

Internal Rules of the Gender Equality Committee

As adopted by the Board of Directors on 23 March 2026

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SECTION 1: NAME. STATUS. DEFINITIONS

Article 1. Name

1.1 The name of the Committee is the Gender Equality Committee ("GEC").

Article 2. Status

2.1 The Committee is constituted as a Thematic Committee of the International Cooperative Alliance (the "ICA"), as defined in the Articles of Association (the "Articles").

Article 3. Definitions

3.1 Except where the context otherwise requires, capitalised words in these Internal Rules have the meaning given to them herein or in the Articles.

SECTION 2: VISION. ROLE

Article 4. Vision

4.1 The GEC envisions a cooperative movement where gender equality is fully realized and every person's experience, skills, and contributions are respected and valued. In this future, work and decision-making are inclusive, participatory and shaped by diverse perspectives and needs. Leadership is shared and the cooperative movement is guided by the principles of equity, equality, solidarity, democracy, self-help, and self-responsibility.

Article 5. Role

5.1 The role of the GEC is to promote and advance gender equality in all cooperative sectors and to serve as a forum for the discussion and exchange of experience and ideas related to gender equality.

5.2 The GEC will collaborate with the ICA's Regions, Sectoral Organisations and other Thematic Committees to promote its vision and fulfil its role. It will work with any regional gender equality committees within the ICA to identify common goals and implement plans to meet them.

SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES. ACTIVITIES

Article 6. Objectives

6.1 Through the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunity for all persons in the cooperative movement, the GEC promotes the Cooperative Values and Principles, supports the purpose of the ICA, as expressed in the Articles, and helps realise the aims set out in the ICA Global Strategic Plan.

6.2 The GEC works to ensure that gender equality is reflected in all policies, strategies and activities of the ICA, including those of the Regions and Sectoral Organisations.

6.3 The GEC seeks to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in general and Sustainable Development Goal 5 — "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" — of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in particular.

- 6.4** The GEC aims to increase the active participation of women in the governance and operation of all Bodies of the ICA.

Article 7. Activities

- 7.1** The GEC will take active steps to achieve gender equality within the cooperative movement, including, but not limited to:
- (a) promoting and endorsing gender equality and women's cooperative entrepreneurship, leadership, and mentorship within ICA Bodies and ICA member organisations;
 - (b) advising the ICA and ICA member organisations on gender issues;
 - (c) encouraging cooperatives to adopt and implement gender equality strategies and promote balanced gender roles in the family, in the workplace, and in the community; and
 - (d) representing the ICA on gender issues at the United Nations, its specialised agencies, other intergovernmental and multilateral agencies and civil society organisations, when expressly authorised to do so by the ICA Board of Directors or the ICA Director General, as stipulated in the Articles.
- 7.2** The GEC will encourage global and regional discussion on issues relating to gender equality and cooperatives.
- 7.3** The GEC will develop a network of women cooperators and encourage their active participation in the governance and management of their cooperatives.
- 7.4** The GEC will initiate and manage, where possible, educational and research activities of relevance to the promotion of gender equality within cooperatives, in coordination with the ICA Committee on Cooperative Research or other Thematic Committees of the ICA.
- 7.5** The GEC will strengthen the efforts of women and men in the promotion of lasting peace and security and undertake activities to oppose violence against women and girls.
- 7.6** The GEC will formulate a long-term strategy with a rolling short-term work plan in line with its vision and role and in accordance with the ICA Global Strategic Plan.
- 7.7** The GEC will regularly report to the ICA Board of Directors on its progress in achieving the objectives in Article 6 and its plans formulated in accordance with 7.6 above.
- 7.8** The implementation of the activities outlined in the present Article and any other activities that may be requested of it by the ICA Director General or the Board of Directors will be subject to the availability of funds and human resources.

SECTION 4: MEMBERSHIP

Article 8. Nomination and replacement of GEC Members

- 8.1** Hereafter, "ICA Member" or "ICA Members" shall mean Full Members of the ICA and "GEC Member" or "GEC Members" shall mean the natural persons nominated and approved as members of the GEC.
- 8.2** All ICA Members whose membership rights have not been suspended under the Articles may nominate one (1) natural person to participate as a GEC Member. They may further nominate two (2) observers to participate in GEC meetings who shall not have voting rights.

