



**ICoCA Q1 – 2025 Board Meeting**  
**12 May 2025**  
**Virtual**

**Minutes**

**Present (Board)**

- Frédéric Chenais (Chair)
- Carmen Rosa De León-Escribano
- Vicky Bowman
- Chinwike Okereke
- Caleb Wanga
- Amanda Wall
- Michelle Quinn
- Cui Shoujun
- Frank Amoyaw

**Present (Observing/Supporting)**

- Orlando Bianchetti (CH)
- Elizabeth Kiingi (US)
- Joan Fontaine (UK)

**Present (ICoCA Secretariat)**

- Christopher Galvin (Head of Communications & Outreach)
- Tom Mather (Compliance Manager)
- Alexandra Garzotto (Finance Manager & Administrative Officer)
- Jamie Williamson (Executive Director)
- Dina Chantre (HR and Office Manager)
- Valentina Potapova (Membership Development Officer)
- Florie Barbotte (Communication & Marketing Officer)
- Nada Bessassi (Membership Officer)
- Antoine Perret (Head of Programmes)



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## 1. Agenda

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 3:35PM and welcomed the Board members. The Chairperson took note that each of the three stakeholder pillars was represented by at least two Board Directors and that at least eight Directors were present. The Chairperson declared that a quorum was present according to Article 7.6 of ICoCA's Articles of Association (AoA), that the meeting was duly constituted and that the Board could adopt resolutions in compliance with the Articles of Association.

## 2. Approve Minutes

The Board reviewed and approved:

- 2.1 The 2024 - Q4 Board Meeting minutes
- 2.2 The 2024 - AGA Minutes

## 3. Membership Update

### **Growth and Membership Figures**

ICoCA continues to demonstrate positive growth. The Association currently counts 165 members, with a strong pipeline of prospective applicants. Membership continues to grow steadily in Iraq and Libya, and more recently in Egypt—likely influenced by the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

In Latin America, ICoCA is receiving applications from several countries, including Mexico, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic.

ICoCA Members are now headquartered in 55 countries and operate in over 104 territories, marking a significant global footprint.

### **Very Small Companies, update**

Thanks to the introduction of the *Very Small Company* membership category at the end of 2023, small local companies now have the opportunity to join ICoCA. This initiative has already led to encouraging growth in this segment. It has also reduced attrition from Small 1 companies which have experienced declining revenues.

### **Certification Bodies**

There are now 14 approved Certification Bodies, a notable increase from 8 in 2023. One of the newly approved bodies is based in Switzerland, marking a significant step forward in expanding certification capabilities.

### **Membership Projections**

Based on current trends, ICoCA projects to reach between 180 and 190 Members by the end of 2025.

### **Engagement Strategies**

Engagement strategies are tailored to each country's unique context. A recent event in South Africa, led by Chris Galvin, demonstrated significant potential, attracting new companies and highlighting the country's broad stakeholder landscape.

### **Strategic Outlook**

Executive Director Jamie Williamson emphasised that the market is largely driven by regulators and clients. ICoCA maintains an active Client Working Group, which includes members of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI). The Association engages closely with clients on procurement practices and contractual language, while also liaising with regulatory authorities. The Director suggested that ICoCA's strategy should adopt a more assertive posture, combining advocacy, multi-stakeholder engagement and diplomacy to further expand its impact.

### **Myanmar Visit**

A mission to Myanmar took place at the end of March 2025, during which ICoCA visited two Member companies. The purpose was to better understand the local context, human rights risks, and the implications of a new private security law introduced in February. Key risks identified include labour rights violations and poor working conditions.

The visit proved to be a valuable exploratory exercise. Several Private Security Companies (PSCs) in Myanmar could potentially join ICoCA, however the most likely addition would be the local private security association which expressed interest in joining as an Observer. This reflects an emerging trend of national security associations joining ICoCA to strengthen their institutional capacity, which in turn creates a useful pathway for ICoCA to drive up standards through the national associations.

## **4. Operational Update – Uganda**

The Secretariat presented an update on the developments in Uganda, where ICoCA has seen significant progress and engagement.

### **Background and Engagement**

Following strong interest in early 2023, there have been three visits to Uganda to date. The principal driver of growth in the country has been the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project. Prior to 2023, there were four ICoCA member/affiliate PSCs operating in Uganda, all international. As of 2025, this number has grown to ten.

### **Membership Development and Certification**

Many companies initially joined as Affiliates and are now actively pursuing ISO 18788 certification, with the goal of transitioning to Certified Membership. The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) is making progress towards launching ISO 18788 certification locally, a development that will further support this transition. ICoCA has engaged with UNBS to encourage the launch of this certification programme.

