

Conference Ombuds Charter

Charter for WEF Events Conference Ombuds Services

I. INTRODUCTION

To support WEF's commitment to ensuring that WEF Events are safe and welcoming for all, consistent with the principles outlined in WEF's policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the WEF Member Code of Conduct, WEF will provide organizational conference ombuds services in connection with WEF Events taking place between January 2026 through December 2027, hereinafter ("Conference Ombuds Program"). WEF's goal is to hold events that are as inclusive and accessible as possible for attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone else participating in WEF Events, regardless of gender, sexual orientation/identity, race/ethnicity, religion, employment status, or field status. In addition, WEF seeks to improve conduct and climate at future events and conferences by using aggregate data and non-confidential feedback on trends and recommendations from the Conference Ombuds Program.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE OMBUDS

The Conference Ombuds Program is designed to be an independent, impartial, informal, and confidential channel for WEF Event attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone participating in WEF Events to discuss any issues related to event activities. The ombuds team selected to provide these services ("Conference Ombuds" or "Ombuds") will provide a safe, confidential place for people to discuss issues related to WEF Events, including safety, conduct ranging from overly friendly behavior to harassment, micro-aggressions, free speech, integrity, privacy, conflicts of interest (including accessibility, lodging, and food), alcohol consumption, and conference cliques, and may share non-identifying, aggregate information regarding systemic issues, trends, and recommendations with WEF Leadership consistent with IOA Standards of Practice. The Ombuds is a resource for informally discussing any of these or other conference-related concerns and for helping inquirers develop options, problem-solve, create paths for self-advocacy, and make informed choices about the best path forward.

This Charter sets forth the operating principles under which the Conference Ombuds Program will operate and reflects WEF's commitment to the Conference Ombuds Team and the role of this position.

III. STANDARDS OF OPERATION

The Conference Ombuds Team are each members of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and shall adhere to IOA's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice in performing ombuds services for WEF.

See <https://www.ombudsassociation.org/standards-of-practice-code-of-ethics>. These tenets require organizational ombuds programs to be independent, impartial, informal, and confidential:

1. Independence

The Conference Ombuds Team members are independent contractors, not WEF staff or employees. The Ombuds Team functions outside existing administrative and management structures pursuant to a contract between MWI and WEF and does not participate in WEF decision-making, investigations, or formal processes.

2. Impartiality

As an impartial third party, the Ombuds Team assists individuals and groups in exploring concerns, identifying options, and considering issues of fairness and equity from multiple perspectives. The Ombuds Team does not, however, provide legal or other kinds of advocacy or enforce WEF's Member Code of Conduct or the Event Code of Conduct. The Conference Ombuds Team does not render services or become involved in any matter that would be a conflict of interest for a Conference Ombuds to do so.

3. Informality

The Conference Ombuds Team provides a means for off-the-record discussions of concerns. The Ombuds are empowered to provide only informal assistance and do not conduct investigations, make or override decisions, determine policy, testify or participate in formal or administrative proceedings with respect to confidential communications, provide legal advice, or accept legal notice of claims against WEF or any other organization, entity, or person. For those wishing to assert claims or have on-the-record communications, a Conference Ombuds can identify appropriate formal channels so that individuals may make informed choices about which process they decide is best for them to pursue.

4. Confidentiality

Communications with the Conference Ombuds Program are confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. This principle of confidentiality helps the Conference Ombuds Program provide a safe place for event and conference attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone participating in WEF Events to voice

concerns, evaluate issues, and identify options for possible further action. The Conference Ombuds Program is a voluntary resource. No one is required to use it, but those who do will be deemed to have agreed to respect and abide by the above principles on which it was created and not to call an Ombuds Team Member or the Conference Ombuds Program to testify or produce documents related to confidential communications in any administrative or legal proceeding. WEF has also agreed not to call upon or attempt to have the Conference Ombuds Program or a Conference Ombuds Team Member disclose confidential communications or to testify or produce documents relating to confidential communications in any administrative or legal proceeding.

