



# HR Manual

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This document is as approved by the REC Caucasus executive Body (Collegial Trio) and is set out at the end of the document.



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## 1. Introduction

This Manual is designed to acquaint the Staff with REC Caucasus and provide them with information about working conditions, benefits, and policies affecting their employment.

The information contained in this Manual applies to all employees of REC Caucasus. Following the policies described in this Manual is considered a condition of continued employment. However, nothing in this Manual alters an employee's status. The contents of this Manual shall not constitute nor be construed as a promise of employment or as a contract between REC Caucasus and any of its employees. The manual is a summary of REC Caucasus policies, which are presented here only as a matter of information.

This Manual is binding for all REC Caucasus staff from the date the Manual is officially issued by the REC Caucasus and accepted by the Board. It applies to everyone employed at the REC Caucasus and staff is expected to be familiar with it.

All Staff are responsible for reading, understanding, and complying with the provisions of this Manual. The objective of this manual is to provide the Staff with a work environment that is constructive to both personal and professional growth.

The Executive Director reserves the right to change any details depicted in this manual, as and when required (see also 1.2.1.).

The Employee Manual is not a collective agreement between the REC Caucasus and staff.

## 2. Changes in Policy

This Manual supersedes all previous employee manuals and memos that may have been issued from time to time on subjects covered in this Manual.

However, the Employment Manual is considered to be a "living document" and is subject to change.

It is the responsibility of the Finance and Administration Department Head in cooperation with the EB to keep the contents of this manual up-to date and to manage the review of the manual at least once a year. A new and fully updated version of the Employee manual is issued every year on April 30 by the REC Caucasus. Any suggested amendments or additions to the manual must be authorized by the Executive Director. The Employee Manual must always be in line with the Charter of the REC Caucasus, the "Agreement between the United States of America and Georgia concerning the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus" and the By-laws.

### **Issuing of New Policies or Amendments to the Employee Manual**

REC Caucasus Staff will be informed by the Executive Body about new policies and amendments to the Employee Manual. These constitute a part of the Employee Manual. For issuing new policies or amending the Manual the following applies:

#### *Definition*

A policy is a general rule introduced by the Executive Body that regulates one or more aspect(s) of work at the REC Caucasus.

#### *Compliance*

A policy may be obligatory for a part or the whole of the workforce. A policy is obligatory for all employees unless it defines a subset of employees to whom it applies.

All staff, contractors, partners and any personnel engaged by the organisation are required to comply with the institution's Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS), Environmental and Social (E&S) safeguard requirements, Gender Policy, Stakeholder Engagement Policy, and Codes of Ethical Conduct as integral components of their terms of engagement. Compliance with these policies and associated procedures is a condition of continued employment or engagement and fundamental to the organisation's commitment to responsible, inclusive and ethical operations. Violations of E&S safeguards, gender policy provisions, ethical conduct standards or related obligations shall be considered serious breaches of organisational policy and may trigger disciplinary action, up to and including suspension, termination of employment or contract, and other sanctions in accordance with the organisation's disciplinary procedures. Such disciplinary actions are intended to uphold the organisation's standards, mitigate harm to affected

individuals or communities, and reinforce accountability for adherence to environmental, social and gender commitments.

RECC Caucasus ensures the health, safety, and well-being of its personnel and stakeholders in all operational contexts, consistent with the Adaptation Fund's Environmental and Social Policy requirements for safe working conditions and labour standards. Projects and activities shall be implemented in a manner that:

- a) Protects and promotes the safety and health of all project and programme workers, including staff, contractors, partners and volunteers, by identifying and managing occupational health and safety risks associated with project activities across all phases of implementation. This includes adherence to relevant national laws, applicable international labour standards, and internal protocols that prevent work-related injuries and illnesses.
- b) Ensures workplace risk prevention and mitigation measures appropriate to the nature of work, including but not limited to risk assessments, provision of safe equipment and tools, safe work practices, and continuous monitoring of occupational health and safety conditions.
- c) Upholds a duty of care for field missions and travel, requiring that all staff and associated personnel travelling on behalf of the organisation receive appropriate pre-travel briefings, risk assessments, health and safety guidance, and support resources (including emergency contacts and medical or security evacuation procedures) tailored to the specific risks of travel locations and missions. Personnel on official travel or field missions shall be provided with necessary information, training and protective measures to ensure their safety and well-being.
- d) Maintains reporting and response procedures for health and safety incidents, including workplace accidents, occupational illnesses, and travel-related emergencies. Relevant incidents shall be reported, investigated and documented in a timely manner and corrective actions implemented to prevent recurrence.
- e) Integrates health and safety considerations into organisational policies and project design, including environmental and social risk assessments, to ensure proactive identification and mitigation of risks that may affect the physical and psychological well-being of personnel and potentially affected communities.

Health, safety and well-being responsibilities shall be clearly defined in the organisation's risk management systems, and relevant staff and partners shall be provided with appropriate training and resources to fulfil these commitments in compliance with both organisational standards and the Adaptation Fund's expectations for safe and equitable working conditions. For additional information refer to REC Caucasus Health and Safety Policy.

#### *Enforcement*

Policies shall be enforced by all supervisors. Lack of enforcement may result in disciplinary action against the supervisor of the transgressing employee.

#### *Issuance*

Policies approved by the Executive Body are to be issued within two working days after the approval. Policies are issued via electronic mail by the Executive Body. Officers shall be informed by the ED about new policies immediately upon issuance.

The policies are available in the standard electronic format in the database of the REC Caucasus.

#### *Preparation*

Draft policies shall contain:

- a clear explanation of the rule or regulation in question.
- which previous policy it modifies (if any) with reference to the chapter of this manual.
- date of entering into force (no retrospective issuance is permissible).
- who are affected (only if non-general policy).
- date of expiration (if any).

