

ICoCA Q1 – 2026 Board Meeting
20 April 2026
Virtual

Minutes

Present (Board)

- Schmidt Tartagli Dagmar (Chair)
- Alyssa Mellon
- Carmen Rosa De León-Escribano
- Vicky Bowman
- Amanda Wall
- Michelle Quinn
- Joan Fontaine
- Chinwike Okereke
- Hasan Wahhab

Present (Observing/Supporting)

- Frédéric Chenais (CH)
- Orlando Bianchetti (CH)
- Geneviève Tremblay (CA)
- Christabel Sadgrove (UK)
- Louise Divers (Amarante)
- Chelsea Gangaram (Amarante)

Present (ICoCA Secretariat)

- Christopher Galvin (Head of Communications & Outreach)
- Tom Mather (Compliance Manager)
- Hanif Dewi (Finance 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)
- Madeleine Thill (Junior Project and Advocacy Officer)
- Kate Johnston (Boston Intern)
- Ben Halle (Michigan Intern)
- Nicolas Aeschmann (Junior Online Training Developer Consultant)
- Raphael Martin (Security and Risk Analyst Associate)



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1. Agenda

The Chairperson opened the meeting at 3:05 PM and welcomed the Board members and invited each Director to introduce themselves and provide a brief overview of what they do.

“It is noted that, following the completion of his second term, Frédéric Chenais stepped down from his position as Chairman of the Board. In accordance with the resolution adopted at the Annual General Assembly held in December 2025, Dagmar Schmidt was elected as the new Chair of the Board. Frédéric Chenais retains his individual signatory rights as registered.”

The Chairperson commended ICoCA's growth as a reflection of it being the benchmark for responsible impact and pledged Switzerland's continuing support. The Chairperson noted that seven Board Directors were present, and that Didier Ranchon (Amarante) was represented by two alternates. As only Board Directors with voting or objection rights are taken into account for quorum purposes, the quorum requirement under [Article 7.6 of ICoCA's Articles of Association \(AoA\)](#) — requiring at least two Board Directors per stakeholder pillar — was not formally met on the industry Pillar. The Chairperson accordingly declared that, while the meeting could proceed, no resolutions could be formally adopted at the meeting.

2. Approve Minutes

The Board reviewed and approved:

- 2.1 The 2025 - Q4 Board Meeting minutes - Approved, but final approval must be confirmed by email due to the quorum.
- 2.2 The 2025 - AGA Minutes - Approved, but final approval must be confirmed by email due to the quorum.
- 2.3 2026 Board Committees: The documents related to the committees have been circulated as they are quite dense the board agreed to discuss them in an online process not at the Board meeting. Thus, the documents will be circulated, and they are open for comments.

3. Membership Update and Projections

The Secretariat presented an update on the following:

- **Status of the Industry Pillar**
 - 189 PSCs are currently engaged.
 - More than 50% of ICoCA members/affiliates are certified members.
 - New members have joined from Burundi and Panama, marking the first PSC members headquartered in these countries.
- **New Companies (Last 12 Months)**
 - Many companies are applying directly for certification, particularly in developing markets such as Iraq.
 - The affiliate membership category, initially uncertain in its uptake, has proven successful, with applications received from companies worldwide.
 - Companies may apply at three levels; many begin at lower tiers and transition to certified status over time. A significant number join ICoCA as affiliates as their first standard, with ICoCA supporting their development and progression.
- **Recertification**
 - 17 companies across 10 countries were recertified.

- Recertified companies have typically been members for at least three years (e.g. Cyprus, Ghana, Kenya, Iraq), indicating both industry development and consolidation in these markets.
- **Operations**
 - Activities span 107 territories, including 97 countries and 10 maritime areas.
 - The organisation's global footprint continues to expand.
- **ICoCA Member Governments**
 - Membership has grown from 3 governments in 2017 to 10 at present.
 - Panama joined in Q1.
 - Belize joined in Q4 2025.

