

FICAC STATEMENT

The World Federation of Consuls (FICAC) is aware of a few recently written articles about the role and the métier of Honorary Consuls. FICAC promotes and supports the highest levels of integrity and professionalism among all honorary consuls posted around the world and has no pretensions that every single one of the several thousands of Honorary Consuls has lived up to these levels at all times. The Federation expects that, anyone bestowed with this unique honor and special status will faithfully and respectfully serve the bilateral relationship to which one owes allegiance to. FICAC, totally and unequivocally condemns all behaviour that goes against the guiding principles of the mission of the Honorary Consul. Although FICAC welcomes genuine, independent, accurate, non-biased, factual, investigative research and expression of opinions, it firmly rejects any generalizations which severely defame and mischaracterize the work of Honorary Consuls. International laws and conventions as well as legal proceedings in both the sending and the receiving states provide for the procedural review and actions that could lead up to and including termination and prosecution of bad actors.

THE INSTITUTION OF HONORARY CONSULS

The institution of Honorary Consuls has a long and proud history. Originating in ancient Greece, India and China, it has become increasingly important with the passage of time whilst transforming into a crucially essential position today. As diplomacy continues to become more democratised, encompassing trade, culture, sports, art, policy and a myriad of other disciplines, the role of Honorary Consul continues to grow in significance and status.

The institution of Honorary Consuls is engaged more and more frequently due to the fact that it is less costly, since the establishment and operation of a consulate headed by an Honorary Consul is relatively of little or no cost to the appointing country. This works out to be a huge benefit, especially to smaller nations that cannot afford representation in all the regions they may have an interest in. Government practices are showing a growing tendency to utilize more often the position of Honorary Consul in modern diplomacy.

WHO ARE THE HONORARY CONSULS AND HOW ARE THEY APPOINTED

Honorary Consuls are carefully selected upstanding and reputable individuals who are respected leaders with strong connections and relationships with the appointing country. Honorary Consuls are always prepared to dedicate time, efforts and resources towards the continued development of bilateral and international relations. They serve on a volunteer basis without remuneration and very often at great personal sacrifices and expense. Their role is to protect the interest of a foreign country, its citizens, and businesses, as well as enhancing the development of bilateral relations between the sending and the receiving countries.

There are certain strict and complicated procedures that must be followed before an Honorary Consul is appointed. After an exhaustive search, candidates for the position of Honorary Consul are first nominated by the state they will be representing and after an intense and thorough background examination, they are then approved by the state they will be operating in. Their consular activities are recorded on a regular basis and a report is generated and submitted to the sending state. Such activities can in many cases be

overseen by the receiving state. The receiving and sending states have the ability to withdraw the authorization of Honorary Consuls at anytime without cause. They can also close down a consulate which would result in the termination of the appointment of the Honorary Consul.

Although the Vienna Convention for Consular Relations provides for certain privileges for career consuls, hardly any privileges are provided for Honorary Consuls except for those strictly related to exercising consular duties. Contrary to career diplomats, Honorary Consuls do not have the benefit of immunity. They are governed by laws of the country where they serve as Honorary Consul, the same way as any other citizen.

FICAC ("*Fédération Internationale des Corps et Associations Consulaires*", also called World Federation of Consuls), which celebrated its 40th anniversary last October, is a global network of Consular Associations from more than 90 countries, created to advocate and improve the status, legitimacy, and effectiveness of all consular officers in all receiving States. FICAC has UN ECOSOC Special Consultative Status, and is accredited a Civil Society with the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. FICAC, through agreements with other international organizations and universities, offers its members training through conferences and regional meetings, supports UN programs, organizes various cultural events around the world, and is currently in the process of launching a post-Doc study program on peace and conflict resolution.

For more information please visit: www.ficacworld.org