

17ⁱICoAF

International Conference
of Ombuds Institutions
for the Armed Forces

Building Bridges

Awareness and Outreach Efforts by Ombuds Institutions

CONFERENCE
PROGRAMME

Johannesburg

Oct 7 - 9

2025

DCAF 25
YEARS





TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW 04

ABOUT THE CO-HOSTS 06

OBJECTIVES & APPROACH 08

PROGRAMME 10

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 28

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION 35





PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

TUESDAY, 7 OCTOBER

All day **Arrival of conference participants**

Until 21:00 Registration, issue of badges, and receipt of conference materials in the lobby of Assembly Room II (conference venue)

18:30 – 21:00 Reception and welcome dinner in the *Negotiating Council Chamber (CODESA)* located within the South Wing in the Convention Centre at Emperors Palace.

Opening remarks delivered by

- Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Vusumuzi **Masondo**, *Ombudsman, South African Military Ombud (SAMO), South Africa*
- Béatrice **Godefroy**, *Deputy Director, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance*

WEDNESDAY, 8 OCTOBER

8:30 – 9:00 Arrival, welcome coffee, and seating of participants at the conference venue (*Assembly Room II*)

9:00 – 10:00 Conference Opening

10:00 – 10:30 Group Photo, Group Photo at the *Central Staircase of the Emperors Palace Convention Centre*, followed by a Coffee Break

10:30 – 12:00 **Session 1: Awareness of What, Awareness by Whom?**

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch at *Restaurant Galleria (located close to Assembly Room II)*

13:00 – 14:30	Session 2: Operationalising Awareness through Outreach
14:30 – 15:00	Coffee Break (<i>lobby of Assembly Room II</i>)
15:00 – 16:30	Session 3: Outreach Channels and Tools – Best Practices and Lessons Learned
16:30 – 17:15	Free time
17:15	Delegates meet in the <i>lobby of Assembly Room II</i> for a group departure by bus to the cultural activity, a visit to the <i>Nelson Mandela Foundation</i>
18:30 – 21:45	Cultural Activity: Visit to the <i>Nelson Mandela Foundation (107 Central Street, Houghton)</i> , concluding with a reception and dinner

THURSDAY, 9 OCTOBER

8:30 – 9:00	<i>Arrival, welcome coffee, and seating of participants at the conference venue (Assembly Room II)</i>
9:00 – 10:30	Session 4: Reaching Intended Audiences
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break (<i>lobby of Assembly Room II</i>)
11:00 – 12:30	Session 5: Safeguarding Integrity: The Role of Ombuds Institutions in Preventing Abuse of Power
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch at <i>Restaurant Galleria (located close to Assembly Room II)</i>
13:30 – 14:00	Adoption of the Conference Statement
14:00 – 14:15	Announcement of the 18 th ICOAF in Australia 2026
14:15 – 14:30	Closing Remarks

ABOUT THE CO-HOSTS

DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, the organisation has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. DCAF creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice, and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

DCAF is committed to supporting ombuds institutions by virtue of their capacity to hold state institutions accountable and strengthen democratic governance. To this end, the DCAF ombuds programme promotes the key role of ombuds institutions vis-à-vis the armed forces and international actors, engages directly with ombuds institutions bi-laterally, and furthermore fosters and facilitates cooperation among and between them to enhance their effectiveness and capacity.

The Office of the South African Military Ombud is honoured to serve as this year's co-host of the 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (17ICOAF), in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

Established to strengthen accountability and fairness within the defence environment, the Office is mandated to investigate complaints submitted in writing by:

- serving members of the South African National Defence Force regarding their conditions of service;
- former members regarding their conditions of service;
- members of the public concerning the official conduct of Defence Force personnel; or
- individuals acting on behalf of members.

In fulfilling this mandate, the Office promotes and safeguards the observance of the fundamental rights of Defence Force members, as enshrined in the RSA Constitution, 1996. Furthermore, the Office reports annually to the Minister of Defence on its activities. The Minister, in turn, is required to table the Ombud's report in Parliament within one month of receipt, thereby ensuring transparency and oversight.



