

GUIDELINES ON PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

IOM recognizes the value of social media as a collaborative communications tool and embraces its benefits while acknowledging associated risks.

These guidelines are designed to help all IOM personnel (including staff and non-staff personnel) navigate social media ethically and strategically, with emphasis on discretion and good judgment in personal social media use to minimize potential risks to themselves, IOM, and IOM beneficiaries.

Social media are defined as Internet-based tools like blogs, messaging apps, and social networks including platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, Weibo and others. Many personal social media accounts reflect a combination of personal and professional lives. These guidelines are intended not to prevent the use of social media, but to ensure that IOM personnel use them in accordance with IOM's standards and values.

WHY REGULATION IS IMPORTANT

IOM personnel are considered representatives of IOM at all times. Our activities on personal social media, even when not connected to our official duties, reflect on IOM and may expose IOM to reputational and operational risks.

While we may each have our own personal views and convictions, we have a duty as international civil servants to demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and professionalism at all times. Our conduct on social media, as in real life, must be consistent with the IOM Unified Staff Regulations and Rules, the IOM Standards of Conduct (IN/15 Rev. 1), and the ICT Policies and Guidelines (IN/123).

In particular, we must act in accordance with IOM's core values as set out in the IOM Standards of Conduct. This includes our duties to be impartial, independent, and respectful. Any violation of IOM standards may be considered misconduct subject to investigation and disciplinary or administrative measures.

IOM personnel are encouraged to read and understand the following guidelines for their use of social media and to seek further guidance as needed.

GUIDELINES

1. Be a good IOM ambassador

As IOM personnel, you are encouraged to promote the objectives and work of IOM. You can do so by sharing posts and messages published by IOM. Likewise, you may share posts by other UN organizations promoting IOM's work. In each case, please ensure that you are sharing only official posts. Don't post news stories relevant to IOM's mandate that IOM has not yet confirmed or commented on, as your post could be misconstrued as IOM confirming the story or endorsing a point of view.

Make sure your use of social media reflects well on IOM and its work. Your personal posts could carry implications for you, IOM, and IOM beneficiaries. Whether or not you identify yourself on social media as IOM personnel, your association with IOM is not private and can be discerned via basic online searches. If you decide to identify your IOM affiliation on social media, don't share any confidential or otherwise sensitive information about your role. IOM email addresses, as assets of IOM, should not be used to create or register personal social media accounts.

2. Be impartial, independent and respectful

As IOM personnel, we must abide by the principles of impartiality, independence, and respect. Taking sides on issues involving IOM or expressing public opinions on political or other controversial matters can undermine IOM's impartiality and compromise its relationships with governments, partners and other stakeholders.

Even when posting about an issue that is not related to IOM's work, it is important to reflect a neutral and balanced selection of viewpoints. If this is not possible, it's preferable not to post at all.

Unless you are sharing an official IOM statement, avoid mentioning any government or politician and avoid expressing a personal view regarding a political matter or election. While IOM personnel may exercise their rights to vote under local laws, we must refrain from publishing partisan opinions or publicly endorsing political candidates in any country, including our own.

Use respectful language. Ensure that the content you share respects diversity and does not express or support discrimination against any individual or group of individuals. Avoid any discrimination based on race, gender, religion, color, national origin, marital status, biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability or political conviction. Similarly, avoid any assumptions about capabilities based on stereotypes.

3. Pause before you post

Use common sense and think carefully before posting on social media.

Ask yourself: Could my post be interpreted in any way other than how it was intended? Is it something appropriate to say in public? Could it reflect poorly on IOM? If you're not sure, let it sit for a few hours or a day. If you hesitate, there is probably a good reason. Be mindful that everything posted online, even if it is later edited or deleted, can be saved via a "print screen" and easily become public.

Don't share or "like" anything online that you consider potentially risky. Sharing or liking posts from other accounts can be seen as an endorsement of those accounts and their contents. Check to be sure you don't share or endorse any type of disinformation or misinformation.

4. Respect privacy rights and protect confidentiality

Respect the privacy rights of IOM beneficiaries, partners, and colleagues, particularly when posting photos and videos. Get express consent before posting any identifying information or images of IOM partners, or beneficiaries (through a parent or guardian in case of a minor). Take special care not to share confidential information about IOM beneficiaries, as this may put them and IOM at risk.

Don't disclose confidential or sensitive information in any case. Don't share official information that hasn't been made public unless you have express prior authorization. Remember that these obligations continue even after you leave IOM.

5. Be authentic

Don't use pseudonyms or false names when sharing or commenting on content related to IOM. The use of pseudonyms does not exempt IOM personnel from the duty to comply with IOM standards.

Always double-check your facts before posting on social media. Credit sources as appropriate, including for their intellectual property.

