

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **ICELAND FOREIGN SERVICE**

**16 April 2009**

#### **cf. Article 18, Iceland Foreign Service Act No. 39/1971**

We, the employees of the Foreign service,  
are determined to show integrity, sound judgement and high ethical standards in our professional and private lives and thus strive to earn due respect,  
reaffirm that our core values are reliability, transparency, integrity and impartiality,  
work as a team to obtain the common goals, which are to guard the interests of Icelanders and Icelandic companies abroad, to actively promote the spread of Icelandic culture abroad and to implement the policies of Icelandic authorities with regard to foreign affairs, external trade, development cooperation and defence<sup>1</sup>,  
are aware of the Foreign Service's history of honouring the equal rights and status of the genders as well as gender mainstreaming at work and in policy making<sup>2</sup>,  
also bear in mind that the Foreign service provides its' staff with a secure, humane and inspiring work environment where the interests of the family are taken into consideration<sup>3</sup>,  
are aware of the fact that customs and practices are different in every given country,  
undertake to abide by these ethical benchmarks in order to maintain the good reputation of Iceland<sup>4</sup>.

### **Chapter I**

#### **GENERAL PROVISIONS.**

##### **Article 1**

###### ***Scope.***

These rules apply to the staff of the Foreign service, including staff temporarily employed in the Foreign service, trainees and staff of other ministries. The rules also apply to counsellors, contractors and partners to the Foreign service as the case may be. All relevant parties are to be informed of these rules. Special rules apply to peace-keeping staff and honorary consuls<sup>5</sup>.

- 
- 1 Article 1 of Act No 39/1971 on the Icelandic Foreign Service, Article 12 of Regulation No 177/2007 on the Government Offices.
  - 2 Equality plan of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 24 April 2007.
  - 3 Ministry for Foreign Affairs Family policy, 24 April 2007.
  - 4 These rules are a part of the *Foreign Service book of instructions and guidelines*, cf. Article 18 of Act No 39/1971 on the Icelandic Foreign Service.
  - 5 The *Code of ethics for the Iceland Crisis Response Unit* No 960/2007 applies to the peace-keeping staff of the Ministry. For honorary consuls the *Manual for Honorary Consuls of Iceland*, Reykjavík 1995 applies.

## **Chapter II**

### **PROTOCOLS.**

#### **Article 2**

##### ***Occupational setting.***

Employees shall always exhibit due professionalism at work. Employees are to comply with the principles, rules of procedure and commitments applicable to their posts, including with regard to protocols in the workplace. All employees are to be treated equally regardless of age, disability, race, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, colour, religious beliefs, political views or other views, nationality, origin, possessions, family or other reasons.

Employees are prohibited from bullying a co-worker<sup>6</sup> or to engage in gender-based or sexual harassment at work<sup>7</sup>. Employees are prohibited to abuse in any way their status vis-à-vis a party dependant upon them, including co-workers.

## **Chapter III**

### **OBLIGATIONS TO ICELANDIC AUTHORITIES.**

#### **Article 3**

##### ***Execution of Instructions.***

Employees shall abide by legitimate instructions from their superiors with regard to their tasks<sup>8,9</sup>.

Employees are prohibited from seeking or following orders from another state, or parties other than Icelandic authorities.

Employees shall carry out their orders with impartiality. The personal views of the employees shall not impede them from carrying out their tasks or result in them acting in any way contradicting legitimate orders from Icelandic authorities.

---

6 Bullying means: "Reproachable or repeated inappropriate conduct, that is an act or behaviour intended to disgrace, belittle, insult, hurt, discriminate, threaten or cause discomfort for the exposed person. Sexual harassment and other mental and physical abuse is included hereunder. However, this does not include difference of opinion or a collision of interests which can arise in a workplace between a superior and an employee or between two or more employees in cases where such a difference of opinion or collision of interests does not lead to the conduct described above." cf. Article 3 of Regulation No 1000/2004 on actions against bullying in the workplace.

7 Gender-specific harassment means: "Any kind of improper and/or insulting behaviour, related to the gender of the exposed person, which is unwelcome and affects the self-esteem of the exposed person and which is continued despite clear signals from the exposed person expressing his/her opinion that the behaviour is unwelcome. The harassment can be physical, verbal or symbolic. One incident can be seen as gender-specific harassment in serious cases."