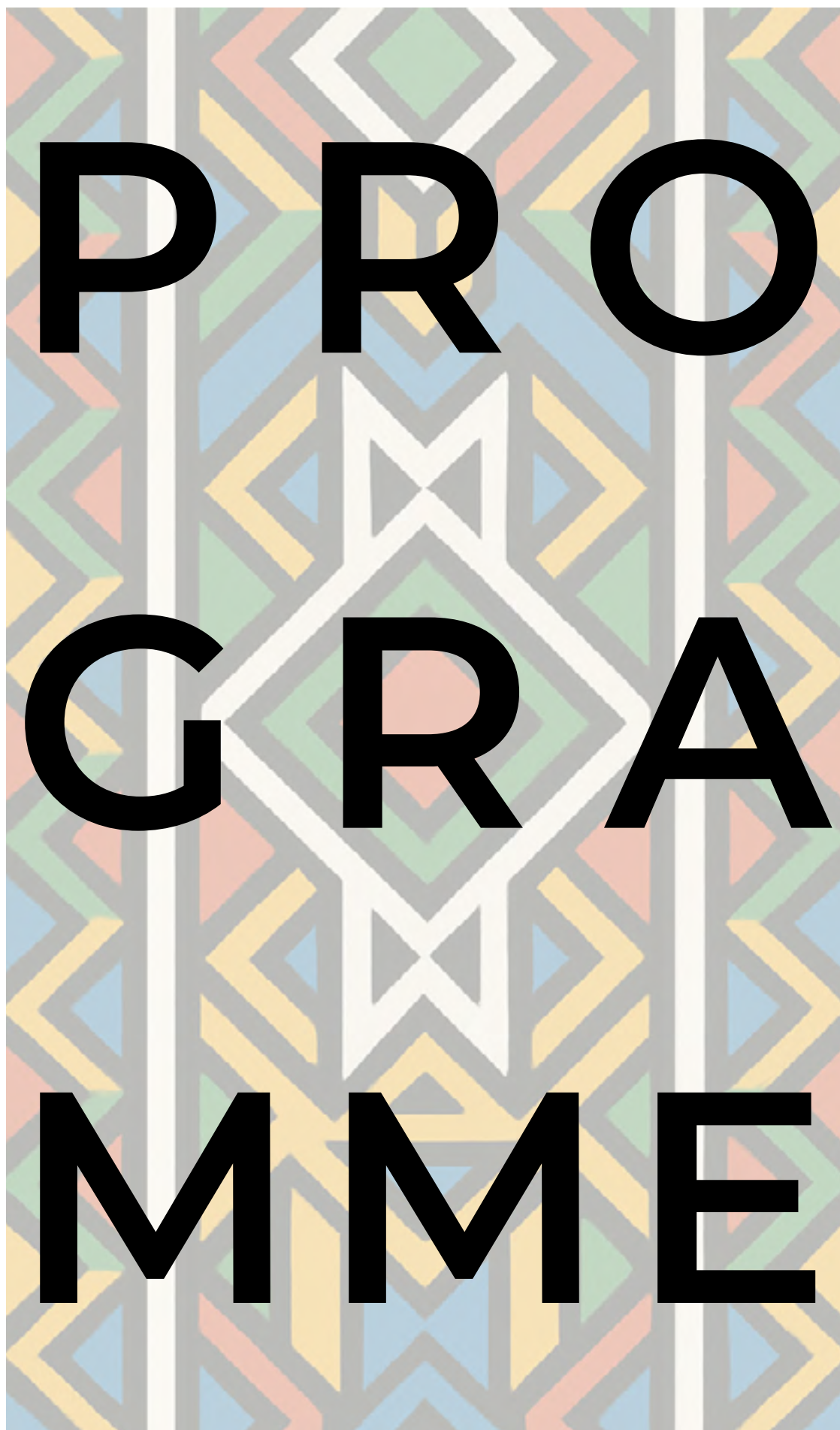


OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The objective of 17ICOAF is to *raise awareness, facilitate and foster peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and best practices, and shape future policy responses* related to the mandate, powers, and functioning of ombuds institutions.

This year's ICOAF is held under the theme "Building Bridges – Awareness and Outreach Efforts by Ombuds Institutions". The chosen theme is grounded in the understanding that the effectiveness and perceived legitimacy of oversight bodies depend on the levels of awareness, understanding, and trust among those whom their mandate is intended to serve. Against the backdrop of increasingly diverse and complex operating contexts, heightened public scrutiny of state institutions, and the spread of misinformation, the ability of ombuds institutions to effectively fulfil their mandate depends on building bridges through meaningful outreach and engagement. To this end, participants are invited to explore and reflect on outreach and awareness efforts by ombuds institutions across carefully curated panel sessions, as well as across the various spaces for dialogue provided by the framework of the conference. Good practices shared during the conference are furthermore compiled and endorsed by participants in a non-binding Conference Statement at the conference's closing.

Prior to the conference, a registration form and accompanying questionnaire are routinely circulated among the ICOAF community on issues pertaining to the conference programme. Participants possess vast experiences in handling and responding to complaints and are encouraged to share their experiences – both positive practices and gaps in capacity – to draw out valuable lessons and identify pertinent areas of need that may prove to be informative to their peers. Participation in the conference is by invitation only and registration is compulsory. The conference opening and first session are open to the public and press. The rest of 17ICOAF, however, is closed to the public and will operate under Chatham House Rules unless otherwise noted.



PRO GRA MME



TUE. 7 OCT. 2025

9:00 - 21:00

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION



Registration Desk, set up in the lobby of the conference venue, Assembly Room II



A dedicated registration desk will be set up in the lobby of the conference venue, Assembly Room II allowing arriving conference participants to register in person and collect the conference package. Signage and electronic displays will provide guidance to the registration desk. Importantly, the conference package will include an accreditation card that is required to enter Assembly Room II. Our friendly staff will further be on hand to assist you with any inquiries or special requests you may have. We kindly request that you bring a valid form of identification for the registration process.

18:30 - 21:00

RECEPTION AND WELCOME DINNER



Negotiating Council Chamber (CODESA), South Wing Convention Centre



Welcome Remarks:

- Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Vusumuzi **Masondo**, Ombudsman, South African Military Ombud (SAMO), South Africa
- Béatrice **Godefroy**, Deputy Director, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance



Delegates are invited to a reception and welcome dinner in the Negotiating Council Chamber (CODESA), located in the South Wing of the Emperors Palace Convention Centre. This historic chamber is renowned as the venue of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), where negotiations in the early 1990s laid the foundation for the country's democratic transition. Attendees will have the opportunity to reconnect and catch up with colleagues ahead of the formal programme.



WED. 8 OCT. 2025

8:30 - 9:00

PARTICIPANT ARRIVAL AND SEATING



Assembly Room II



Participants are kindly requested to arrive at the conference venue with ample time to spare, despite the proceedings taking place within the same hotel complex where they are lodged, as access to the venue will be subject to security measures and participants must present their card to enter. During this period, delegates will further have the opportunity to network and reconnect with fellow conference participants over coffee, familiarise themselves with the venue and programme, and prepare for the discussions ahead.

9:00 - 10:00

CONFERENCE OPENING



Assembly Room II



Speakers:

- Hon. Angie **Motshekga**, Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, South Africa
- Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Vusumuzi **Masondo**, Ombudsman, South African Military Ombud (SAMO), South Africa
- Béatrice **Godefroy**, Deputy Director, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

10:00 - 10:30

GROUP PHOTO FOLLOWED BY COFFEE BREAK



Central Staircase of the Emperors Palace Convention Centre



Assembly Room II



Moderator:

- Béatrice **Godefroy**, Deputy Director, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance



Speakers:

- Reinier **van Zutphen**, Ombudsman, The National Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Veterans, the Netherlands
- Ingrid **Husselmann**, Chief of Office, Office of the Ombudsman, Namibia
- Dr. Luka **Glusac**, Assistant Director, Research Fellow, University of Belgrade – Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory



OBJECTIVE:

The first session aims to unpack the notion of awareness and position it within the work of ombuds institutions. It will seek to clarify why awareness of an ombuds institution's role and mandate is crucial for its effective functioning, map out its relational dimensions – awareness of what, and held by whom – and further consider how current political developments may influence and shape both awareness and outreach efforts by ombuds institutions.

At the most fundamental level, awareness of an ombuds institution's existence, mandate, and procedures, is a precondition for its effective functioning. In the absence of such awareness, service members are unable to seek grievance redress through external mechanisms and must rely instead on internal structures that lack the institutional autonomy of ombuds institutions. Awareness of one's rights, fundamental freedoms, and available avenues for redress is especially relevant in military contexts, where rigid hierarchies, insular military cultures, and limited external contact can create significant barriers to grievance mechanisms. These conditions increase the risk that oversight bodies such as ombuds institutions are overlooked or poorly understood – particularly among lower-ranking personnel and marginalised groups most vulnerable to rights violations – resulting in issues within the armed forces not being brought to the ombuds institution. As such, a high volume of complaints submitted by rights holders to an ombuds institution is indicative of a well-functioning and 'healthy' complaints mechanism and

reflects a broader culture of accountability and transparency within the armed forces. In this remedial role, ombuds institutions are then able to raise awareness of systemic grievances to executive and legislative bodies, as well as to the broader public. By identifying the structural issues underlying these grievances and informing corresponding policy responses, they thus serve as barometers of societal tensions and are uniquely positioned to advocate on behalf of individuals and groups, whose grievances may otherwise be overlooked.