### **Impact and Advocacy**

The release of the Working Conditions Report in 2023 recently sparked widespread national discussion, highlighting the influence and relevance of ICoCA's work. This represents a clear and positive impact of ICoCA's engagement in the country.

A major upcoming event—although date is still to be confirmed—is the Uganda Security Symposium. This will further raise awareness and provide a platform for dialogue. The next steps in Uganda include:

- Continued engagement with civil society organisations, local authorities and regulators.
- Ongoing support to UNBS in operationalising ISO 18788 certification.
- Establishment of a Country Working Group involving CSOs and other stakeholders, which would strengthen coordination and ensure multi-stakeholder input.

## Board Discussion

Following the presentation, the floor was opened for questions.

Frank Amoyaw inquired about the Symposium and how ICoCA could support its organisation. Jamie Williamson noted that funding is a challenge and suggested two avenues:

1. Exploring possible support clients and local private security companies
2. Identifying additional supporters to contribute to the event's success.

It was emphasised that Uganda is a model case for how an initial exploratory mission can lead to tangible impact: a growing number of companies have joined, and national-level debate around private security has been catalysed. He stressed the importance of maintaining momentum through ongoing engagement with clients, multinational corporations, authorities and CSOs.

## 5. Impact of Global Funding Cuts

Executive Director Jamie Williamson presented the current financial context, referring to it as a “new financial crisis” affecting the broader international cooperation and humanitarian sectors.

### Sector-Wide Context

Over the past months, the sector has experienced significant turbulence due to donor budget realignments and cuts, with a notable shift of funding towards defence spending.

In International Geneva, the consequences are already being felt, with an estimated minimum of 20% funding cuts affecting operations. Many international organisations are in crisis mode, suspending activities and freezing forward planning. The most severe impact is being felt by small NGOs, which are especially vulnerable.

### Impact on Private Security Companies

The crisis is also affecting Private Security Companies (PSCs), particularly in high-risk contexts. Due to cuts in humanitarian and development funding, many PSCs have lost contracts, especially those with humanitarian agencies.

### ICoCA's Financial Response

Jamie Williamson outlined several steps ICoCA has taken over the years to strengthen its financial resilience:

- 2018: Establishment of operational reserves
- 2021: Launch of a strategic focus on membership growth in the private security sector, leading to a 15–20% increase in membership dues
- 2023: Transition of the Annual General Assembly (AGA) to an online format
- Strategic decision to reduce the Secretariat by two positions, generating savings of approximately CHF 240,000
- Submission of high-level EU project proposals to diversify funding sources
- Decision to move to ICoCA's own premises, allowing the Secretariat to:
  - Rent out meeting rooms
  - Maximise cost-effectiveness per square metre
  - Host interns to support operations

### **Current Financial Approach – May 2025**

The Secretariat has adjusted its financial strategy to reflect current realities. The new approach is focused on:

1. Securing financing for core expenses
2. Developing targeted, project-specific proposals

### **Fundraising**

### **Priorities**

Current fundraising efforts are centred on:

- Continuing to expand ICoCA's membership base
- Developing and securing funding for projects aligned with the Secretariat's strategic plan and long-term goals

## **6. Budget 2025**

The ICoCA Secretariat presented the proposed budget for 2025, outlining key priorities and objectives aligned with the Association's strategic direction.

### **Key Objectives for 2025**

The Secretariat emphasised the following goals:

- Continued membership growth
- Development of a robust project proposal portfolio, aligned with strategic goals
- Strengthening and expanding partnerships, including with governments, institutions and civil society

### **Board Discussion and Member Comments**

Following the presentation, the floor was opened for questions and comments:

- Vicky Bowman. raised the issue of the budget cuts' significant impact on Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). She emphasised the need for ICoCA to build strategic partnerships with key CSOs, to:
  - Support capacity-building
  - Co-develop project proposals
  - Collaboratively bid for funding opportunities
- Orlando Bianchetti (Switzerland) asked whether membership dues had been adjusted. The Secretariat confirmed that dues were revised at the end of 2023, including with the creation of the "Very Small Company" membership category
  - Adjustments to existing dues to reflect ongoing inflationary pressures
- Joan Fontaine (UK) inquired about collaboration with the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) and how it could be enhanced. Fred Chenais noted that VPI is currently undergoing internal reorganisation and agreed that closer collaboration with ICoCA would be mutually beneficial.

**Next Steps**

The 2025 Budget will be circulated to Board Directors via email. A 24-hour approval period will follow to ensure timely confirmation.

**7. Wrap up**

The Chair and the Executive Director thanked all Board Members and participants for their active engagement, valuable insights, and continued commitment to ICoCA's mission and goals. The Board meeting was officially closed at 5:30 PM.