
INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTE (IOI) WELLINGTON DECLARATION

adopted unanimously by all present and voting
at the General Assembly held on 13th November 2012
in Wellington, New Zealand

WHEREAS the Ombudsman offers independent and objective consideration of complaints, aimed at correcting injustices caused to an individual as a result of maladministration; and

WHEREAS a further important objective of the Ombudsman is to improve services provided to the public by ensuring that systemic failings are identified and corrected; and

WHEREAS from its early beginnings in Scandinavia, the Ombudsman concept has now been adopted and extended across the world, and includes the promotion and protection of human rights; and

WHEREAS the Ombudsman idea has proved extraordinarily adaptable and innovative while remaining true to its original core principles of independence, objectivity and fairness.

On motion duly made by the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and unanimously carried, it:

1. *Recognizes* that Ombudsman institutions at national, regional and local level exist in approximately 140 countries worldwide, growing in number every year.
2. *Emphasizes* that Ombudsman institutions form an integral part of constitutional reality and make an important contribution to the Rule of Law, Transparency, Good Governance, Democracy and Human Rights.
3. *Stresses* the diversity of Ombudsman institutions which in turn reflects the diversity of the countries and regions which individual Ombudsman offices serve.

4. *Considers* that different models of legislation and accountability underpinning Ombudsman offices worldwide are emerging and reflect particular constitutional arrangements and cultures.
5. *Reiterates* that the work of ombudsman institutions constitutes an essential and necessary element in the development and maintenance of a transparent and accountable democracy.
6. *Encourages* the creation and development of Ombudsman institutions where they do not already exist.
7. *Stresses* that access to an Ombudsman is integral to every persons' right to access to justice to address an ombudsman institution in order to have injustices caused as a result of maladministration corrected.
8. *Commits* to the importance of guaranteeing these inalienable rights.
9. *Emphasizes* that especially in times of economic crises, financial and social hardship affecting large parts of society, strong Ombudsman institutions are essential to guarantee that the fundamental rights of all persons are respected.
10. *Opposes any* financial restrictions which would limit the independence of the Ombudsman and restrict the ability of an Ombudsman to protect the fundamental rights of all persons.
11. *Recognizes* the fact that some Ombudsman institutions also function as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and where it is not the case,
12. *Encourages* increased cooperation between Ombudsman and NHRIs at national level, between associations of Ombudsman and NHRIs at regional level, and between the IOI and the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC).
13. *Stresses* that it is an expression of democratic maturity and the rule of law that governments and parliamentary majorities shall allow criticism voiced by independent Ombudsman institutions. As a consequence, an Ombudsman diligently fulfilling his/her mandate, shall not be subject to any form of physical, mental or unjustified legal coercion.