

## **Servas International Statutes (2024)**

Servas International, a non-profit association incorporated under Articles 60 to 79 of the Civil Code of Switzerland, and in conformity with Swiss law, currently having its legal domicile in Zurich, Switzerland, hereby adopts the following statutes, repealing all previously adopted statutes:

### **I Definition**

Servas International has the overarching, long-term vision of a peaceful world, and its mission is to contribute to achieving this goal.

#### **I.1 Principles, Ethos and Values, Vision and Mission**

**Principles:** The first fundamental principle of Servas International is the belief in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of all human beings as well as the conviction that respect and care of the environment lay as a foundation for a more peaceful world.

**Ethos and Values:** We, the members of Servas, believe that our lives are enriched when we meet, interact, share and learn from each other. Our key values are caring for people and the planet.

**Vision and Mission:** The aim of the networking is to create conditions for exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge that promote tolerance and understanding between the peoples of the world. We aim to do this in a way that is in keeping with our principles and values.

#### **1.2 Purpose**

The purpose of the association is to create conditions for the exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge that promote tolerance and understanding between people worldwide.

To realise our goals of “a peaceful world”, we work as follows:

Servas International is an accredited non-governmental organisation with the three UN agencies: New York, Geneva and Vienna. Three groups (five Servas members each) regularly attend the UN meetings and participate in sub-groups. Opportunities for official statements are used as often as possible. With this peace work, we can work on the realisation of our vision.

The members of Servas promote peaceful coexistence by living the following values:

- \* Friendship based on openness, trust and respect.
- \* Hospitality and generosity through travel, hosting guests and other opportunities to meet.
- \* Diversity and inclusion that extends far across cultures, traditions and religions.

#### **I.3 Organisation & structure**

**Organisation & structure:** Servas International is an international, nonprofit, non- governmental federative organisation of national Servas member groups, interest groups and individual members, which at its core encompass an international network of hosts and travellers who share these principles. The purpose of the network is to provide and develop opportunities for personal contacts between people of different nationalities, cultures, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

**1.4** The association pursues neither profit-making nor self-help purposes.

## 1.5 Means

The association has the following means at its disposal for the pursuit of its objects:

- \* Fee of the national Servas groups
- \* Donations and contributions of all kinds
- \* Legacies

## II Membership

- 1) Any national Servas group containing ten or more personally confirmed hosts (including day-hosts) and three defined contact persons, may become, or be reinstated as, a member group of Servas International by a majority vote of the General Assembly. One host is defined as one household sharing the same home address. A group may be proposed for membership by
  - a) direct application by the group; or
  - b) recommendation from a Servas International Area Coordinator or Committee; or
  - c) invitation from the General Assembly.
- 2) The obligations of a member group to Servas International consist of, and are limited to, paying fees, doing annual host list updates, submitting annual reports, and of following the regulations and procedures as decided by the General Assembly according to Section V, 3f of the statutes.
- 3) Except under special circumstances, a member group will lose its membership in Servas International by majority vote of the General Assembly if
  - a) it has been without a functioning national secretary for two consecutive years; or
  - b) it has fewer hosts than in subsection 1) above for two consecutive years; or
  - c) it does not fulfil its obligations for two consecutive years.

## III Board members and other Servas International officers

Board members are Servas International officers that are individuals (natural entities) elected or appointed to the Board of Directors (also known as “SI Executive Committee” or “SI EXCO”). Other Servas International officers are elected or appointed to other Servas Committees and Teams. Servas International shall have at least 6 and no more than 25 officers. Six of these officers shall be elected by the General Assembly: President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Peace Secretary and Membership and Technology Secretary. These officers constitute the Board of Directors (also known as “SI Executive Committee” or “SI EXCO”). Each of the remaining officers may be elected or appointed by the General Assembly, or appointed by the SI Executive Committee, as determined by the General Assembly. The term of office for all officers ends no later than three months after a General Assembly.

