

# OPERATIONAL POLICY

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*Type of document:* Policy

*Approved by:* The Palme Center Board 2017-06-15

*Responsible for document:* Secretary General

*Latest update:* 2020-06-10

*Latest review:* 2020-06-10

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The Olof Palme International Center's (the Palme Center) operational policy is one of the organisation's overall steering documents. It forms the basis for the Palme Center's strategy development and complements the organisation's statutes, the rules of procedure for the Board and instructions to the Secretary General. The operational policy is based on the values and societal analysis of the labour movement. It is approved annually by the Board of the Palme Center.

## THIS IS THE PALME CENTER

The Palme Center is part of the Swedish labour movement and was founded in 1992 to promote democracy, human rights, and peace in the spirit of Olof Palme. With a vision of a world of peaceful societies based on the ideals of democracy where all people are of equal value, the Palme Center is a body for cooperation in international issues for the Swedish labour movement. The Palme Center is a democratically run organisation and our member organisations represent the Swedish labour movement through the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and its member associations, the Workers' Educational Association (ABF), the Swedish Social Democratic Party and its secondary organisations, the Swedish Young Falcons, the Swedish Union of Tenants, the Swedish labour movement's folk high schools, Folkets Hus och Parker and Verdandi. Our task is to support the member organisations' international operations and thus contribute to strengthening the global labour movement. Our member organisations' commitment and experience as popular movements are the basis for our work and their international networks enable cooperation with organisations that share our values all over the world.

## OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

The labour movement is based on the conviction that it is only through organisation that we can change society and influence its development so that it is of benefit to everyone. Together, the organisations of the labour movement have a unique history and long practical experience of, through organisation, contributing to the development of democracy, international solidarity, and the fight against poverty. For more than a hundred years, work for change in Sweden and internationally has been driven forward. Just as the international labour movement has changed society and the world in the last century, the Palme Center works together with its member and partner organisations to do so in the future.

Today's globalised world turns ever faster and is characterised both by unprecedented prosperity and extreme injustice. The age in which we live is marked by deep divisions in both welfare and power, between people and countries, and our future existence is threatened by a development model that does not take the limitations of the planet into account. People risk being consumed like goods and the climate and environment are being sacrificed. The informal

economy is growing, not least in the developing countries. Unregulated or outright illegal working conditions mean no rights for workers. Each year, active trade unionists are imprisoned and tortured and tens of thousands of workers are losing their jobs because they have tried to organise themselves. The situation is akin to slavery for the most vulnerable. This human exploitation disregards human rights, increases inequality and hampers a sustainable development. Globalisation cannot and should not be hindered. But, for the labour movement, it is unacceptable that it leads to societies being torn apart by increased inequality, that it takes place without consideration for the environment and that people have to compete for work through low wages and poor working conditions. We want to see globalisation that is not merely economic, but which is also political, social, and sustainable. Globalisation that enables a sustainable future and is of benefit to everyone through a just transition.

The challenges and the answers are global. Agreements such as Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement make possible global solutions to common problems. They form a framework for both domestic policies like foreign relations and, not least, international development work. They underline the need for common solutions. To achieve these objectives, popular organisation, political decisiveness, local and global trade union mobilisation, and broad alliances between a wide range of organisations and movements are needed. People must be given the opportunity to control development through political representation and real influence.

## OUR CORE ISSUES

The Palme Center works for a world where all people have the same opportunities and equal life conditions. The prerequisites for such a development are that human rights are respected, democracy is maintained and developed, and that peace prevails. These are the core issues of the Palme Center.

### *Human rights*

All people shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Respect for human rights is necessary to create an equitable and sustainable world free from poverty and oppression, for present and future generations. Human rights – as reflected in *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948, the *Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* of 1966, the *Convention on Civil and Political Rights* of 1976 and other relevant regional conventions and treaties – constitute a unit. They are universal, indivisible, and interdependent. This means that the political and civil rights are as important as the social and economic ones. States are ultimately responsible for human rights being respected, promoted, defended, and implemented. The role of civil society organisations, political parties, religious groups, and others is to respect, promote and defend the value and dignity of everyone in society. The Palme Center, together with our member organisations, therefore works to support organisation that aims to strengthen respect for human rights in society, advocate for, and increase awareness of, human rights and work towards respect for human rights permeating all operations, legislation and exercising of power.

