

The role and duties of the International Councilor

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I. The purpose of this document

This document is intended to serve as an instrument to inform and help the National Elective Chapters and the candidates, the International Councilors, the National Councils and the Presidency Councilors on the role, the rights and the duties of the International Councilor as well as his/her position on the International Council and on the particular National Council.

The role and duties of the International Councilor are described in the General Constitutions and in the Statutes of the International Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order which, together with the experiences of the Presidency and the practice of the International Fraternity, has given a profound base to this document. Through this document, the Presidency hopes to strengthen the fraternal spirit within the International Fraternity, and help the respective persons and bodies of the Order.

II. The role and duties of the International Councilor

The International Councilor is a member of the International Council of the OFS, "the highest governing body of the OFS (GGCC 70.3), which guides and animates the International Fraternity (cf. GGCC 69.2.) The International Council, "convened in General Chapter ... [has] legislative, deliberative, and elective powers." (GGCC 70.3), and "meets every six years in elective general chapter, and at least once between two elective general chapters" (GGCC 70.4). **However, as a body, this International Council continues to exist and performs certain functions during the period of time between the General Chapters.**

Article 71. of the General Constitutions states the purposes and duties of the International Council, within which the International Councilors have to fulfill their duties. The performance of this office is not limited to the participation at the General Chapters, but is also expressed in the activities indicated in GGCC Art. 71. a-f. **Thus, the role and duties of the International Councilors have an ongoing nature**, all of which can be sorted into three groups:

1. Ongoing role, duties and rights of the International Councilor
2. Role, duties and rights pertaining to the General Chapters
3. Other specific duties

1. Ongoing role, duties and rights of the International Councilor

- 1.1 The primary duty of the International Councilor is to promote and sustain the awareness of his/her own National Council that the National Fraternity is a vital and integral part of a larger reality: the International Fraternity
- 1.2 In the case of the YouFra International Councilors their duty also belongs to the areas they represent and also the duties and responsibilities they have in the International Coordination of YouFra (see the International Regulations of the Youfra).
- 1.3 The International Councilor is normally the contact person, who receives and forwards information, maintains contacts between the Presidency, the General Minister, the General Secretariat, on the one hand, and the National Council on the other. (FIOFS Statutes 7.1.e)
- 1.4 Takes steps to ensure that the decisions of the General Chapter are implemented by the National Fraternity.
- 1.5 Makes his/her personal contribution, as a member of the National Council, in order to promote and sustain the

evangelical life, to increase the sense of unity of the OFS, to contribute to the spreading of ideas and initiatives, etc. of the Order

- 1.6** Ensures that responses are provided to the requests and needs of the Presidency and the General Minister, including:
 - 1.6.1 Submitting the annual report of the National Fraternity
 - 1.6.2 Responding to questionnaires, surveys (demographic, financial questions, documents)
 - 1.6.3 Stimulating the financial contributions of his/her own the National Fraternity
 - 1.6.4 Considering twinning and other ways of helping the Emerging National Fraternities
- 1.7** Forwards the questions, requests, informational materials of the National Council to the Presidency and the General Minister, and everything else regarding elective chapters, visits, significant events, and others
- 1.8** Participates in any decisions to be taken during the interim period between General Chapters
- 1.9** If necessary, ensures that the various documents are translated from the official language to the particular national language.

2. Role, duties and rights pertaining to the General Chapters

- 2.1. During preparations for the General Chapter
- 2.2. During the General Chapter itself
- 2.3. During the follow-up after the General Chapter.