Sexual harassment means: "Any kind of improper and/or insulting sexual behaviour, which is unwelcome and affects the self-esteem of the exposed person and which is continued despite clear signals from the exposed person expressing his/her opinion that the behaviour is unwelcome. The harassment can be physical, verbal or symbolic. One incident can be seen as sexual harassment in serious cases."

cf. Article 2 of Act No 10/2008 on the equal status and equal rights of men and women.

8 Superior means: Closest superior to employee and his superiors, up to the Executive Officer of post or Permanent Secretary of State.

9 Cf. Article 15 of Act No 70/1996 on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants.

## **Article 4**

### ***Decision making.***

Employees shall make efforts to use the powers invested in their tasks with care and apply them in the interests of the general public, apply fairness and proportionality, and not use said powers for own benefit.

In case an employee applies his authority to choose between individuals, for instance when hiring in a position, when approving grants or other benefits or when negotiating contractor agreements, he or she must base his or her decision on objective viewpoints, such as merit and competence. It is prohibited to discriminate between parties on the basis of subjective viewpoints, such as sex, race, sexual orientation or social status<sup>10</sup>.

Employees shall ensure transparency to the extent possible in decision making

## **Chapter IV**

### **OBLIGATIONS TO FOREIGN AUTHORITIES.**

## **Article 5**

### ***Immunity privileges.***

Employees shall be aware of the fact that the immunity privileges they may enjoy in the host country are granted to Icelandic authorities and not for their own benefit. They are to respect the laws and regulations of the host country, its traditions and customs. Immunity privileges must not exempt them from fulfilling their personal obligations.

Employees granted with immunities are not permitted to interfere in the domestic affairs of the host country, including by taking part in political activities. They shall duly respect the authorities of the host country<sup>11</sup>.

## **Chapter V**

### **FINANCIAL MATTERS.**

## **Article 6**

### ***Financial interests.***

Employees shall ensure that their personal and financial interests, as well as those of family or friends, do not infringe on their duties. They are thus not to take part in case proceedings if they are connected to the case via family bonds, if they themselves are a party to the case, or if it involves friends or former spouses or children-in-law<sup>12</sup>.

---

10 Points 1 and 2 of the Guidelines of the Ministry for Finance on Good Practices for Civil Servants (GSR), dated February 2006.

11 Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April 1961, cf. Articles 1 and 2 of Act No 16/1971 on Iceland's accession to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

12 Point 3 GSR.

## **Article 7**

### ***Gifts and benefits.***

Employees shall neither accept nor seek gifts or financial contributions from individuals, companies or others that are in one way or another related to their tasks, if this can generally be observed as reimbursement for favours or special services. It is permissible to accept Christmas presents and other anniversary presents, provided their value is within reasonable limits. An employee is to consult with their superior in case there is reasonable doubt as to whether the employee may receive a particular present<sup>13</sup>.

The above mentioned rules also apply to benefits and honours. In case it is unavoidable to accept a more expensive gift than 100 SDR for the sake of courtesy, the gift will be seen as the property of the Foreign Service. The gift shall be handed over immediately and inventoried. Presents in the form of money may never be accepted.

## **Article 8**

### ***Other Activities.***

#### *a. General.*

Employees shall not be associated with the management of any business, nor may they hold an interest in any business, if there is a possibility that they benefit from it by reason of their position in the Foreign Service. In case an employee needs to communicate with a company, in which he is a stakeholder, due to his tasks, he is to inform the relevant Executive Officer of the extent of that stake<sup>14</sup>. This does not apply if the stake amounts to less than 10% of a public limited liability company.

Prior to an employee taking on a paid job in the service of another party, joins the board of a company or institution or starts a business venture alongside his official post, he is to report this to the relevant Executive Officer. He is to be informed within two weeks whether the aforementioned activities are deemed reconcilable with his posting and whether the undertaking is permitted<sup>15</sup>.

#### *b. In the host country.*

Employees who have been granted immunity are prohibited from engaging for their own benefit in work- or business related activities in the host country<sup>16</sup>.

Family members of employees with immunity rights may work or run a business if the rules of the host country allow, given that such activities are reported to the relevant Executive Officer prior to signing an employment contract or launching a business venture.

