

# **Code of Ethics and Conduct for the World Customs Organization's (WCO's) Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG)**

## **I. Introduction**

Current times demand that international organizations interact more frequently and meaningfully with non-traditional public actors. The World Customs Organization (WCO) is aware of this need for further engagement with private sector and therefore proposes strengthening its framework for collaboration with the Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG). This Code of Ethics and Conduct is a foundational element of this approach and outlines the standards of behavior and ethical principles that the Members of the PSCG are expected to uphold. It ensures that all discussions and decisions are taken considering WCO values and should be considered as part of the Terms of Reference that guide the work of the PSCG and its Members.

This Code of Ethics and Conduct serves as a comprehensive guideline to protect the credibility of the WCO and PSCG members by ensuring the highest standards of honesty, integrity, professionalism, and ethical behavior of PSCG members and, in so doing, safeguard and enable higher quality interactions between the WCO and PSCG. It has been developed to align with key principles and a set of concrete provisions. All PSCG Members must comply with this Code of Ethics and Conduct.

This Code of Ethics applies to all PSCG members with respect to any activities involving the WCO or any individual acting in or on behalf of the WCO.

## **II. Key Principles**

PSCG members must observe the following key principles and provisions while interacting with WCO Secretariat and/or WCO Members:

1. Act with honesty, integrity, and fairness in all dealings, and uphold the highest ethical standards in all activities.
2. Act professionally, and when making recommendations, have a reasonable basis for making such recommendations.
3. Conduct all activities in a reasonable and fair manner. Facts and opinions shall be clearly distinguished.
4. Present all communications clearly and structure them logically to minimize the risk of misinterpretation.
5. Be objective, transparent, and perform duties with the highest level of care and diligence.
6. Provide accurate information in all communications and reports to the best of one's knowledge
7. Do not allow personal financial interests to supersede responsibilities, tasks, or decisions within the PSCG.
8. Treat all individuals with respect and dignity and ensure fair treatment and opportunities for all, without discrimination.
9. Uphold the highest standards of conduct, including strict adherence to local laws and refraining from engaging in illegal activities such as fraud, bribery, or embezzlement.
10. Comply with WCO policies, where applicable, in particular the WCO data protection policy(ies).
11. PSCG Members must observe the provisions that follow this section.

### **III. Gifts, Rewards, Hospitality and Discounts**

PSCG Members shall neither:

1. offer, solicit or accept any gift, hospitality or other item of monetary value to/ from any person or entity for the purpose of seeking to influence or benefit from PSCG or WCO action or decision, except where such hospitality is reasonable and appropriate and does not create a conflict of interest, and does not exceed the equivalent value of fifty (50) euros; nor
2. engage in business transactions using non-public information obtained through the work of PSCG or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.

### **IV. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest**

PSCG members/representatives must:

1. avoid engaging in activities related to PSCG that could create conflicts of interest or influence decisions for personal or private gain.
2. offer objective and unbiased advice based on comprehensive analysis; and
3. disclose any potential conflicts of interest and abstain from decision-making or inputs to PSCG documents where such conflicts exist.

### **V. Limitations on Political Activities**

PSCG members/representatives:

1. shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization individual, WCO or Customs administration for political reasons; and
2. shall not participate in political campaign activities to favor an organization or individual in WCO elections.

### **VI. Conduct in Money Matters**

PSCG members must not enter into private financial arrangements with WCO or Customs employees where such arrangements could reasonably be perceived to influence, or give the appearance of influencing, their professional duties or decisions. This includes, for example, personal loans, acting as a guarantor, or providing security on a loan.

### **VII. Confidentiality and Use of Official Information**

1. PSCG members/representatives:

- a. are free to use the information received during PSCG and WCO meetings, provided that such information is not designated as "WCO Members only" and neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s) or any other participant, is revealed.
- b. shall treat documents or materials indicated as "WCO Members only" or obtained from the WCO website through credentialed access (i.e. accessible only with authorized credentials), or discussions classified as sensitive as confidential. The aforementioned documents or materials cannot be directly or indirectly shared with third parties. Third parties in this respect shall refer only to parties outside of the PSCG and WCO members.
- c. Protect and conserve WCO property and not use it for other than authorized activities.

2. If confidential or sensitive information relates or belongs to a PSCG member, only that

member can authorize its disclosure.

#### **VIII. Enforcement of the Code**

1. By accepting membership, each PSCG member acknowledges and agrees to adhere to this Code of Ethics and Conduct, ensuring that its actions reflect the values and principles of the Organization.
2. Maintenance of these Key Principles and provisions is the responsibility of the PSCG membership itself. Any Member of the PSCG can seek advice from the WCO Secretariat regarding any potential violation or breach of this Code. Members who do not comply with the Code of Ethics and Conduct may be subject to a written reprimand or termination of their membership. In imposing such sanctions, the WCO will follow due process as appropriate.
3. The WCO shall notify the member in writing that it is under consideration for sanction and provide the member with an opportunity to comment in writing within one week, with the response not exceeding three pages. The member's written response will be considered by the WCO Secretary General in making the final decision on the appropriate sanction, which can include removal from membership.
4. This Code of Ethics and Conduct will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it remains relevant. Updates and amendments to the Code will be communicated to all PSCG members promptly.