All Board members and other Servas International Officers work on a voluntary basis and are, in principle, only entitled to compensation for their actual expenses and cash outlays. Appropriate compensation may be paid for special services rendered by individual Board members.

## IV Bodies of the association

The bodies of the association are:

- a) the General Assembly
- b) the Board of Directors (also known as the SI Executive Committee “SI EXCO”)
- c) auditor

## **V General Assembly**

1) The General Assembly of Servas International shall consist exclusively of one delegate from each member group. These delegates have the right to vote and to speak. The officers of Servas International have speaking rights only. The General Assembly may also grant speaking rights (which may be restricted to specified agenda items) to other individuals.

2) The General Assembly shall meet at regular intervals as decided by each General Assembly. In addition to this, the General Assembly may be convened at any time when requested by at least one fifth of member groups.

**SI Exco may call for an annual Online SI General Assembly (O-SIGA) to be held either in October or November each year instead of the regular SI DV held in November or in April or May each year instead of the regular SI DV held in May.**

In all cases, at least three months' written notice, including agenda, time and place, must be given to each member group.

3) The General Assembly shall:

- a) review and adopt the minutes of the last General Assembly as published or corrected;
- b) review and vote on reports of Servas International's office holders;
- c) review and vote on the audited accounts and the auditor's reports;
- d) decide upon the programme of activities of Servas International;
- e) adopt a budget showing projected expenditure up to the next regular General

Assembly;

- f) decide upon fees, regulations and procedures of Servas International;
- g) elect the SI Executive Committee (also known as "SI EXCO");
- h) elect other Servas International officers, or delegate this responsibility to the SI Executive Committee;
- i) elect members of committees or working parties for special tasks deemed necessary by the General Assembly, or delegate this responsibility to the SI Executive Committee;
- j) elect an auditor, or empower the SI Executive Committee to pay for independent professional auditing. The auditor shall verify, annually, the accounts of the Treasurer and shall submit a report to the SI Executive Committee. These reports shall be submitted for adoption to the next General Assembly;
- k) determine which members of the SI Executive Committee shall be empowered to sign on behalf of Servas International. The General Assembly may empower the SI Executive Committee to do this. Two signatures shall be required.
- l) leave as little ecological footprint as possible on the environment of the planet earth.

4) An item may be submitted for inclusion on the agenda only by a national group (represented by its national secretary), or by members of the SI Executive Committee. All items submitted by member groups must be sent to the President at least six months before the General Assembly to be placed on the agenda of the coming General Assembly. The agenda must be distributed to member groups in writing at least three months before the General Assembly.

5) Decisions of the General Assembly, in addition to being recorded in the minutes of the meeting, shall be abstracted from the minutes and a list of such decisions sent to each national Servas group.

6) Decisions can be made only on items published in the agenda.

7) Decisions made by the General Assembly are binding on the activities and priorities of Servas International.

## **VI Servas International Executive Committee (SI Board of Directors)**

The six members of the Servas International SI Executive Committee is the Board of Directors of Servas International and are designated as President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Peace Secretary and Membership and Technology Secretary.

Responsibilities of the Servas International SI Executive Committee (also known as SI EXCO):

- 1) The SI Executive Committee is responsible for the day-to-day running of Servas International between one General Assembly and the next. Its decisions and actions should be in accordance with decisions made by the General Assembly.
- 2) Expenditure by the SI Executive Committee is limited to the budget adopted by the General Assembly.
- 3) Following the adoption of a three year plan of expenditure by the General Assembly, the SI Executive Committee will prepare a detailed three year budget for this plan.
- 4) Full details of SI Executive Committee financial duties are to be set out in the Financial Operating Procedures (known as FOP).
- 5) The SI Executive Committee shall appoint those Servas officers who have not been elected by the General Assembly.
- 6) If the post of any Servas officer becomes vacant between General Assemblies, the SI Executive Committee may appoint a replacement. If the vacancy is for a member of the SI Executive Committee other than President, the remaining members may make the appointment.
- 7) Within financial limits, the SI Executive Committee shall meet as often as deemed necessary by the SI Executive Committee.
- 8) The SI Executive Committee is empowered to make decisions either
  - a) by a majority vote at a meeting of the SI Executive Committee; or
  - b) by a majority vote by correspondence, provided that all members of the SI Executive Committee are given the opportunity to participate in the decisions.
- 9) The term of office for each member of SI Executive Committee will end no later than three months after a General Assembly.