## **Article 9**

### ***Insider trading.***

In case employees possess inside information, they may not acquire or dispose of financial instruments, directly or indirectly, on their own account or for others, to

---

<sup>13</sup> Point 4 GSR.

<sup>14</sup> Executive Officer means: Executive Officer of diplomatic mission or Permanent Secretary of State.

<sup>15</sup> Article 20 of Act No 70/1996 on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants.

<sup>16</sup> Article 42 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April 1961, cf. Articles 1 and 2 of Act No 16/1971 on Iceland's accession to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 14 of Act No 39/1971 on the Icelandic Foreign Service.

provide third party with inside information or to advise third party on the basis of inside information to obtain financial instruments or administering them or to otherwise encourage business with them<sup>17</sup>.

## **Article 10**

### ***Public property.***

Employees shall judiciously administer public funds, ensure that they are used in an economic manner, and not used in another way than intended by the applicable laws or instructions<sup>18</sup>.

Employees must not wilfully, intentionally or by neglect, cause unnecessary waste, loss or destruction of the possessions of the Ministry for Foreign affairs, its documents or funds.

Employees may not use office equipment to retrieve or disseminate illegal content, pornography or other material that may damage the reputation of the Foreign service.

## **Article 11**

### ***Entertainment expenses.***

An employee is only to use entertainment expenses in case it is deemed necessary in order to preserve Iceland's interests in connection with the relevant employees' tasks, taking into consideration the customs and circumstances of every location. Prudence is to be shown in such matters and efforts made not to exceed general codes of conduct. In case alcohol is being served, this should be done in moderation.

## **Article 12**

### ***Abuse of position.***

Employees shall not accept nor pay bribes<sup>19</sup>.

Employees shall not favour certain suppliers or enable other transactions on behalf of the Foreign service in an unprofessional manner such as due to family ties or other personal relations.

## **Chapter VI**

### **PERSONAL MATTERS.**

## **Article 13**

### ***Conduct.***

Employees of the Foreign service shall always strive to fulfil the utmost requirements for themselves, at work as well as during private life and thus become worthy representatives of Icelandic authorities.

Employees are obliged to perform their duties with care and diligence. Their conduct

---

17 Article 123 of Act No 108/2007 on securities transactions. Financial instrument means i.a. equities and securities, cf. Article 2 of Act No 108/2007 on securities transactions.

18 Point 7 GSR.

19 Articles 109 and 128 of Act No 19/1940 on General Penal Code.

must be courteous, flexible and righteous in every manner. They are to avoid any kind of action in performing their tasks as well as in private life which may cause disgrace to them or loss of prestige or esteem for the task or profession they are employed in. Employees are obliged to provide those seeking their assistance with necessary assistance and guidance<sup>20</sup>.

#### **Article 14**

##### ***Human rights.***

Employees are to ensure that their conduct is compatible with the aims of Icelandic authorities in the field of human rights. Employees are prohibited from buying or accepting the services of prostitutes.

#### **Article 15**

##### ***Conflict of interest.***

Employees are to avoid conflicts of interest in their tasks. They are to report such incidents to their Executive Officer in applicable cases. This also applies when there is a change in the conditions of employees that could cause such a conflict of interest.

Employees are to observe rules regarding incompetence in handling a case due to family relationships or due to other reasons<sup>21</sup>.

Employees shall not utilize their position in benefit of their private interests or of others related to them, irrespective of whether such an advantage surfaces immediately or later, including after cessation of their employment.

### **Chapter VII**

#### **SECURITY ISSUES.**

#### **Article 16**

##### ***Information.***

Employees shall provide information access to the general public on the operations of the Foreign service, provided the information is not confidential by law<sup>22</sup>.

#### **Article 17**

##### ***Confidentiality.***

Employees shall observe confidentiality regarding confidential work related matters that are disclosed to them. They are prohibited from gathering confidential information in their work that is not relevant to their tasks. They are not to exploit information they receive when performing their work, that has not been revealed or published, in order for them or others to benefit from such information, including through financial

---

20 Article 14 of Act No 70/1996 on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants.

21 Article 3 of Act No 37/1993 on Administrative Procedures.

22 Point 5 GSR.

gains, even when the information is not considered confidential. Employees observe their confidentiality obligations, even after they have retired from their post<sup>23</sup>.