Notably, awareness is not a neutral concept. It is often shaped by perceptions of institutional legitimacy, credibility, and effectiveness. Awareness of an ombuds institution's existence may coexist with scepticism or distrust if the institution is viewed as inaccessible or ineffective. The public image of an ombuds institution as impartial, responsive, and confidential is often a decisive factor in whether individuals choose to bring forward complaints. In that sense, ombuds institutions must remain attentive not only to the levels of awareness, but also to how they are perceived by the constituencies they are meant to serve.

Awareness of an ombuds institution's role must also extend beyond the armed forces. Understanding of an ombuds institution's mandate and functioning by the public and other governmental actors, contributes to safeguarding their operational independence. This broader societal and institutional awareness further enables ombuds institutions to foster healthy civil-military relations and to reinforce the principles of democratic security sector governance and civilian control over the armed forces. In an era marked by democratic backsliding, awareness of the role of oversight bodies as institutional guardrails of accountability and the rule of law is more important than ever.



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- *What are the most common gaps in awareness among service members, other governmental actors, or the broader public?*
- *How does your office generally assess levels of awareness and associated perceptions of your office's institutional image, and do you link these to the volume of incoming complaints?*
- *Have political developments, current geopolitical trends or prolific cases affected awareness and shaped the perception of your work? If so, in what way?*

12:00 - 13:00

LUNCH



Restaurant Galleria

13:00 -14:30

SESSION 2: OPERATIONALISING AWARENESS THROUGH OUTREACH



Assembly Room II



Moderator:

- Njundu **Drammeh**, *Commissioner, National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia*



Speakers:

- Sylvia **Schär-Hahn** & Stefan **Junger**, *Co-heads, Independent Confidence Center for Members of the Swiss Armed Forces, Switzerland*
- Dr. Katarina Bursikova **Jacques**, *Ombudsman of the Ministry of Defence - General Defender of Human Rights, Czech Republic*
- Hon. Atty. Beda Angeles **Epres**, *Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights, The Philippines*
- Johann **Behr**, *Director Intake and Analysis, South African Military Ombud (SAMO), South Africa*



OBJECTIVE:

The second session aims to further concretise how awareness is operationalised through outreach efforts. It will examine specific outreach strategies, internal regulations, and communication practices, and further explore how these align with and support the achievement of corresponding institutional objectives.

Operationalising awareness through outreach efforts requires a thorough examination and nuanced understanding of what outreach entails, as well as how its various forms can be systematised, embedded within institutional practices, and aligned with broader strategic objectives. This further includes recognising that outreach often goes beyond merely conveying information – it frequently carries a political dimension by shaping how issues are framed and understood – depending not only on the message itself, but also the format, tone, and intended audience. Furthermore, outreach activities may be limited by resource constraints, carry inherent risks, or produce unintended outcomes. As such, strategic outreach involves weighing the potential benefits and drawbacks of specific practices and integrating these

considerations into the development of internal policies and frameworks that are responsive to the political and operational context in which the ombuds institution operates. High-profile cases or instances of public criticism may require an ombuds institution to carefully consider its positioning – whether to engage discreetly behind the scenes or to leverage public sentiment by adopting a more visible, advocacy-oriented role.

Comparing institutional approaches to outreach can offer valuable insights into how different offices conceptualise and conduct outreach, the types of awareness they seek to foster, and the degree to which these efforts are codified and formalised.



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- *How is outreach defined and conceptualised within your institution?*
- *To what extent are outreach activities embedded in your institution's internal regulations or strategic frameworks?*
- *How does your institution assess potential risks or unintended consequences of specific outreach initiatives? Have you encountered situations – intended or not – where outreach was perceived as politically charged?*

14:30 - 15:00

COFFEE BREAK



Lobby of Assembly Room II

15:00 - 16:30

SESSION 3: OUTREACH CHANNELS AND TOOLS –
BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED



Assembly Room II



Moderator:

- *Dania Hadi, Senior Advisor, National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman, Canada*



Speakers:

- **Anthony Erman**, Squadron Leader, Deputy General Counsel/Assistant IGADF, Office of the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force (OIGADF)
- **Mariette Hughes**, Service Complaints Ombudsman, Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces (SCOAF), United Kingdom
- **Dr Reinhard Bösch**, Chairman, Parliamentary Armed Forces Commission, Austria
- **Col. (Ret.) Nishika Jardine**, Veterans Ombud, Office of the Veterans Ombud, Canada (Video Input)



OBJECTIVE:

The third session provides the space for the exchange of best practices related to outreach channels and tools. It will focus on specific outreach initiatives as case studies, examining the effectiveness of different methods such as hotlines, digital platforms, and in-person engagement.

Means to conduct outreach take on a multitude of forms and involve certain trade-offs. They are further shaped by contextual factors such as institutional structure, available resources, and the targeted audience. In-person forms of outreach and engagement are highly effective in raising awareness, building trust, and improving accessibility – however, they are often constrained by logistical challenges, re-source limitations, and geographic reach. Remote methods of outreach – through dedicated online platforms, communication materials, or social media engagement – have become increasingly common and necessary in today's information landscape but may lack the personal connection and contextual sensitivity required for addressing complex grievances or fail in reaching vulnerable groups. Similarly, while a strong media presence is generally effective in fostering awareness and understanding of the ombuds' role, it carries the risk of media fallout – where messaging may be misinterpreted, politicised, or inadvertently antagonise other governmental bodies – potentially creating barriers to effective cooperation. As such, the tools, channels and methods of awareness-raising and outreach efforts in ombuds work must be carefully considered and evaluated to ensure that approaches are effective and efficient, and support the perceived legitimacy and independence of ombuds institutions among its various audiences.



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Which outreach channels have proven most effective in your institutional context, and why?
- What trade-offs have you encountered and how do you balance the need for reach and accessibility with the quality of engagement?
- How does your office evaluate the effectiveness of certain outreach tools and channels? Which tools or channels have you phased out or replaced over time, and what informed that decision?