#### *Records*

Updated, complete records of policies in force in the REC Caucasus shall be kept:

- in the Office of the ED

- in the library (for general access)
- at the fileserver.

#### *Reference*

Policies shall be referred to by their title, date of issuance and the chapter of the Employee Manual to which they refer.

Suggested amendments or suggestions for new policies should be submitted to the Finance and Administration Department Head who decides whether the amendment is to be brought forward to the Staff Meeting (see below) or whether a decision can be made without involvement of Staff Meeting. The latter will be done only in cases where there is no room for discussion. Any REC Caucasus employee may suggest amendments or additions.

### **3. Availability of the Human Resources Policy**

All HR procedures shall be based only on job-related and non-discriminatory criteria. Any form of discrimination, based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age or disability are strictly prohibited.

The copies of the Employee Manual will be available for all REC Caucasus staff at:

- ED Office
- REC Caucasus Library
- At the Fileserver

It is the task of the Finance and Administration Department Head to ensure that the latest updated version of the Employee Manual is always available at the places mentioned above.

If there are any questions regarding the Employee Manual, employees should contact the Finance and Administration Department Head, who will arrange for a more detailed explanation. In case the provisions of this manual are unclear or lead to misinterpretations, it is the task of the Finance and Administration Department Head to initiate an amendment of the Employee Manual.

### **4. Definitions**

#### *Employee*

For the purpose of the Employee Manual, an employee is a person who has an employment contract with the REC Caucasus. In the Employee Manual, such persons are referred to as “*employee/s*” or “*staff*”.

## **Introduction to the REC Caucasus**

### **5. Legal Status of the REC Caucasus**

The Regional Environmental Centre for Caucasus (REC Caucasus) is legally based on a Charter signed by the governments of three countries and the European Union<sup>1</sup>, and the “Agreement between the United States of America and Georgia concerning the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus” (inter-state agreement). The REC Caucasus regional office is based in Tbilisi, Georgia. Within Georgia, the REC Caucasus has the status of a non-commercial organization.

As set out in its Charter, the REC Caucasus is a non-commercial legal entity with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in the Caucasus. The Centre achieves its mission by encouraging co-operation among non-governmental organizations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, by supporting the free exchange of information, and by promoting public participation in environmental decision making.

The REC Caucasus is governed by a Board of nine Directors, the initial composition appointed by the

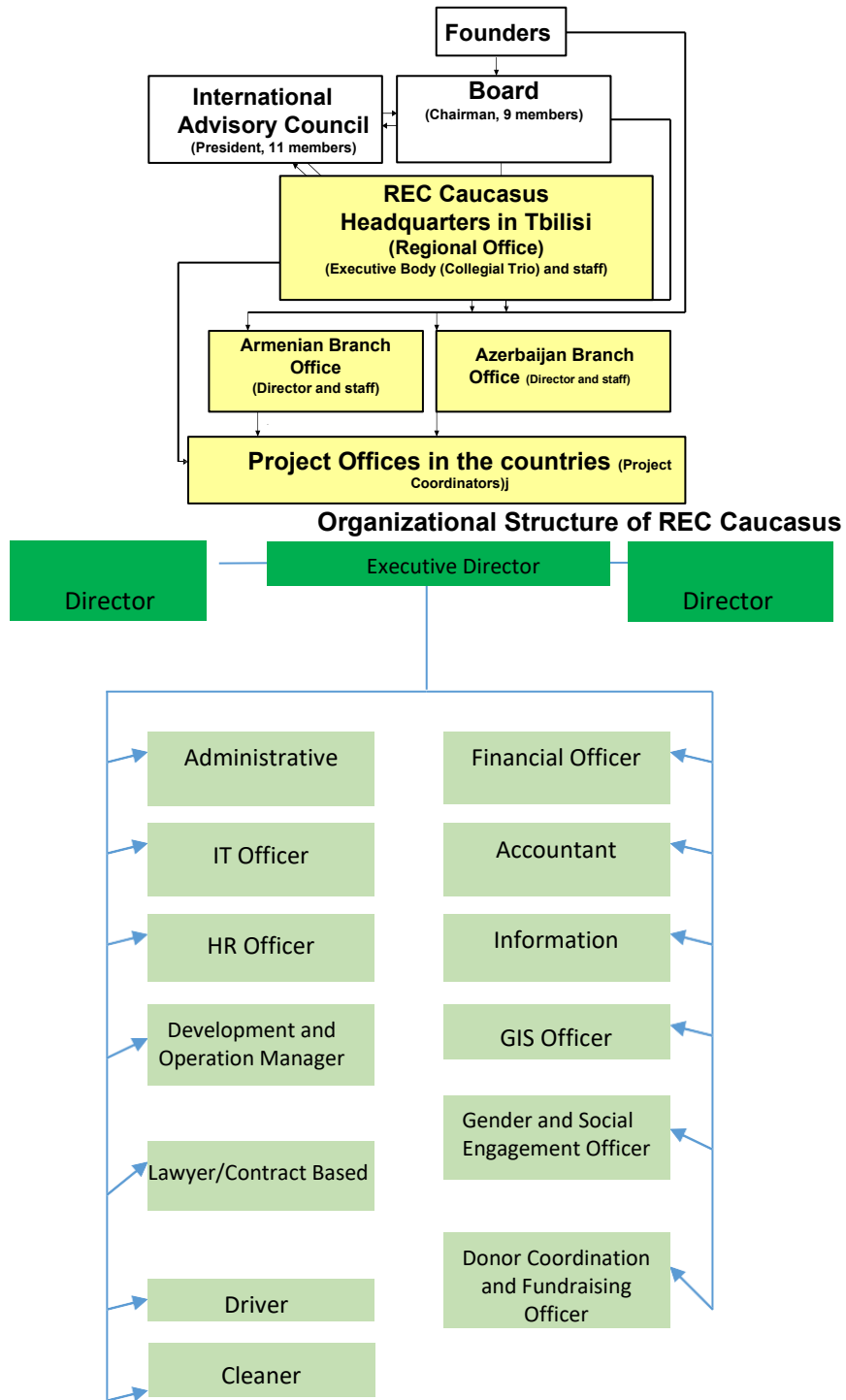
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<sup>1</sup> Signatories to the REC Caucasus Charter are: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and EU.

