



## **ITTO Whistleblower Policy**

Revised in November 2016

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**INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION**

Adopted by the International Tropical Timber Council through Decision 3(LII)

# ITTO Whistleblower Policy

## Purpose

- 1.1 To ensure that the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) functions in an open, transparent, ethical and equitable manner, with the objective of enhancing protection for individuals who report misconduct or cooperate with duly authorized investigations.

## General

- 2.1 It is the duty of staff members to report any breach of ITTO's Regulations and Rules to the officials whose responsibility it is to take appropriate action. An individual who makes such a report in good faith has the right to be protected against retaliation.
- 2.2 It is also the duty of staff members to cooperate with duly authorized and transparent investigations. An individual who cooperates in good faith with an investigation has the right to be protected against retaliation.
- 2.3 Retaliation is defined for the purposes of this Policy as any direct or indirect detrimental action recommended, threatened or taken because an individual is engaged in an activity protected by the present policy. When established, retaliation is by itself misconduct.
- 2.4 Consultants, contractors or their employees, agents or representative or any other individual engaged in business dealings with ITTO have a duty to report any breach of ITTO's Regulations and Rules to the officials whose responsibility it is to take appropriate action.

## Scope

- 3.1 Protection against retaliation applies to ITTO Staff members who may use the procedures established in this Whistleblower policy to submit confidential complaints to:
  - (a) Report the failure of one or more staff members to comply with his or her obligations provided in the ITTO Staff Regulations and Rules or other relevant administrative issuances, the Financial Rules and Rules relating to projects of the ITTO, including any request or instruction from any staff member to violate the above-mentioned regulations, rules or standards. In order to receive protection, the report should be made as soon as possible and not later than one (1) year after the individual becomes aware of the alleged misconduct. The individual must make the report in good faith and must submit information or evidence to support a reasonable belief that misconduct has occurred; or
  - (b) Cooperate in good faith with a duly authorized and transparent investigation.
- 3.2 The Whistleblower Policy is without prejudice to the legitimate application of regulations, rules and administrative procedures, including those governing evaluation of performance, non-extension or termination of appointment. However, the burden of proof shall rest with ITTO, which must prove by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same action in the absence of the protected activity referred to in section 3.1 above.

### **False complaints**

- 4.1 A whistleblower who intentionally makes a false, fraudulent, malicious or frivolous complaint and which is subsequently found to be false shall be subject to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

### **Reporting misconduct through established internal/external mechanisms**

- 5.1 Reports of misconduct should in practice be made through the established internal mechanisms of ITTO. It is the duty of the Administration to protect the confidentiality of the reporting individual's identity and all communications through those channels to the maximum extent possible.

- 5.2 Protection against retaliation will be extended to an individual who reports misconduct to an entity or individual outside of the established internal mechanisms of ITTO, where the criteria set out in subparagraphs (a), (b) and (c) below are satisfied:

(a) Such reporting is necessary to avoid:  
Substantive damage to ITTO's operations; or  
Violations of national or international law; and

(b) The use of internal mechanisms is not possible because:

At the time the report is made, the individual has grounds to believe that he/she will be subjected to retaliation by the person(s) he/she should report to pursuant to the established internal mechanism; or

It is substantially likely that evidence relating to the misconduct will be concealed or destroyed if the individual reports to the person(s) he/she should report to pursuant to the established internal mechanisms; or

The individual has previously reported the identical information through the established internal mechanisms, and ITTO has failed to inform the individual in writing of the status of the matter within six(6) months of such a report; and

(c) The individual does not accept payment or any other benefit from any party for such report.

- 5.3 Individuals unable or unwilling to make a report of misconduct due to the circumstances described in paragraph 5.1 or 5.2 are encouraged to make the report to one of the Council officers (Council Chair, Council Vice-Chair or the Chairperson, Committee on Finance and Administration). Current contact information for Council Officers shall be maintained and posted in a place accessible to all ITTO staff members.

