

## **AOM Pristina Declaration**

*25 May 2023, Pristina – Kosovo*

We, the Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions, gathered on the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen (AOM), on 24-25 May 2023, in Pristina, Kosovo;

*Reaffirming* that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and that Ombuds Institutions, Mediators and NHRIs has a central role in the human rights system;

*Committed* to promote cross-border, regional and international cooperation in order to effectively protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and determined to redefine the Mediterranean from a sea that separates us to the sea that unites us, as noted in the AOM Nafplion Declaration of 5 October 2021;

*Noting* that Ombuds institutions constitutes an integral part of democratic governance and have a crucial role for rule of law, protection and promotion of human rights, but also in overseeing the effective implementation of international human rights obligations;

*Recognizing* that integrity and independence are key principles that should govern the work of the Ombuds institutions, Mediators and NHRIs and also are the foundations upon which they must be built;

*Recalling* United Nations [Resolution](#) on the role of Ombuds and mediator institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and the rule of law, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 2020 and acknowledging the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights ([Paris Principles](#)) and the principles on the protection and promotion of the Ombudsman institution ([Venice Principles](#));

*Expressing* grave concern about the challenging working conditions, threats and attacks which Ombuds institutions and mediators and their staff are at times experiencing, which constitute a real threat to the independence and effectiveness of NHRIs;

*Recognizing* that the independence of human rights institutions cannot be guaranteed without adequate funding and infrastructure, and that budget cuts may affect and undermine the independence and effectiveness of them;

*Having* dedicated the 12th meeting of our Association to the discussion of the three issues, namely:

- Independence as a fundamental element of an effective Ombudsman Institution,
- Ombudsman institutions under threat – challenges and opportunities
- Preserving the independence of Ombudsman institutions – the way forward;

### **Hereby declare as follows:**

1. AOM encourages its members to continue their efforts in upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms in their respective countries and pressuring State actors to abide to international standards related to independent human rights institutions, especially with regard to responding to threats and independence in performing their mandates.
2. AOM asks all the countries in the Mediterranean region and neighboring areas, within the framework of their mandates and responsibilities to:

- a) to provide a firm legal basis for Ombudsman institutions, preferably at the constitutional level, which guarantees their independence and provides them with the means necessary to accomplish their functions effectively, both at national and international levels;
  - b) to ensure that Ombuds Institutions enjoy organizational, administrative and financial independence in the implementation of their mandates;
  - c) to refrain from any action aiming at or resulting in undermining the integrity and independence of Ombuds institution and from any threats against such institutions and their staff;
  - d) To provide adequate premises, sufficient financial and human resources to carry out their mandates;
  - e) To ensure that the appointment process of the Ombudsperson, his deputies and staff are objective, merit-based, and free from any political interference;
  - f) To ensure enjoyment of functional immunity from prosecution, civil lawsuit and dismissal due to spoken or written statements for activities or decisions that are within the scope of responsibilities for the Ombudsperson and his staff, which should continue even after the end of their mandate.
  - g) To refer to international human rights standards, such as Paris Principles and Venice Principles, when undertaking legislative reforms concerning Ombuds Institutions.
3. AOM calls the attention of international and regional human rights organizations, such as OHCHR/GANHRI, Council of Europe, IOI and other regional networks to raise their voices in support of strengthening the Ombuds institutions, NHRIs and Mediators in line with Paris Principles and advocate for an enabling environment in which they can maximize their impact and resilience in performing their mandates.