

TERMS OF REFERENCE

REVIEW BOARD

Context

In recent years, alternative dispute resolution has gained widespread acceptance among both the general public, as well as legal and other professionals involved in cross-border child protection situations. Increasing recognition and use of International Family Mediation (IFM) fosters new avenues of cooperation between practitioners, specialised institutions and authorities and gives an impetus to the dissemination of relevant materials worldwide.

An International Family Mediation programme was initiated by International Social Service (ISS) in 2010 with the creation of a think tank of diverse senior experts in cross-border family disputes working towards establishing and promoting IFM worldwide through comprehensive IFM publications and tools.

More recently a *Charter for International Family Mediation Processes* was agreed upon and published by a group of international family mediators; this cross-border collaboration, which involves both individual mediators and recognised national and regional organisations, including ISS members, is being pursued with the aim of creating a *Global Network of International Family Mediators (The Network)*.

Overall mission of *The Network*

The global mission of *The Network* is support and protection of children and prevention from potential harm related to cross-border family disputes and child abduction.

The purposes of such a network are to facilitate searches for competent family mediators and other professionals of the legal and psychosocial field working internationally in all regions, as well as to reinforce cooperation with administrative and legal authorities.

The Network intends to establish a body of knowledge and to promote existing expertise and regional/transregional networks, as well as all existing training offers, to extend professionalization, and access to information, for practitioners across regions.

An *Steering Committee* was appointed by ISS to prepare the creation of *The Network* during a period of 1 year, as of September 2017.

Establishment of the institutional Review Board

ISS will establish an institutional consultation body, the *Review Board*, composed of representatives from key institutions, States, and political organisations that work with cross-border families, child's rights, child protection, and in the development of family policies. The *Review Board* has flexible membership, and will include all relevant stakeholders, to provide guidance to ISS's *Steering Committee* and *The Network* of global family mediators.

Specific tasks of the *Review Board*

The *Review Board* ensures that *The Network's* purpose is aligned with all existing political and institutional mandates in these fields. To this end and through consultation on very specific issues during the preparatory work by the *Steering Committee*, the *Review Board* will carry out the following main tasks:

- 1) Share comments and recommendations from an institutional point of view on the proposals of the *Steering Committee* (Terms of Reference of *The Network* and Action Plan);
- 2) Give input regarding advocacy and policy related strategies;
- 3) Provide information on their mandates, as requested by the Chairperson of the *Steering Committee*.

This stage of the project offers the unique opportunity to make efforts of policy-makers and regional/global professional initiatives converge around IFM, a trend recognised to be feasible and efficient. From here onwards, the collection of inputs from institutions and political organisations will foster cooperation between mediation professionals and authorities, according to the following shared principles and milestones:

- **Representation:** IFM will be professionalized, and progressively inclusive of more regions and legal cultures.
- **Reliability:** Advocacy and recognition of IFM instruments needs to be initiated and sustained internationally, while existing training tools and training opportunities need to be further developed;
- **Sustainability:** Cooperation among mediation professionals and institutions needs to be nurtured and developed in each country, research endeavours, best practice and data collection encouraged;
- **Collaboration:** Institutional stakeholders that are not necessarily in touch one with the other, will be rallied around the project.

Methodology during the *Steering Committee* mandate

One or two consultations, most probably in April the August 2018;

The overall workload remains very reasonable for such an important objective and drive, about 10 pages to read and comment, along with some recommendations to formulate (a template if preferred, will be provided).