2.1. *During preparation for the General Chapter*

- 2.1.1 The International Councilor - as the main contact person - is the one who receives the preparatory materials from the General Secretariat, relays them to the National Council, the National Minister and to anyone else to whom it may concern. Also, it is the International Councilor who sends the necessary materials from the National Council to the General Minister, the General Secretariat or to anyone delegated by the General Minister in this regard.
- 2.1.2 To participate in the General Chapter with a sense of responsibility, the International Councilor must prepare himself/herself by reading the preparatory materials, by collecting the necessary information, and by preparing his/her personal contribution to the work of the General Chapter.
- 2.1.3 Submits preliminary proposals to the Agenda of the General Chapter, and sends his/her contributions in writing.
- 2.1.4 Forwards the proposals and/or the requests of his/her particular National Fraternity.
- 2.1.5 Helps to raise the necessary funds for the organization of the General Chapter
- 2.1.6 Takes part in the concrete work of the preparation at the personal request of the General Minister.

2.2. *During the General Chapter itself*

- 2.2.1 Takes part in the General Chapter, from the opening rite to its conclusion (FIOFS Statutes 7.1.a), as a member of the International Council, representing his/her own National Fraternity.
- 2.2.2 Participates in the work of the General Chapter, offering and giving his/her personal fraternal contribution by:
 - making observations and interventions during the sessions (FIOFS Statutes 7.1.b)
 - actively contributing to the work of the groups
 - presenting to the General Chapter, in the manner established by the Presidency, the report prepared and approved by the respective National Council, including updated statistical data. (FIOFS Statutes 7.1.c)
 - accepting, if there are no particular problems, and fulfilling those tasks entrusted to him/her by the Presidency, the General Minister and/or the General Chapter, i.e. moderation of sessions, roles during the elective sessions, music, editing chapter documents, etc.)
 - actively participating in the decision-making (elections, voting)
 - being ready to accept the result of the elections, also if he/she was nominated
 - ensuring that the financial contribution to the costs of the General Chapter has been made on behalf of his/her own National Fraternity.
- 2.2.3 To foster the contacts with other international councilors, in communion with his/her own National Council.

2.3. During the follow-up after the General Chapter.

- 2.3.1 Presents his/her report on the General Chapter to the National Fraternity and the National Council (FIOFS Statutes 7.1.d)
- 2.3.2 Provides information on the decisions, documents of the General Chapter, and on the result of the elections (FIOFS Statutes 7.1.d)
- 2.3.3 Fosters the implementation of the decisions of the General Chapter in the everyday life of his/her National Fraternity.
- 2.3.3 Actively collaborates in the execution of the decisions of the General Chapter that may be assigned by the FIOFS Presidency or the General Minister
- 2.3.5 Provides the necessary translation of the official documents of the General Chapter in the particular national languages.

3. Other duties

The International Councilor may have other duties, entrusted to him by the General Minister, like presiding over National Elective Chapters, conducting fraternal visits, or representing the OFS in other international organizations.

III. Placement of the International Councilor within his/her particular National Fraternity

The national statutes define the mode of election and the subsequent placement, in various ways, of the International Councilor within the National Council. Mainly, two cases are identified:

- The National Minister is also the International Councilor.
- The International Councilor (who can be the National Minister or anyone else) is elected separately and is a member of the National Council with full rights.

Sometimes it happens that a person is elected International Councilor without becoming a member of the National Council. This is **not in conformity** with the FIOFS Statutes 5.1.

Without evaluating these options, it must be insisted that the International Councilor be in a close contact with the National Minister, and must be a member of the National Council with a personal and specific responsibility. In a fraternal spirit, he/she must initiate, monitor and care for current matters concerning the National Fraternity and its relationship with the International Fraternity.

As for any of the offices in the National Fraternity, there are some specific requirements that pertain to the International Councilor, who must be ready to serve and must be able to fulfill the requirements of this office, namely:

- to be ready and prepared to serve the Order in this office
- to dedicate the necessary time to this service
- to be ready to travel, if and when necessary
- to be able to communicate in at least one of the official languages
- to be a good communicator, capable of making contacts and open to other cultures
- to have the possibility of accessing existing means of communication

In conformance with its own statutes, the National Chapter will elect a substitute for the international councilor, who will act in the absence of the incumbent. (FIOFS Statutes 5.2.)