16:30 - 17:15

FREE TIME

17:15

CULTURAL EVENT:
VISIT TO THE NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION



Lobby of Assembly Room II



Delegates are kindly asked to meet in the lobby of Assembly Room II for a group departure by bus **at 17:30** to the cultural activity, the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The Nelson Mandela Foundation is an organisation focused on memory, dialogue and legacy work, founded by Nelson Mandela in 1999 and mandated to promote his lifelong vision of freedom and equality for all.

18:30

RECEPTION WITH OPENING REMARKS



Nelson Mandela Foundation



Arrival of delegates at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, where the visit will open with a formal welcome and introduction by the Foundation's management in the auditorium. This will be followed by a reception, a guided tour of the facility, and dinner. The **dress code** for the evening is professional attire, which may include full uniform for participants with a military background, as well as traditional, ceremonial or religious dress.



- Welcome address from the Office of the Military Ombud, *South Africa*

APPROX.
21:45

Bus transfer of ICOAF participants from the Nelson Mandela Foundation to the Emperors Palace Hotel





THU. 9 OCT. 2025

8:30 - 9:00

PARTICIPANT ARRIVAL AND SEATING



Assembly Room II



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9:00 - 10:30

SESSION 4: REACHING INTENDED AUDIENCES



Assembly Room II



Moderator:

- Dr Moses B. **Khanyile**, Director, Centre for Military Science (CEMIS), University of Stellenbosch, South Africa



Speakers:

- Emmanuel **Jacob**, President, European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL)
- Simphiwe Thembakazi **Damane-Mkosana**, Deputy Ombud, South African Military Ombud (SAMO), South Africa
- Yury **Kovbasa**, Deputy Commissioner, Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, Ukraine



OBJECTIVE:

The fourth session focuses on how to tailor awareness-raising and outreach efforts to specific target audiences, including other governmental actors, the general public, rights holders, or other oversight bodies. It will explore approaches to identifying audience-specific needs and adapting outreach efforts to effectively address them.

Identifying and effectively reaching distinct audiences is essential to ensuring that the diverse groups of military personnel – including active-duty members, reservists, conscripts, veterans, and those deployed internationally – have equitable access to information on how to seek grievance redress through the ombuds institution. This should include particular attention to structurally marginalised groups, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQ personnel, and women, who encounter compounded barriers related to institutional bias and discrimination. These and other audiences may hold varying levels of trust in the ombuds institution, face distinct structural or cultural obstacles, or require adapted messaging and communication channels to ensure that information is both accessible and meaningful within their specific context. To meet the differentiated needs of diverse audiences, ombuds institutions can adapt both the content and format of their outreach efforts and build internal capacity to engage meaningfully with specific groups. For example, staff may benefit from training on trauma-informed communication to better support veterans with PTSD. More broadly, promoting diversity within the ombuds institution itself can help ensure a deeper understanding of the varied perspectives and experiences of the populations it serves. Outreach can also be tailored to specific audiences by strengthening ties with community-based organisations, such as veteran support networks or women's advocacy groups.

Beyond military audiences, governmental actors, other oversight bodies, and the broader public also constitute important target groups for ombuds institutions. Engaging these audiences often requires distinct forms of outreach – such as formal reporting, participation in inter-agency working groups, or public communication efforts – that enhance understanding of the ombuds institution's role and mandate. Strengthening awareness at this level can, in turn, reinforce the institution's operational independence by fostering mutual understanding, building trust, and enabling future cooperation.



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- *Are certain target groups (especially specific categories of armed forces personnel, ranks or functions, veterans, or particular groups of citizens) more difficult to reach? What challenges have you encountered in engaging these constituencies?*

- *Does your office assess the effectiveness of reaching diverse target audiences? Have you adapted communication formats and messaging to reflect diverse target audiences? In what ways have you strengthened internal capacity to support more inclusive and targeted outreach?*
- *How do you approach awareness-raising among other governmental bodies? Do you engage with non-state oversight actors through outreach?*

10:30 - 11:00

COFFEE BREAK



Lobby of Assembly Room II

11:00 - 12:30

SESSION 5: SAFEGUARDING INTEGRITY: THE ROLE OF OMBUDS INSTITUTIONS IN PREVENTING ABUSE OF POWER



Assembly Room II



Moderator:

- Dr Hans **Born**, *Head of Research and Training, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Switzerland*



Speakers:

- Hon. Grace Tikambenji **Malera**, *Ombudsman, Office of the Ombudsman, Malawi*
- Lise Veronica **Huynh**, *Advisor, The Parliamentary Ombud's Committee for the Norwegian Armed Forces, Norway*
- Hennie van **Vuuren**, *Director, Open Secrets, civil society organisation, South Africa*



OBJECTIVE:

The fifth session examines the role of ombuds institutions in addressing abuse of power and corruption within the armed forces. It explores how their mandates, institutional powers, and operational reach enable them to identify and respond to corrupt practices and considers the enabling conditions that support their effectiveness. The discussion also reflects on how ombuds institutions complement formal anti-corruption bodies and contribute to broader integrity frameworks in the defence sector.

Ombuds institutions play an increasingly recognised role in tackling corruption within the armed forces, as corruption itself is more widely understood in its broader sense – not only as bribery or embezzlement, but as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, encompassing nepotism, clientelism, opaque decision-making, and systemic violations of integrity standards. In the defence sector, such forms of corruption undermine operational effectiveness, erode internal discipline, and weaken public trust in military institutions. As bodies whose mandates are well placed to identify and address such practices through the lens of maladministration, abuse of power, and rights violations, ombuds institutions are uniquely positioned to address forms of corruption that are embedded in organisational culture or obscured by military hierarchy.

While ombuds institutions are not endowed with prosecutorial authority, their investigative and over-sight functions align closely with anti-corruption objectives. Their proximity to the armed forces – through formal access to military sites and records, as well as regular contact with personnel – enables ombuds institutions to identify patterns of misconduct that may otherwise go unreported. As established and recognisable state bodies, they also have the credibility and public standing to bring concerns into the open and leverage public to support reform. Ombuds institutions may further reframe corruption not only as an administrative failure but also as a rights-based concern – manifested in extortion, discriminatory treatment, or the diversion of public resources – thereby broadening the normative foundation for institutional accountability. Building on this role, some are formally integrated into national anti-corruption frameworks, while others operate alongside them, reinforcing integrity efforts through independent scrutiny and sustained engagement with military structures. The effectiveness of ombuds institutions in this domain is facilitated by several key conditions: clear legal authority, operational and financial independence, sufficient resources, secure access to sensitive or classified information, effective coordination with broader anti-corruption mechanisms, and a political environment open to external scrutiny. Where these factors are present, ombuds institutions can act as early warning mechanisms, protect whistleblowers, and contribute meaningfully to institutional reform.