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

- **A Board Member expressed satisfaction at ICoCA's geographical spread and asked about what drives this growth**
 - The Secretariat explains that growth is largely driven by tendering requirements, with ICoCA certification increasingly required in certain markets such as Iraq and Somalia.
 - However, tendering alone does not drive geographic diversity. Diplomatic efforts also play an important role (e.g. Swiss embassies requiring ICoCA certification in contracts). Some companies join due to alignment with ICoCA's mission, often influenced by civil society organisation (CSO) engagement.
- **On recertification, the Board sought to know how frequently there are issues of concern and whether there any specific types of companies that move membership categories?**
 - During recertification, significant issues are rare, as companies are continuously monitored and have already met certification requirements before.
 - On moving categories. In some cases, it is evolving standards, so companies need to show compliance with strengthened requirements. Some affiliates remain at their current level due to limited capacity (e.g. inability to obtain ISO certification) or lack of market demand. So there is no consistent trend in the types of companies that progress to higher levels; however, market-specific dynamics (e.g. expectations in Uganda that certification may become mandatory) can influence progression.
- **Strategic Priorities**
 - While progress is strong, there remains scope for further growth and increased strategic focus. Key priorities include:
 - Strengthening oversight of relationships between large security providers and subcontractors, particularly where certified companies subcontract to smaller firms.
 - Expanding client engagement, recognising that approximately 90% of market demand is client driven.
 - Advancing localisation and regionalisation efforts, including the development of regional hubs and local chapters, to increase ICoCA's visibility and presence in the field.

4. Observer Criteria, including discussion

The Secretariat presented an update on the following:

- **Background to the Discussion**
 - A recent process was undertaken to assess whether Observer status should be granted to an applicant (a PSC client) for Observer status

- Given concerns raised by some board members, the discussion considered whether specific criteria should be established for client/observer participation, and how to ensure that any commitments made are effectively followed through.
- **Relevant Provisions (Articles of Association)**
 - Article 3.4.3 allows observer status to be granted to non-PSCs that have demonstrated support for ICoCA's mission.
- **Membership and Affiliate Requirements**
 - Observers cannot be PSCs and must submit a statement of support for ICoCA.
 - There is no formal requirement related to past conduct for observer status.
 - ICoCA's due diligence of Observers focuses only on identifying major concerns (e.g. governance issues, criminal activity).
- **Board Consideration and Voting Status**
- The board emphasised the opportunity to further develop the framework and process for observer participation to be further discussed at a future board meeting.
 - The Board agreed with this approach.
- The Executive Director noted that:
 - Engagement with observers and the Voluntary Principles initiative has strengthened in recent years.
 - Corporate clients play an important role in advancing standards, and ICoCA can help translate these into measurable and recognisable benchmarks.
 - Some companies within the VP corporate pillar do not yet meet the standards ICoCA would expect, particularly in relation to supply chains.
- Chris Galvin observed that:
 - Interest in observer status has increased significantly, with more clients seeking affiliation with ICoCA.
 - Levels of engagement among observers vary; some are highly active, while others remain more passive.
 - There has been a notable increase in invitations for ICoCA to conduct field visits (e.g. Total in Uganda, something that would not have occurred several years ago).
 - Board engagement can have a tangible impact; for example, dialogue initiated by a CSO Board member within the VPs framework recently led to increased engagement from one observer.

The Secretariat presented an update on the following:

- **Observers Criteria**
 - The CSO pillar and the Secretariat held discussions on whether existing criteria for observer status should be strengthened.
 - In particular, consideration was given to how “demonstrated support” could be more clearly defined and operationalised.
 - A Board member asked whether formal terms of reference exist for observers.
 - The Secretariat confirmed that no such terms currently exist.
 - Currently the Articles of Association 3.4.2 states “Non-voting observer status to other parties, including non-state clients, companies providing services or

- other support to PSCs, and other stakeholders who have demonstrated support for the principles of the ICoC and the Purpose of the Association.”
- It was noted that ICoCA’s multi-stakeholder structure remains a key strength.
 - With 10 member governments, there is a vested interest in how companies operate both domestically and internationally.
 - The role of governments in applying leverage across different sectors was highlighted as an area for further consideration.
 - Potential modifications could include updates to the Articles of Association or the Code.
 - It was noted that any such changes would require concrete proposals to be developed in advance of the AGA.

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

- Board members raised the question of what interim measures could be taken, noting that applications for Observer status could arise in the near term.
- The Secretariat suggested to include discussion on Observer expectations and requirements at the next board meeting. Some practical steps that could be considered include:
 - Ensure that state ownership or influence is systematically included as part of the review process.
 - Require clearer evidence of demonstrated commitment to the Code (e.g. references to ICoCA in procurement documents or other formal company policies) prior to submission to the Board.
 - Consider introduces a reporting requirement on progress towards Article 2.2 by Observers.
 - Recognise that companies operating in high-risk environments will often face allegations; the focus should therefore be on identifying issues specifically related to security practices and assessing whether ICoCA engagement can drive improvement.
 - Make use of opportunities such as changes in senior management to reassess company practices and strengthen engagement.
 - Leverage existing relationships and points of influence to maintain oversight and encourage progress.

