

AOM Skopje Declaration on Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights

31st of May 2018, Skopje – FYROM

We, Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions gathered on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen (AOM), on 30-31 May 2018 in Skopje, in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other relevant universal and regional instruments, and the obligations of State parties to uphold the norms and standards contained therein;

Reaffirming that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and that social, cultural and environmental rights, are a prerequisite for human dignity;

Observing that the people of the world have shown in different ways an urgent need to address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion that affect every country, in a context of tensions and conflicts deriving from improper implementation of cultural rights;

Acknowledging that our societies must respond more effectively to the material and cultural needs of individuals, their families and the communities in which they live throughout our diverse countries and regions.

Committed to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, with a view to encouraging the recognition and implementation of social, cultural and environmental rights at the local, national, regional and universal levels,

Hereby declare as follows:

1. AOM encourages all its Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions members to engage within the framework of their specific mandates and responsibilities in ensuring that social, cultural and environmental rights are systematically taken into consideration in all of their activities, and consistently and progressively integrated into all relevant instruments and monitoring mechanisms.
2. AOM asks all the States and other actors in the public sector, within the framework of their specific mandates and responsibilities to:

- a. Respect and concretize their commitments with regards to the set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of the new sustainable development agenda on September 2015 by the members States of the United Nations;
 - b. Further integrate the rights recognized in the present Declaration into their national legislation, at the highest level, and their national practices;
 - c. Respect, protect and fulfil these rights in conditions of equality, and to dedicate the maximum amount of their available resources to ensure their full exercise;
 - d. Refrain from interfering directly or indirectly with the enjoyment of social, cultural and environmental rights;
 - e. Prevent third parties, such as corporations, from interfering in any way with the enjoyment of social, cultural and environmental rights;
 - f. Provide access to effective remedies to anyone who claims that one's rights have been violated.
3. AOM Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions, are engaged to work closely with key local and international stakeholders, importantly NGOs, INGOs and the media of the respective countries, in order to:
- a. Raise public awareness on social, cultural, and environmental rights and obligations in particular, and to make sure that they are well understood and strongly taken into account by all actors in the social, economic and political areas;
 - b. Facilitate the inclusive and informed dialogue of all interested parties into the decision making process, with the aim of encouraging the appropriation of these rights by all persons, so as to guarantee the fulfilment of these rights to every person, in particular for those who are more disadvantaged and vulnerable.
4. AOM Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions will further their actions in protecting and promoting social, cultural and environmental rights, through diffusion of experiences and initiatives of different member institutions and international partners.