Code of Conduct

Contents

Related policies 1
Purpose 2
Applicability 3
What is expected of Scientists' Coalition members? 3
Respectful Conduct 3
Independence and Integrity 4
Complying with the Code of Conduct 4
Reporting and whistleblowing 4
Procedure for managing violations of the Code of Conduct 6
What is expected of the Secretariat and Steering Committee when managing complaints 6
Glossary 8
Appendix 8

Related documents

Internal

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
Conflict of interest and transparency policy
Routine for managing cases where existing members are considered to have a potential conflict of interest (internal document)
Guidance for core members representing the Scientists' Coalition externally (internal document)

External

Code of Conduct To Prevent Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, AT UN SYSTEM EVENTS
Civil Society and Rights Holders Coalition for the Plastics Treaty Policy on Harassment and Discrimination (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) (internal document)

Purpose

The Scientists' Coalition is dedicated to promoting open, transparent, robust, and independent science during the United Nations negotiations towards an international legally binding instrument to end plastics pollution. Our mission is to provide scientific expertise and knowledge to facilitate informed decision-making while upholding the principles of respect, inclusivity, truthfulness, and accuracy.

This Code of Conduct provides a framework reflecting the values, behaviours, attitudes and conduct expected of all Scientists' Coalition members.

Openness and Transparency ● We are committed to fostering open and transparent scientific discussions and sharing our outputs (the summaries and syntheses of the best available science) with the public. ● We strive to ensure negotiators and the public have access to all information necessary to appropriately respond to plastic pollution.	**Robust and Independent Science** ● Our work is guided by rigorous scientific methods and approaches, including local and Indigenous knowledge systems. It is conducted independently of external political, commercial or personal vested interests.
Truthfulness and Accuracy ● We are dedicated to the pursuit of truth and accuracy in our scientific endeavours. ● We communicate our research findings honestly, acknowledging uncertainties, potential biases, and limitations when present.	**Respect and Inclusivity** ● We value the dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of their background, geographical location, identity, or disciplinary background. ● We actively seek diverse voices, and disciplinary perspectives and aim to create an inclusive environment free from discrimination, harassment, or bias.

Applicability

This code of conduct applies to all Scientists' Coalition members (core and observer) as well as affiliated non-members including the legal policy team, communications team, and Secretariat in all Scientists' Coalition related spaces including the INC negotiations, intersessional meetings, all members meetings, working groups, Steering Committee meetings, and other formal and informal spaces (e.g., side events and social gatherings) and bilaterals. It includes all written and verbal communication, including telephonic, digital, and online (e.g. Signal, Zoom, Social Media Platforms).

In addition, Scientists' Coalition members are expected to adhere to the code of conduct in other personal and professional spaces, particularly when representing the Scientists' Coalition. Engaging in behaviour or activities that are contrary to the values of the Coalition may be grounds for expulsion. Historical behaviour or circumstances can also be grounds for expulsion.

The code of conduct is effective from 1 January, 2026.

What is expected of Scientists' Coalition members?

Respectful Conduct

The Scientists' Coalition is committed to creating and maintaining a culture where all Scientists' Coalition members can participate freely and safely. There is a zero tolerance policy in place for discrimination based on an individual's race, sex, sexual orientation, religion or in any other form. Behavior or incidents that undermine our ability to create a healthy and conducive working environment, that damage or breach trust between members, or that are disrespectful, or rude, are grounds for expulsion from the Coalition.

Scientists' Coalition members will:

1) listen actively to the views and concerns of others, and engage in constructive dialogue and debate while maintaining a respectful tone*;

2) treat others, including fellow scientists, policymakers, rights holders and stakeholders, with respect and courtesy, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect, open-minded curiosity, and collaboration; and

3) refrain from engaging in personal attacks, derogatory language, or any form of assault, bullying, discrimination, or harassment (refer to Glossary for definitions).

