



Code of Ethics

IPS relations with the private sector

IPS - Inter Press Service International Association and its associated entities have relations with the private sector as a news subject and source, an advertiser and now as a financial supporter. This code of ethics is primarily addressed to safeguarding IPS' integrity and reputation with regard to accepting financial support. The general treatment of the private sector as a subject and source for IPS news reporting is naturally part of the editorial IPS Style Guide.

The Board of Directors of IPS International Association mandated the Director General to explore innovative sources of funding and explore opportunities with the private sector, as part of ongoing efforts to ensure the continuing financial health of the organization in the context of rapidly changing and very challenging fundraising and market contexts. This code of ethics articulates how this mandate will be undertaken, without risking the credibility of IPS as an independent news agency and communication institution.

IPS Financing

Traditionally, IPS has three major sources of financing: income from the market, grants from multi-lateral and national development co-operation budgets and project funding (from international institutions, foundations and NGOs). In this scenario, IPS preserves its journalistic integrity through maintaining a wide diversity of revenue sources, working only with backers and initiatives that explicitly accept editorial independence, and being transparent about its sources of income.

In accepting financial support from the private sector IPS will continue to ensure diversity, independence and transparency.

The IPS Board of Directors has set a maximum limit on financial support from private sector donors at 30 % of total revenues.

Editorial independence will continue to be an explicit commitment in any agreements or contracts drawn up between IPS and any backer, including private sector companies.

Sources of income, including the private sector donors, will be included in the IPS annual reports, audited accounts and listed on the institutional website www.ips.org

This code of ethics will be referred to and part of any agreement with private sector companies.

U.N. Global Compact

IPS will not accept backing from private sector companies that go against our values. Recognizing that IPS has neither the human and financial resources nor the expertise to devote to ethical assessments of individual companies, IPS will rely in the first instance on credible, global and regional corporate watchdogs in deciding whether or not to accept financial backing from particular sources.

The primary point of reference will be the U. N. Global Compact, a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

www.unglobalcompact.org

Furthermore, IPS will not partner with companies if their products or strategies are refuted by civil society, or other longstanding IPS constituencies.

Media Independence and Private Sector Engagement

The major risk in accepting financial backing from the private sector is a perception that IPS is risking its media independence. In this regard IPS notes the increasing commercialisation and news sponsorship of the mainstream media, and increasingly the progressive media sector too, driven by financial imperatives to remain solvent. Insofar as media outlets are then subject to limits on their independence or practice self-censorship this is a negative trend. To counter actual and perceived risks IPS will:

Actively assert its continuing independence as a news agency.

Learn and share experiences of working constructively with the private sector with likeminded media and civil society communicators as a new avenue for IPS in terms of networking and partnering

Use this opportunity to actively engage with a new, huge and influential constituency. IPS donors have always been seen as communication partners and allies and this philosophy of partnership and engagement will be extended to the private sector interlocutors.

Rome, February 2010
