



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Written Ministerial Statement

International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers Association Launch

15 October 2013

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mark Simmonds): The UK is, along with the USA, a global leader in the private security company (PSC) market. Legitimate PSCs, working to high standards, are vital to the protection of diplomatic missions and the work of companies and NGOs in complex and dangerous environments around the world.

The Government wants to see the highest standards, including on human rights, across all PSCs that work in complex environments abroad. At the same time, the Government wants to level the global playing field for those PSCs that work to high, measurable standards, so that they cannot be undercut by PSCs which do not meet those standards.

We have undertaken to establish a system of national certification to professional standards for PSCs, which would measure PSCs' implementation of the commitments and principles set out in the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC).

A large section of the PSC industry has signed up to the ICoC, which envisages professional standards to implement the ICoC principles and the creation of a global oversight mechanism, named the ICoC Association (ICoCA). The ICoCA forms the second track of the Government's approach to raising standards and levelling the playing field for PSCs. The Government strongly encourages all PSCs working in complex environments abroad to both pursue certification to these standards by accredited certifying bodies and to become members of the ICoCA.

The ICoCA was launched at a conference in Geneva on 19 – 20 September. The UK, along with Australia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, is one of the founding member governments of the ICoCA. 13 civil society organisations and 135 PSCs have also joined the ICoCA as founding members. Over 50 of the 135 PSCs that have joined the ICoCA are UK-based. The United Kingdom has provided £300,000 of funding to support the establishment of the ICoCA. Other founding states are also providing support.

The governance structure of the ICoCA will consist of a General Assembly, a secretariat based in Geneva, and a twelve-person Board of Directors, with equal representation for each of the membership pillars of governments, civil society and industry. Former UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva, Dr Peter Gooderham CMG, has been elected to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will establish the procedures by which the ICoCA will fulfil its core functions.

Future membership of the ICoCA for PSCs will depend on them being independently certified to approved professional standards. The ICoCA will be able to monitor member PSCs are fulfilling their obligations under the ICoC, including through independent monitoring in the field, and can receive complaints that a PSC has breached the principles of the ICoC.

We believe the twin-track approach of certification to agreed standards and ICoCA oversight can help us fulfil the UK's commitments under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. These commitments were set out in the UK's Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which the Foreign Secretary and Business Secretary launched in September.