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- *To what extent, and through which means, does your institution address corruption within the armed forces? Has this focus evolved over time?*
- *What enabling factors – legal, political, or operational – have most contributed to your institution's effectiveness in addressing corruption? What remains the most significant challenge?*
- *Does your office coordinate with other actors in the broader anti-corruption framework (e.g. audit institutions, anti-corruption commissions, prosecutors)? What facilitates or hinders such cooperation?*
- *How are corruption-related issues framed and communicated in your office's reporting? Have your outreach and awareness-raising efforts specifically addressed integrity risks within the military?*

12:30 - 13:30

LUNCH



Restaurant Galleria

13:30 - 14:00

ADOPTION OF THE CONFERENCE STATEMENT



Assembly Room II

14:00 - 14:15

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 18TH ICOAF IN AUSTRALIA



Assembly Room II

14:15 - 14:30

CONFERENCE CLOSING



Assembly Room II



Speakers:

- Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Vusumuzi **Masondo**, *Ombudsman, South African Military Ombud (SAMO), South Africa*
- Béatrice **Godefroy**, *Deputy Director, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance*



17IC0AF PROGRAMME

171COAF PROGRAMME

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS



ALBANIA

People's Advocate of Albania	Erinda Ballanca	Ombudsperson
	Besnik Deda	Commissioner for Police, Secret Service, Prisons, Armed Forces, and the Judiciary



AUSTRALIA

Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force	Squadron Leader Anthony Erman	Deputy General Counsel
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AUSTRIA

Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces	Dr. Reinhard Bösch	Executive Chairman, Former Member of Parliament (National Council)
	Ministerialrat Karl Schneemann	Director
	Sophia Schneider	Head of Unit



BELGIUM

General Inspectorate	Colonel Jean-Paul Nocarte	Inspector General <i>ad interim</i>
	Colonel Johan van de Walle	Integrity Coordinator
	Major Bertrand Buyse	Complaints Coordinator
	Senior Captain Mieke Axters	Military Assistant



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

General Inspectorate	Brigadier General Edin Fako	Inspector General
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BOTSWANA

Office of the Ombudsman	Oscar Gaselabone	Assistant Ombudsman
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CANADA

National Defence and
Canadian Armed Forces
Ombudsman

Mario **Baril**

Ombudsman

Dania **Hadi**

Senior Advisor



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Méiateur de la République
(Republic Ombudsman)

Daouda **Tanon**

Chief of Staff

Kone **Tanguy Dimitri
Ulrich**

Director of Legal Affairs and
Complaints

Amoïn Emmanuelle
Héloïse **Kouassi épouse
Assamoi**

Senior Advisor



CZECH REPUBLIC

Ministry of Defence, Office
of the Main Inspector for
Human Rights Protection

Dr. Kateřina **Bursíková
Jacques**

Ombudsman



FRANCE

General Inspectorate -
National Gendarmerie

Colonel Floriane
Antegnard

Head of Human Resources
Department



GAMBIA

National Human Rights
Commission

Njundu **Drammeh**

Commissioner

Sidy **Saidykhan**

Senior Investigating Officer



GERMANY

Parliamentary Commissioner
for the Armed Forces

Henning Rudolf **Otte**

Parliamentary Commissioner for the
Armed Forces

Anna **Eichhorn**

Personal Advisor to the
Parliamentary Commissioner

Mariana **Rieck Moncayo**

Senior Officer

Daniel **Heyd**

Press Officer

IRELAND

Ombudsman for the Defence Forces

David **O'Connor**

Head of Office

KENYA

Commission on Administrative Justice (Office of the Ombudsman)

Honourable Charles **Kanyi**

Commissioner

KYRGYZSTAN

Ombudsman of the Kyrgyz Republic

Zhanibek **Zhorobaev**

Deputy Ombudsman

MALAWI

Office of the Ombudsman

Grace **Malera**

Ombudsman

MOLDOVA

Office of the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Moldova

Ceslav **Panico**

People's Advocate (Ombudsman)

Victor **Morari**

Principal Consultant

NAMIBIA

Ombudsman of Namibia

Ingrid **Husselmann**

Chief of Office

NETHERLANDS

Inspector General of the Netherlands Armed Forces

Vice Admiral Boudewijn **Boots**

Inspector General of the Netherlands Armed Forces

Josephine **van den Berg**

Staff Officer

The National Ombudsman of the Netherlands

Reinier **van Zutphen**

National Ombudsman, Ombudsman for Veterans

Brechtje **Kemp**

Head of Veteran Affairs

Stephan **Sjouke**

Head of International Affairs



NORWAY

The Parliamentary Ombud's
Committee for the
Norwegian Armed Forces

Roald **Linaker**

The Parliamentary Ombudsman for
the Norwegian Armed Forces

Øyvind **Halleraker**

Member of the Parliamentary
Ombud's Committee for the
Norwegian Armed Forces

Lise Veronica **Huynh**

Advisor



PHILIPPINES

Commission on Human
Rights of the Philippines

Honourable Attorney
Beda Angeles **Epres**

Commissioner



POLAND

Office of the Commissioner
for Human Rights
(Biuro Rzecznika Praw
Obywatelskich)

Tomasz **Oklejak**

Head of the Department of Soldiers
and Officers Affairs



SOUTH AFRICA

South African Military
Ombud

Lieutenant General (Ret.)
Vusumuzi **Masondo**

Military Ombud

Simphiwe Thembakazi
Damane-Mkosana

Deputy Ombud

Johann **Behr**

Director Intake and Analysis

Velile **Jonas**

Director Investigations

Thabiso **Maape**

Director Legal Support

Themba **Mthethwa**

Director Operations

Ronald **Mokgethi**

Deputy Director Logistics

Bulelwa Theresa **Siwisa**

Deputy Director Investigations

Dr. Nthombikayise
Queeneth **Mdluli Jacha**

Head of Communications

Mpho **Makhalemele**

Head of Corporate Support

Andrew **Landman-
Peyper**

Finance Manager

Ntswelengwe
Kgomotso **Mokgethi**

Research Manager

Itumeleng **Qaba**

Facility, Security, and Reception
Manager

South African Military Ombud	Lerato Ngwatle	Personal Assistant to the Military Ombud
	Sister Teresa Magidela	Public Relations Officer
	Nomaphelo Aviwe Kitsile	Human Resources Officer
	Ntshi Lorette Ledwaba	Analyst
	Tshegofatso Malope	Military Ombud Support
	Avuzwa Mandela	Military Ombud Support
	Sizwe Richard Ngutshane	Communication Admin Clerk