Founders. The Board is advised by an Advisory Council. Daily operations of the REC Caucasus are managed by consensus of the Executive Body. The General Management and Control Structure of the Foundation are described in the Charter of the REC Caucasus.

This governance structure defines a public organization of international character, independent from the direct influence of governments on its operations and fulfilment of its mission. Thus the REC Caucasus has a uniquely open, flexible and adaptable structure, able to develop widely diverse programs within the frame of its mission. From a legal point of view, the REC Caucasus is fully eligible to serve governments, NGOs, businesses and all other environmental stakeholders. It can explore, in its own right, any concrete modalities of flexible or formalized co- operation with relevant international and national, governmental, non-governmental and private organizations.

## **6. Organizational Structure**



All managers, supervisors and staff are accountable for fulfilling their respective responsibilities in implementing environmental and social (E&S) risk management, stakeholder engagement standards, gender equality measures, and grievance handling in accordance with their roles and authorities.

## **7. Executive Body**

- a.** The Executive body of the Foundation shall be a Collegial Trio formed by the Executive Director and the 2 Directors (with the staff based in the main office) from government (three) one each from Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.
- b.** The 3 members of the Trio (Executive Director and 2 Directors) are being selected on a competitive basis and ultimately approved by the Board. The approval of the members of the Trio shall be for a term of three year, with an initial trial period of six months.
- c.** The Trio shall manage by consensus the day to day affairs of the Foundation in accordance with the policies and guidelines established by the Board, including through maintaining regular contact with the Founders. The Trio shall participate ex officio in the meetings of the Board.
- d.** The position of Executive Director shall rotate every year between the members of the Trio.
- e.** In case the position of the Executive Director should become vacant before the completion of the one year term, a new Executive Director from the same country shall be selected to complete his/her predecessor's term but will not be immediately eligible to serve beyond that term. When the term of office of the Executive Director expires, the new Executive Director shall be from a different country. The Executive Director may not be a national of a country which has held this post during the two preceding years.
- f.** The Executive Director and the two Directors shall serve as the principal points of routine coordination with their respective national administrations, and with the branch offices in their respective countries. However, the Collegial Trio shall retain the overall responsibility for management of the Foundation as a whole, including cooperation with the governments of all three Founder countries.
- g.** The Foundation recruitment policy shall ensure that the staff, except the technical staff, of the Foundation represent all the participating countries based on parity principle.

### *Responsibilities*

The Executive Body manages the REC Caucasus in accordance with the resolutions and decisions of the Board. In particular,

- submits the documents and proposals for decision to the Board, and supervises the implementation of Board decisions
- represents the organization, signs contracts and legally binding documents for the REC Caucasus.
- directs the financial activities of the Centre.
- supervises the Transboundary Project
- exercises employer's rights in respect of the employees of REC Caucasus
- issues all policies
- directly manages all other REC Caucasus branch offices.

### *Performance Evaluation*

The performance of the Executive Body is evaluated by the Board.

## **8. Programme Managers**

### *Selection*

Programme Managers (PM) are selected by the Executive Body for a program area and approved by the Board.

### *Responsibilities*

Programme Managers are responsible for ensuring that during project implementation, REC policies are implemented within their programme area and that REC quality standards are fulfilled.

Programme Managers manage the staff assigned to their program area, whose main supervisor they are, including administrative issues (e.g. vacation requests, attendance, sick leave), goal setting and performance evaluation.

Programme Managers function as liaison persons among REC Caucasus Program Areas and towards the Project Managers within their Programme and define, together with EB, the strategic directions of the Centre.

Programme Manager shall:

- provide strategic leadership for the programme.
- make recommendations for promotion of staff.
- oversee the composition of project teams.
- supervise project managers.
- set objectives for the programme area and the staff within the programme and conduct regular performance evaluations.
- overview projects in their programmes including budgets.
- review all interim and final project results.
- be held accountable for the overall performance of her/his area, including financial sustainability.
- participate in the Management Committee Meetings.
- approve project related expenditures of Project Managers within her/his programme.
- contribute to REC Caucasus's strategic development.

### *Performance Evaluation*

The Performance of PMs is evaluated by the EB.

### *Delegation of Authority and Deputizing*

Programme Managers may delegate authority to project managers. If the absence of the Programme Manager is foreseen, she/he may nominate an acting Programme Manager.

## **9. Finance and Administration Department Head**

### *Selection*

Department Head (DH) is appointed by the EB.

### *Responsibilities*

Department Head operates under the direct supervision of the ED and is accountable to EB. He/she supervises and manages the staff of the Department.

### *Performance Evaluation*

The Performance of Finance and Administration Department Head is evaluated by the EB.

### *Delegation of Authority and Deputizing*

Department Head can delegate authority to Department members.

### **Delegation of Authority**

In the event of ED's absence, the day-to-day operation of the REC Caucasus will be taken over by one of the Directors. The normal line of authority is the following: Founders > Board > Executive Director > Directors > (Heads of Branch Offices) > Finance and Administration Department Head and Programmes coordinator > Programme Managers > Project Managers > Technical Staff.