## **VII Auditor**

The General Assembly shall elect an auditor or authorise the Board of Directors to appoint an independent professional auditor. The auditors shall review the Treasurer's accounts annually and submit a report to the Board of Directors.

The term of office shall be one year. Re-election is possible.

## **VIII Voting at Meetings**

1) All decisions of the General Assembly or the SI Executive Committee (except votes on the dissolution of Servas International, or an amendment to, or replacement of, the Statutes) shall be taken by majority vote of the persons voting. In the event of a tie, the President shall cast the deciding vote.

2) Voting procedure shall be made clear to all delegates before voting takes place. The right exists for any delegate to ask for a secret vote on any issue.

- 3) Only delegates from member groups which have met all of their financial obligations to Servas International within six (6) months of the due date are allowed to vote.
- 4) In order to retain its voting rights at the GA, a member country must have published a host list not older than 2 years and must have submitted an annual report for at least one of the two previous years.
- 5) A delegate attending the General Assembly in more than one capacity shall have only one vote, except in the case of proxy voting in elections.
- 6) Only those delegates attending the General Assembly in person shall be permitted to vote.
- 7) The voting process shall include three voting options for each motion, "support/yes", "against/no" and "abstain". "Abstentions" shall not be counted as a vote for or against the motion, except as required in Sections IX Dissolution and X Amendment of Statutes.
- 8) The minutes shall record the number of delegates voting for, voting against, and abstaining.

### **Elections**

- 1) Nominations for election at the GA to be accepted until immediately before the start of the voting.
- 2) Elections for Servas officers shall be by secret vote.
- 3) The GA will allow proxy voting for elections at GAs to enable member countries not present at the GA to participate in the election process.
- 4) If, in the election of officers, there are more than two candidates for any position, and none of these receives more than half of the votes, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall stand in a further election in which all voters vote again.
- 5) The voting procedure in the election of one or more officers shall be:
  - a) The voting paper shall include a "None of the Above/Re-open Nominations" in addition to the name/s of the candidate/s.
  - b) Voters may vote for "None of the Above/Re-open Nominations" as if it is a candidate for the position.
  - c) Votes for "None of the Above/Re-open Nominations" are counted along with those for the candidate/s.
  - d) Candidates receiving more votes than "None of the Above/Reopen Nominations" shall be declared elected.
  - e) Candidates not receiving more votes than "None of the Above/Re-open Nominations" are not elected.
  - f) This voting procedure shall also apply to elections by Distant Voting.
- 6) The process for filling a vacancy that remains following an election at a GA either because there are no nominations for the position or as a result of Sub-clause 5) e) above, shall be as follows:
  - a) The vacancy may be filled by appointment by the SI Executive Committee or by calling for new nominations to be elected in another election or in the next Distant Vote.
  - b) The SI Executive Committee shall be responsible for selecting and initiating the process for filling a vacancy unless this has been decided by the GA following the election.