6. Don't rely on disclaimers

Don't use disclaimers such as "views expressed are my own" as a free pass. Even if you use such a disclaimer, your behavior on social media is still subject to the IOM Standards of Conduct including the principles of impartiality, independence and respect. If, after making a post, you realize that the post was mistaken or inappropriate, delete it as soon as possible.

7. Understand your privacy settings

Manage your privacy and security settings thoughtfully and understand their limits. You may choose to use strict privacy settings for a personal account. Even if you do, assume that nothing on social media is entirely private. Even if you post in a private group or "like"/repost a private post, be mindful that this can become public and spread widely into the public domain.

8. Watch your digital footprint

You are responsible for your online reputation. Watch your digital footprint and remember that what goes online can live forever.

Make sure that your online presence, including past private activity, is consistent with your desired public image and status as IOM personnel. Remove old posts or accounts that may reflect poorly on you, IOM or its work.

9. Seek guidance

If you aren't sure whether your social media activity is consistent with your obligations as IOM personnel, seek guidance from your supervisor, the IOM Social Media Manager, the relevant Regional Media and Communications Officer, the HR Focal point in your Mission/Office, or the Ethics and Conduct Office (ECO@iom.int).

If you are subject to harassment online, report the source's profile using the reporting tools on the respective social media platforms. If you are harassed by an IOM personnel, please report through the We Are All In platform at www.weareallin.iom.int and/or contact the Office of Staff Security (oss@iom.int).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ***Can I identify myself as IOM personnel on professional networking platforms, such as LinkedIn?***

Yes. You may indicate your affiliation with IOM as long as you do not share any confidential information about your position, IOM projects or offices, or any other type of information that could place IOM at risk. Make sure that your job title and dates of employment are accurate and update your profile if you leave the Organization.

- ***I have a “private” account on social media. Do I still have to follow the guidelines?***

Yes. Remember that «personal» and «private» are not the same. While communication through social media networks and messaging apps is primarily a personal matter, it is not the same as being private. In some cases, written conversations inside these networks or messaging apps may be found through search engines such as Google. Even if only your contacts can see what you write, there is a possibility that one of them will forward or “print screen” your statements and make them visible to a wider audience. As a result, anything posted on personal social media networks should be considered public rather than private, regardless of the account’s privacy settings.

- ***I understand that I am not allowed to express opinions on controversial matters. What are some examples of controversial matters?***

There is no official list of matters that are considered controversial. At the same time, matters such as politics, religion, international conflicts and indeed migration are generally considered controversial. If you would like to post about migration in furtherance of IOM’s mission but you are uncertain whether your post could be considered controversial, please seek guidance in accordance with Guideline 9 above. In using social media, IOM personnel are reminded of their obligation to promote and practice tolerance, understanding and respect for all, taking into account the local cultural context.

- ***Why am I not allowed to express an opinion on an international conflict if my own country is affected and it has had repercussions in my personal life?***

IOM is a humanitarian and non-political organization, committed to assist beneficiaries regardless of their nationality, race or ethnicity.

As IOM personnel, we are representatives of IOM and have a duty under the IOM Standards of Conduct to remain impartial, meaning that we must refrain from any public pronouncement on political matters, including those that may appear to criticize an IOM Member State. IOM personnel are not expected to give up their national sentiments, or their political and religious convictions. For example, we understand that you may feel strongly about supporting a specific humanitarian cause. In such a case, you are advised to act with discretion, without such use of social media as may raise concerns about your impartiality or expose IOM to reputational and operational risks. If you need guidance, please contact the Ethics and Conduct Office at ECO@iom.int.

- ***I live in a country where the government has made hostile remarks against migrants. Can I advocate in support of migration and IOM’s mission as this aligns with the IOM values?***

IOM has official channels to address issues and developments within its mandate. It does so without interfering with national politics or criticizing IOM member states. As IOM personnel, we can share IOM’s official posts but must otherwise remain impartial and refrain from individual political statements.

- ***Is it possible to have a personal blog or YouTube channel and share content about topics other than migration?***

Having a personal blog or YouTube channel, whether remunerated or not, is considered an outside activity that requires prior authorization in accordance with the IOM Standards of Conduct (IN/15 Rev.1). If you wish to have a personal blog or YouTube channel, or if you wish to use social media as a tool to obtain remuneration on a regular basis, for example by selling or advertising products or services online, please contact the Ethics and Conduct Office at ECO@iom.int for further guidance.

- ***I have seen posts/comments made by IOM personnel on social media that don’t align with these Guidelines. Do I have to report this?***

If you have observed a violation of the social media guidelines, please report by using the We Are All In platform at www.weareallin.iom.int or contacting the Office of Inspector General (OIG) at OIGIntake@iom.int.