



# SOUTH ASIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



## CODE OF CONDUCT EDITION 2022

“Become a leading responsible regional football association”

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## **A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF SAFF**

**A warm greeting to all our colleagues through South Asia, particularly all officials in our respected Member Associations. I express my pleasures in working with you throughout the years in which we have been united in aligning our core values in order to develop and promote the best for football around the region.**

**Although, we have demonstrated throughout the years our “Strength in Unity”, we are yet to contextualize how we have in good faith adopted to the key values underpinning the game of football into our activities**

**beyond the field of play. Additionally, given the fact that we operate in 7 countries with environments that can often prove complex, we believe that the notions of respect, fair play and teamwork should be corner stones in our administrative and other activities, as such, we have put together this Code of Conduct which will deliver the underlying principles of the key values we need to uphold.**

**The Code of Conduct will be a tool to measure our activities against the highest possible standards of ethical conduct and integrity and each and every one of you has a responsibility to be familiar with our Code of Conduct, practice it in your day-to-day activities and convey its values in your dealings with those who work with and for us. The commitment to demonstrate such highest standards will set a positive example about our administration to all our key stakeholders who participate in our competitions and development activities. Further, upholding highest possible standards of ethical conduct and integrity will boost our reputation and aid us to deliver quality competitions, attract more spectators and players to football and retain committed people at SAFF.**

**We must respect the game of football and everyone involved with it. Therefore, the Executive Committee and I are counting on your individual and collective engagement to uphold the SAFF’s values.**

**Thanking you, SAFF President**

## SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This Code of Conduct is a reference document intended for all the following individuals who shall be subject to and bound by this Code of Conduct:

- All individuals who are engaged in working for SAFF through an employment contract either on a full-time or a part-time basis. This shall therefore include, the General Secretary and other staff members of SAFF in their designated capacities, amongst others.
- All individuals who are elected duly by SAFF to carry out certain and/or wider functions and/or represent SAFF in an official capacity. This shall therefore include, the SAFF President, the SAFF Vice Presidents, the members of the SAFF Executive Committee and the independent Committees of SAFF.
- All individuals who are appointed, authorised and/or assigned duly by SAFF to carry out certain and/or wider functions and/or represent SAFF in an official capacity. This shall therefore include, committees required under the SAFF Statutes, all individual who are appointed to exercise an official function for, or on behalf of, SAFF at any match, competition, function, course or other events organised by SAFF (including Match Commissioners, Referees, Assistant Referees, Referee Assessors, Member Association staffs, Panelists, Speakers, amongst others) and any volunteers engaged by the SAFF while organising its events and competitions, amongst others.
- All individual third-party contractors, consultants, service providers and others who may be temporarily engaged from time to time (on a contractual and/or any other basis) to perform and/or provide certain definitive works and/or services for/to SAFF to are also encouraged to follow this Code of Conduct in connection with their work for SAFF as any failure to comply with this Code of Conduct by any individual third-party SAFF contractor, consultant or other service provider may result in the consequence of termination of their relationship with SAFF.

As this Code of Conduct is collectively addressed to the functions of all the above individuals acting for, or on behalf of SAFF, all such individuals shall hereinafter collectively be referred to as the “SAFF Unity” throughout this Code of Conduct.

## **PURPOSE**

This Code of Conduct has been devised to protect SAFF's objectives which include broadly the delivery and realisation of SAFF's visions and missions, amongst others. The principles set out in this Code of Conduct is therefore, essential to SAFF. SAFF understands that the SAFF Unity who execute the key functions for, or on behalf of SAFF are key to protect, develop and promote competitions and development activities of SAFF. SAFF consequently comprehends that together with the SAFF Unity, they must commit to maintain fair play, ethics and integrity in their conduct to protect the unifying, educational, cultural and humanitarian values that underpin the game of football.

This Code of Conduct further enshrines the core values of unity, professionalism, respect, safety, performance and pioneer spirit which should be reflected by the SAFF Unity while acting for, or on behalf of SAFF, in all that SAFF do, in order to ensure that the SAFF's competitions, development activities and all other conduct conform to the highest ethical and sporting standards.

This Code of Conduct is the first step for the SAFF Unity to get clarity on any questions relating to the standards of ethical conduct. It sets forth SAFF's core values, shared responsibilities, global commitments, promises and general guidance on expectations.