### *Democracy*

The democratic society is essential for the labour movement based on the conviction that everyone has an equal right to have power over their lives, to join in and shape their environment and take part in the development of society. Democracy creates the conditions

for people to live a life of freedom and participation. It is a form of governance with the ability to prevent and solve conflicts peacefully. When individuals are given the same rights to influence collective decisions, conflicts of interest between the collective and the individual are easier to deal with. It also contains the potential for a fair redistribution of societal resources. Democracy is an integral part of the labour movement's social analysis and has been crucial in the fight for reformist advances. Democracy is, however, not a static condition. It is a system that must be defended and developed if it is not to stagnate, be taken for granted and exploited. Our experience shows that when trade unions, political parties, popular movements, environmental organisations and other grass roots movements are absent as a counterweight to financial interests and anti-democratic forces, it leads to a weakening of democracy, a lessening of respect for citizen and workers' rights, environmental considerations being disregarded and exploitation increasing. A viable and dynamic civil society is also crucial to realise the ideal of democracy and civic participation beyond and between general elections. The Palme Center, together with our member organisations, therefore work to increase people's opportunity and will to participate in democratic processes to influence their societies and their own lives, to contribute to developing democratic popular movements, trade unions and progressive parties, to advocate for, and increase awareness of, democracy and democratic conditions worldwide.

#### *Peace and dialogue*

The labour movement's view of peace is that it is not merely the absence of war and conflict, it is also freedom from social, political, and cultural oppression. Peace is safeguarded both by personal security and by political, social, and cultural justice. A long-term and lasting peace can therefore only be built in societies grounded in freedom and equality. The freedom and security of every person is closely linked to the freedom and security of every other person. The fundamental principle of common security that Olof Palme often talked about and worked for internationally means that people cannot achieve security in conflict with each other, but only together with each other. It is a world with disarmament as a common objective. Globalisation characterised by peaceful relations between countries, organisations, people, and other actors strengthens trust and peace. Mistrust and armament drive armed conflicts and threaten stability and security. International law and its institutions must therefore be strengthened as an essential tool for creating and spreading mutual trust. The Palme Center, together with our member organisations, therefore work to increase respect for UN conventions and international law and for their implementation, support initiatives that promote dialogue and understanding between parties in existing or potential conflicts, help to strengthen people's and societies' ability to peacefully deal with conflicts and crises and advocate for, and increase knowledge about, peace, security and disarmament. The core issues of the Palme Center are mutually dependent on each other and shall be considered as a whole, a unit. Without peace, no human rights. Without human rights, no democracy. Without democracy, no peace.

Conflicts, war and violence, the ongoing environmental and climate crisis, widespread corruption, and threats to gender equality are of particular importance for the development of the world. Read more about how the Palme Center views these development factors and how they affect our operations in the respective policies and in our strategies.

## HOW WE CHANGE THE WORLD

In order to achieve societal change in our core issues, the Palme Center works on organisation and alliance-building, with a focus on popular participation, trade union community work and party-political organisation. Through our operations in international development cooperation, knowledge dissemination and advocacy, the Palme Center contributes to organisation and alliance-building all around the world.

### **Organisation and alliance-building**

The Palme Center proceeds from the premise of people's rights and every society's own conditions and forms for organisation and participation. The power for change lies in people's involvement and common endeavour. Democratic associations, popular movements and other popular groupings are powerful tools by which people can both influence and govern society. They create conditions for popular support for societal development, mobilise for progressive social change and increase trust in society and its institutions. The Palme Center wants to be an organisation in motion, a popular movement that brings together different organisations and actors in strategic alliances to achieve common goals. Therefore, the Palme Center works on the following:

#### *Popular Participation*

Through the Palme Center and our member organisations, our partners receive support in educating and developing their organisations. Public education – through, for example, study circles – is a democratic and effective method for reaching many people. The Palme Center's public education work has a focus on young people, women and marginalised groups, as these are groups that often have or have had fewer opportunities to acquire knowledge of, participate in and have an influence on their communities. When people get more knowledge about their rights and opportunities, it gives them the power to work for change. Leaders of organisations also receive education through the Palme Center, including in leadership, gender equality and internal democracy.

#### *Trade union community work*

Democratic, free, and strong trade union organisations are a prerequisite for justice and good working conditions, as well as being a safeguard of workers' rights and the progressive development of society. They are also important actors for ensuring that human rights are observed and play a central role as educators through courses and training, as community builders through national, regional and international platforms for social dialogue and as peace actors through dialogue and mediation work. The Palme Center supports trade union organisations and trade union support organisations in matters such as advocacy, internal democracy, organisation, political and trade union cooperation, and gender equality. We jointly discuss and pursue questions of a just transition, decent employment conditions and new ways to organise in an increasingly informal economy.

#### *Party-political organisation*

Democratic parties and the multi-party system are prerequisites for parliamentary democracy to be able to function. They make possible popular support, active citizenship, and democratic participation. In this way they contribute to a democratically anchored development of society and the emergence of a sustainable democracy. Just as in the case of trade union organisations, it is a prerequisite that they are democratically organised, inclusive, guarantee participation,

influence and transparency and are thus stronger than individual political leaders. The participation of women and young people is often limited in the central bodies of parties, but also through women and youth sections not being given the opportunity to participate in decision-making. A lack of development of ideas and debate further weakens parties and their standing and has a negative effect on the very idea of the multi-party system and the choice between political ideas and proposals. The Palme Center therefore particularly encourages the participation of young people, women, and marginalised groups. We cooperate with our sister parties for progressive idea and policy development and the promotion of internal democracy.

