structure of committees required to enable it to carry out its role as the governing body of the Association, adopt terms of reference for such committees and designate the chairperson and members of each committee.

The Bureau shall decide on applications for admission to the Association as affiliate or associate members and make regulations regarding membership.

The Bureau shall adopt rules governing the conduct of sessions of the General Assembly and meetings of the Council.

The Bureau shall elect the Vice-President of the Association and elect, if required, a successor to any member of the Bureau or an ad interim President, Treasurer or member of the Control Commission.

The Bureau shall establish the structure of technical commissions required to carry out the programme of activities determined by the Council, adopt terms of reference for such commissions, and designate the chairperson of each technical commission,

The Bureau shall examine any proposed amendment to the Constitution.

The Bureau members should:

- Support the elected President as the leader of the Bureau.
- Be cooperative and proactive.
- Work effectively with the elected officers, the management and the staff of the General Secretariat.
- Perform any special functions allocated to the Bureau and prepare properly for, attend and participate actively in Bureau and committee meetings.

- Strive for unity whilst recognising that valid differences in views and perspectives will exist and where unity is not possible will respect and accept the majority Bureau decision.

Quorum[*]

If, during a Bureau meeting, a vote on the subject under discussion is taken and less than half of the Bureau members are present, the President of the ISSA will inform the Bureau of this situation and will proceed with the meeting. The ISSA Secretariat will send the Record of Proceedings of the meeting to all Bureau members and any decisions taken will be ratified at the following Bureau meeting that has a quorum.

4.4 The Control Commission

The role of the Control Commission is to understand the key risks of the Association and to examine and evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of risk management and internal control as operated by the Association. The Control Commission, therefore, has unrestricted access to all activities undertaken in the Association, in order to review, appraise and report on:

- The adequacy and effectiveness of the systems of financial, operational and management control and their operation in practice in relation to the business risks to be addressed.

- The extent of compliance with, relevance of, and financial effect of, policies, standards, plans and procedures established by the Association and the extent of compliance with external laws and regulations, including reporting requirements of regulatory bodies.

- The extent to which the assets and interests are acquired economically, used efficiently, accounted for and safeguarded from losses of all kinds arising from waste, extravagance, inefficient administration, poor value for money, fraud or other cause and that adequate business continuity plans exist.

- The suitability, accuracy, reliability and integrity of financial and other management information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information.

- The integrity of processes and systems, including those under development, to ensure that controls offer adequate protection against error, fraud and loss of all kinds; and that the process aligns with the Association's strategic goals.

- The suitability of the organization of the units reviewed for carrying out their functions, and to ensure that services are provided in a way which is economical, efficient and effective.

- The follow-up action taken to remedy weaknesses identified by the Control Commission or other reviews, ensuring that good practice is identified and communicated widely.

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[*] This paragraph was added by decision of the Bureau at its 107th meeting, June 2013.

- The operation of the Association's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management.

The ISSA Bureau shall monitor and review the enforcement of the Charter of the Control Commission approved by the Bureau in 2004.

V. ISSA OFFICERS

Article 4 of the ISSA Constitution stipulates that the officers of the Association are: the President, the Vice-President, the Treasurer, and the Secretary General.

5.1 ISSA President

The President represents the Association and serves as the ISSA ambassador.

The President shall:

- Convene and chair the meetings of the statutory bodies.
- Generate membership cohesion and inclusiveness.
- Establish and sustain a high and positive profile and standing in the membership.
- Ensure the liaison with the Director-General of the International Labour Office as well as with the heads of other international organizations.
- Initiate and facilitate opportunities to enhance the international positioning of the ISSA by initiating new alliances and business partner linkages.
- Build and strengthen strategic alliances and relationships with other international organizations, government, business and cultural leaders.

5.2 ISSA Vice-President

The Vice-President shall perform, to the extent required, the functions of the President during any period in which the President is temporarily unable to perform those duties or if so requested by the President.

5.3 ISSA Treasurer

The Treasurer has the responsibilities of:

- Overseeing the financial management, including procedures and risks of the Association, expenditures, investments and the collection of contributions, on which he reports regularly to the Bureau.
- Preparing the three year budget for the Association, in close collaboration with the ISSA General Secretariat.
- Developing and maintaining the financial capability to enable the Association to discharge its statutory financial functions, managing its funding requirements and providing proper accounting for all funds of the Association.

5.4 ISSA Secretary General

The ISSA Constitution stipulates that the Secretary General manages and directs the activities of the Association as a whole and, in particular, the operation of the General Secretariat.