Consistent with the International Ombuds Association Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, the only exceptions to this confidentiality principle are: (a) when, during the course of communications with a Conference Ombuds, an inquirer gives the Ombuds permission to make a disclosure, and the Ombuds agrees it is appropriate to do so, or (b) when a Conference Ombuds determines that there is an imminent threat of serious harm.

IV. SCOPE OF SERVICES

A Conference Ombuds Team Member will be available on-site at WEF Events between March 2026 and December 2027. Attendees will be advised on how to contact an Ombuds Team Member, as well as on the times and places where an Ombuds may be found.

As an impartial third-party resource, the Ombuds Team Members support fair and equitable processes by assisting individuals in identifying options and making informed choices. The Ombuds Team, however, does not provide legal or other forms of advocacy or enforce the WEF Member Code of Conduct.

The Conference Ombuds Team has been authorized to continue assisting inquirers after an event or conference for a limited period when consultation has not yet been concluded or when an issue is raised within a reasonable time after an event or conference.

V. ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING

The Conference Ombuds Team reports to the Executive Director, the Senior Director of Culture and Belonging, and the Senior Director of Conference & Event Management. An Ombuds Team Member may, at their discretion, meet with and alert other senior leadership at WEF to any systemic issues or trends the Ombuds believes may help the organization address identified or potential issues, improve the climate for membership in future events or conferences, or improve its policies and practices. Even when

reporting issues to senior leadership, the Conference Ombuds will protect the confidentiality of those using Ombuds' services.

VI. RECORD-KEEPING

Ombuds Team Members provide only informal assistance, and although informal notes may be temporarily created only as needed, the Ombuds does not retain permanent records containing personally identifiable information or confidential communications. Communications with the Conference Ombuds are not part of WEF's formal records, personnel files, or investigative files. Any post-event or conference reporting to senior leadership will include only aggregate data, the Ombuds' insights and observations on the types of issues raised, and any recommendations.

VII. INQUIRY ABOUT THE USE OF THE CONFERENCE OMBUDS IS INAPPROPRIATE; RETALIATION FOR DOING SO IS PROHIBITED

WEF supports efforts to manage and resolve conflicts informally to preserve collegial and effective working relationships and to avoid the time and expense of formal proceedings or litigation. Because the Conference Ombuds Program is intended to be a confidential resource, it is not appropriate for anyone at WEF to inquire about an individual's use of it or any communication that may have occurred there. Furthermore, discouraging or preventing eligible visitors from using the Conference Ombuds Program is inappropriate because it is contrary to the organization's intent to provide the Conference Ombuds Program as a resource for early and informal management and resolution of conflicts.

Retaliation includes direct or indirect actions, whether overt or subtle, that could reasonably discourage an individual from consulting the Conference Ombuds Program.

While the organization supports and encourages the use of the Conference Ombuds Program for conflict management, an individual's use of the Ombuds Program must always be entirely voluntary. Reminding individuals that the Conference Ombuds Program is available as an option or a resource is acceptable. However, no one may be ordered or required to visit the Ombuds, nor may an individual be punished for not seeing the Conference Ombuds Program.

All attendees, staff, exhibitors, and anyone participating in WEF Events shall have the right to consult the Conference Ombuds Program without fear of retaliation or reprisal. Retaliation against any attendee or staff for consulting with the Conference Ombuds Program or against the Ombuds for actions within the legitimate scope of duties as described in the Charter is prohibited.

VIII. PROCEDURE FOR REVISION OR REVOCATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Charter remains in effect unless otherwise revoked by WEF, and such revocation shall be provided in writing to MWI's Director of Ombuds Services. Any revision to this Charter shall be jointly agreed to in writing by both WEF and the Ombuds representatives from MWI and shall be appended to this document.

WEF

MWI

Signed: Deana Gissendanner
Deana Gissendanner (Feb 17, 2026 14:12:19 EST)

Signed: 

Name: Deana Gissendanner

Name: Charles P. Doran

Title: *Senior Director, Conference & Event Mgmt.*

Title: Executive Director

Date: 17/02/2026

Date: 17/02/2026

Duly Authorized Hereunto

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Charter for WEF Events and Conferences

Final Audit Report


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