5. Q1 Activities

5.1 Veterans Guidance

The Secretariat presented an update on the following:

- A growing trend has been observed in the transition of veterans into the private security sector.
- The guidance presented was developed based on field insights, input from private security companies, and interviews with veterans.
 - The aim is to capture first-hand experiences, better understand challenges and needs, and ensure that the guidance reflects operational realities.

- The key message emphasised that reintegration represents both a significant responsibility and an important opportunity.
 - It extends beyond recruitment practices, contributing more broadly to peace, stability, and the professionalisation of the security sector.

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

- Priority Countries
 - Ukraine was identified as a priority, in part due to funding opportunities from Switzerland.
 - Additional countries of interest include Colombia, Nigeria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.
 - At this stage, emphasis is being placed on developing online training modules to ensure a consistent approach and broad applicability across different contexts.
- A Board member noted that, based on their experience in the security sector, approximately 85% of personnel are veterans.
 - It was highlighted that there is significant scope to strengthen vetting and hiring practices, and that the Code provides a strong framework in this regard.
- The Secretariat noted potential areas for further development:
 - Exploring how this workstream could be integrated into discussions on non-state armed groups.
 - Considering how companies can support the integration of third-country veterans into their operations.
 - Highlighting the high level of engagement observed in Ukraine, where discussions were notably open and participants engaged beyond institutional “pillars,” sharing perspectives as veterans.
 - Emphasising the importance of this workstream and noting that additional funding would be highly beneficial.

5.2 Responsible Security Awards

The Secretariat provided an update on the Responsible Security Awards programme, an initiative to document best practices from ICoCA’s PSC members and affiliates, as well as CSO members and observers. The Secretariat noted that the initiative significantly exceeded expectations, producing more than five times the original target: over 10 case studies were developed compared to the 2 initially planned. This included 3 in-depth case studies supported by Secretariat-led site visits and more than 7 additional submissions without field missions.

The programme aims to translate the principles of the Code into practical and accessible examples of responsible private security practices worldwide. The case studies are complemented by podcasts, which have recorded over 100 downloads to date, as well as a monthly digital dialogue series designed to further engagement and dissemination.

The Secretariat reported that 3 field visits were conducted as part of the in-depth case studies: a mission to Albania in February 2026 with ARB Security, which featured an award ceremony and a two-day documentation visit; a mission to Kenya in March 2026 with SGA Security, which included an award ceremony and a three-day documentation visit; and a visit to Uganda in March 2026 focusing

on EACOP (not part of the Responsible Security Awards programme). The case studies cover a range of themes, including equal opportunities in private security in Myanmar, as well as community resilience in the context of flooding and environmental challenges in South Sudan.

Looking ahead, the Secretariat plans to continue rolling out the digital dialogue series throughout the year to increase visibility and engagement. Additional video assets will be produced for the in-depth case studies, and there is an ambition to further develop the case studies into training modules. The Secretariat also sought sponsorship for the Responsible Security Awards programme, with an estimated funding requirement of approximately GBP 20,000 per in-depth case study.

5.3 Uganda Update

The Secretariat presented an update on the following:

- **Ecosystem Engagement**
 - A brief overview was provided on the recent mission to Uganda, which included a field visit with a film crew to meet with Saracen Uganda and TotalEnergies in Bulisa to document how Saracen's and TotalEnergies' engagement with ICoCA and the requirement for all security companies working on the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) to be members of ICoCA is driving up security standards on the project. The mission also included bi-lateral engagement with stakeholders in Kampala and convening a multi-stakeholder Responsible Security Forum Uganda with the objective of how to further promote responsible private security practices in the country through an ecosystem approach.
 - Ecosystem engagement covers clients, private security companies (PSCs), security associations, certification bodies, ministries, regulators and civil society actors.
 - .
 - Uganda has been identified as a priority country due to its distinctive regulatory and operational context.
 - It is unique in authorising security personnel to carry lethal weapons, which contributes to a higher incidence of use-of-force challenges.
 - It is also the largest exporter of security personnel internationally.
- This dual role presents opportunities for ICoCA engagement across both ends of the value chain:
 - Working with companies exporting personnel from Uganda.
 - Engaging with companies abroad that employ Ugandan personnel.
- It was noted that there is significant potential for further progress in Uganda, particularly in relation to addressing forced labour risks and strengthening oversight mechanisms across the supply chain.