APPENDIX

The role and duties of the International Councilor in the general documents (GGCC, FIOFS Statutes)

GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS

Article 69

1. The international fraternity is constituted by the organic union of all the Catholic secular Franciscan fraternities in the world. It is identical to the OFS. It has its own juridical personality within the Church. It is organized and it functions in conformity with the Constitutions and its own statutes.

2. **The international fraternity is guided and animated by the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS)**, with its seat in Rome (Italy), by its Presidency and by the general minister or international president.

Article 70

1. **The international council is composed of the following members, elected according to the norms of the Constitutions and its own statutes:**

- **professed brothers and sisters of the OFS;**
- representatives of the Franciscan Youth.

In addition, the four General Assistants to the OFS form part of the international council.

2. The Presidency of the International Council of the OFS is constituted within the international council of which it forms an integral part.

3. **The International Council convened in General Chapter is the highest governing body of the OFS with legislative, deliberative, and elective powers. It can make legislative decisions and give norms in conformity with the Rule and the Constitutions.**

4. **The international council meets every six years in elective general chapter, and at least once between two elective general chapters, according to the norms established by the Constitutions and by the international statutes.**

Article 71

1. **The purposes and duties of the International Council of the OFS are:**

- a) **to promote and sustain the evangelical life** according to the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi within the secular condition of the faithful living throughout the world;
- b) **to increase the sense of unity of the OFS** while respecting the pluralism of the persons and groups, and to strengthen the bond of communion, collaboration, and sharing among the national fraternities;
- c) **to harmonize the sound traditions**, according to the original nature of the OFS, with advances in theological, pastoral, and legislative fields, with a view to a specific evangelical Franciscan formation;
- d) **to contribute**, in line with the tradition of the OFS, **to the spreading of ideas and initiatives which are valuable for promoting the availability of secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and of society;**
- e) **to determine the orientations and establish priorities** for the actions of its Presidency;
- f) **to interpret the Constitutions** according to article 5,2.

2. The international statutes specify the composition of the international council and how to convoke its meetings.

FIOFS STATUTES

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

Composition

Article 3

The International Council (cfr. GC Art. 70.1) consists of :

- **International Councilors elected by the National Fraternities;**
- secular members of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS;
- representatives of the Franciscan Youth;
- the four General Assistants of the OFS.

International Councilors Representing National Fraternities

Article 4

1. **Every National Fraternity, formally constituted by the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, has the right to one representative on the International Council (cfr. GC Art. 66.2.g).**
2. **Emerging National Fraternities, representation in the International Council of the OFS can be assured, with the approval of the Presidency, through:**
 - a) **International Councilor of a nearby National Fraternity; or**
 - b) **constitution of a group of National Fraternities that present similar situations and characteristics.** The group of National Fraternities will have the right to one International Councilor. To assure an equitable representation in the International Council of the OFS, the National Fraternities concerned will also propose to the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS the method of rotation or of alternation among themselves.

Article 5

1. **The representative of the National Fraternity, to which Art. 4.1 of the present Statutes refers, may be, in conformity with his or her National Statutes, the National Minister or an International Councilor elected for the purpose, who will become a member of the National Council. He or she is elected by the National Chapter in conformity with the General Constitutions, the present Statutes and the respective National Statutes.**
2. **In conformance with its regulations, the National Chapters will elect a substitute for the international councilor, who will act in the absence of the incumbent.** The right to vote, either within the Council or in the Chapter, can be exercised only in the absence of the incumbent, unless the substitute has the right to vote for reasons of holding another office.
3. For the election of the International Councilors to which Article 4.2.b of the present Statutes refers, the procedure will be by means of a proposal to which all the National Fraternities concerned have agreed. When the Fraternities concerned meet difficulties in arriving at an agreement, the Presidency will designate the Councilor from among the nominees proposed, and will give notice of the designation to the Councils concerned.
4. The term of office of the International Councilors and their substitutes is three years. They may be re-elected for consecutive periods according to the regulations of the General Constitutions, Art. 79.3.