The SAFF further requests to understand that this Code of Conduct cannot possibly address every situation. Therefore, the Code of Conduct is by no means a substitute of good and unbiased judgment. The SAFF Unity therefore must remember that each of them are responsible for their own actions.

## **REFERENCE STANDARDS**

We comply with all national and international laws and standards governing our activities. We also abide by the rules and regulations promulgated by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association and the Asian Football Confederation.

In the event of a conflict between legal standards and our Code of Conduct, we apply the more stringent standard. As provided by legislation governing our activities and our internal guidance, failure to comply with these reference standards can result in sanctions.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES**

The SAFF Unity subject to this Code of Conduct shall have to comply with the following core principles all the time:

- **Integrity and ethics**

Individuals of the SAFF Unity have a duty to behave ethically and act with integrity, as such, it mandates to act honestly and maintaining a consistent adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

The SAFF Unity must bear in mind that the SAFF has to act with pioneer spirit and that nurturing a reputation of behaving with integrity is utmost important in order for the SAFF to successfully pursue its objectives. You must also be mindful that your words and actions reflect on the SAFF and on football generally. Therefore, anything you say or do must be consistent with the highest ethical standards. It shall include honoring the contracts, agreements and documents we sign.

- **Respect, dignity and fair play**

Respect, dignity and fair play is a cornerstone of our collective principles and our way of demonstrating exemplary conduct. It involves showing due regard for the personal dignity, privacy and personal rights of all colleagues and football stakeholders as people are the core focus of our collective undertaking, valuing diversity and paying attention to the quality of dialogue within the SAFF Unity. You have a duty to act with dignity and decorum at all times when carrying out your duties and functions. The SAFF also believes in the importance of fair play and the SAFF Unity should be guided by this principle at all times.

To work effectively, all of us need a healthy and safe work environment. Individuals of the SAFF Unity must treat everyone with respect in order to create a positive work environment free of coercion by listening to each other's values and opinions. It further requires to accept other's customs and cultures which are different from one's own as we work in a diverse environment, so that we can behave towards colleagues in a way that does not offend them and ensures equality.

- **Discrimination and harassment**

Discrimination involves treating a person or group of persons unfairly, especially on the grounds of race, age, disability, religion or gender. Harassment can be any form of intimidation and can include all types of harassment like sexual, assault, amongst others. The SAFF is a diverse organisation, with employees, representatives, Member Associations and other stakeholders from across the South Asian region and beyond and as such has a zero-tolerance approach to all types of discrimination and harassment. The SAFF promotes inclusiveness and diversity. This diversity is a strength and, as a member of the SAFF Unity, you must not commit, support or tolerate discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind. SAFF takes the necessary steps to ensure decent working conditions in office, competition sites and during other activities. In particular, this includes a prohibition on forced labor and child labor, a commitment to non-discrimination and freedom of association, and a guarantee that any problems that arise can be reported to human resources staff. Turning a blind eye to instances of discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated.

- **Diversity promotion**

We develop our employees' professional skills and careers without any discrimination, whether based on origin, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or affiliation with a political or union organization or minority group. Our employees are hired on the basis of need and each candidate's specific capabilities. We respect the diversity of religious beliefs and the freedom of every employee to follow articles of religious faith.

- **Safeguarding children and young people**

Safeguarding is a core component for SAFF and if we cannot ensure it, we will not be reliable and hence sustainable as an organization. The SAFF therefore is fully committed to protecting children and young people from any kind of harm and promoting their wellbeing. Accordingly, the SAFF seeks to ensure a safe, enjoyable and inclusive environment for the millions

of children and young people who regularly play, coach and referee football across South Asia, as well as those who volunteer in support of SAFF's activities and attend the SAFF's competitions as fans.

SAFF is uncompromising when it comes to safeguarding. Safeguarding is a daily battle that is waged with humility and vigilance. We must never drop our guard. Accidents are not inevitable. Every accident, no matter how minor, can be avoided. All of us at SAFF, at every level of the organization, should be mindful of our rules regarding safeguarding, and rigorously observe those rules at all times. Each of us has a personal responsibility — and the personal authority — to step in when we observe a breach of those rules or feel a situation is unsafe. In choosing our partners, we give preference to those who can apply a policy equivalent to ours. Upholding our core value of safeguarding and putting it into practice at all times is essential for fulfilling our ambition to become the responsible football association.

The SAFF Unity therefore has a duty to report immediately any facts or suspicions relating to the mental, physical and/or sexual abuse of children and young people.