## **OUR AREAS OF OPERATION**

The Palme Center operations take place on two fronts: international development cooperation and communication, advocacy, and fundraising. In order to conduct these in the best way, the Palme Center continuously develops its organisation. Priorities for work in the respective areas of operation are made in five-year strategies.

### *International development cooperation*

The Palme Center supports and promotes the development of free and democratic organisations that are part of the international labour movement or organisations related to it. All international work is based on our member organisations' solidarity work and international priorities. Partnerships are characterised by sustainability and solidarity, where strategic relations create good conditions for achieving common objectives. The Palme Center's dual role as a capacity strengthening and controlling organisation places high demands on continuous dialogue, good partnership and solid systems for follow-up and accounting. We do this in close dialogue with our member organisations and partner organisations. The quality of the work is ensured by good relations, transparency and participation, well-functioning internal systems and processes for management and control, clear application and accounting processes and continuous work on risk management.

### *Communication, advocacy, and fundraising*

The Palme Center provides facts on questions about democracy, human rights, and peace as a source of knowledge for the Swedish labour movement; this is a basis for studies, debate and active advocacy. Our communications work is inspired by Olof Palme's role as an educator and opinion shaper. We work for the labour movement to involve itself in and collect money for global development. The Palme Center shall also shape opinion, pursue dialogue, and cooperate with decision-makers and authorities to have an influence on and pursue the organisation's core issues. Advocacy efforts are in part aimed at highlighting the structures that create and maintain unequal conditions and standards of living. We want to be a megaphone for our partner organisations and give a voice to groups and individuals that today have a lack of influence and small resources. In this way we can increase understanding and commitment to global development issues and the need for change. Information shall be designed so as best to take advantage of the experience of our partner organisations. Together with our member and partner organisations we can involve more people in the debate and in advocacy efforts, which will lead to concrete results.

### *Internal organisational development*

In order to conduct the Palme Center's operations in the best way, the organisation shall continuously be developed. The Palme Center is a learning organisation that evaluates

operations continuously in order to increase our effectiveness and competence. Learning in the organisation takes place with the help of, among other things, training, assessments, methodology development and through the exchange of experiences.

## **FUNDING**

The financial base for the Palme Center consists of membership fees and collected funds. These are managed in the Solidarity Fund and invested in accordance with the Palme Center's capital investment policy. To carry out operations, this financial base is supplemented with institutional funding from government agencies, foundations, or other public institutions. Institutional funding should strive to be diversified and long-term. The basic values of the financier shall be in accordance with the values expressed in this policy.

## **INTERNAL GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL**

The Palme Center's mandate of, and responsibility towards, the donors is to manage the money in such a way that the operational objectives are met without compromising the financial stability of the organisation. This requires an effective system of internal governance and control, carried out by the board, the management group and other personnel to provide a reasonable assurance that objectives related to operations, reporting and compliance are achieved. The system shall, as far as possible, ensure that funds are managed transparently, predictably, and consistently; that there is a clear division of responsibilities; reduce risks to acceptable levels and support sound decision-making. The basis for the Palme Center's internal governance and control is the COSO model (Committee of Sponsoring Organization of the Treadway Commission). Five components are to permeate organisation and processes: Control Environment, Risk Assessment, Control Activities, Information and Communication, and Monitoring Activities.

### **Control Environment**

There should be adequate regulations, organisational structure, and process control throughout the organisation. This forms the basis for good internal governance and control.

### **Risk Assessment**

Significant risks must be defined and managed by the Palme Center's secretariat. The board is informed of the risk assessment work at least once a year. The Palme Center's work on identifying and evaluating operational risk must be documented.

### **Control Activities**

There should be sufficient control activities established through, for example, policies, guidelines, manuals, and routines. Control activities should be carried out at all levels of the organisation and at all stages of the operational processes.

### **Information and Communication**

The Palme Center's information system should generate relevant information on operations and finances, and provide communication channels for personnel to participate in. The communication paths should be short and inclusive so that information is disseminated quickly and efficiently within the organisation.

## **Monitoring Activities**

Running evaluations, separate evaluations, or a combination of the two must be performed to ensure that the five components of internal governance and control are in place and functioning.

## **OWNERSHIP AND FOLLOW-UP**

The content of this policy is reviewed and adopted annually by the Board of the Palme Center. The Secretary General is responsible for ensuring that the policy and related documents are known and complied with in operations, and that follow-up on compliance with the policy is conducted annually.