SOUTH KOREA

National Human Rights Commission of Korea	Yongwon Kim	Standing Commissioner
	Yoontaik Kim	Deputy Director
	Jieun Hyun	Assistant Director



SWITZERLAND

Independent Confidence Center for Members of the Swiss Armed Forces	Silvia Schär Hahn	Co-Head
	Stefan Junger	Co-Head



TOGO

Médiateur de la République Togolaise (Ombudsman)	Colonel Kokou Balakibawi Paka	Director of Legal Affairs and Litigation
	Akpelozim Lokoun	Officer in Charge of Appeals and Investigations



TUNISIA

General Inspectorate, Ministry of Defence	Major General Lamjed Hammami	Inspector General
	Senior Colonel Naser Ismail	Inspector
	Lieutenant Colonel Hatem Galai	Deputy Director, Domestic Intelligence Cooperation



UKRAINE

Military Ombudsman	Olha Reshetylova	Military Ombudsman
Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights	Yuriy Kovbasa	Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights in the System of Security and Defense Sector Bodies
	Olga Strepochenko	Head of International Cooperation and European Integration, Department of the Secretariat



UNITED KINGDOM

Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces	Mariette Hughes	Ombudsman
	Tariq Khan	Chief Operating Officer



ZAMBIA

Office of the Public Protector Zambia	Honourable Caroline Zulu	Ombudsman, Public Protector
	Doria Namukonda	Senior Investigations Officer



ORGANISATIONS

DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance	Beatrice Godefroy	Deputy Director
	Dr. Hans Born	Head of Research and Training
	Daniel Reimers	Programme Manager
Open Secrets	Hennie van Vuuren	Director
European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)	Angelos Pappas	Chief Adjutant of Standing Corps
	Laura Marie-Jose Colette Moreau	Specialist
European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL)	Emmanuel Jacob	President
University of Belgrade – Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory	Dr. Luka Glušac	Assistant Director, Research Fellow
Stellenbosch University	Dr. Moses B. Khanyile	Director, Centre for Military Studies



ABOUT THE CO-HOST

The Office of the South African Military Ombud is honoured to serve as this year's co-host of the 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (17ICOAF), in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

Established to strengthen accountability and fairness within the defence environment, the Office is mandated to investigate complaints submitted in writing by:

- serving members of the South African National Defence Force regarding their conditions of service;
- former members regarding their conditions of service;
- members of the public concerning the official conduct of Defence Force personnel;
- or individuals acting on behalf of members.

In fulfilling this mandate, the Office promotes and safeguards the observance of the fundamental rights of Defence Force members, as enshrined in the RSA Constitution, 1996. Furthermore, the Office reports annually to the Minister of Defence on its activities. The Minister, in turn, is required to table the Ombud's report in Parliament within one month of receipt, thereby ensuring transparency and oversight.



ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

7 - 9 OCTOBER 2025

Johannesburg, South Africa

Dear Participants,

The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) and the Military Ombud of South Africa look forward to welcoming you to the 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (17ICOAF). The conference will take place under the theme:

"Building Bridges – Awareness and Outreach Efforts by Ombuds Institutions".

The Conference will be held from **Tuesday, 7 October 2025, to Thursday, 9 October 2025**, at Emperors Palace, Johannesburg, conveniently located close to OR Tambo International Airport. Upon arrival, you will be able to settle in and register at the convention centre.

On the day of your arrival, **Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Vusumuzi Masondo** and **the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)**, will host a dinner at the Negotiating Council Chamber (NCC) *Codesa*, situated within the Convention Centre. On **Wednesday, 8 October**, delegates are invited to visit the **Nelson Mandela Foundation** for a tour of the exhibition to be followed by a dinner hosted by the South African Military Ombud at the venue.

On **Thursday, 9 October**, the Conference will conclude with the adoption of a joint conference statement and the announcement of the host country for the 18th ICOAF.

Following the closing, participants may take the Gautrain to Sandton for world-class shopping and leisure at **Nelson Mandela Square**.

Below, you will find the most important administrative information, which is intended to assist with your travel, your stay in Johannesburg and your participation in the conference.

ARRIVAL

OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Upon arrival at OR Tambo International Airport, please proceed through immigration and customs before collecting your baggage. Once you have entered the International Arrivals Hall, you will be greeted by a statue of O.R. Tambo and find Foreign Exchange agents and an Information Desk on the left-hand side.

Representatives of the Office of the South African Military Ombud will be on hand in the International Arrivals Hall to welcome you and direct you to the designated shuttle collection area. Should you not immediately see an Ombud staff member, kindly ask for assistance at the Information Desk.

The shuttle terminal is situated on the western side of the International Arrivals Terminal, adjacent to the Intercontinental Hotel. To reach it, exit the Arrivals building, cross the road and proceed straight ahead, keeping the hotel on your right.

Complimentary shuttles to the Emperors Palace Convention Centre operate **daily from 07:00 to 22:00** at regular intervals. The transfer takes approximately ten minutes.

To ensure we can assist you promptly, please email your flight particulars (airline, flight number, arrival time and country of departure) to 17ICOAF@milombud.org by 2 October 2025.

Private and VIP Transfers are available at own cost. For this service you can contact Qalabotjha Transport at Qtransport@emperorspalace.com or +27 11 928 1762.

For more information about the airport visit [Johannesburg - OR Tambo International Airport | Welcome and Website Tour](#).



© Photograph by Mike Peel

Oliver Reginald Tambo (1917–1993), was an anti-apartheid political activist and president of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1967 to 1991.