### **Reporting Retaliation**

- 6.1 Individuals who believe that retaliatory action has been taken or may be taken against them because they have reported misconduct or cooperated with a duly authorized and transparent investigation should forward all information and documentation available to them substantiating their complaint to one of the Council Officers (Council Chair, Council Vice-Chair or the Chairperson, Committee on Finance and Administration (CFA) as soon as possible. Complaints may be made in person, by regular mail, fax or by e-mail.

- 6.2 The functions and responsibilities of the Council Officers described in paragraph 6.1 with respect to protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct or cooperating with a duly authorized investigation are as follows:

To receive complaints of retaliation or threats of retaliation;

To keep a confidential record of all complaints received; and

To conduct a preliminary review of the complaint to determine if (i) the complainant engaged in a protected activity; and (ii) there is a prima facie case that the protected activity was a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation or threat of retaliation.

These processes will be undertaken in a collaborative manner.

Individuals making the disclosure will be offered and afforded confidential liaison with the Council Officer to whom the disclosure was first made. That Council Officer will serve as the principal point of contact for the duration of these actions.

- 6.3 The Council Officers will seek to complete a preliminary review within 45 days of receiving the complaint of retaliation.
- 6.4 All officers and staff members shall cooperate with the Council Officers and provide access to all records and documents requested by the Council Officers, except for medical records that are not available without the express consent of the staff member concerned.
- 6.5 If the Council Officers find that there is a credible case of retaliation or threat of retaliation, they will normally refer the matter in writing to the Executive Director for investigation and will immediately notify in writing the complainant that the matter has been so referred. The Executive Director will seek to complete his investigation and submit a report to the Council Officers at the next session of the Council. If the Council Officers have concerns that the Executive Director cannot or will not act impartially, the case will be referred to the Council Chair and Vice-Chair.
- 6.6 Pending the completion of the investigation, the Council Officers may recommend that the Executive Director take appropriate measures to safeguard the interests of the complainant, including but not limited to temporary suspension of the implementation of the action reported as retaliatory and, with the consent of the complainant, temporary reassignment of the complainant within or outside the complainant's office or placement of the complainant on special leave with full pay.
- 6.7 Once the Council Officers have received the investigation report, they will inform in writing to the complainant of the outcome of the investigation and make their recommendations on the case to the Executive Director. The recommendations may include disciplinary actions to be taken against the retaliator.
- 6.8 If the Council Officers find that there is no credible case of retaliation or threat of retaliation but finds that there is an interpersonal problem within a particular office, they will advise the complainant to seek recourse via informal mechanisms of conflict resolution within ITTO.
- 6.9 If the Council Officers determine that there is a managerial problem based on the preliminary review of the complaint they will advise the Executive Director accordingly.
- 6.10 Where, in the opinion of the Council Officers, there may be a conflict of interest in ITTO conducting the investigation, they may recommend to the Executive Director that the complaint be referred to an alternative transparent investigating mechanism.

#### **Protection of the person who suffered retaliation**

- 7.1 If retaliation against an individual is established, the Council Officers may, after consultation with the individual who has suffered retaliation, recommend to the Executive Director appropriate measures aimed at correcting negative consequences suffered as a result of the retaliatory action. Such measures may include, but are not limited to, the rescission of the retaliatory decision, including reinstatement, or, if requested by the individual, transfer to another office or function for which the individual is qualified, independently of the person who engaged in retaliation. If requested, the individual shall be provided with professional counseling to be paid for by ITTO.

#### **Action against the person who engaged in retaliation**

- 8.1 Retaliation against an individual because that person has reported misconduct on the part of

one or more ITTO officials or cooperated with a duly authorized investigation of the ITTO constitutes misconduct which, if established, may lead to disciplinary action and/or transfer to other functions in the same or a different office.

**Prohibition of retaliation against outside parties**

- 9.1 Any retaliatory measures against a Consultant, Contractor or its employees, agents or representatives or any other individual engaged in any dealings with the ITTO because such person has reported misconduct by ITTO staff members will be considered misconduct that, if established, will lead to disciplinary or other appropriate action.