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Code of Conduct for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe-affiliated International Public-Private Partnerships Specialist Centres of Excellence

Note by the Secretariat

Background

This document is a revised version of the draft Code of Conduct for the UNECE-affiliated International PPP Specialist Centres of Excellence submitted to the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships at its thirteenth session in March 2019. The document has been cleared by the UN Legal Office and was endorsed by the Bureau of the Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships.

The document is submitted to the Working Party for consideration and endorsement.

I. Purpose and scope

Purpose and scope: The International PPP Specialist Centres of Excellence (hereinafter, “the Centres”)¹ affiliated to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) by virtue of Memorandums of Understanding, Contribution Agreements, exchange of letters or other institutional arrangements (affiliation agreements) have the overarching goal of

¹ Including the Centre as an institution and its staff, contractors, interns and collaborators as well as the experts and consultants engaged by the Centre.

contributing to the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence (ICoE) in Geneva in promoting the UNECE People-first PPP programme in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The specific contribution of the Centres - both collectively and individually - to the ICoE is agreed upon in a work plan approved at the annual meetings of the Centres.

This code of conduct is applicable to the Centres, their staff, interns, contractors and collaborators, as well as to the experts and consultants engaged by the Centres, in a paid or pro-bono position, participating in any manner in the substantive work of the ICoE.

II. Guiding Principles

United Nations Charter: The [United Nations Charter](#) guides the operations of the United Nations, and the Centres and their members are expected to adhere to the overarching values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, namely:

- (a) Respect for fundamental human rights, including equal rights for men and women;
- (b) Social justice and human dignity; and
- (c) Peace and security.

Integrity: The Centres and their members are expected to uphold the integrity of the United Nations, in particular by clearly advancing the objectives, activities and purposes of the United Nations.

General Principles: In addition to the values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Centres and their members are expected to be guided in their day-to-day activities by the principles that are included in the United Nations Global Compact and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The [United Nations Global Compact](#) provides an overall value framework for cooperation with the business sector. The principles on the Global Compact on human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption are based on intergovernmental agreements and are specifically relevant for business.

Similarly, the [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) serve as the baseline reference point for expected business conduct, and as a benchmark for responsible business implementation.

III. Professional Competence

The Centres recognise their boundaries of competence and shall refrain from expanding their scope without the prior approval of the ICoE. The Centres are expected to be forthcoming and truthful about their professional experience, including that of their members, which they are expected to select diligently, and will represent their achievements accurately and without exaggeration. Wilful failure to do so, if brought to the attention of the UNECE, will result in a written warning to the Centre; repeated wilful failure may result in the withdrawal of affiliation of the Centre with the ICoE.

Consultants and experts that the Centres intend to engage for any substantive work must justify their qualifications and experience in the particular field of expertise of the Centres in relation to People-first PPP projects.

IV. Ethical conduct

Confidentiality and Privileged Information: The Centres and their members are expected to protect the confidentiality of all privileged information obtained from the secretariat and from client Member States. Furthermore, the Centres shall not exploit any relationship with a client Member State, or any privileged information obtained for the benefit of the Centre, the Organization hosting the Centre (where applicable), or any individual connected with the Centre.

Use of the United Nations name and emblem: The Centres may not use the United Nations name and emblem in their business cards, email signatures, website or for other communication purposes. The use or reproduction of the UN name and emblem in any activity of the Centre will be conditioned upon this activity being co-organised or co-sponsored by the UNECE.

Conflict of Interest: The Centres are expected to disclose to the UNECE secretariat any situation that discloses or may appear to disclose a conflict of interest. This also applies to any of its members. The Centres and their representatives may elect to recuse themselves from participating in an activity because of a potential conflict of interest or lack of impartiality in the implementation of an activity endorsed by the ICoE.

Corruption: The Centres and their members are expected to adhere to the highest standards of professional, moral and ethical conduct, to respect the local laws and not engage in any form of corrupt practices, including but not limited to, extortion, fraud, embezzlement or bribery.

Intellectual Property: The Centres and their members are expected to refrain from knowingly infringing the intellectual property rights of other parties at all times. Failure to do so may not only result in the initiation of legal proceedings against the Centre concerned at the national level, but also to withdrawal of that Centre's affiliation with the ICoE.

Sexual exploitation and abuse: sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognized international legal norms and standards. In line with the Secretary-General's Bulletin dated 9 October 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13), the United Nations shall receive a written undertaking from the Centres that they accept these standards. Failure by a Centre to take preventive measures against sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, to investigate allegations thereof, or to take corrective action when sexual exploitation or sexual abuse has occurred, shall constitute grounds for termination of that Centre's affiliation with the ICoE.

V. Continuing affiliation conditions

Operational matters: The overarching principle is that Centres have to become operational within the first six months of their establishment and remain operational throughout their lifecycle. Any delays have to be justified and discussed with the UNECE secretariat, which has full discretion to grant an extension. If a Centre is not operational within one year of its creation, or does not remain operational throughout its existence, the UNECE secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships will decide on its continued affiliation with the ICoE.

Sunset provision: The Centres have been established for a definite period of time (typically five years) with a sunset provision included in the affiliation agreements. The continued operations of a Centre beyond its sunset provision is exclusively at the discretion of the Bureau of the Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships in consultation with the UNECE secretariat. One of the key factors to be taken into account in these circumstances is the Centre's capability to remain fully operational.