### **Signatory Rights**

1. Governmental agreements and treaties (subject to international law) shall be signed by or in the name of the Chairman of the Board.
2. Memoranda of Understanding, Letters of Intent and other international documents (not subject to international law) to governments or international organizations shall be signed by the Executive Director (ED).
3. New or re-issued policies for the REC Caucasus shall be signed by the ED or delegated Directors in his/her absence.
4. Employment contracts for all REC Caucasus staff wherever situated must be signed only by the ED.
5. Project contracts shall be signed only by the ED.
6. Project applications and tender proposals (including letters applying for short-listing) shall only be signed by the ED.
7. Cover letters of final reports of REC Caucasus projects above the value of 100.000 EURO shall be signed by or in the name of the ED.
8. Donations and payments to the REC Caucasus shall be acknowledged by the ED.

9. All documentations to be signed by ED, shall be cleared by the assistant of the Executive Director. The Executive Director will not accept any direct enquiries.
10. Letters to the administrative agencies can be signed by the Finance and Administration Department Head.
11. The seal is to be used only by the Executive Director, by the Directors and Finance and Administration Department Head.

## 10. Meetings

### A. Executive Body Meetings

The Executive Body Meetings take Place regularly and constitutes the Collegial Trio.

### B. Management Committee Meetings (MCM)

The MCM Meeting takes Place regularly and constitutes the Programme Managers and Department Heads to advise the Programmes Coordinator on decisions to be taken with respect to the coordination of each programme.

#### Participation

Participation is obligatory for the Programmes Coordinator, all Programme Managers and Finance and Administration Department Head.

Topics are selected by Programmes Coordinator or EB / one of the members of Collegial Trio.

#### *Frequency*

MCM takes place each week on Mondays and / or Fridays at 11:00 by invitation. If needed more frequent meetings may be organized. The meeting should ordinarily not be longer than two hours.

#### *Minutes*

- Short minutes will be prepared by the ED Assistant or by the Secretary, following the agenda and concentrating on decisions. Confidential issues will be highlighted.
- Minutes will be endorsed by the Programmes Coordinator or one of the initiator of the meeting in absence of the Programmes Coordinator.

### C. Staff Meetings

The Staff Meeting takes place twice or at least once a month and constitutes the main body to advise the ED on decisions to be taken with respect to the administration of the REC Caucasus and with respect to programme and project initiation and implementation. It is the objective of the regular Staff Meeting:

- to advise the ED on decision making, thus introducing and maintaining the participatory approach in REC Caucasus in decision making.
- to exchange information.

- to initiate and coordinate Working Groups on diverse subjects.
- to advise the ED on adoption of new or modification of old policies and procedures.
- to advise the ED on the staffing of projects.
- to advise the ED on setting up and closing down of programme areas.
- to discuss the strategic directions of the REC Caucasus, its business and working plans.
- to advise the ED on allocation of core and project funds.
- to confirm subcontracts.
- to confirm suggested qualified sub-contractors or preferred suppliers.
- to evaluate projects.
- to discuss and confirm investments from core funds.
- to discuss other budgetary issues.

### *Participation*

- obligatory for all staff except cleaner and driver.
- confidentiality of certain topics must be clearly marked.

### *Frequency*

Staff Meeting takes place twice, at least once a month on a fixed day (usually Wednesday, 11.00). If needed more frequent meetings may be organized.

### *Procedure*

- The Executive Director is the initiator of the meetings. She/he is responsible for the preparation or distribution of the agenda.
- The meeting also could be initiated by one of the Directors or by the Finance and Administration Department Head.
- Meetings are chaired by the ED, one of the Directors, or by the Finance and Administration Department Head using a consensus approach.
- Final decisions are made by the ED.
- The ED can take decisions on the meeting or consider suggestions / advice for later decisions. In the latter case, these decisions will be communicated to staff by ED. Staff members shall follow up on the decision-making process.

### *Topics*

- The Staff Meeting deals only with topics that are relevant for the administrative functioning of the organization as a whole or are related to programme / project management and strategic development of the organization.
- Topics are selected:
  1. By the ED or other initiator of the meeting.
  2. Every REC Caucasus staff has the right to suggest to the ED a topic for the agenda and has a right to at least a five minute presentation.

### *Agenda*

- Decision(s) of last meeting - Follow up

- Staff Meeting approvals
- Topics for decisions
- Topics for discussion
- Urgent issues
- Other issues

The meeting should ordinarily not be longer than two hours.

#### *Minutes*

- Short minutes will be prepared by the Assistant to Executive Director or by Secretary, following the agenda and concentrating on decisions. Confidential issues will be highlighted.
- Minutes will be endorsed by the ED.
- Minutes should be ready no more than two working days after the meeting and sent by e-mail to all REC Caucasus staff (except for confidential issues).

### **11. Employment at the REC Caucasus**

The terms and conditions of employment for REC Caucasus staff are in accordance with the Labour Code of Georgia. The terms and conditions of employment for REC Caucasus staff at Branch Offices / Information Points, relevant or applicable, will be the subject to the country Labour Code.

It is REC Caucasus policy to provide secure employment conditions to all staff. All employment contracts are managed by the Finance and Administration Department Head, who prepares contracts, based on the information supplied to him/her by the respective supervisors, following the applicable legislation. All salaries have to be agreed with the Executive Director, before offered to new employees.

The financial background of contracts has to be reviewed by the Finance and Administration Department Head. Contracts can only be signed by the ED.

REC Caucasus is committed to promoting gender equality and inclusiveness in all aspects of work – both within the organization and throughout the delivery of the projects.

