



## **IGC Framework for Handling Concerns Regarding Champions' Conduct and Alignment with Values**

### **1. Purpose, scope, and applicability**

1.1 This framework sets out the approach and process of the IGC Secretariat and relevant governance bodies when concerns arise regarding a Champion's alignment with the values and expectations expressed in the IGC Code of Conduct.

1.2 This Framework is intended to guide decisions regarding each Champion's membership of the IGC. The IGC Secretariat and IGC governance bodies do not have investigative or disciplinary authority over Champions or their institutions. They do not conduct formal investigations, determine legal liability of disciplinary findings or replace internal institutional or legal mechanisms.

### **2. Principles**

All actions under this framework are guided by:

- Respect for due process within Champions' own institution and/or institutional oversight body;
- Recognition that IGC is not an investigative or judicial body;
- Protection of confidentiality and safety;
- Proportionality and fairness;
- Safeguarding the integrity, credibility and reputation of the IGC network.

### **3. IGC Response to Misconduct, Non-alignment & Accountability**

#### **3.1 Definition of Misconduct**

3.1.1 Champions must not engage in misconduct, which is defined as "Any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying, cyberbullying or abuse of power, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence". Specifically, they should not engage in:

- sexually suggestive comments or conduct;
- abusing their authority or power, defined as their position, status or influence, to intimidate, coerce, manipulate, exploit or otherwise disadvantage another person;
- requesting or implying that professional opportunities (access to events, travel, speaking roles, recommendations), positive evaluations, or access to the Champion depend on accepting personal, romantic or sexual attention;



- one-to-one after hours settings or private social engagements where a power imbalance exists and a subordinate is under implicit pressure to accept or refusal may reasonably be perceived as having professional consequences;
- requests to connect with subordinates on private social media accounts intended for personal and non-professional use.

### **3.2 Threshold for Misconduct**

For the purposes of this Framework, a Champion may be considered to have committed misconduct if any of the following occurs:

- The Champion is found by an internal or external body to have engaged in misconduct or behaviour that is clearly inconsistent with the network's values, commitments or expected behaviours identified above.
- The Champion is accused of misconduct and fails to demonstrate that appropriate procedures for reporting or investigation are in place and have been followed in line with UN-system standards. This includes review by a body independent of the Champion's direct reporting line, and of the IGC Secretariat, with appropriate confidentiality safeguards.

### **3.3 Non-alignment**

For purposes of this Framework, a Champion may be considered to have failed to align with the network's framework or values if the Champion fails repeatedly, without reasonable justification, to make annual commitments, report on their commitments, or engage with network.

### **3.4 Handling of Concerns and Allegations**

#### **3.4.1 Receiving and Reviewing Reports**

- The Head of the IGC Secretariat may receive and log reports ("Reports") of potential misconduct or non-alignment which may be made by anyone directly impacted, a witness, or someone who has reasonable grounds to believe that misconduct or non-alignment has taken place. Any reports of misconduct or non-alignment should be submitted to [admin@genderchampions.com](mailto:admin@genderchampions.com) for any concerned person to submit a report of alleged misconduct or non-alignment, including the possibility of anonymised or de-identified reports.
- An allegation of misconduct shall, to the extent possible, describe specific incident(s). The allegation should include as much detail as possible. If the person making the allegation chooses to report on an anonymous basis, the reporter must provide sufficient information concerning the basis of the allegations and sufficient detail or supporting factual basis that the matter can be pursued responsibly. Otherwise, the matter typically cannot be pursued further.



- The Head of the IGC Secretariat’s role is to review whether the concern:
  - falls within the scope and values of this Framework and the IGC Code of Conduct;
  - appears credible, substantiated, and relevant to IGC’s integrity or reputation; and
  - warrants consideration by the IGC Chair, Vice-Chair or Global Board.

#### *3.4.2 Nature of the Review*

- The Head of the IGC Secretariat does not have investigative or disciplinary authority over Champions or their institutions. Their role is to conduct a preliminary factual and reputational review based on the information available, without adjudicating individual responsibility or conducting inquiries into Champions’ internal affairs.

#### *3.4.3 Confidentiality*

- The IGC Secretariat and/or Global Board will take all reasonable steps to treat all Reports and related information with confidentiality and sensitivity, but this cannot be fully guaranteed in the event of a request from an authority and/ or court. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis with individuals directly involved.
- The reporter may remain anonymous but they are encouraged to reveal their identity to facilitate proper follow-up. They will be informed of the timeline for handling their report and the outcome.

#### *3.4.4 Engagement with the Champion Concerned*

- The Head of the IGC Secretariat will inform the Champion of the nature of the concern and invite them to provide context or clarification, unless doing so would risk harm, retaliation, or compromise investigative proceedings.
- The Champion is expected to cooperate fully with the Secretariat’s reasonable questions related to the concerns raised and provide appropriate information and responses.
- The Head of the IGC Secretariat may encourage the Champion to address the matter within their institution and/ or take further action detailed below.

#### *3.4.5 Protective or Interim Measures*

- If the concern poses serious reputational or integrity risks to the IGC, the Head of the IGC Secretariat may recommend to the Chair, Vice Chair, or Global Board temporary measures such as:



- suspension of the Champion's visibility on the IGC website or in public events;
- refraining from representing IGC publicly until the issue is clarified.
- If a Champion is placed under formal investigation by an internal or external review body, their profile will be automatically suspended on the IGC website, pending the resolution of the investigation.