The General Secretariat has the following structure and responsibilities:

General Secretariat Structure

- Office of the Secretary General
- Social Security Observatory
- Social Security Promotion
- Resources and Services

Responsibilities

Statutory bodies
- Ensure that the decisions of the statutory bodies and officers of the Association are carried out.
- Advise the President of the Association and the Treasurer of any matter relating to the functioning of the Association and the operation of the General Secretariat on which they need to be informed in order to perform the functions of their office.
- Encourage collaboration among the ISSA statutory bodies.
- Act as a secretary of the statutory bodies of the Association.
- Provide to the members of the Statutory Bodies the relevant documents in line with the ISSA Constitution.
- Provide Bureau members with the documents to be discussed four weeks in advance of the Bureau meetings.

Programme & budget/Member services
- Ensure the effective implementation of the ISSA Programme and Budget.
- Regularly report to the ISSA Bureau on the progress of implementation.
- Regularly consult the ISSA membership on the quality and impact of ISSA activities as well as on the priorities of future ISSA work programmes.
- Promote cooperation among the ISSA members and with the international organizations, institutions and other agencies in order to promote and develop social security.
- Inform the members on a periodic basis about ISSA activities.
- Maintain an excellent standard of operation for all services and activities in consultation with the members.
- Monitor and report through efficient information systems on the delivery and quality of services and activities in consultation with members for planning, operational and reporting purposes.

Finance
- Collaborate with the ISSA Treasurer in the preparation of the triennial budget.
- Manage the ISSA finances in strict accordance with the financial regulations and budget approved by the ISSA statutory bodies.
- Ensure that the human and financial resources of the Association are used economically and efficiently for the achievement of the programme of activities and in accordance with the approved budget.

Management

- Employ and terminate the employment of the staff of the Secretariat of the Association, having regard, as necessary, to the conditions laid down by agreement between the President of the Association, representing the Bureau, and the Director-General of the International Labour Office.
- Provide effective leadership to senior management and staff in the achievement of corporate objectives through best practice human resource management strategies.
- Model and pursue a corporate culture that promotes and recognises the values: Empathy, Integrity, Open to Change and Service Oriented.
- Ensure that the ISSA Constitution and ISSA internal regulations are fully complied with.

VI.   GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

The successful implementation of the objectives, goals and policies of the ISSA requires an efficient management structure. This structure needs to ensure that effective mechanisms and systems are in place to deliver results and outcomes in line with the priorities determined by the ISSA statutory bodies.

For this purpose, the ISSA has adopted a results-based programming and budgeting methodology. This methodology consists of a cycle of objective and programme setting, implementation and monitoring as well as evaluation and impact measurement that focuses the Association on the achievement of results. It includes defined points of interaction with the ISSA Bureau that defines the programme and budget and monitors its implementation as well as with the ISSA membership that defines the ISSA priorities and evaluates the quality and impact of its activities.

Within the Secretariat, the results-based methodology is supported through a results-based management system that defines unit objectives and regulates delegation through agreements between the Secretary General and unit chiefs. Regular reporting on progress towards defined objectives through scoreboards and real-time budgets sourced by analytical accounting constitutes the basis for six-monthly progress report by the Secretary General to the ISSA Bureau on programme implementation.

The effectiveness of an organization depends greatly on the performance of its most valuable asset, the staff. In recognition of the crucial role that staff play in achieving the ISSA's vision, management must ensure that a human resources management strategy is in place.

The strategy shall also be based on the premise that in order to sustain a high level of performance, management must provide an appropriate organisational environment plus a means of ensuring that the Association has the capability to meet its goals through a qualified and motivated workforce.

The management shall comply with strategies, measures, protocols and regulations of the International Labour Office concerning human resources management to ensure a work environment for staff that is safe, fair and supportive.

The ISSA has long recognised that appropriate delegations to the management have allowed the Secretariat to conduct its business efficiently and expeditiously. A delegations system provides for an efficient and transparent approach to conducting ISSA business.

Concerning the duties and rights of the ISSA officials, the regulatory texts that apply are the basic and regulatory texts of the International Labour Organization reflected in the internal governance documents of the International Labour Office taking into consideration that all ISSA staff in the headquarters hold an employment contract with the International Labour Office.

In addition, the ISSA staff shall comply with the "Standards of conduct for the international civil service" of the United Nations that promote common values and define the behaviour and performance expected of international civil servants.

Furthermore, the ISSA Secretariat shall comply with the internal regulations relating to administrative and financial matters emanating from the ISSA statutory bodies and officers.

In strict accordance with the ISSA Constitution and the Financial Regulation, the ISSA Secretary General shall establish and/or enforce:

- Service quality standards.
- A Guide on Procurement that includes: all contracts concerning purchase of goods; purchase of service with companies or individuals, lease of material.
- Guide of control standards that includes a policy on risk management.
- Guides regarding collection of contributions, suspensions, and agreements on the contributions due.
- Guides regarding membership.
- Guides regarding the organization of the ISSA technical and statutory meetings.