Candidate Name

Youssoupha Niang, Certified Organizational Ombuds

Candidate Title

UNHCR Ombudsman and Mediator

Organization

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Candidate Statement

I am interested in serving on the IOA Board because I believe deeply in the value of the organizational ombuds profession and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to its continued development and global reach. Having worked as an Ombudsman for more than a decade across Africa and Europe, in highly diverse and multicultural United Nations environments, I have seen firsthand the difference that organizational ombudsing can make for individuals and organizations.

I would bring to the Board an international and field-based perspective, shaped by working with people from very different cultures, languages and organizational contexts. I am particularly interested in helping IOA strengthen its global character, expand engagement with members from different regions, and make its values, standards and resources more accessible across languages and cultures.

Serving on the Board would also be an opportunity for me to give back to a profession that has been central to my own professional journey. I would bring curiosity, practical experience, a collaborative approach and a strong commitment to ensuring that IOA continues to be a professional community in which members from all regions can participate, contribute and feel that they belong. Kind Regards

Pathway to the Profession

Over the next five years, I believe one of IOA's greatest opportunities is to strengthen its position as the global leader and reference for organizational ombuds practice. This means increasing IOA's international visibility and ensuring that its standards, training, resources, and professional community are accessible to practitioners well beyond the English-speaking world.

A particular priority for me would be expanding IOA's multilingual reach, especially in French and Spanish. Greater language accessibility would help engage new communities of practitioners, expand IOA's global membership and influence, and make the profession more accessible across regions.

I would bring to the Board extensive international Ombuds experience across diverse cultural and organizational settings, as well as experience building networks and partnerships across the multilateral system. I would use that perspective to support stronger international partnerships, greater regional engagement, and increased visibility for IOA, with the goal of establishing the Association as the worldwide professional reference for organizational ombudsing.

IOA Values

For members to truly embrace IOA's values, they must first be able to fully understand and connect with them. This requires making those values, and other key IOA resources, accessible in the languages spoken by its diverse membership. Language is more than a means of communication; it is a gateway to inclusion, belonging, and ultimately a stronger sense of ownership of IOA's values.

Volunteer or Leadership Experience

Since joining the IOA Board of Directors in April 2023, I have actively contributed to the Association's governance. I have also served as Chair of the Network of Ombudsmen and Mediators of Multilateral Organizations (NOMMO). In my current role as Director of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediator, I lead an Ombuds programme serving more than 20,000 personnel worldwide. These responsibilities build on broader leadership experience gained throughout my United Nations career and through my involvement in professional associations.

Professional Expertise

I would bring to the Board particular strengths in strategic partnership development, research, global organizational leadership, and translating evidence into strategic action.

Throughout my career, I have worked across the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, building partnerships among institutions, senior leaders, professional networks, and diverse stakeholders. In my current role as Head of the UNHCR Ombudsman and Mediator Office, I lead a global programme serving more than 20,000 personnel across over 150 countries. My work also involves engagement with Member States and governing bodies and collaboration with organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and other parts of the UN system.

Strategic partnership development is therefore an area where I believe I can make a particularly strong contribution to IOA. I have experience developing cross-organizational initiatives and professional networks, including serving as Chair of the Network of Ombudsmen and Mediators of Multilateral Organizations (NOMMO). As an IOA Board member since April 2023, I have also contributed to strengthening IOA's international presence, including through the reinforcement of Regional Advisory Committees.

I would also bring a significant research and evidence-based practice background. My earlier academic and public-health career included research on the social determinants of health and vulnerable populations, quantitative research training, and several publications.

More broadly, my experience has taught me how to translate information from practice into systemic and strategic recommendations. As an Ombudsman, I have regularly used trends emerging from cases and organizational experience to identify systemic issues and advise senior leadership and governing bodies. I believe this perspective can support IOA as it continues to strengthen the profession, expand its global reach, develop strategic partnerships, and ensure that its priorities respond to emerging workplace and organizational challenges.

My experience in global outreach, partnership cultivation, governance, education, and international network-building can contribute to increasing IOA's visibility, extending its partnerships, broadening its

international engagement, and identifying opportunities that support the Association's long-term sustainability.

Candidate Bio

I began my career as an Ombudsman at the end of 2012. My first assignment was as a Regional Ombudsman based in Kinshasa, where I served for two years. I subsequently held Ombudsman positions with the United Nations in Goma and Entebbe for five years, followed by three years in Nairobi. I then moved to Geneva, where I have been based for the past four and a half years and currently serve as Ombudsman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.