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World Organization of the Scout Movement
Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout
Всемирная Организация Скаутского Движения
Organización Mundial del Movimiento Scout
المنظمة العالمية للحركة الكشفية

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To: International Commissioners

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World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) Complaints Policy

Dear Friends in Scouting,

I am writing to you to share the new WOSM Complaints Policy. This policy outlines the process to be used when dealing with a complaint related to issues and activities associated with WOSM at the global level. Please know that all complaints will be taken seriously and addressed in a timely manner. The objective is to make sure that complaints are addressed and resolved, and that relationships are repaired.

Importantly, all complaint information will be treated as confidential and dealt with on a "need to know" basis, including any relevant data protection and privacy requirements. Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with me as Secretary General, in coordination with the General Counsel of WSB as necessary.

Please review the details of the Complaints Policy and share any questions with Peter Illig, General Counsel, World Scout Bureau, at: pillig@scout.org.

The policy is effective immediately, and will be available on scout.org in all five languages: English, French, Arabic, Russian and Spanish.

We thank you in advance for complying with the detailed guidelines outlined in this policy, and for respecting the intended spirit of good Scouting reflected in the objective of this policy.

Yours in Scouting,

Scott A. Teare
Secretary General WOSM

Annex:
WOSM Complaints Policy document



WORLD ORGANIZATION OF THE SCOUT MOVEMENT (WOSM) COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines the process to be used when dealing with a complaint related to issues and activities associated with the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) at the global level. It does not cover activities that are specific to or occur in National Scout Organisations (NSO). These complaints should be directed to that NSO. It does not apply for internal World Scout Bureau grievances, complaints and discipline issues as they are covered by a separate internal policy.

DEFINITION

- a) Complaint: includes a grievance or dispute.
- b) Vexatious complaint: a complaint meant to bother, embarrass or cause legal expense to the Organisation and or an individual. A vexatious complaint is a form of abuse as it has the power to hurt or disrupt another person's life and may result in psychological injury.

PURPOSE

To ensure that a complaint raised by a person, a group, or a NSO, is addressed in a fair and just manner, as well as to provide WOSM an opportunity to learn and improve its operations and performance from receiving critical feedback. If the complainant is a member of an NSO, WSB reserves the right to inform the NSO.

This policy is:

- To provide a complaints procedure which is fair, clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint;
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner;
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired;
- To gather information which helps us to improve our performance and practices.

For a full implementation of this policy, the World Scout Bureau (WSB) will:

- Translate the Policy in all five WOSM working languages
- Publicise the existence of this complaints procedure so that people know how to make a complaint;
- Make sure all staff at the World Scout Bureau and volunteers engaged in activities for and on behalf of WOSM know what to do if a complaint is received;

WHERE COMPLAINTS COME FROM

Complaints may come from any person or an organisation (including NSOs). A complaint can only be acted upon under this policy if it is received in writing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

RESPONSIBILITY

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Secretary General. The General Counsel of WSB (General Counsel is the chief legal officer of WSB), on delegation by Secretary General of WOSM, will do the triage.

REVIEW

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on:.....[date]

Last reviewed:.....[date]