REC Caucasus ensures equal access to opportunities, upholding non-discrimination, and making fair, merit-based decisions, which includes and not limited:

**Encouragement of Equal Participation** – All employees, regardless gender, race, color, national origin, religion, age have a fair voice in decision-making and consultations across project phases.

**Build Awareness Within the organization** – REC Caucasus equips the staff and partners with tools to prevent discrimination and harassment.

**Make Gender Considerations Part of Everything** – REC Caucasus mainstreams gender-sensitive approaches from planning through evaluation and completion of the projects.

**Support Vulnerable Groups** – REC Caucasus addresses specific risks faced by female-headed households, rural women, and others.

**Create a Safe and Respectful Workplace** – Implement robust systems to prevent and respond to Gender Based Violence (GBV), harassment and abuse.

**Promote Growth Based on Merit** – Ensure advancement is based on performance and contributions, not assumptions or bias;

Equal opportunity principles are embedded in all organizational functions and decisions, including:

## **Recruitment Procedures and Selection**

All recruitment processes shall include safeguarding screening, including requesting signed self-declaration form and checking references, to ensure that individuals with histories of GBV, SEA/SH, harassment, or serious misconduct are not engaged (refer to Annex 1 for self-declaration template).

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Using gender-neutral language in job descriptions.
- Ensuring diverse composition of interview panels.
- Setting targets to review shortlists for gender balance.
- Applying objective, competency-based evaluation criteria.
- Requesting signed self-declaration form.
- Checking references.
- Gender Mainstreaming Officer is involved in training HR staff and hiring managers on gender equality and anti-harassment.

## **Job Advertisements and Interview Practices**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Clear Communication commitment to gender equity and inclusion.
- Advertising vacancies on platforms accessible to both men and women, including women's career networks.
- Avoiding language or visuals that may discourage underrepresented applicants.
- Offering flexible interview scheduling (e.g. outside childcare hours).

## **Terms and Conditions of Employment**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Standardizing employment contracts to ensure equal benefits and protections for all staff.
- Auditing terms for any indirect gender bias (e.g. differences in leave, allowances, or fieldwork expectations).
- Applying consistent contract durations, probation periods, and advancement policies;

## **Access to Training, Development, and Career Advancement**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Offering equal access to all training and development programs.
- Ensuring training timing and format are inclusive (e.g., child-friendly hours, online options).
- Tracking participation by gender and address any disparities.

Mentoring and coaching opportunities, especially for women in male-dominated roles;

## **Performance Management and Appraisal**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Using transparent, results-based evaluation criteria for all staff.
- Providing training to managers on fair performance reviews.
- Ensuring maternity or extended leave periods do not disadvantage appraisal outcomes.

Incorporating team collaboration and inclusive leadership into performance reviews;

## **Remuneration and Benefits**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Assessing and avoiding the gender pay gap.
- Implementing pay scales that are transparent and equitable.
- Ensuring benefits (e.g. health insurance, family leave, travel allowances) are inclusive and gender sensitive.
- Offering parental leave benefits to both men and women;

## **Work-Life Balance Policies, Including Flexible Working Arrangements**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Providing flexible work schedules, part-time options, and remote work where feasible.
- Encouraging uptake of family leave by all genders.
- Promoting work-life balance through supportive workplace culture and workload planning.
- Considering support for childcare, especially in rural or project-based contexts;

## **Termination of Employment and Redundancy Processes**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- Ensuring procedures are transparent, documented, and consistently applied to all staff.
- Avoiding disproportionate effects on specific gender groups.
- Offering transition support and career counseling equally to all affected staff;

## **Return to Work and Reintegration Following Long-Term Leave**

### **Methods and Activities:**

- When applicable, developing return-to-work plans tailored to employee needs after maternity or extended leave.

- Providing reintegration orientation and skills refreshers.
- Protecting against demotion or exclusion from project roles upon return.
- Encouraging supportive supervisor check-ins during reintegration phase

## **11.1 Employment Documents at RECC Caucasus**

Finance and Administration Department Head is responsible for preparing and processing employment documents for REC Caucasus Office, based on existing regulations and input from supervisors regarding the job description and terms of reference for contracts.

### **11.1.1 Employment Agreements**

The Employment Agreement is the main contractual document for employing all REC Caucasus staff. The Sample is attached (annex1). The Employee shall be designated by the Executive Director by the relevant Approval document. (Sample Is attached (annex 2). This document shall be signed by ED and the Finance and Administration Department Head. The copies of this document should be given to the Finance and Administration Department Head and to the Employee. The original shall be kept in the personal file of the Employee.

The rights and obligations of the Employee are regulated by the terms and conditions of the signed agreement between Employer and Employee. The Employee shall not be entitled to any benefit, payment, subsidy, compensation or entitlement from the Employer, except as expressly provided in the agreement, Georgian Legislation, Administration Manual and Human Resources manual.

By signing the agreement, the Employee confirms that he/she has read, understood and accepted the terms and conditions set out in the Administration Manual and Human Resources Manual of the Employer and agrees to follow exactly these rules and procedures at all times.

The Employer is owner of all information, technology, devices, publications, or otherwise, which are developed during the execution of the Agreement. The Employer reserves full and exclusive rights with regard to its use and/or final destination.

Upon the requirement of the employee, Employer shall issue the certificate providing the fact that the Employee works in the “Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus” Foundation, with indication of the position title, total duration of work and salary amount in it.

The status of the Employee, its commitments and liabilities are defined in the Employment Agreement.

The clauses that are not included in the Employment Agreement could be defined by this Manual.

#### *Employment Agreements with Definite Term*

These contracts are given to employees with medium term assignments (between 6 months and 12 months).

Definite term contracts might include an automatic extension. Other contracts will consider only the definite term.

