



# WORKING GROUP ON THE INTERNATIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT ASSOCIATION

6TH OF DECEMBER 2023, IN PERSON

## CHAIR'S SUMMARY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The 15th meeting of the Working Group on the International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA Working Group) was convened during the ICoCA-sponsored Responsible Security Forum. The participants were several Montreux Document Participants, the Co-Chairs of the Montreux Document Forum (Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as well as the Montreux Document Forum Secretariat, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), and the Chairman and Executive Director of ICoCA.

### 2. OPENING STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE ICoCA WORKING GROUP

In her opening remarks, Ms. Susan Benda, deputy Legal Adviser at the United States Mission in Geneva representing the United States of America as the Chair of the ICoCA Working Group, noted that the Working Group is meant to serve as an advisory forum of the Montreux Document participating states, to advise states about ICoCA's activities and to promote dialogue between those states and ICoCA. Referencing that 2023 was the 10th anniversary of the International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA) and the 15th anniversary of the Montreux Document, she noted that it was an important moment to take stock, and to look ahead as to how both initiatives could work to further strengthen the oversight and accountability of PMSCs.

### 3. OPENING STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE ICoCA

Following this, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of ICoCA, Mr. Frédéric Chenais, referencing the role of the ICoCA Working Group in promoting a dialogue between MDF participating states and ICoCA. He emphasized the importance of National Action Plans including private military and security companies (PMSC) use, drawing guidance from the MDF Secretariat on established best practices. Concluding with an inquiry into how ICoCA could better support governments in this realm, he suggested exploring collaborations with the MDF Secretariat on ongoing initiatives.

### 4. UPDATE FROM THE ICoCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mr. Jamie Williamson, the Executive Director of ICoCA, provided a comprehensive update on the organization's key developments in recent years, including changes to the Code of Conduct that

reflected the evolution of the private security industry which are increasingly working not only in “complex” environments but also in a range of otherwise high risk, unstable and fragile operating environments. He also noted the proliferation of local and small private security companies that were participating in ICoCA, and the new category established by the association, designed to embrace the newcomers, generally as affiliate companies. He reiterated the purpose of the working group as a platform for participants to exchange experiences and resources related to PMSC commitments to address human rights concerns. Highlighting ICoCA's mission to ensure Private Security Providers adhere to international standards, he stressed the shared responsibility of national regulators and security companies. Williamson advocated for broader international participation, emphasizing the mutual interest of governments in regulating PMSCs.

## 5. DISCUSSION

During the ensuing discussion, a participant observed that relatively few governments were ICoCA members and invited non-member states to consider joining. Several participants expressed alignment with the MDF and ICoCA, emphasizing the imperative of reducing human rights abuses nationally and internationally. The role of multistakeholder initiatives, such as the ICoCA, was acknowledged as instrumental in expanding good practices.

Multiple participants stated that as a part of the Montreux Document Forum and ICoCA, their respective countries are clear in that reducing human rights abuses within and outside of their national boundaries is important. Thus, they pressed the issue of how to further expand good practices. In this regard, multistakeholder initiatives such as this ICoCA Working Group were valued.

As co-chair of the MDF, the ICRC noted that the Montreux Document primarily addresses the international legal obligations of and best practices for States and has only a few paragraphs directly addressed to companies themselves. Thus, the MDF and ICoCA have important complementary, mutually-reinforcing roles to play.

The Executive Director of the ICoCA noted that because of the negative connotation of PMSCs, many companies ICoCA interacts with who provide smaller-scale security services alone are less open to discussion. In closing, the Chair once again invited Montreux Document participants to further engage bilaterally with the Association and to discuss priority areas of interest for the ICoCA.

**In case there are further questions or comments, please refer them to the Secretariat of the Montreux Document Forum: [secretariat@montreuxdocument.org](mailto:secretariat@montreuxdocument.org).**