Complaints should be addressed to complaints@scout.org

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- (a) For the complaint to be considered it must be related to issues and activities associated with WOSM at the global level including the World Scout Bureau, the World Scout Committee and its substructures as per the operational framework for the triennium.
- (b) All complaints must be taken seriously, managed expeditiously and dealt with in a timely manner and promote the maintenance of relationships.
- (c) Wherever possible, any complaint should be dealt with at the level where the complaint originated.
- (d) The person to whom the complaint is first made must make all efforts to effectively clarify the issues and attempt to resolve this where ever possible. After consideration, they may refer the complaint to the next higher authority in WSB or a member of the Steering Committee if the complaint is against a Committee member.
- (e) The investigating member:
- must provide all parties involved the opportunity to state their views clearly to ensure all facts are clear and understood;
 - must consider all facts and points of view;
 - may seek the advice of others using Scouting structures and procedures;
 - when making a decision should seek a solution that is in accordance with the principles of natural justice, Scouting ethics, manageable for both parties and;
 - must record the factors on which they have based their decision.
- (f) If the matter is unable to be resolved after all reasonable steps have been taken at that level, it should be referred to the next level in the WSB for resolution.
- (f) If the outcome is not accepted, then either party may appeal the decision and ask that the matter be referred to the next level in WSB.
- (g) Either party may appeal a decision by writing to the investigating member and request that the matter be referred to the next level of WSB. A written appeal must contain reasons why a decision should be reconsidered.
- (h) If the complaint relates to a possible unlawful practice or child abuse, the incident must be referred immediately to complaints@scout.org. Once notification is received, the WSB will make an immediate referral to the relevant authority for their investigation.
- (i) If the complaint is considered to involve a crime, the complainant must be advised that they may report the matter to the police at any time.
- (j) In a small number of circumstances an exception to this process may be required causing the matter to be referred to a level higher than where it originated. Where this happens, consultation with the local personnel or their appointee should occur.
- (k) Where complaints are identified as vexatious, the Secretary General may consult a specialist investigation panel for an appropriate course of action to be taken.

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS CRITERIA

Vexatious complaints may be deemed to be vexatious where they meet one of the following criteria:

- (a) Persists in pursuing a complaint where the procedure for handling complaints has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted.
- (b) Repeated unwillingness to accept documented evidence given as being factual, denying receipt of an adequate response in spite of correspondence answering their complaint, or not accepting that facts can sometimes be difficult to verify.
- (c) Regular and continuous focus on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance.
- (d) Persistently raises new issues or seeks to prolong contact by raising further concerns or questions whilst the complaint is being addressed (note: care must be taken to not disregard new issues which are significantly different to the original complaint).
- (e) Makes unreasonable complaints or demands which impose a significant burden on the Organization and where the complaint clearly is designed to disrupt or annoy, or has the effect of harassing another person or can otherwise be characterised as obsessive or manifestly unreasonable.
- (f) Makes repetitive complaints and allegations which ignore the replies previously supplied.

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

Stage One

In many cases, the person responsible for the issue being complained about may best resolve the complaint. On receipt of a complaint, General Counsel will acknowledge it and under the guidance of the Secretary General pass it on to an appropriate volunteer or member of staff to allow action to be taken to try to resolve the issue.

Complaints must be raised within three months of knowing the facts.

There may be rare occasions when the WSB chooses not to respond to a complaint at all. These include:

- When a complaint is about something that the World Scout Bureau or WOSM has no direct connection. The General Counsel may choose to reply to clear WOSM's name but is not obliged to do so.
- When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that the WSB has already responded. They will be given escalation points but the WSB may choose not to reply again; The General Counsel of WSB will always inform a complainant of the decision to do this.
- When a complainant is being obviously abusive, prejudiced or offensive in their manner.
- When a complainant is harassing a staff member.
- When a complaint is incoherent or illegible.
- When a complaint has clearly been sent to the World Organization of the Scout Movement or the World Scout Bureau and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email.

The World Organization of the Scout Movement and the World Scout Bureau cannot respond to complaints made anonymously. However, the WSB will investigate the complaint and use the information to improve in any way that the organization can. If the complaint relates to a specific person and it is not potentially a criminal issue, that person should be informed and given an opportunity to respond. The General Counsel of WSB will acknowledge all complaints sent to complaints@scout.org.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply (by electronic means) from the WSB within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed. This appeal (to review) can only be done within three months from the date of reply in Stage One. The Secretary General (or in case of complaint against the Secretary General the General Counsel) will nominate a process for this to occur. In resolving this, external assistance may be sought. The decision taken at the completion of this stage is final.

MONITORING AND LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends, which may indicate a need to take further action.