### **IX Distant Voting.**

- 1) The member groups of Servas International may make decisions affecting Servas International between meetings of the General Assembly using the following Distant Voting process.
- 2) Each member group of Servas International shall have one vote on each motion to be decided by the Distant Voting process. Votes may be cast by post mail or electronically using a verifiable voting process.
- 3) The Distant Voting process shall not be used to amend the Statutes or to vote on the dissolution of Servas International.
- 4) In each calendar year between each General Assembly at least one Distant Vote shall be held to vote on the annual accounts, auditor's report and any changes to the budget.
- 5) The Distant Voting process may be used to vote on:
  - a) matters to be decided before the next meeting of the General Assembly;
  - b) a motion to suspend or remove from office any officer of Servas International;
  - c) the election of officers to fill SI Executive Committee or other Servas International vacancies by secret vote;
  - d) motions arising from decisions of the General Assembly.
- 6) No later than two months after a General Assembly the SI Executive Committee shall publish a schedule of proposed Distant Votes up to the next General Assembly. The closing date for the votes shall be determined as follows:
  - a) the first Distant Vote cannot be earlier than six months after the General Assembly;
  - b) the next Distant Votes shall be at least four and no more than eight months after the preceding Distant Vote;
  - c) the last Distant Vote cannot be later than six months before the next General Assembly.

A scheduled Distant Vote shall be cancelled if no motions have been received.
- 7) A motion for inclusion in the next Distant Vote may be submitted to the President when requested by at least one tenth of the member groups (represented by their National Secretaries), or by any member of the SI Executive Committee. All motions submitted by member groups must be sent to the President at least four months before the scheduled closing date for the vote to be included in a Distant Vote.
- 8) In addition to Clause 7, the General Assembly may specifically authorise a committee or working group to prepare and submit motions to be voted on by the Distant Voting process.
- 9) The Distant Voting process shall include three voting options for each motion, "support/yes", "against/no" and "abstain", and that abstain votes shall not be counted as a vote for or against the motion.
- 10) Resolutions to be decided by the Distant Voting process as well as the voting procedure to be used must be distributed to member groups in writing at least three months before the closing date for the vote.
- 11) Motions shall be declared adopted as if they have been passed by a meeting of the General Assembly if they get a double majority:
  - a) when the majority of the votes cast are "support/yes",
  - b) AND when the "support/yes" vote is at least four tenths of the number of member groups allowed to vote in the Distant Vote.

- 12) The procedures for the conduct of the Distant Voting process shall be governed by the Servas Regulations for Distant Voting. The Servas Regulations for Distant Voting may be amended or replaced by a majority vote of the General Assembly."

### **X Duties and Responsibilities of Officers.**

All Servas International Officers must, as a minimum, submit an annual activity and financial report to the President of Servas International or the General Secretary to be forwarded to all National Secretaries.

If any Servas International Officer violates her or his duties or brings Servas International into disrepute as determined by the majority of the member groups, then the SI Executive Committee is authorized to replace or otherwise initiate action against such an officer.

#### 1) The President:

The focus of the role is to lead the SI Executive Committee and oversee the general operation of Servas International.

The President shall:

- a) preside over all meetings of Servas International or of the SI Executive Committee, or delegate this function to a suitable chairperson;
- b) represent Servas on other international bodies or delegate this function to other suitable persons;
- c) keep broadly informed about the work of Servas International officers;
- d) be responsible for the organisation of the International Conference and General Assembly;
- e) be responsible for the agenda of the SI Executive Committee and the agenda of the General Assembly; and
- f) perform any other functions directed by the General Assembly.

#### 2) The Vice-President:

The focus of the role is to promote the development of Servas at all levels of the organisation. This includes encouraging collaboration between national groups and those working for Servas International to strengthen and develop Servas membership across all regions.

The Vice-President shall:

- a) perform the functions of the President in the absence or incapacity of the President;
- b) Work with the development committee and youth leadership committee together with national groups to strengthen and develop Servas at a local, regional and international level;
- c) perform such other functions as shall be delegated by the President or General Assembly.

#### 3) The General Secretary:

The focus of the General Secretary's role is communication and process management.

The General Secretary shall:

- a) handle the correspondence and information sharing of Servas International;
- b) collect information from national groups;
- c) send communications to national groups and maintain their contact information;
- d) Maintain SI records, including statutes and procedures.