### **11.1.2 Service Agreements**

These are other types of employment documents, they are called Service Agreements and are always for a definite or fixed period of time. Service Agreements are usually given for short term tasks (normally less than 6 months) and to employees working outside the REC Caucasus. All persons working in REC Caucasus contracted under a Service Agreement must also follow this manual.

## 11.2 Position and Job Description

An up-to-date file of all positions and job descriptions at the REC Caucasus is attached to this manual (annex 3). The following types of positions exist at the REC Caucasus:

- **Senior Management:** Executive Director and 2 Directors (Collegial Trio);
- **Managerial Staff:** Finance and Administration Department Head, Branch Office Coordinator, Project Regional Coordinator, Development Head, Environmental Policy and Climate Change Programme Manager, Biodiversity Conservation, Forests, Sustainable Agriculture and Land Degradation Programme Manager, Integrated Water Management Programme Manager.
- **Support Staff:** Administrative Officer, Financial Officer, HR Officer, Partnerships Advisor, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Officer, Gender Mainstreaming Officer, GIS Officer, Project National Coordinator, ED Assistant, IT Officer, Procurement and Accounting Specialist, Lawyer, Technical Assistant to the Administration, Driver, Conference Assistant, Cleaner.

See Annex 2 for full Job Descriptions.

## 11.3 Compensation

Compensation decisions within the RECC Caucasus shall be based solely on objective, job-related criteria, including the qualifications required for the position, the level of responsibilities and accountabilities, and the demonstrated performance of the individual.

No differences in compensation shall be made on the basis of personal characteristics that are unrelated to job-related qualifications or performance - such as gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected characteristics.

Compensation practices will be periodically reviewed to ensure compliance with applicable non-discrimination standards and to promote equitable treatment across the workforce. This approach reinforces RECC Caucasus's commitment to fair and equitable employment practices and aligns with recognised standards that prohibit compensation decisions based on personal attributes unrelated to the requirements and responsibilities of the job.

The compensation system at the REC Caucasus consists of the following elements:

### 11.3.2 Salary

Salaries at REC Caucasus consist of one element:

#### *Gross Base Salary*

The present electronic data system shall be taken in consideration when the salary is paid. Each late hour shall be counted as a fine and shall be either deducted from the gross salary amount and/or from the annual leave (if the total of this late hours constitutes the one full working day), depending on the agreement of the parties. Deduction from the gross salary amount shall not be exceed 50 % from one month salary. (Labour Code of Georgia).

The employer shall pay to the Employee 0.07% of the salary per day for any delayed payment.

### 11.3.3 Transparency

REC Caucasus strives to keep individual salaries confidential. However, in the frame of project preparation it may be necessary to release information related to individual salaries.

### **11.3.4 Payment of Salaries**

Gross base salaries are determined on a monthly basis. All salaries are payable on the last working day of the relevant month.

All salaries are payable in local currency (Georgian Lari). Staff is expected to inform the Finance and Administration Department Head about their bank details at the beginning of each year.

For the REC Caucasus employees, calculation of salaries will automatically withhold and transfer the appropriate amount for Personal Income Tax, Social Insurance, etc. to the state fund as regulated by employment legislation.

All staff may receive pay slips with details concerning the calculation of salaries.

### **11.4 Exceptions**

By decision of the ED and only in justified cases, a new staff member can be hired directly without an in-house and public announcement in the following cases:

- a. an available person for the position is exceptionally qualified, a top expert in her/his field, and it is likely that a public call would not attract better people;
- b. the time available for hiring a new staff member is too short to run a public announcement process.

Before hiring a person in the cases a. and b., a justification together with the CV of the person has to be presented to the ED. In case the ED decides to approve the request, he will inform the next Staff Meeting about the request and the justification.

### **11.5 Use of identity cards**

There is one type of identity card REC Caucasus employees might have. The regulations and procedures related to these are described below:

#### *REC Caucasus Identity Cards Issued by REC Caucasus*

The Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus provides persons travelling on its missions with identity cards. These cards are also given as to Georgian nationals as well as to international Staff Members. The Finance and Administration Department Head is responsible for providing new employees with identity cards. Upon leaving, these are also to be returned to the Finance and Administration Department Head.

### **11.6 Trial Period**

By the decision of ED the trial period could be defined from one month but should not exceed 6 months. By Georgian Labour Code the trial period could be concluded only once. This gives the REC Caucasus the opportunity to assess whether staff is performing their job to a satisfactory level, and gives the staff the opportunity to decide and ensure they are satisfied with their new position. During the trial period performance will be evaluated by the relevant supervisor, and if the result is satisfactory, the contract will automatically come into force for the agreed period. If performance is not satisfactory, the employment agreement may be terminated with immediate notice by either party.

### **11.7 Vacation and Sick Leave**

REC Caucasus vacation and sick leave policy for the Headquarters Office Georgia is based on the Georgian Labour Code, regulating this issue.

Annual leave (vacation) will be accrued at the rate of 2 (two) working days per month. All leave will be taken during the period of current year. There will be no cash payment for unused leave at the end of the year.

If the individual staff member's employment commenced in the course of the year, he/she is entitled to a

proportionate part of the leave. If in the calculation of ordinary leave a fragment of a day arises, any fragment that comes to half a day will count as a full work day.

The time when leave can be taken shall be determined by the ED after previously discussing it with the employee.

Except for the first three months of employment, the REC Caucasus shall allocate one quarter of the basic leave at a time that accord with the staff's request.

Leave shall be allocated in the year in which it is due or latest until June 30 of the following year. If this is not possible due to job related duties, the employee should discuss this issue with her/his supervisor.

All vacation days must be taken with the prior approval of the ED.