- Team mentality

The SAFF Unity is strongly encouraged to express all concerns and problems, regarding that the SAFF pledges to support them on any such physical and mental health issues.

Teamwork shall always be an essential component for SAFF as we work with seven Member Associations and other stakeholders across the globe. Teamwork is also an essential part of football whether its' on the pitch or off it. To create and promote team mentality and a positive working environment, shall be the responsibility of all individuals of the SAFF Unity. Individuals of the SAFF Unity should have a positive attitude when performing their duties, and should look to provide help and encouragement to colleagues when needed. Trusting in and cooperating with colleagues will contribute to a happy and productive work environment which blends each other's strengths.

As mentioned above, individuals of the SAFF Unity are encouraged to report any disrespectful or discriminatory behavior in order that appropriate action can be taken.

- **Political and religious neutrality**

SAFF is neutral in terms of politics and religion as sports are intended to bring people together and not create divisions. Individuals of the SAFF Unity therefore must be careful regarding their personal political activities and statements, ensuring that SAFF is not presented in any particular issue, in a way where SAFF's neutrality is questioned and/or misinterpreted.

The use of SAFF funds and resources for political activities is strictly prohibited. Accordingly, individuals of the SAFF Unity must be apolitical when carrying out their duties and functions relating to SAFF, particularly when carrying out duties on the territory of SAFF Member Association, and at SAFF events and Congresses.

We further respect the privacy of the SAFF Unity. With regard to political engagement, the SAFF Unity have the right to participate in political activities on their own right, if they specify clearly that they do not represent SAFF and they notify SAFF of any action with the potential to create a conflict of interest.

- **Compliance with laws and regulations**

As SAFF complies with all applicable laws and international and regional standards, it expects the SAFF Unity to do the same. Individuals of the SAFF Unity must also adhere to all SAFF rules and regulations when carrying out their duties and functions. You should particularly be wary of instances relating to money laundering, corruption, the financing of terrorism, customs and taxation, data protection and human rights. You must be on guard to spot signs of potential illegal activity and report any such activities immediately. Violations of laws can result in significant harm to SAFF, including financial penalties, denial of government contracting privileges, imprisonment for criminal misconduct and damage to our business relationships and reputation. As such, individuals of the SAFF Unity are expected to be ethical and responsible when dealing with finances, products, partnerships, and public image.



- **Bribery and corruption**

**Bribery and corruption can destroy the fundamental principle of the game to unite the globe by maintaining fairness and diversity. The SAFF rejects and condemns all forms of bribery and corruption. Corruption involves dishonest and/or fraudulent conduct (typically involving financial or other benefits, and often some form of bribery). Bribery means the offer of anything of value with the intent to obtain or retain an improper business or personal advantage. As such, individuals of the SAFF Unity shall not offer or accept gifts in exchange for improper business or personal advantages, or to influence official decisions. Gifts of a reasonable value may be accepted under certain circumstances in the ordinary course of business. In case of any doubt, you should contact [info@saffederation.org] for clarification.**

- **Best interests and conflicts of interest**

**We respect the privacy of personal data. Every individual of the SAFF Unity undertakes to uphold the confidentiality of all information and protect our intangible assets. To that end, any disclosure is prohibited other than in exceptional circumstances and on a need-to-know basis, even among the SAFF Unity, and nothing should ever be shared outside of the organisation without the appropriate approval(s) being sought in advance.**

**Individuals of the SAFF Unity must always act in the best interests of SAFF and it is the personal responsibility of each individual of the SAFF Unity to avoid conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest may arise when a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity for SAFF. No individual of the SAFF Unity should use their position for improper personal gain. You may have a conflict of interest if you, or a close relative, has a financial interest in a SAFF business partner, or in circumstances where you supervise or are supervised by a relative, or if you are considering hiring a relative as an employee, or if you have personal or romantic involvement with any stakeholder of the SAFF which might affect your ability to exercise good judgment. In case of any doubt, you should contact [info@saffederation.org] for clarification. We encourage that you disclose potential conflicts of interest in advance.**

The duty to act in the best interests of SAFF also includes the need to safeguard and protect the SAFF's assets. The SAFF's assets can be physical (e.g. office furniture, any work documents, amongst others), but also include SAFF's intellectual property (e.g. trademarks, brands and logos, copyright, designs and ideas). This duty also involves keeping all business information strictly confidential (e.g. strategic plans, contract terms and rates, fees and other financial information, and details of internal procedures). The SAFF Unity therefore has a duty to treat our property, whether material or intangible, with respect and care. Further, they shouldn't misuse our equipment or use it frivolously and should respect all kinds of incorporeal property. It should be used only in relation to their activities for SAFF. Additionally, the use of our assets for individual profit or any unlawful, unauthorized personal or unethical purpose is prohibited.