Employees who express themselves publicly shall, as the case may be, reveal whether they do so in their own name or in the name of the Foreign service.

Employees shall ensure that confidential information is securely preserved from being accessed by unauthorised parties.

## **Article 18**

### ***Safety.***

Employees are to do everything in their power to ensure the safety of the Foreign service and its' employees. They are to observe all rules and instructions regarding safety issues, including contingency plans in case a critical situation arises in the workplace.

If a critical situation arises in a host country, employees are to do everything in their power to secure the safety of co-workers, Icelandic citizens, their families and property, including evacuation from critical areas.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **FINAL PROVISIONS.**

## **Article 19**

### ***Regulatory Infringements.***

Employees that witness corruption, or illegitimate or inappropriate conduct shall report such instances to their Executive Officer, the Human Resources Director or the Permanent Secretary of State. The Executive Officer is to report such incidents without delay to the Human Resources Director or the Permanent Secretary of State. Employees who in good faith report such incidents in line with this item shall in no manner be held liable for their actions<sup>24</sup>.

Employees are to report reasonable suspicion of breach of these rules to their Executive Officer and/or the Human Resources Director of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He or she can claim anonymity.

Employees accused of a breach of these rules, shall have access to all the data concerning the case and be offered the chance to express their views on the matter. The Executive Officer or the Human Resources Director are to reach a conclusion in the matter within a month after notification of irregularities. In case a matter is resolved in a written manner, both parties are to sign the resolution. Employees are entitled to have the observations they have provided attached to the document.

Penalties to breaches of these rules shall be in accordance with the severity of the breach. These can i.a. be a reprimand or expulsion from post in accordance with Act No 70/1996 on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants.

---

23 Point 6 GSR and Article 18 of Act No 70/1996 on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants.

24 Point 8 GSR.

## Article 20

### ***Publication and Entry Into Force.***

These rules are not intended to be comprehensive or to replace legal procedures otherwise applying to the staff of the Foreign service. They include a more detailed description of the demands made in general to staff with regard to their conduct and behaviour and thus shed a further light on their professional obligations.

These rules shall be published both in Icelandic and English and introduced to the relevant staff so they can apply them in their tasks. Employees hired after the entry into force of these rules shall sign a declaration stating that they have read the rules and will comply with them.

Employees are to introduce these rules to their family members and staff with immunity privileges. Employees shall see to it that they are observed, in as much as possible.

These rules are to be reviewed within a year from their entry into force.

These rules, set in accordance with Article 18 of Act No 39/1971 on the Icelandic Foreign Service, having regard to Chapter IV of Act No 70/1996 on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants and the Standards of Good Practice for Government Employees issued by the Ministry for Finance, dated February 2006, shall come into force on 1 May 2009.

*Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 16 April 2009.*

---

**Össur Skarphéðinsson (sign.)**

---

*Benedikt Jónsson (sign.)*

## Table of contents

CHAPTER I .....	1
GENERAL PROVISIONS .....	1
CHAPTER II .....	2
PROTOCOLS .....	2
CHAPTER III .....	2
OBLIGATIONS TO ICELANDIC AUTHORITIES .....	2
CHAPTER IV .....	3
OBLIGATIONS TO FOREIGN AUTHORITIES .....	3
CHAPTER V .....	3
FINANCIAL MATTERS.....	3
CHAPTER VI .....	5
PERSONAL MATTERS .....	5
CHAPTER VII .....	6
SECURITY ISSUES.....	6
CHAPTER VIII.....	7
FINAL PROVISIONS .....	7

## Index

General Provisions .....	1
Decision making .....	3
Publication and Entry Into Force .....	8
Regulatory Infringements.....	7
Financial interests .....	3
Conduct.....	5
Execution of instructions .....	2
Immunity privileges .....	3
Scope.....	1
Gifts and benefits.....	4
Conflict of interest.....	6
Insider Trading .....	4
Final provisions.....	7
Human Rights.....	6
Financial Matters.....	3
Abuse of position .....	5
Public Property .....	5
Personal Matters .....	5
Entertainment Expenses .....	5
Protocols.....	2
Obligations to Foreign Authorities.....	3
Obligations to Icelandic Authorities .....	2
Occupational Setting .....	2
Confidentiality .....	6
Information.....	6
Other Activities .....	4
Safety .....	7
Security Issues.....	6

---