



# Guidance on the Code of Conduct and Practices for its Implementation 2021–2025

IUCN Species Survival Commission

*As revised and adopted by the SSC Steering Committee, January 2021*

## Preamble

Each SSC member pledges to achieve the high standards of IUCN Commissions, as established in the [Code of Conduct of the members of IUCN Commissions](#), adopted by IUCN Council on 17 August 2016.

This document aims to provide additional guidance for compliance with the Code of Conduct as well as establish practices for its implementation within SSC, in accordance with Article 8 of SSC By-laws 2021-2024.

## 1. On the purpose and scope of the Code of Conduct

1.1. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to guide the actions of SSC, its leaders, and its members, particularly when acting on behalf of or in the name of IUCN, SSC and/or any of its groups. For purposes of the Code of Conduct, the phrase “the rights and responsibilities of SSC or any SSC member” shall include the rights and responsibilities of groups within SSC. Similarly, where a group has adopted governing documents of the group in accordance with the SSC’s governing documents, they shall be accorded the same respect and obligation as the governing documents of the SSC. Where the Code of Conduct refers to actions or statements by, within or on behalf of SSC, it shall include such actions or statements by or on behalf of its groups; and where it speaks of assets or property of SSC, that reference shall include assets or property of its groups, without implying any independent right of the SSC to control such assets or property.

1.2. The Code of Conduct applies in addition to, and does not alter, any (collective or individual) terms of reference that have been or will be accepted by the IUCN Commissions or their members. It applies to all SSC members, including those in leadership positions within the Commission or any of its groups (collectively referred to herein as “SSC leadership”).

1.3. Nothing in the Code of Conduct shall alter or restrict the rights and responsibilities of SSC or any SSC member as set out in the governing documents of IUCN or any governing documents (constitution, charter, bylaws, statutes, guidelines, rules, procedures, etc.) of the SSC. SSC shall ensure that its governing documents are consistent with the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

## 2. Additional Guidance to the Code of Conduct

The following are additional guidance regarding particular aspects of some points within the Code of Conduct. They should not be taken as limitations on its coverage, but only as particular points on which some members have indicated that there may be a need for additional guidance.

### 2.1. Specific Elements of “Accountability”

Among other aspects of accountability, the Code of Conduct’s commitment to “abide by all relevant governing documents of IUCN and its Commissions” will essentially include the commitment, when transacting any business involving or on behalf of the IUCN, SSC or any of its groups, to engage in fair and ethical business and labour practices as defined internationally, and to avoid any activity that uses child labour.

### 2.2. Specific Elements of “Ethical Leadership and Transparency”

With regard to the commitment to “act as a fiduciary”, a member should consider the following to be included:

Whenever a member has

- control of property of IUCN, SSC or of any of its groups,
- authority regarding the distribution of information products of IUCN and/or SSC,
- access to its communication tools or
- responsibility for the maintenance or use of its other mechanisms,

that member should act in all respects in the best interests of the body whose property, information, tools or mechanism is so held, placing its interests and the collective interests of all components or members of that body above the member’s personal interests.

### 2.3. Specific Elements of “Mutual Respect for Colleagues, Peers, IUCN and Commissions”

The following points are included within the general obligations specified in the Code of Conduct under this heading:

- To direct constructive criticism regarding SSC or any of its groups to the designated leadership of the SSC or its groups, in the first instance, in accordance with any designated procedures that may have been adopted within SSC.
- To refrain from harassment, bullying or abuse of authority.
- To refrain from spreading (or allowing the spread of) negative gossip or defamatory statements about colleagues and peers.
- To follow the specific rules set by IUCN regarding [Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse, and Sexual Harassment](#).

### 2.4. Specific Elements of “Representation”

Where a member’s correspondence or other communications indicate that he/she may be acting, speaking or writing on behalf of or with the support of the IUCN, SSC or any of its groups, that member should make every reasonable effort to ensure that such correspondence or communication does not give a mistaken impression of his/her acts. Specifically, this point calls on the member to be aware of the implications of the use or inclusion of the name, logo or other formal indications of IUCN, SSC or of any of its groups, and to adhere to the SSC By-laws in this regard.

### 2.5. Specific Elements of “Confidentiality”

Within the members’ commitments with regard to confidentiality, all members specifically should

maintain and safeguard the confidentiality of all collegial discussions, including listservers, website discussions on restricted portals, and email exchanges, except with the express agreement of any individual whom a member might wish to quote, paraphrase or name. All members also should comply with the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union. See more details on this regard in the IUCN policies below.

- [IUCN Data Policy](#)
- IUCN Data Protection Guidelines for Commission Members [English](#) - [Français](#) - [Castellano](#)

## **2.6. Specific Elements of “Conflict of Interest”**

In complying with the Code of Conduct’s provision relating to conflict of interest, each member should

- refuse to accept any payment or special consideration from any person or organisation whose purpose in providing such a payment is to unduly enrich a single member or group of members, or to unduly influence the decisions, policies or actions of the IUCN, SSC or any of its groups; and
- refuse to undertake or finance any other activities that are in conflict with any of the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

Wherever a member is uncertain as to whether his/her interests relating to a particular action or decision might constitute a conflict of interest, that member should disclose the potential conflict to the Chair of the Commission (or his/her designee), before engaging in any action or decision-making which involves that conflict.

