



African Ombudsman Association
Association des
Ombudsman/Mediateurs Africains

African Ombudsman and Mediateurs Association(AOMA)

Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016

English Version

Foreword

(To be done after approval and adoption, covering issues: process of review of strategic plan, dates, establishment of AORC, factors impacting process and future direction, relevant matters arising from Ethiopia meeting, etc. Should be jointly signed by President and Secretary-General)

President of AOMA

Executive Secretary of AOMA

1. Introduction

This Strategic Plan of the African Ombudsman and Mediateurs Association (AOMA) 2011 to 2016. It broadly sets out what AOMA aims to do over the next five years. The agenda includes consolidating AOMA as a cohesive and representative body, building the capacity of its members, and advancing the concept and practice of ombudsmanship in Africa. The Strategic Plan builds on the outcome of the previous Strategic Plan, 2004 to 2008, extended to 2010.

AOMA is the only Africa-wide body that brings together offices, practitioners and scholars dedicated to advancing the development of ombudsman and related governance institutions in Africa. It is also the Africa regional arm of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) based in Vienna, Austria. Currently AOMA's membership consists of national ombudsman and mediateur offices in 37 African countries. Its work is underpinned by a Constitution, which sets out its main import, mode of operation, office-bearers as well as duties and obligations of members.

Reflective of its diverse membership, AOMA languages of operation are English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. There are plans to include Portuguese as capacity, funding and need increases. There are also plans to expand the membership of the Association, in line with the constitution, to interested individuals, corporate organisations, and ombudsman-like offices.

AOMA's work and activities are coordinated by the Executive Secretariat based at the Public Protector SA and supported by the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC). The key objectives of AOMA are:

- a) To encourage the establishment, development and promotion of African Ombudsman institutions;
- b) To further mutual support, co-operation and joint activities through information sharing, training, and development of Ombudsman and staff;

- c) To promote good governance including the observance of human rights, transparency and administrative justice;
- d) To support and promote the autonomy and independence of ombudsman offices;
- e) To foster affiliation and maintain liaisons with other Ombudsman offices and institutes and associations, international bodies, and organizations interested in the progress of Ombudsman activities and human rights; and
- f) To identify and implement any other relevant activity that the members deem appropriate.

2. Assessment of Previous Plan

AOMA strategic plan, 2004 – 2008, extended to 2010 was the first such plan of the Association. So, naturally, the document laid out a series of proposals for the consolidation of the establishment of the Association, the achievement of critical aims and in building the capacity of its members to better discharge themselves of national ombudsman offices.

While significant achievements were recorded, there were also notable setbacks. The current plan intends to learn from the lessons of that experience in order to chart a new direction for the Association, especially as it takes on the demands of a significantly expanded membership.

Key Areas of Achievements

- Development and adoption of a Constitution, and published in the three official languages of the Association;
- Development and adoption of a Strategic Plan, which was subsequently reviewed and extended;
- Creation and adoption of an official logo;
- Expansion of institutional membership from less than 20 to over 30 (over 50 per cent increase);
- Complete relocation of the Secretariat from Tanzania to Namibia and then to South Africa;
- Registration of Association in South Africa with appropriate legal personality;

- Conduct of various regional and national training programmes, mostly in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat in Botswana, Gambia, Namibia, Lesotho, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa;
- Creation of an official website, which is continuously updated;
- Hiring of an Office Manager to support the work of the Secretary-General;
- Creation of a regular Newsletter;
- Setting up of a database of membership, which is continuously updated;
- Successful holding of the biennial Conference of the Association;
- Establishment and take-off of the reconstituted African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) in South Africa, including the securing initial funding from the Government of South Africa and the German Development Programme; and appointment of Director and Deputy Director of the Centre;
- Conferment of an observer status under the African Union (AU).

Key Outstanding Areas

- Continuing operational challenges occasioned by the lack of a fully functioning secretariat and administrative support system;
- Modest financial capacity. Indeed, entrance fees and subscription fees, even when consistently demanded, continue to provide minimal funding for the requirements of the Association;
- Non-completion of the development and publication of various Association promotional materials, including brochure and membership directory;
- Harmonisation and publication of Association Rules;
- Conduct of promotional and advocacy visits and missions;
- Limited training and capacity building intervention conducted;
- Limited membership of Association to national institutional membership;
- Lack of institutional capacity to support and advise members on ombudsman related work;
- Non-completion of the translation of all Association materials and documents to the three official languages.