- **Transparency and responsible communication**

Only specific authorised persons may use social media to speak on SAFF's behalf. Similarly, requests for information from third parties (in particular, the media) should always be referred to the SAFF Head of Media and Communications. Further, when using any form of social media, you must comply with this Code of Conduct. You must not disclose any confidential information about the SAFF or any of its employees, contractors or third-party vendors. We do not encourage you sharing and being part of any political or social propaganda on behalf of the SAFF unless specifically asked to do so.

Transparency is key for maintaining good governance, as such, SAFF shall strive to maintain transparency in governing the game in its competitions and when dealing with its stakeholders. Individuals of the SAFF Unity therefore are required to ensure that their business communications and internal documents are clear, truthful and accurate, by avoiding misleading and inaccurate statements, and by avoiding the implementation of difficult to understand practices and policies in their capacities of acting for SAFF.

Openness in communication is to be encouraged, however, individuals of the SAFF Unity must ensure that all external communications (including on social media) are consistent with SAFF's position, and its practices and procedures. Please note that what individuals of the SAFF Unity publish externally reflects on the entire organisation and anything posted on social media, even in a private capacity, must be consistent with this Code of Conduct and SAFF's official position.

- **Social and environmental responsibility**

The SAFF Unity must be mindful of the broader social and environmental context within which SAFF operates. When carrying out your duties, this includes taking a responsible attitude to the use of air conditioning, the use of reusable drinking vessels ahead of disposable bottles and cups, and avoiding unnecessary printing.

SAFF is committed to taking its social and environmental responsibilities seriously, particularly with regard to sustainability. The SAFF Unity should contribute to positive social change through football and aim to minimise the negative impact of all of the organisations' activities on the environment, promoting sustainability within our sphere of influence.

- **The use of drugs and other forms of substance abuse**

In line with the key role that SAFF plays in the fight against drugs and doping in sport, SAFF takes a zero-tolerance approach to substance abuse by individuals of the SAFF Unity. Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of chemical and other substances.

- **No betting or match manipulation**

SAFF strictly prohibits the SAFF Unity to participate in, either directly or indirectly, betting, gambling, lotteries or similar events or transactions which are related to football. Involvement in any form of manipulation or unlawful influencing of match results is strictly prohibited.

Players, officials, management and anyone who might have information pertaining to suspicious behaviour, incidents or approaches related to potential match fixing and/or betting manipulation should report to SAFF immediately via email directly to the following email address [[info@saffederation.org](mailto:info@saffederation.org)].

## **DUTY TO REPORT**

Individuals of the SAFF Unity have the duty to report immediately regarding any conduct or behavior which is or might be considered to be a violation or potential violation of this Code of Conduct or any other SAFF rules or regulations. An omission to report any such violation shall be considered to be a violation or potential violation of this Code of Conduct. Reports can be made directly via email to the following email address [info@saffederation.org].

The SAFF in this regard shall take a zero-tolerance approach to any form of illegal, immoral or unethical behavior.

The SAFF shall not tolerate any form of retaliation against individuals who report violations of this Code of Conduct. The SAFF shall handle all reports of misconduct confidentially (to the extent practically and legally possible).

In case of any doubt as to whether a report should be made or to whom a report should be made, individuals are encouraged to seek guidance from the General Secretary.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE**

SAFF expects all persons who are subject to and bound by this Code of Conduct to know and follow the above-mentioned principles. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary and/or other action being taken against the relevant individual, including termination of contracts (subject to applicable laws). In appropriate cases, action may also be taken under the SAFF Disciplinary and Ethics Code.

## **OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

This Code of Conduct shall be issued in the official language of the SAFF which is English. Each Member Association shall be responsible for its own translation. In the case of any discrepancy in the interpretation of the different language texts of this Code of Conduct, the English text shall be authoritative.

## ENFORCEMENT

This Code of Conduct was adopted by the SAFF Executive Committee on 2 July 2022. It supersedes all previous texts and comes into force with immediate effect.

On behalf of the SAFF Executive Committee:

**Kazi Md. Salahuddin**  
**President**

**Anwarul Huq**  
**General Secretary**



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