## **3. SSC practices and procedures to implement the Code of Conduct**

These practices provide a framework to report and address violations of the Code of Conduct within the SSC.

### **3.1. Procedures for addressing claims of violation of the Code of Conduct**

The provisions of the Code of Conduct under the heading “Response to Violations of this Code of Conduct” address the first level of response.

In SSC, initial responsibility for addressing allegations that a member of a Specialist Group, Task Force, Committee, National Species Authority or Red List Authority has violated the Code of Conduct has been specifically assigned to the Chairs or Coordinators of the respective group. These leaders should report the incident to the SSC Chair or his/her designee in a timely manner, so that an incident report can be filed for SSC’s tracking as described below.

It is recognised, however, that controversy regarding such a claim may continue after the decision/action of the assigned responsible person. In those cases, escalating process may be used:

- Within a reasonable time following such a decision, any person involved may refer the matter for guidance to the Chair of the Commission or to any person that has been or may be designated by the Chair as responsible for such matters.
- The person referring the matter must also inform all involved persons of the referral.
- At his/her discretion, the Commission Chair or designated person may offer guidance on the issue, taking into account the authority of the person making the initial decision, as set out in the relevant terms of reference and/or in the governing documents of the SSC.

In the event that any such disagreement should continue after the disposition of a referral to the Commission Chair or designated person:

- Any person may, within a reasonable time following referral to the Commission Chair or designee, request that the matter be referred to the designated IUCN Vice Presidents who constitute the Ethics Committee of the IUCN Council.
- In their discretion, that Committee may issue guidance regarding the matter, through the Commission Chair as a member of Council, taking into account the authority of the SSC's leadership, as set out in the relevant terms of reference and in the SSC's By-laws and any relevant non-conflicting bylaw, rule, regulation, statute, Council decision or Congress resolution of IUCN.

### **3.2. When receiving a Code of Conduct violation claim**

When a Code of Conduct concern is disclosed, the person receiving the claim should bear the following in mind:

- Listen.
- Empathise with the person.
- Ask who, when, where, what but not why.
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation.
- Report to the corresponding SSC group leader, or to the SSC Chair.

### **3.3. Reporting and incident statistics**

Reports can reach the SSC Chair through several routes. This may be in a structured format such as a letter, e-mail, text or message on social media. It may also be in the form of informal discussion. If a SSC member hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a violation of the Code of Conduct, they should report this to their respective Chair or to the Chair of the SSC (or his/her designee).

The person receiving the report should then document the information, using an Incident Report Form (attached as Annex 1). Due to the sensitive nature of violations to the Code of Conduct, confidentiality will be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited 'need to know' basis only.

SSC Chair (or his/her designee) will record data relating to the case and create a database of incidents to follow-up, when needed, and to feed into learning for dealing with future cases, as well as being able to detect repeated offences, always guaranteeing confidentiality.

### **3.4. Consequences for violating the Code of Conduct**

As is mentioned in the Code of Conduct under the heading "Response to Violations of this Code of Conduct" the first action the SSC Chair or his/her designee is called to take is "to request that the person(s) engaging in the violation cease such behavior".

Nevertheless, some breaches of the Code of Conduct could be severe and require harsher penalties, even on a first offense. Major infractions can include acts of violence, threats toward colleagues, theft or abuse of power. In those cases, the SSC Chair or his/her designee will evaluate the case carefully to determine if the action required could be a warning or if further legal action must be taken, and in the most extreme cases, proceed with the termination of the relationship of the person(s) with SSC and its groups.

### **3.5. Awareness Raising and Communication**

The SSC Chair's Office will implement a regular communication plan to build awareness and promote adequate implementation of the Code of Conduct across SSC, its groups and relevant stakeholders,

ensuring the SSC members know and embrace the Code of Conduct. The plan will include but is not limited to:

- Making the Code of Conduct, this Guidance and all the material related available on SSC's website.
- Developing a communication campaign to disseminate the Code of Conduct and this Guidance through the different SSC channels and media: annual and quarterly reports, Chair messages, social media, SSC mailing list, etc.
- Engaging SSC Leaders and members to take part in awareness raising and communication activities to disseminate and implement the Code of Conduct and this Guidance widely.

### **Annex 1 - Incident Report Template**

This form should be used by the SSC Chair's Office to record claims of violations to the [Code of Conduct](#) within the SSC.

All the information must be treated as confidential and reported only to the SSC Chair or to any person that has been designated as responsible for such matters. Completing this record should not stand in the way of contacting Police or Social Services in the event of an emergency or urgent safeguarding incident.

[Report form](#)