Taken together, it is fair to say that AOMA made marked progress in implementing the plan it set out in 2004, even though it had to extend the implementation period for a further two years. Four significant lessons can be drawn from this experience. First, AOMA as a continent-wide Association operating across three, possibly four, language groups faces obvious huge operational challenges without a dedicated high-level administrative support system. This is even more so that its members, including the Secretary General, hold important national and time-engaging roles. The launch of AORC, and subsequent appointment of full-time senior staff, should hopefully mitigate his concern in the future.

Directly related to the first, the second point is about the need for AOMA to maintain consistency in the location of its operations. Uncertainties about where the office should be located simply compound the already difficult situation of running the Association. Thirdly, AOMA must be realistic about what it is able to do as a largely professional Association, and not overly commit itself to work activities. AOMA cannot possibly replace the responsibility of states and National offices but should essentially focus on a cross-continent facilitative role.

Lastly, adequate funding for the execution of AOMA is certain to remain a real issue, and could potentially become even more difficult as donor countries cutback on their development commitments in the face of the global economic realities. In the circumstance, AOMA must be realistic about its funding level and by implications how much it can do while progressively building itself into a reasonably self-reliant organisation.

At the same time, there are huge opportunities open for the future. Notably, the international commitment to securing good governance in state systems remains high, including in Africa and at the level of the Africa Union. In truth, several competing oversight bodies have emerged in response to this situation. Notwithstanding, the ombudsman continues to be judged as critically essential to that project because of its unique people-centred perspective.

Consequently, the popularity of the concept has grown consistently in the last decade or so, not just in the state but also in the private and non-state

sectors as well as in the international arena. Remarkably, these developments have caught on with Africa as well and therefore portend an auspicious environment for AOMA's future. This Strategic Plan, 2011-2016 will naturally seek to tap into these developments.

3. Strategic Direction, 2011 - 2016

AOMA's direction statements provide an indication of the Association's purpose and deeply desired future. They also set out the driving beliefs that supports and shape the Association's niche role.

Mission

To advance the development of the Ombudsman institution for the furtherance of good governance, the rule of law, and human rights in Africa.

Vision

To be a leading international Association of ombudsman offices, practitioners and scholars dedicated to the promotion of open, accountable and people-centered democratic governance in Africa.

Core Values

- **Integrity:** Reflects the ombudsman's to being a trusted, competent, honest and reliable organisation
- **Independence and impartiality:** Refers to the ombudsman's belief that it must discharge its role without deference, fear or favour to any individual or authority
- **Human Rights:** This relates to the ombudsman's fundamental commitment to human rights and human dignity, and to serving humanity with respect and compassion
- **Justice and fairness:** Refers to a fundamental commitment to natural justice and the rule of law as well as timely and quality service regardless of a person's background or dispositions
- **Equality:** The ombudsman is an essentially people-centered organisation that promotes inclusion and access for every person to its services
- **Accountability and Transparency:** The ombudsman must be an accountable, transparent, open and responsive institution; more

so that it demands the same of those organisations it has oversight.

4. Strategic Objectives and Priorities, 2011 – 2016

Over the following five years, AOMA resolves to pursue the following five strategic goals and priorities:

- Consolidate presence of Association;
- Increase membership;
- Improve communication and information dissemination;
- Mobilize financial resources;
- Consolidate international relations;
- Institutionalise AORC.
- Strengthen AOMA regions.

Consolidate Presence

The aim of this is consolidate the reputation of AOMA across the African continent. In a nutshell, this means making the AOMA must be become widely perceived as relevant to its stakeholders, including ombudsman institutions, complementary international organizations, governments, and non-governmental organizations. Nearly ten-years of existence, AOMA should now be strongly confident about its institutional presence and awareness in not less than three-quarters of African countries. This goal builds on what has been established over the years. The key features includes: further raising level of awareness in across African countries, establishing the continental presence of the Association especially at the level of the African Union (AU); and execution of other relevant promotional and outreach activities.

Key Priorities:

- Complete processes of achieving AOMA recognition in the AU, UN and other international bodies.
- Website development and register update;
- Disseminate Association brochures and promotional materials to reinforce presence and relevance;

- Conduct of a pre-selected number of promotional and advocacy visits annually;
- Complete and publish Membership Directory;
- Harmonize relationship / rules with the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI);
- Organise and hold Biennial Conference as well as other statutory meetings of Association.