**Where a member identifies a conflict in research approaches, data, findings, or interpretation within the membership or a working group, the member will respectfully offer recommendations accompanied by supportive science-based evidence to strengthen the Scientists' Coalition product/output for the consideration of the working group, steering committee, and/or broader membership*

Independence and Integrity

In accordance with the Scientists' Coalition Conflict of Interests and Transparency policy, Scientists' Coalition members will:

1) encourage collaboration and the sharing of research methodologies, data, and findings openly with fellow scientists, policymakers, and the public, as appropriate, and following ethical and legal guidelines including prior informed consent of rightful knowledge holders;

2) maintain the highest standards of scientific integrity, refraining from engaging in any research or other practices that may compromise the integrity or impartiality of your work and independence of the Scientists' Coalition;

3) refrain from sharing internal and confidential communications outside of the membership;

4) refrain from engaging in activities which bring the integrity of the Scientists' Coalition into disrepute, or which are disloyal to the Scientists' Coalition;

5) communicate scientific findings honestly and accurately, providing appropriate context and acknowledging uncertainties, potential biases, or limitations; and

6) complete the Scientists' Coalition Declaration of Interests on a regular basis and as soon as any changes in circumstances arise. Changes of circumstances include, but are not limited to, a change in employment and new affiliations (whether remunerated or not).

Complying with the Code of Conduct

Violations of this Code of Conduct will be taken seriously. The Scientists' Coalition Steering Committee and Secretariat are responsible for addressing any breaches of this code promptly and impartially.

Consequences for violating this code may include warnings, suspension of participation in negotiations, or expulsion, depending on the severity and/or frequency of the offense. Conciliation measures may not apply to cases of sexual harassment, serious physical threats and/or assault.

Reporting and whistleblowing

If you believe a member of the Scientists' Coalition community has violated this Code of Conduct, you are invited to report the incident within 120 days to secretariat@scientistscoalition.org

Only the Scientists' Coalition Secretariat have access to this email.

If the 120-day reporting period is exceeded, the complainant has the right to justify the delay, and it is at the discretion of the steering committee to address the complaint. In the case of very serious allegations (including, but not limited to assault, rape), there is no deadline for reporting.

Reports may be delivered orally or in writing.

A comprehensive report of **assault, bullying, discrimination, or harassment** should encompass the following elements:

- Description of incident: A detailed account of the alleged harassment or discrimination, including specific actions and behaviors.
- Individuals involved: Names and roles of the parties directly or indirectly involved in the incident.
- Date, Time, and Location: Specific information about when and where the incident occurred.
- Supporting Evidence: Any documentation, communications, or witnesses that corroborate the allegations.
- Desired Resolution: A description of what the complainant considers a fair and appropriate outcome.

Incidents of assault, bullying, discrimination, or harassment that occur during UN events should also be reported to the UN as per the UN Office of Internal Oversight services: https://oios.un.org/report-wrongdoing

The Scientists' Coalition encourages reporting of serious incidents that are deemed criminal to relevant institutions, organisations, authorities, and/or the police where the incident took place.

Decisions about external reporting should be made by the complainant. The Coalition will offer assistance with external reporting where needed and relevant.

Third-party reports: Bystanders, witnesses, or allies may submit complaints. These complaints may be on behalf of a complainant/survivor/victim or may describe actions of a Scientists' Coalition member.

Where a **conflict of interest** has been identified by a member, a comprehensive report of the **conflict of interest** should be sent to the Secretariat encompassing the following elements:

- Individuals concerned: Name/s of the parties with the potential conflict of interest.
- Description of conflict of interest: The reason you find that the member in question has affiliations or interests that do not comply with the Scientists' Coalition's Conflict of Interest and Transparency policy.
- Perceived risk: An explanation of how the current situation constitutes a risk to the work of the Scientists' Coalition.

Procedure for managing violations of the Code of Conduct

Upon receipt of a report, the Secretariat shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within 5 working days and take responsibility for communicating with the Complainant.

The Steering Committee will be notified that a complaint has been made within 5 working days.

Where necessary, an ad-hoc complaints committee composed of the Secretariat and/or 1-2 Steering Committee members will form to review the complaint and make recommendations for future action.

If either the complainant or respondent, or both, are members of the Steering Committee or the Secretariat, they will be excluded from the Ad Hoc Complaints Committee and decision-making process .

The Ad Hoc Complaints Committee reports back to the Steering Committee who ultimately decides if there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct and determines remedial action.

Possible remedial actions

- A discussion and first warning
- Expulsion from the Scientists' Coalition, effective immediately
- Written Apology: The respondent provides a formal written apology to the affected individual(s)

All parties shall be duly informed of the outcome and any actions taken as a result of the investigation within 5 working days of the Steering Committee's decision.