#### *3.4.6 Referral to Appropriate Authorities*

- If credible allegations of potential criminal conduct exist, appropriate action shall include, where necessary, the referral of relevant aspects of the complaint to the competent investigative or disciplinary authority with jurisdiction over the alleged perpetrator, and to the relevant national authorities.

#### *3.4.7 Malicious Reporting*

- If it is concluded that the reporter intentionally made false allegations and / or knowingly submitted misleading information, this may lead to legal consequences.

### **3.5 Reputational and Membership Review**

#### *3.5.1 Referral to Chair, Vice-Chair or Global Board*

- When a concern is credible and material to IGC's integrity and reputation, the Head of the IGC Secretariat will refer it to the IGC Chair (and, where appropriate, the Vice-Chair, Global Board and/or local Steering Group).
- The Head of Secretariat, Chair or members of the Global Board, may engage directly with the Champion concerned to clarify facts, discuss remedial actions, or explore voluntary withdrawal from the network.

#### *3.5.2 Possible Outcomes*

Following review and dialogue, the Chair and / or Global Board may decide to:

- Take no further action if the concern is unfounded or resolved satisfactorily;
- Request remedial action by the Champion within their institution (e.g. internal review, training, or policy improvement);
- Temporarily pause or de-list the Champion's participation on the IGC website and in public events until the matter is resolved;
- Encourage voluntary withdrawal from IGC;



- Decide that the Champion's participation be discontinued following a majority vote of the Global Board; or
- Take any other action that is reasonable and appropriate to resolve the matter and to safeguard the integrity and reputation of the network.

### *3.5.3 Communication and Transparency*

- Decisions will be communicated to the Champion in writing.
- Generally, the IGC will not publicly comment on specific cases but may update its website or public listings to reflect changes in membership status.

## **4. Learning and Continuous Improvement**

4.1 The Secretariat will document anonymised lessons from such cases to strengthen preventive guidance and awareness.

4.2 Periodic summaries (without identifying details) may be shared with the Global Board and partners to demonstrate accountability and ethical leadership.

## **5. Governance, Oversight & Implementation**

5.1 The Head of the IGC Secretariat is responsible for implementing and administering this Framework, including maintaining records of Reports, investigations and sanctions.

5.2 The Global Board is responsible for oversight of this Framework, ensuring that the processes are fair, transparent, and applied consistently.

5.3 An anonymised annual summary of cases, trends, and learning outcomes may be shared with Champions and donors to promote transparency and trust .

5.4 The Global Board will review this Framework every two years to ensure it remains fit for purpose, reflects best practice and complies with any applicable legal or funding requirements.

## **6. Communication, Training & Awareness**

6.1 Each Champion is responsible for ensuring that relevant persons in their entity (including their appointed focal point) are aware of the IGC Code of Conduct, this Framework and the ability of anyone engaging with the Champion professionally to report any concerns to the Secretariat should the Champion's behaviour fall short of what is expected.



6.2 The network will provide orientation to new Champions about the Code of Conduct and this Framework to support compliance and accountability.

6.3 The Code of Conduct and this Framework will be published on the network's website and communicated to all Champions and stakeholders.

## 7. Definitions

7.1 For purposes of this Code, the following definitions apply:

- **Discrimination** is any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status [*recognised under international law*]. Discrimination may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated or may manifest itself through harassment or abuse of authority.
- **Bullying** is a form of violence that can be defined as unwanted aggressive behaviour which involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. It is a behaviour that is repeated or carries the threat of being repeated over time. Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies (such as social media, messaging platforms and mobile phones).
- **Harassment** is any improper or unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment normally implies a series of incidents based on gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, physical appearance, ethnicity, race, national origin, political affiliation, age, religion or any other reason.
- **Sexual harassment** is a specific type of prohibited conduct. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, non-verbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications, and may occur between persons of the same or different genders.
- **Abuse of power** is where someone uses their position of power or authority in an unacceptable manner. Abuse of power can take various forms and may include, but is not limited to, grooming, manipulation, coercion, putting pressure on others to engage in conduct they do not feel comfortable with.



- Initiating or pursuing personal, romantic or sexual relationships with individuals over whom they have, or may reasonably be perceived to have, supervisory, evaluative, or gate-keeping authority in relation to employment, internships, consultancies or professional opportunities may constitute evidence of harassment or abuse of power, even when the relationship is consensual.
- **Sexual exploitation** is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- **Sexual abuse** means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

## References Used

[1] United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (2018): [UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment \[PDF\] UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment](#)

[2] United Nations (2025): [UN System Model Code of Conduct](#)

[3] UNESCO (2019): [Anti-Harassment Policy](#)

[4] UNFCCC (2025): [Code of Conduct for UNFCCC Events](#)

[5] UN Women (2013): [Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority](#)

[6] United Nations (2024): [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Practical Toolkit for United Nations Senior Leaders in-Country](#)

[7] Council of Europe (2026): [Preventing Bullying and Violence](#)

[8] University College London (2025): [Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)