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

- It was suggested that Total be encouraged to include its engagement with ICoCA in its responsible business reporting. ICoCA is developing a case study on this engagement, it was recommended that ICoCA suggest to Total that the case is included in its sustainability reporting.

6. Budget 2026

The ICoCA Secretariat presented the proposed budget for 2026, outlining key priorities and objectives aligned with the Association's strategic direction.

The Secretariat emphasised the following goals for 2026:

- Continued membership growth
 - A review of membership dues may be tabled at the AGA due to manage USD/CHF exchange rate depreciation.
- Development of a robust project proposal portfolio, aligned with strategic goals
- Strengthening and expanding partnerships, including with governments, institutions and civil society

Following the presentation, the floor was opened for questions and comments: No comments/questions

7. Government Engagement — Panama & Honduras

The Secretariat presented an update on growing membership, particularly the recent joining of governments over the past few months. It was noted that this engagement work was initiated approximately two years ago in Uruguay, where technical support was developed. Building on this foundation, ICoCA engaged with the Organisation of American States (OAS) and co-organised a conference bringing together CSOs, governments, and companies to explore what regional engagement could look like. Following this, further engagement by both CSOs and the Secretariat contributed to the accession of Belize and Panama, while discussions are also ongoing with Guatemala and Honduras. It was highlighted that CSOs play an important role in bringing expertise to regulators and supporting these developments. While there is currently positive momentum in Latin America, it was noted that only 10 governments are members of ICoCA, and there is a need to bring more governments to the table. Despite efforts over the years using different approaches, results have been limited, and further consideration is needed on how to effectively increase government participation.

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

- It was suggested that inclusion of ICoCA in State recommendations under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) could be a useful avenue, both multilaterally and bilaterally, and that greater use should be made of existing diplomatic networks to support this objective.

8. EU1 & EU 2 updates and other project updates

The Secretariat presented an update on the following:

- **Introduction**
 - The CSO engagement strategy was developed three years ago, focusing on three main pillars: monitoring, CSO engagement with the private sector, and advocacy.
 - Three current projects now support and operationalise this strategy.



- **EU1**
 - Corporate accountability initiative, including trainings (in DRC, Nigeria, Mozambique, Iraq, Colombia and Guatemala), research on working conditions, and participation in responsible security forums (Nigeria in 2027).
 - Engagement with the EU, international standards, and EU-based multinational companies.
 - The aim of this project is to place the CSO pillar at the forefront of international-level engagement.
- **EU2**
 - A project implemented with DCAF
 - CRM Secure initiative focused on enhancing the mitigation of security risks linked to critical raw materials in fragile contexts.
 - Outcome 1: Emphasis on community engagement and strengthening security sector responsiveness. We aim to have effective, inclusive and sustainable multi-stakeholder platforms at local levels for community engagement, improved knowledge on rights and legislation as well as improved community development and access to grievance mechanisms.
 - Outcome 2: Security sector responsiveness. We aim for security actors to use a rights-based approach to engage with CRM-affected communities, to establish tailored community policing models on the sites and enhance capacity to investigate CRM-related criminality.
- **CSO Advocacy**
 - ICoCA had a successful pilot advocacy training in Kenya on UPR, HRC, Business & Human Rights and Working groups with CSO from across the continent.
 - Goals
 - The ultimate goal is to reinforce the CSO network, reinforce their ability to represent the wider ICoCA CSO network on a regional/international level and create a pool of experts that are able to collaborate cross-regionally.
 - ICoCA also plans to increase engagement between governments, private security companies and civil society
 - ICoCA aims to help decision-makers identify and remove barriers to accountability through the evidence-based advocacy that ICoCA CSOs will provide.
 - What's next
 - ICoCA is going to increase our engagement, submissions and statements in working group spaces, the UN forum on Business and Human Rights and international standards (IRMS, GRI, ASI for example).
 - A CSO member from the DRC already participated in the evaluation of a mining company under the IRMA framework.
 - ICoCA will also provide technical support for the CSOs, providing hands-on coaching, as well as creating and implementing a targeted advocacy plan.

9. Wrap up

The Chair summarised that the Q4 Board minutes were approved, as were the minutes of the Annual General Assembly (AGA). It was also agreed that information on Board committees would be circulated. 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 objectives. The Board meeting was officially closed at 5:55 PM.