Respondents may choose to question or dispute the decision made by the Steering Committee. In this instance, their anonymity may not be assured. Under no circumstances will the Steering Committee and Secretariat provide any information to respondents that will enable them to identify the complainant except where this is required by law.

What is expected of the Secretariat and Steering Committee when managing complaints

- Act in an unbiased and just manner, ensuring parties are considered, including respondents.
- Establish mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability including maintaining proper records of complaints received and redressed.
- Manage complainant and respondent confidentiality regarding the identity and personal information of complainants and respondents:
    - The Secretariat and any other Scientists' Coalition member shall anonymize and redact context-specific information wherever possible.
    - Sensitive information shall be stored on password-protected hard-drives and not in shared cloud drives.
    - In communications with respondents and complainants, information that could identify the other party should be removed.
    - Take reasonable measures to safeguard complainants, witnesses, and committee members against any form of retaliation.
    - When the Secretariat and/or Steering Committee members are involved in a complaint, the process is to be modified to protect confidentiality as much as is practicable.
- Provide regular updates to the complainant and respondent regarding the status and progress of the complaints review process.
- Any Steering Committee member or Secretariat who has a conflict of interest in relation to any potential breach of code of conduct must declare it when first notified of the incident.
- In recognition that the incident may have been traumatic for the complainant, the committee shall take reasonable measures to ensure the process of making a complaint does not re-traumatise them. These measures may include assisting the complainant to identify suitable options for counselling, and offering a support person for relevant meetings..
- Conduct inquiries in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner to all individuals involved.

Glossary

Assault is a criminal offence that refers to the intentional application of force (or the threat of the application of force) against another person's body without their consent.

Bullying refers to repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or a group of people that can lead to physical or psychological harm. Examples of behaviours that may be regarded as bullying can be found in the Appendix.

Discrimination refers to any and all kinds of unequal treatment, unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social orientation, social origin or other status. Examples of behaviours that may be regarded as discrimination can be found in the Appendix.

Harassment is any improper or unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment often implies a series of incidents. Examples of behaviours that may be regarded as harassment can be found in the Appendix.

Sexual harassment is a specific type of prohibited conduct that is a criminal offence in many countries. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, nonverbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications, and may occur between persons of the same or different genders. Examples of behaviours that may be regarded as sexual harassment can be found in the Appendix.

Appendix

Examples of bullying and harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Mimicking the way a person speaks, for example if the person has an accent
- Making jokes or offensive remarks about a person's race, colour, ethnicity or nationality
- Ignoring, excluding or isolating behaviours;
- Belittling remarks;
- Attacking a person's beliefs, attitude, lifestyle or appearance;
- Ridiculing, insulting, teasing, sarcasm, humiliation;
- Ganging up, criticising or spying, 'witch hunt', singling someone out;
- Intimidation, acting in a condescending manner;
- Shouting or yelling at, threats of violence or physical attacks;
- Giving unachievable or meaningless tasks, impossible deadlines, unmanageable workloads, 'setting up to fail', undermining;
- Withholding or concealing information, failing to return calls or pass on messages;
- Constant criticism of work, undervaluing contribution, no credit where it's due;
- Reducing opportunities for expression, interrupting when speaking;
- Abuse of the intrinsic trust, power and status differential that established scholars hold over early-career researchers

Examples of discrimination include, but are not limited to:

- Restraining a person undertaking physical activity themselves such as opening doors for them or by trying to impede them carrying work equipment or their personal belongings ("protective paternalism");
- "Complimenting" people for their proficiency in a specific language, based on their race or skin colour;
- Implying that a person might not be fit for a specific task, not because of their real abilities, but due to stereotypes/prejudice;
- Implying that a person might not understand and/or over-explain, not because of their real abilities, but due to stereotypes/prejudice.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Making derogatory or demeaning comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Name-calling or using slurs with a gender/sexual connotation
- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing or body parts
- Rating a person's sexuality
- Repeatedly asking a person for dates or asking for sex
- Staring in a sexually suggestive manner
- Unwelcome touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing or purposefully brushing up against a person
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures,such as pelvic thrusts
- Sharing sexual or lewd anecdotes or jokes
- Sending sexually suggestive communications in any format
- Sharing or displaying sexually inappropriate images or videos in any format
- Attempted or actual sexual assault, including rape
- Questioning or commenting on a person's sexual activities or history;