International Councilors Representing Franciscan Youth

Article 6

The Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, after consulting the National Councils of the OFS and of the Franciscan Youth, will determine the number, maximum six, and the method of election of the International Councilors representing the Franciscan Youth (cfr. GC Art. 97.5).

Duties of International Councilors

Article 7

1. The duties of the International Councilors of the OFS are (cfr. GC Art. 75):
 - a) to participate in the General Chapter;
 - b) to speak during the General Chapter in the name of the National Fraternity that they represent, and to present what has been entrusted to them by decision of their respective National Council;
 - c) to present to the General Chapter, in the manner established by the Presidency, the report prepared and approved by the respective National Council, including updated statistical data.
 - d) to inform their National Fraternity of the decisions made and the initiatives undertaken by the General Chapter;
 - e) to maintain frequent and regular contacts of communication and dialogue with the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, with the Minister General, with the Secretariat, as well as with his or her own National Council.
2. With the proper adaptations, the duties described apply to the International Councilors representing emerging national Fraternities or Franciscan Youth Fraternities. Together with the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, they shall contribute to the development and consolidation of the Fraternities they represent.

Vacancy and Removal Provisions

Article 8

1. When the office of the International Councilor remains vacant due to death, renunciation, or another impediment of a definitive character, the person elected as substitute (Art. 5.2 of the present Statutes) takes up the duty until the end of the mandate for which the Councilor was elected. The National Council concerned informs the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS and elects a new substitute within six months.

2. The request to renounce the office of International Councilor must be presented in writing to the National Council concerned, which has the competency to accept the request.
3. The removal of an International Councilor, negligent in his or her duties in a continual form or manner, is the competency of the National Council to which the Councilor belongs and is expressed by a secret ballot after a fraternal dialogue with the person concerned (cfr. GC Art. 84.3). In the case of inertness of the National Council, the regulations of the General Constitutions, Art. 84.6 apply.

Meetings of the International Council

Article 9

The International Council, meeting in Assembly, constitutes the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order (cfr. GC Art. 70.3). Members of the General Chapter with full rights are those indicated under Art. 3 of the present Statutes. In the case of an elective chapter, both the outgoing and the incoming Presidency are members.

The General Chapter

Article 10

1. The General Chapter
 - a) is the highest governing organ of the OFS, with legislative, deliberative and elective powers (cfr. GC Art. 70.3);
 - b) is convoked by the Minister General, with the consent of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS. The convocation is made preferably with six months' notice and, in any case, not less than three months, and by means of communication in the official languages of the International Council (cfr. GC Art. 74.2.b);
 - c) meets as an elective General Chapter once every six years (cfr. GC Art. 70.4) to elect the Minister General and the secular members of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS;
 - d) meets in plenary at least once between two elective General Chapters;
 - e) gives orientations for the development of the life of the OFS ;
 - f) has the competency to give a practical interpretation of the General Constitutions (cfr. GC Art. 5.2);
 - g) clarifies and resolves the questions and/or problems that are submitted to it;
 - h) comments on the report of the Minister General;
 - i) comments on the financial report, and on the verification of the financial and patrimonial management of the Presidency;
 - j) approves a three-year budget for the International Fraternity and the Presidency, in which the projected costs and the "pro capite" quota for the annual financial contribution are fixed.
2. Observers and experts with a consultative function may be invited to the General Chapter, at the discretion of the Presidency.
3. The General Chapter will be carried out in conformity with its own Regulations.
4. The deliberations, agreements and decisions made by the General Chapter must be approved by the absolute majority, i.e. more than half of those present (cfr. CIC 119. can), except for cases in which a qualified majority, i.e. two thirds of those present, is required.
5. The proposals voted as suggestions or "desiderata", that require further reflection by the Presidency or by appropriate study Commissions appointed by the Presidency, have only an indicative character.