#### **11.7.1 Public Holidays**

REC Caucasus staff does not perform work on public Georgian holidays. The Executive Director may provide additional paid leave to the REC Caucasus as a whole (e.g. Christmas Period).

#### **11.7.2 Special Leave**

Staff is entitled to certain forms of special leave (e.g. maternity leave, the death of a close relative) as regulated by the Labour Code. In this case they should discuss this with the Finance and Administration Department Head and the ED.

Staff can also be eligible for unpaid leave as regulated by the Labour Code of Goergia. For this, staff must obtain the approval of the ED.

#### **11.7.3 Sick Leave**

For a duration of sick leave up to 1 day per month, all employees are entitled to 100% of their average pay. All leaves must be supported by Medical Certifications except for one occasion, lasting not longer than 2 days.

In the event of employment commencing in the course of the year, the employee can be entitled to duration of sick leave proportionate to the calendar year.

#### **11.7.4 Medical Appointments**

Staff are expected to arrange medical appointments outside of office hours whenever possible. When this is not practicable, it is necessary to obtain their supervisors agreement. Staff will be expected to make up for lost time.

#### **11.7.5 Notice of Sickness**

Staff who are sick are expected to notify the ED, including the expected day of return on the first day of sickness by 10 a.m. whenever possible. It is the responsibility of the employee to submit the sick leave form together with the doctor's certificate to the Finance and Administration Department Head.

#### **11.7.6 Forms**

All requests for leaves must be submitted through the appropriate forms (available by Finance and Administration Department Head) by the staff to the ED for approval (annex 4).

### **11.8 Training and Development**

The REC Caucasus advocates the principle that it is of the utmost importance to ensure that all staff are adequately trained to perform their duties effectively. The REC Caucasus views training as a motivating factor by which the REC Caucasus is assisting staff in their career development, and achieving higher professional standards.

All staff shall receive regular training on environmental and social safeguards, stakeholder engagement, ESMS procedures, and grievance handling appropriate to their function.

REC Caucasus provides training on gender equality, anti-harassment and inclusive workplace practices for all staff together with career advancement opportunities.

Gender Mainstreaming Officer (GMO) ensures together with HR officer, that employees receive equal pay for equal or comparable work, regardless of gender. GMO with HR support flexible working arrangements and equitable parental leave to accommodate employees' family responsibilities. Also, GMO coordinates with HR to recruit employees as per gender balance, overviews relevant trainings and Gender Policy monitoring.

The GMO also oversees efforts to increase the representation of women and promote gender diversity in leadership positions, and encourages staff, especially men, to actively support gender equality initiatives and challenge discriminatory behaviors;

### **11.8.1 In-house Training**

The REC Caucasus organizes regular in-house training events for which all REC Caucasus staff is eligible, provided that funding and man-power is available. By decision of the Staff Meeting, certain in-house training events can be made obligatory for all or particular staff members. Training schedules are announced by the HR.

### **11.9 Salary Advances**

REC Caucasus staff can get short-term salary advances with the approval of the ED up to the amount of 1/2 actual monthly net salary. The amount will be deducted from the next regular salary payment. If the member of staff should leave before this amount has been reimbursed the REC Caucasus is entitled to deduct this amount from any payment to be made or request the employee to reimburse REC Caucasus before leaving.

### **11.10 Complaints And Grievances**

If any staff member has a grievance about any aspect of their employment, including the conduct of other staff, they should discuss this with their Supervisor.\* However, if the grievance is not settled within a reasonable time, of which the upper limit is fifteen working days, the grievance should be referred in writing to the Executive Director, whose obligation it is to investigate the cause of the grievance.

Any staff member appealing to a higher level of management must inform the ED of this in writing on the day of submitting the appeal.

Grievances among Managers must be referred to the Executive Director.

### **Internal Gender Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures**

#### **Methods and Activities:**

- Establishing a confidential, gender-sensitive grievance mechanism (see Annex 2).
- Ensuring multiple reporting channels (e.g., HR Officer, supervisor, grievance box, online).
- Guarantee no retaliation and protect anonymity.
- Providing guidance and relevant information materials to all staff on grievance processes and anti-harassment standards.
- Forming gender-balanced disciplinary committees with trained members.

## **Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention Methods and Activities**

### Policy and Regulation Implementation

- Establishing and enforcing an internal Gender Policy applicable to all employees across all work environments, which includes Gender-Based Violence prevention methods.

### Training and Capacity Building

- Encouraging participating in annual capacity building activities on GBV prevention and response.

### Reporting and Support Mechanisms

- Confidential channels for GBV reporting (e.g., HR, line managers, GBV focal point).

### Investigation and Disciplinary Action

- Assigning a GRM Focal Point to review complaints impartially.
- Maintaining confidentiality and protecting complainants from retaliation.
- Disciplinary measures from warnings to termination based on severity.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- Annual reviews of GBV systems including reported cases, outcomes, and staff awareness and capacity building activities and trainings conducted.
- Policy revisions based on monitoring findings.

### Leadership and Accountability

- The Administrative and Finance department is accountable for system introduction, implementation, and monitoring.

In the context of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Sexual Harassment (SH), RECC Caucasus ensures that all response procedures are survivor-centered, respectful, and uphold the dignity, safety, autonomy and confidentiality of the survivor.

Survivor-centered response means that the needs, rights, choices and welfare of the survivor are prioritized at all stages of the response process. Survivors will be treated with respect and compassion, their wishes will be honored, and informed consent will be obtained before sharing information or making referrals, except where mandatory reporting is required by law (e.g., in cases involving minors). Appropriate measures shall be taken to prevent re-traumatization, protect privacy, and ensure safety throughout the response process.

Referral Pathways: RECC Caucasus shall maintain and disseminate clear, accessible referral pathways that enable survivors to access timely and appropriate services, including: Medical Assistance, Psychosocial Support, Legal Assistance, Protection and Safety Services.

