

Code of conduct at the OSPAR Commission's meetings

This code of conduct applies to all events held by the OSPAR Commission (OSPAR) and to all who participate in any capacity.

OSPAR's events are guided by the highest ethical and professional standards. They are conducted in an inclusive, safe and healthy working environment, with those present being respectful and dignified to each other.

The OSPAR Commission is committed to having events where discrimination, bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment and abuse of authority or that causes offence have no place, and access to redress if such behaviour does arise.

Prohibited conduct

Harassment

Behaviour can constitute bullying or harassment where: it violates the dignity of a person on the grounds of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (the protected characteristics); or where it creates an intimidating, hostile and degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Individual or accumulative acts can seriously undermine the dignity, confidence, and work satisfaction to such an extent that it has an effect on the person.

Conduct becomes harassment if it persists and it has been made clear that it is regarded as offensive by the recipient or a witness to the conduct, although a single offensive act can amount to harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

Sexual harassment

This is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Examples of sexual harassment include but are not limited to:

- a) sexual comments or jokes
- b) displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photos
- c) suggestive looks, staring or leering
- d) propositions and sexual advances
- e) making promises in return for sexual favours
- f) sexual gestures
- g) intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life
- h) sexual posts or contact on social media
- i) spreading sexual rumours about a person
- j) sending sexually explicit emails or text messages, and
- k) unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing.



Complaints process

In the first instance, any act or behaviour that is considered to breach this code of conduct should be brought to the attention of a person of authority, i.e. in OSPAR's case this will usually be either the Chair or convenor of the meeting. If the Chair or convenor of the meeting is the source of the complaint, then the issue should be raised with the relevant Secretariat representative usually the Executive Secretary or relevant Deputy Secretary, who will investigate the matter and bring it to the attention of the person accused of behaving inappropriately. If the behaviour recurs, and depending on the gravity of the situation, they will be asked to leave the meeting/not attend further meetings and the incident will be reported to their Head of Delegation or ministries. Any criminal acts should be reported to the police by the victim.

No participant will be victimised for bringing forward a complaint. However, if upon investigation, it is concluded that the complaint is both untrue and has been brought with malicious intent, the incident will be reported to the participant's Head of Delegation/ministry.

This code of conduct is a guide that participants must adhere to while in attendance at OSPAR events. It supplements applicable laws and regulations in force in the host country and at the premises where the event is being held.