- 8.3** To nominate a GEC Member, interested ICA Members must submit an application to the President and Secretary of the GEC no later than thirty (30) Calendar Days before the next Annual Plenary Meeting. New applications shall be considered by the GEC Executive Committee and, if found fit, shall be recommended for approval at the Annual Plenary Meeting.
- 8.4** ICA Members may change their GEC Member by completing and sending a new nomination form to the GEC Secretary.
- 8.5** The approval of an ICA Member's GEC Member shall be recorded in the membership register. The membership register shall be held in electronic form and shall be made available to any ICA Member upon request.

Article 9. Resignation from membership

- 9.1** GEC Members may voluntarily resign from the GEC at any time by notifying their nominating ICA Member, and the President and Secretary of the GEC. The resignation shall take effect from the earlier of the next Annual Plenary Meeting or the next meeting of the GEC Executive Committee.

Article 10. Membership appeals

- 10.1** Prospective GEC Members whose applications are not accepted and GEC Members who are asked to leave the GEC have the right of appeal at the next Annual Plenary Meeting. If a membership application is not accepted or if a GEC Member is asked to resign, the GEC must submit a full report on the matter to the Chairperson of the ICA's Governance Committee. The final decision on the matter will rest with the ICA Board of Directors.

SECTION 5: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Article 11. Role

- 11.1** The Executive Committee's role is to lead and manage all GEC activities and to ensure that the GEC is achieving its objectives. The Executive Committee will regularly review the GEC work plan, set benchmarks for success, and report progress on the achievement of the GEC's objectives to the Annual Plenary Meetings.

Article 12. Composition

- 12.1** The Executive Committee shall consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents and four (4) GEC Members elected at large following Article 18 of these rules. The presidents of any ICA regional gender equality committees shall be ex officio members of the Executive Committee.
- 12.2** No country may have more than one (1) member on the Executive Committee.

Article 13. Officers

- 13.1** The GEC President presides over GEC meetings, serves as the GEC liaison to the Board of Directors and oversees the execution of the GEC work plan.
- 13.2** The GEC Vice-Presidents facilitate ICA Member engagement in the activities of the GEC, help draft the GEC work plan and assist the GEC President with their responsibilities.

Article 14. Meetings

14.1 The Executive Committee shall meet at least twice a year, either in person or online. One (1) of these meetings shall be held in conjunction with the Annual Plenary Meeting. Any member of the Executive Committee may request additional meetings.

SECTION 6: SECRETARY

Article 15. Appointment

15.1 The ICA Director General shall appoint a member of the ICA staff to support the GEC, who shall be known as the GEC Secretary.

Article 16. Role

16.1 The GEC Secretary shall:

- (a) receive new membership applications;
- (b) maintain the GEC membership register;
- (c) prepare meeting documentation and attend to meeting logistics;
- (d) distribute meeting materials no later than two (2) weeks prior to meetings;
- (e) prepare minutes of GEC meetings;
- (f) oversee the preparation of Executive Committee elections;
- (g) report GEC activities to the ICA Global Office;
- (h) publicise the work of the GEC, financial resources permitting; and
- (i) undertake other operational and administrative work on behalf of the GEC.

SECTION 7: ELECTIONS

Article 17. Frequency and term

17.1 Elections for the Executive Committee shall be held every four (4) years at the Annual Plenary Meeting. The election may take place at an in-person or an online meeting. In the latter case, the general requirements respecting online meetings set out in the Articles, modified as necessary for the GEC, shall apply.

17.2 The term of office for the President, Vice-Presidents and Executive Committee members at large is four (4) years.

17.3 The President may serve no more than two (2) full consecutive terms.

Article 18. Election process

18.1 Notice of elections must be communicated to all GEC Members at least forty-five (45) Calendar Days before the Annual Plenary Meeting at which the elections will take place.

18.2 All ICA Members whose membership rights have not been suspended under the Articles may nominate current GEC Members as candidates for election to the Executive Committee by completing an Executive Committee nomination form and submitting it to the GEC Secretary no later than thirty (30) Calendar Days before the Annual Plenary Meeting. The nomination form shall indicate whether the candidate is nominated as President, Vice-President or at-large Executive Committee member.