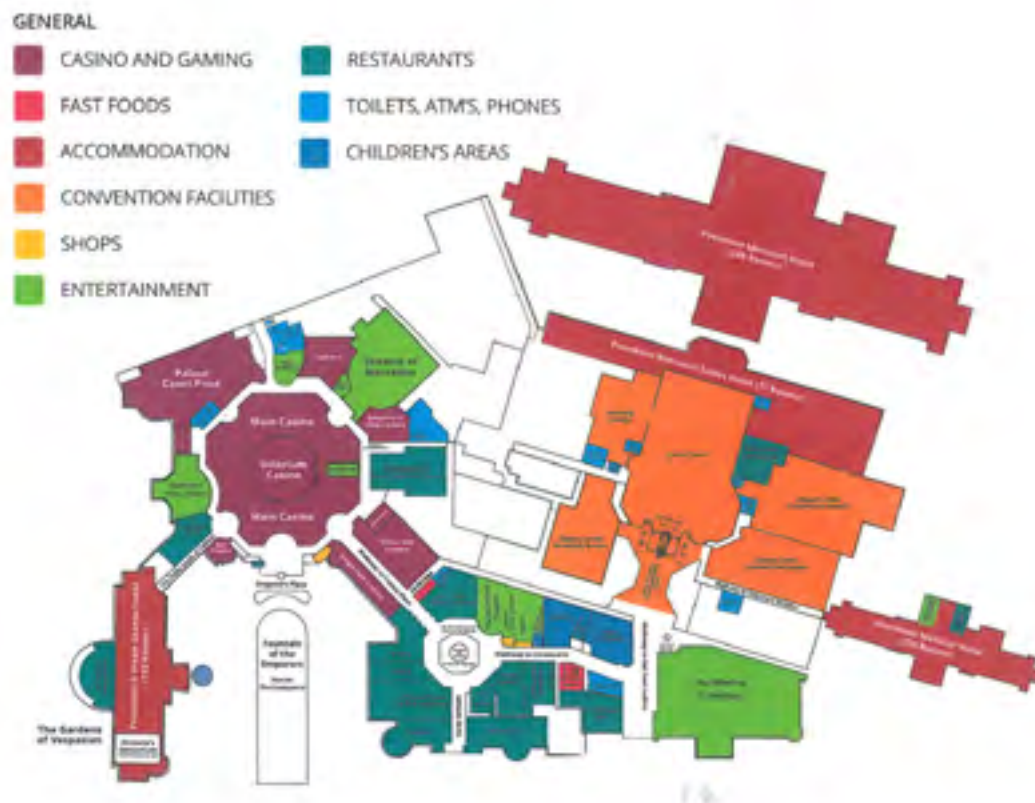
REGISTRATION

On Tuesday, 7 October 2025, a registration desk will be available in the lobby of Assembly II, Emperors Palace Convention Centre, operating **from 09:00 to 21:00**. All participants are required to register upon arrival, where they will receive their conference pack. Clear / visible 17ICOAF floor signage and wall-mounted visual screens will guide participants to the registration area.

During registration, each participant will be issued with a personalised accreditation card upon presentation of valid identification (RSA Identity Document or Passport). These credentials will serve as authorisation to access the conference venue and all official sessions.

For the convenience of delegates who may arrive late on Tuesday evening or early on Wednesday morning, the registration desk will remain open on Wednesday, 8 October 2025, **from 09:00 to 12:00**. However, participants are strongly encouraged to complete their registration on Tuesday to ensure a timely start to the conference and to avoid unnecessary queues and delays with accreditation on Wednesday morning.

EMPERORS PALACE LAYOUT



CONFERENCE VENUE



The 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (17ICOAF) will be hosted at the **Emperors Palace Convention Centre**, located at **64 Jones Road, O.R. Tambo, 1627, South Africa**, only a few minutes from O.R. Tambo International Airport. GPS coordinates S: 26° 08' 55.10" E: 28° 13' 20.17"

The venue offers a secure and modern environment with extensive conferencing facilities, hotels, restaurants, and leisure amenities within one integrated complex.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE – THE CODESA WALKWAY

Delegates will have the opportunity to experience the **CODESA Walkway**, an inspiring exhibition preserved within the Convention Centre. This walkway commemorates one of the most defining chapters in South Africa's modern history – the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations.

Between 1990 and 1993, representatives of the National Party (NP), the African National Congress (ANC), and other political organisations engaged in formal negotiations at the then World Trade Centre, now Emperors Palace. While CODESA II ended in deadlock in May 1992, the process ultimately gave way to the Multi-Party Negotiation Process, which concluded with South Africa's Interim Constitution and paved the way for the country's first multiracial democratic elections on 27 April 1994. These elections marked the birth of a democratic South Africa.

In recognition of their leadership, Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk were jointly awarded the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize. The CODESA Walkway, located in the South Wing of the Convention Centre, now preserves this legacy in the very halls where these historic negotiations unfolded.

CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS

The staff of the Convention Centre are well informed about the 17ICOAF. In addition, staff from the Office of the Military Ombud, identifiable by their green lanyards, will be available throughout the conference to assist participants with any questions or concerns.

Upon registration, delegates will receive printed copies of essential conference materials, including the programme, draft conference statement, and a list of participants. These will also be available at the registration desk and in the main conference hall.

DRESS CODE

A **formal work dress code** applies throughout the conference. Participants with a military background are requested to attend in **full uniform**. Civilian delegates may wear **formal business attire**, while **traditional, ceremonial, or religious dress** is equally welcome. On Thursday, 9 October, the **wearing of ties will be optional**.



CONFERENCE ACCOMMODATION

Most participants will be accommodated within the Emperors Palace precinct, which offers three hotels located in close proximity to the Convention Centre:

- Peermont Metcourt Hotel
- Peermont Mondior Hotel
- Peermont D'oreale Grande Hotel

All three hotels are within a short walking distance – approximately seven minutes – from the Emperors Palace Convention Centre, where conference registration and the Welcome Dinner on Tuesday, 7 October 2025, will take place. For ease of reference, the precinct's physical address is:

Emperors Palace
64 Jones Road
Kempton Park, Johannesburg
1620, South Africa

- Tel: 0860 777 900 (within South Africa) / +27 (0)11 928 1928
- Email: reservations@peermont.com

During the conference, staff from the Office of the South African Military Ombud – identifiable by their green lanyards – will be present in the lobby of Assembly II to guide ICOAF participants to the venue and assist with any logistical queries. Please also consult the programme for the exact timings of sessions and events.

COMMUNICATION

Participants are encouraged to use their respective social media platforms to inform of their participation in 17ICOAF in South Africa:



Please bear in mind in this context that the conference sessions – with the exception of the opening and the first session – will be held under **Chatham House rules** to promote open dialogue. At the end of the conference, relevant documents, including the opening speeches, photos and press statements, will be published via the ICOAF website (www.icoaf.org). The official language at the conference is English. The key conference documents will be available in English.



SECURITY INFORMATION

Security for the 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (17ICOAF) will be coordinated from the Venue Operations Centre (VOC), located close to the conference venue.

- Hotel Security Services will provide the primary on-site security.
- The South African Police Service (SAPS) Tactical Response Team will be on standby outside the building.
- Military Police will also be stationed outside the venue to respond to any incidents requiring their intervention.