Increase Membership

Under this goal, and in line with its Constitution, AOMA will work towards increasing its membership to every national office in the continent as well as to interested individuals and other ombudsman-like organisations in the private and non-governmental sectors. The current membership of AOMA is concentrated on national/governmental ombudsman and mediateurs. This does not reflect the prevailing status of the institution in the continent. Similarly, there is a high concentration of members in selected regions. A wide membership is essential to establishing the presence and relevance of the Association as well as to boosting its level of income.

Key Priorities:

- Conduct and publish baseline research on status of ombudsman and ombudsman-like institutions in the continent;
- Set up programme to monitor and up-date baseline research;
- Design appropriate forms and instruments for adopting new members;
- Set target of growth of membership, implement and monitor programme to attract new members;
- Implement promotional programmes in countries *proposing* to set ombudsman offices.

Improve Communication and Information Dissemination

This forth programme goal builds on the outcome of an identical goal in the previous plan. The objective will be to build an effective communication and information dissemination system, which is vital to any association. Without this, an association lacks the unity and cohesiveness required to effectively speak with one voice. Further, the Association may be unable to competently implement activities outlined in the rest of this Plan. AOMA

has established a functioning website however significant improvements still need to be done, especially in building it into an interactive medium.

Key Priorities:

- Complete development of AOMA website as an interactive medium;
- Complete translation of AOMA materials and documents into all the official languages of the Association;
- Secure access of members to electronic copies of all AOMA materials and documents;
- Publish Newsletter periodically;
- Develop and disseminate promotional materials through pre-identified channels;
- Create electronic links between all national ombudsman and mediateur offices in Africa to facilitate easy exchange of information.

Mobilize Financial Resources

Adequate funding for the execution of the objectives of the Association remains a real issue, and is set to become even more difficult as donor countries cutback on their development commitments in the face of the global economic realities. It is incumbent on AOMA to find ways to expand its financial position beyond the current level. This goal will address this critical issue by seeking to identify more creative approaches for funding and financial management, improve AOMA's machinery for collecting subscription, and tap into less traditional sources of raising income for the association. As said, the plan to expand the membership of the Association will also directly contribute to this goal.

Key Priorities:

- Establish a membership fees and subscriptions accounts payable system that is realistic and responsive;
- Secure up-to-date payment of subscriptions and fees by all institutional members within two years;
- Organise a International Donour Conference to raise awareness about AOMA and secure real financial commitment for the implementation of its Strategic Plan;
- Review and establish an efficient financial management system for AOMA and its operations.

Institutionalise AORC for Strengthening Offices

The key objective here is to fully establish the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) as the key operational organ of AOMA and instrument for delivering the capacity building requirements of African Ombudsman offices. This must be accomplished by the end of the plan period in 2014. By the same token, this goal focuses on increasing the capacity of African ombudsman offices to do their work. Through AORC, AOMA will strive to respond to identified capacity building requirements of individual offices in a creative and cost-effective manner. AORC must be cognisant of an abiding responsibility to help inculcate the core values of the Association in member offices and their respective functionaries. Launched only in March 2011, and the key staff appointed soon after, AORC is obviously still at its inception. Over the next five years, it will need to be progressively established with the full spectrum of a credible research and capacity building organisation, and in a sustainable manner to enable it carry out its functions into the future.

Key Priorities:

- Constitute, define roles and secure operation of Governing *and* Advisory Boards for Centre;
- Develop and publish Background Operational Policy on the role and functioning of AORC relative to AOMA Executive Council members and host organisation;
- Complete hiring of core staffing of Centre, including secure competent specialist skills;
- Design and set up operational systems and procedures for the management of human and financial resources;
- Determine and equip Centre offices with appropriate infrastructure and facilities;
- Develop, adopt and implement Operational Plan of Centre based on AOMA overarching framework.
- Develop, adopt and implement Capacity-building Needs based on GTZ Consultancy.

5. Adoption of Strategic Plan

The plan was discussed and adopted by AOMA Executive Committee at its meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 15 to 16 September 2011. The Plan became operation from 16 September 2011 and will be

Dated: August 2011