- 18.3** The GEC will form an Elections Committee consisting of three (3) natural persons who are neither nominated candidates for the Executive Committee, nor affiliated with the ICA Members nominating candidates. The Elections Committee shall facilitate the Executive Committee elections, in a manner consistent with the election practices set out in the Articles.
- 18.4** The election of all members of the Executive Committee shall take place first, followed by the election of the President and Vice-Presidents from among those persons elected to the Executive Committee.
- 18.5** If the current President is standing for re-election, the Chairperson of the Elections Committee shall preside over the Annual Plenary Meeting during the election process until the election of a new President.
- 18.6** Election of the Executive Committee shall be by simple majority of GEC Members voting in person or by proxy. Each GEC Member shall have one (1) vote. In the event of a tie, the vote will be taken again. Subsequent voting rounds will take place until the tie is broken.
- 18.7** No one may hold the offices of president of a regional gender equality committee and President of the GEC simultaneously.

Article 19. Vacancies

- 19.1** If the mandate of a member of the Executive Committee ends for any reason before the expiry of their term of office, the Executive Committee shall appoint by co-optation a new GEC Member to serve for the remainder of the term, provided that such person appointed by co-optation meets the criteria for the composition of the Executive Committee set out in this Section. At its first meeting following the co-optation, the Annual Plenary Meeting shall be asked to confirm the appointment. If the Annual Plenary does not confirm the appointment, the mandate of the person co-opted shall come to an end immediately upon the conclusion of the Annual Plenary Meeting, without prejudice to the regularity of the composition of the Executive Committee until that date, and a fresh election shall be held to fill the vacancy at the same or the following Annual Plenary Meeting.
- 19.2** In the event of a vacancy in the office of President, the Executive Committee may appoint one (1) of the two (2) Vice-Presidents by consensus decision to serve as President until new elections are called. Elections shall be held to fill any vacancies arising in the two (2) offices of Vice-President.

SECTION 8: PLENARY MEETINGS

Article 20. Frequency

- 20.1** A plenary meeting of the GEC shall be convened once a year, whenever possible in conjunction with the ICA General Assembly. Extraordinary plenary meetings may be convened by the Executive Committee as required to meet the needs of the GEC or upon the written request of one-fifth (1/5) of the GEC Members. Both ordinary and extraordinary plenary meetings may be held in person, online or in hybrid fashion.

Article 21. Purpose

- 21.1** The purpose of the Annual Plenary Meeting is to discuss and review the GEC work plan, receive reports on progress towards achieving the GEC objectives, share experience and ideas on gender issues, and, when applicable, elect the Executive Committee.

Article 22. Voting and quorum

- 22.1** Decisions at the Annual Plenary Meeting shall be taken by a simple majority vote of those GEC Members participating in person or by proxy. Each GEC Member shall have one (1) vote. The President shall have a casting vote, except for purposes of elections, when the provisions of 18.6 above shall apply.
- 22.2** Annual and Extraordinary Plenary Meetings shall be validly constituted when at least fifty (50) per cent of the GEC Members are present or represented. If fewer than fifty (50) per cent are present or represented at the first meeting, a second plenary meeting may be convened no earlier than thirty (30) Calendar Days after the first meeting. The second meeting shall have the power to take decisions, irrespective of the number of GEC Members present or represented.
- 22.3** GEC members who are up to date with their membership fee payments but are unable to attend the Annual Plenary Meeting may give their proxy to another GEC member. This proxy appointment must be sent to the GEC Secretariat at least fifteen (15) Calendar Days prior to the Annual Plenary Meeting. No single GEC Member may hold more than two (2) proxies.

SECTION 9: AMENDMENTS. DISSOLUTION

Article 23. Amendments

- 23.1** Amendments to these Internal Rules require approval by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those GEC Members voting in person or by proxy at the Annual Plenary Meeting or an Extraordinary Plenary Meeting called for that purpose. Amendments further require the approval of the ICA Board of Directors and shall not take effect until they have been so approved.

Article 24. Dissolution

- 24.1** As stipulated in the Articles, the ICA General Assembly has the power to dissolve the GEC. The GEC itself may recommend its dissolution provided that the recommendation is approved at two (2) consecutive Annual Plenary Meetings by no fewer than three-quarters (3/4) of votes cast by GEC Members participating in person or by proxy.