All emergency personnel – including fire and security teams – will be accessible via the VOC and remain on standby throughout the conference.

Mr Tumi Qaba (Office of the South African Military Ombud) will act as liaison between the conference organisers, venue security, SAPS and the Military Police. He may be contacted through any Military Ombud staff member identifiable by their green lanyards, or directly on +27 (0)83 602 7921 (mobile).

Advisory to Delegates:

- Please wear your accreditation badges visibly at all times within the venue.
- Follow the instructions of security personnel and conference staff if required.
- Report any safety or security concerns immediately to Ombud staff or venue security.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY DURING CONFERENCE

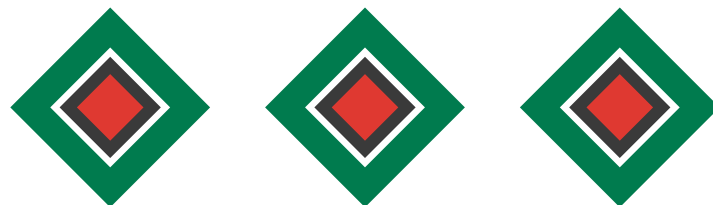
Emergency medical services for the 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (17ICOAF) will be provided by the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS).

On site, three Operational Emergency Care Practitioners will remain on standby for any urgent incidents, while a dedicated medical room – staffed by a nurse and a medical doctor – will operate daily from 08:00 to 17:00, offering basic assessments such as blood-pressure and blood-sugar checks, first-aid supplies and a limited selection of over-the-counter medications.

Should stronger treatment or prescription medicines be required, the attending clinician will issue a script and delegates may be transported to nearby pharmacies for medication at their own expense.

In addition, medics will stand by during the Welcome Dinner and will accompany delegates on the Nelson Mandela Foundation excursion.

Delegates needing assistance are invited to approach any **Military Ombud staff member wearing a green lanyard** or to contact **Mr Tumi Qaba** – who may be reached via any Ombud representative or directly on +27 (0)83 602 7921 – for immediate coordination with the medical team.





EVENING PROGRAMME DURING THE CONFERENCE

TUESDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2025

WELCOME DINNER

On Tuesday, 7 October 2025, delegates are invited to a reception and welcome dinner commencing **at 18:30** in the Negotiating Council Chamber (CODESA), located in the South Wing of the Emperors Palace Convention Centre. This historic chamber is renowned as the venue of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), where negotiations in the early 1990s laid the foundation for the country's democratic transition. Attendees will have the opportunity to reconnect and catch up with colleagues ahead of the formal programme.

Welcome Remarks:

- Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Vusumuzi **Masondo**, *Ombudsman, South African Military Ombud (SAMO), South Africa*
- Béatrice **Godefroy**, *Deputy Director, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance*


WEDNESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2025

CULTURAL EVENING

On Wednesday, 8 October 2025, following the day's conference proceedings, participants are requested to **assemble in the lobby of Assembly II at 17:15**. At **17:30**, buses will depart for the Nelson Mandela Foundation. Upon arrival, delegates will be welcomed to a short formal reception, followed by guided tours of the museum in English, commencing at **18:30**.

The formal dinner will begin at **19:00**. The dress code for the evening is **formal work dress**: participants with a military background may attend in full uniform, while ceremonial, traditional or religious attire is equally appropriate.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) is custodian of an unparalleled archive documenting the life, work and legacy of Nelson Mandela. Its physical collections include handwritten papers, official records, personal artefacts, and materials from the Office of Nelson Mandela



after his retirement as President in 1999, as well as archives of related individuals and organisations. The Foundation ensures the preservation, documentation and accessibility of these invaluable records.

Beyond its archival role, the NMF actively contributes to building just societies. It mobilises Mandela's legacy to provide public access to knowledge of his life and times, while convening dialogue on critical social issues. Its overarching objective is to promote sustainable solutions to the challenges confronting humanity, positioning itself as a respected change agent in South Africa and globally, with dialogue grounded in rigorous research, analysis and evaluation.

THURSDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2025

CONFERENCE CLOSING

The conference ends on 9 October, after the adoption of the conference statement and the presentation of the host for 2026. After this, you are welcome to explore Johannesburg further or depart individually. Participants who booked for the Soweto tour on the 10th will meet again after breakfast the following morning.



POST-CONFERENCE EXCURSION

FRIDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2025

EXCURSION TO JOHANNESBURG AND SOWETO

Participants who have pre-booked the Johannesburg and Soweto Day Tour are invited to enjoy a full-day excursion on Friday, 10 October 2025, offering a unique opportunity to explore South Africa's history, culture and diversity.

Itinerary:

- 8:30 – Meet at Emperors Palace Convention Centre Reception.
- 9:00 – Departure from Emperors Palace, Kempton Park.
- 9:45 – Drive through Houghton Estate for an exterior view of Nelson Mandela's former residence, followed by an orientation to Johannesburg.
- 10:00 – Johannesburg City Overview, highlighting its role as the economic capital of South Africa.
- 10:30 – Guided tour of the Apartheid Museum, tracing the rise and fall of apartheid.
- 12:30 – Continue south-west towards Soweto.
- 12:45 – Stop at the FNB Stadium, the largest football stadium in Africa and a central venue of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.
- 13:00 – Welcome to Soweto, the heart of South Africa's struggle and cultural diversity.
- 13:15 – Drive past Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, the third largest hospital in the world and the largest trauma centre globally.
- 13:30 – View the iconic Orlando Towers, a landmark of Soweto.
- 14:00 – Lunch at Ubuntu Kraal.
 - Visit the Hector Pieterse Museum, commemorating the student uprisings of 1976.
- 14:30 – Explore the Vilakazi Street Precinct, the only street in the world to have been home to two Nobel Peace Prize laureates: Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.
 - Visit the Mandela House Museum (Mandela's first family home).
 - See the former home of Archbishop Tutu, the first black Archbishop of Cape Town.
- 16:00 – Depart Soweto and return to Kempton Park.
- 17:00 – Estimated arrival at Emperors Palace.

Advisory to Delegates:

- Comfortable walking shoes are recommended
- Please bring a hat, sunglasses, and water, as parts of the tour involve outdoor walking.
- Lunch is included in the tour package; any additional refreshments or souvenirs will be at your own expense.
- Tour timings are approximate; participants are kindly requested to follow the instructions of the tour guide to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience.



Outdoor exhibit at the South African Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg

17th IC^oAF

International Conference
of Ombuds Institutions
for the Armed Forces



DCAF 25th
YEARS