- e) Ensure the updating of SI documentation following any changes to the statutes made at a General Assembly or via a distant vote. Also keep the statutes under review and recommend any required amendments to the General Assembly.
  - f) Manage Distant Votes between General Assemblies.
  - g) Be responsible for recording minutes of meetings and conferences. This includes the minutes of the General Assembly at the end of the term of office and Distant Vote decisions.
  - h) Represent the interests of their assistants, national secretaries and main contacts in the SI Executive Committee.
- In the case of assistants being elected by the General Assembly or appointed by the SI Executive Committee, the General Secretary nevertheless carries the final responsibility for the duties of General Secretary.

#### 4) The Treasurer:

The focus of the role is on the overall financial operation of Servas International.

The Treasurer shall:

- a) Manage SI funds.
- b) Guide the SI Executive Committee on financial matters.
- c) Be in charge of Servas International budget management. Guide the SI Executive Committee in planning expenditure and realizing revenues.
- d) Manage the financial accounting and record keeping function for Servas International.
- e) Manage financial audits. The reports of the external auditor shall be submitted for adoption by the General Assembly or by Distant Vote.
- f) Prepare financial reports for presenting to members and the General Assembly.

The duties and responsibilities of the Servas International treasurer are to be set out in detail in the Servas International Financial Operating Procedures (known as FOP).

A paid external bookkeeper, contracted by the SI Executive Committee on the recommendation of the Treasurer, will support the Treasurer by maintaining financial records and preparing the financial statements under the direction of the Treasurer.

#### 5) The Peace Secretary

The Peace Secretary shall:

- a) promote the peace aspect of Servas International in national groups and internationally;
- b) coordinate the work of national Peace Secretaries;
- c) represent the interests of the UN representatives and national Peace Secretaries in the SI Executive Committee; and
- d) encourage liaison with other peace organisations, and arrange representation in such organisations when appropriate.

#### 6) The Membership and Technology Secretary:

The focus of the role is to maintain an international overview of membership issues including the recruitment of new members and the technology that supports them.

The Membership and Technology Secretary shall:

- a) Promote accuracy and regular updating of members data in ServasOnline and the Dolphin storage area.
- b) Be the SI Executive Committee member with overall responsibility for the management of the technology that supports the membership systems.



- c) Be the SI Executive Committee contact person for technology in Servas.
- d) Be the SI Executive Committee member with overall responsibility for the management of ServasOnline.
- e) Be the lead SI Executive Committee member in supporting the work of the ServasOnline team, the Dolphin Team and the ServasOnline Users group.
- f) Work with others involved in the management of ServasOnline to maintain communication with ServasOnline national administrators.
- g) Ensure maintenance of a list of key persons in Dolphin Key or its replacement.
- h) Promote understanding and implementation of ServasOnline.
- i) Work with the ServasOnline team and others to recruit and support a ServasOnline tutor group.

#### 7) Officers

- a) are responsible for the teamwork of their respective committees; and
- b) implement the decisions of the General Assembly relevant to their areas of responsibility.

### **XI Dissolution**

- 1) Dissolution of Servas International shall be effective upon a vote of the General Assembly carried by a two-thirds majority of the eligible voters present.
- 2) The funds remaining after the dissolution of the association shall be donated to a tax-exempt institution based in Switzerland with the same or a similar purpose. A distribution among the members is excluded.

This organisation or these organisations must be exempt from taxation, be committed to world peace the same way as Servas International and have a registered office (legal domicile) in Switzerland. The recipient organisation or organisations must be selected by a majority resolution passed at the General Assembly, which dissolves Servas International.

If the General Assembly cannot agree on such a non-profit organisation or several such non-profit organisations, it shall give special authority to a committee of at least 5 persons to select the non-profit organisation or organisations.

### **XII Amendment of Statutes**

The Servas International Statutes may be amended or replaced at a General Assembly by an affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the eligible voters present, provided that notice of the proposed amendment or replacement is given to the delegates at least three months before the General Assembly at which it will be voted on.

SI Statutes as amended by the Extraordinary Servas International General Assembly (EO-SIGA) in May 2024.