

Code of Conduct for NGOs at IWC meetings and complaints procedure

The Commission welcomes the attendance of NGOs at its meetings but such attendance carries certain responsibilities. It is the duty of each NGO to behave with due and proper respect for the meeting proceedings and to all Contracting Governments and other governments attending IWC meetings and to abide by this code of conduct. Disruptive behaviour and/or failure to conform to this code of conduct may result in suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

A copy of this code of conduct will be issued to each NGO observer at the beginning of each meeting.

Mobile telephones

Mobile telephones shall be switched off or put in 'silent' mode before entry of the observer into the meeting room.

Use of recording equipment

The use of audio and/or visual recording equipment is permitted during Plenary sessions of the Commission provided that such recording is carried out unobtrusively and without disturbance to the meeting. Flash photography is only permitted during the Opening Plenary.

The use of recording equipment is not permitted in meetings of the Commission's sub-groups unless the Commission decides otherwise.

Documents

Quotations from, or use of draft IWC documents is prohibited. Rule of Procedure Q.1¹ regarding confidentiality of reports of meetings of IWC committees, sub-committees and working groups must be respected.

Only official meeting documents submitted by Contracting Governments or prepared by the Secretariat (including the collated Opening Statements from NGOs) may be distributed through pigeon-holes. The Secretariat is solely responsible for such distribution. NGOs may, however, make 'for information' documents available to participants using tables designated for this purpose. Such documents must indicate which organization is responsible for them. Documents that do not meet this requirement will be removed by the Secretariat.

While 'for-information' documents will not be reviewed by the Secretariat before being placed on the designated tables, those NGOs distributing such documents remain responsible for their content. These documents shall not contain statements that defame any participating organization or person, or cause serious offence to any government.

Behaviour and demonstrations

Behaviour of representatives of NGOs shall not be disruptive to the proceedings of the meeting. The Chair of the proceedings may ask anyone disrupting the meeting to leave the room.

Demonstrations at the meeting venue shall take place at sites designated for such purposes by the host government. In any event, demonstrations shall neither take place within the meeting rooms or their immediate vicinity within the venue of the meeting controlled by the IWC, nor impede access to the meeting venue, nor shall they threaten the physical safety of delegations attending the meeting.

Complaints

Differences in views and philosophy are natural and should be respected. Any participant shall refrain from measures, including verbal, written, or physical attacks designed to deter the exercise of the rights of others to hold and express different views.

Any participant who has a grievance in this regard should submit a written complaint to the Secretary, who will try to resolve the problem with the parties concerned. If this fails, the Secretary will report the matter to the Advisory Committee who shall liaise with the parties concerned to seek a resolution. If this fails, the Advisory Committee will refer to the Commission for decision-making.

¹ 'Reports of meetings of all committees, sub-committees and working groups of the Commission are confidential (i.e. reporting of discussions, conclusions and recommendations made during a meeting is prohibited) until the opening plenary session of the Commission meeting to which they are submitted, or in the case of intersessional meetings, until after they have been dispatched by the Secretary to Contracting Governments and Commissioners. This applies equally to member governments and observers. Such reports, with the exception of the report of the Finance and Administration Committee, shall be distributed to Commissioners, Contracting Governments and accredited observers at the same time. Procedures applying to the Scientific Committee are contained in its Rules of Procedure E.5.(a) and E.5.(b).'