Referrals shall only be made with informed consent from the survivor (or guardian in the case of a minor), and RECC Caucasus shall seek to provide survivors with comprehensive information about available services, including the nature and implications of access to each service, so that survivors can make voluntary, informed decisions about follow-up support.

RECC Caucasus shall regularly map and update available service providers and coordinate with relevant actors to ensure that referral pathways are functional, appropriate and accessible, and staff involved in receiving and managing complaints shall be trained in survivor-centered approaches and referral protocols.

All grievance mechanisms will include protections against retaliation and ensure timely, transparent handling of grievances, with specific procedures for cases involving Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Sexual Harassment (SH).

a) Prohibition of Retaliation: No person who in good faith raises, reports, assists in the investigation of, or participates in the resolution of a grievance related to GBV/SEA/SH shall be subject to retaliation, intimidation, discriminatory treatment or adverse consequences as a result of their involvement.

b) Time-Bound Resolution Procedures: Grievances relating to GBV/SEA/SH shall be processed in a faster and clearly defined timeframe than general grievances to minimise harm, reduce uncertainty, and uphold survivor rights. Where possible, such grievances should be acknowledged promptly

c) Distinct Procedures and Support: GBV/SEA/SH grievances shall be handled through designated, confidential channels (which may be separate from general grievance logs) that prioritise survivor safety and dignity, and support a survivor-centered process. Staff assigned to handle GBV/SEA/SH cases shall be trained in sensitive intake, confidentiality, documentation, and referral procedures, including connections to appropriate medical, psychosocial and legal assistance.

## **11.11 Disciplinary Actions**

### **11.11.1 Normal Disciplinary Procedure**

Staff are requested to maintain a professional demeanor and strive to provide quality service to all REC Caucasus constituents.

All staff must adhere to organizational ethics and integrity standards, including transparency, anti-fraud, anti-corruption, and safeguarding. Violations constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

The Employee is expected:

- to appear at the workplace on time, in a condition capable to work, and spend his/her working hours working, and/or be at the disposal of his/her supervisor during working hours for the purpose of performing work;
- to perform his/her work with care and skill, in accordance with the Job Description and Performance Objectives set for the position he/she fills and REC Caucasus regulations as spelled out in this manual and the other documents specified in Chapter 1;
- to cooperate with his/her fellow-workers, and perform his/her work and generally behave in such a manner so as not to endanger the health and physical condition of others, not to disturb the work of others, and not to cause financial damage to REC Caucasus or other fellow-workers.

Non-compliance to this can result into disciplinary action which consists of the following steps:

1. Problems regarding compliance of the employee with the above will be handled by the immediate supervisor on an informal basis, e.g. through a talk with the employee in question, as the first step. The supervisor should keep a record of this action;
2. If the informal procedure does not result in improvements, the employee will be given a formal warning/reprimand by the respective supervisor. This formal written warning must be sent in writing either by registered mail to the employee or it can be handed to her/him at the workplace. The employee must confirm receipt of the paper. The supervisor must ensure that a copy of the warning letter and the receipt are submitted to the Finance and Administration Department Head, to be included in the personnel file. The Finance and Administration Department Head can advise the supervisor on the formal requirements of a warning letter;
3. If the formal warning/reprimand does not result in improvements, the Finance and Administration Department Head will be contacted. After thoroughly analysing the case, the Finance and Administration Department Head will give a second warning/reprimand to the employee and a deadline for improvement;
4. In case no improvement occurs by the given deadline, the termination request will be forwarded by the supervisor to the Executive Director.

Warning letters older than 3 months will become obsolete (supervisors cannot use these in disciplinary

actions)

### **11.11.2 Disciplinary Action with Immediate Termination of Employment Contracts**

Failure to comply with the provisions below may lead to immediate termination of employment. It is up to the supervisor to choose - depending on the seriousness of the offence - between giving a warning/reprimand to employee, or initiating termination of his/her employment agreement.

REC Caucasus staff is expected not to get involved in:

- Criminal Activities
- Conflict of Interest (see chapter 3.14.)
- Violation of Confidentiality Rules (see chapter 3.15.)

The name or official seal of Employer shall not be used by the Employee for business or professional purposes or otherwise without the prior written approval of the Executive Director. Present clause shall survive the expiration or termination of this agreement.

### **11.12 Termination of Employment Agreements**

In all cases, the agreement about termination must be put in writing according to the provisions of Labour Code of the country.

In case of employment agreements with definite period, employment may be terminated:

1. By mutual agreement between the parties;
2. By extraordinary notice;
3. With immediate effect during the trial period (if a trial period was set);
4. By the employer, if the employer pays the average pay of employee for the whole remaining period, (maximum one year) if this period is shorter than one year.
5. Failure to comply with environmental, social, gender, or safeguarding requirements constitutes grounds for disciplinary action or termination.

### **11.13 Assaults On Staff**

Any member of staff who is assaulted, threatened, harassed (including sexual harassment) by other REC Caucasus staff or any other person while being on official duty or on REC Caucasus premises should report the matter immediately to the ED. Initially, this may be an oral report, but should be put in writing documenting the details as soon as possible.

If the employee has decided not to take legal action, the supervisor will be responsible for investigating and establishing the facts of the matter and should ask the person assaulted whether or not he/she wishes the REC Caucasus to take any action.

This action may consist of;

- taking disciplinary actions,
- taking or defending legal proceedings on behalf of REC Caucasus.

The responsible supervisor will prepare a report to the Executive Director, containing a recommendation on the course of action proposed. This document will also be referred to the Finance and Administration Department Head. The Executive Director has the right of decision in this matter. The employee may involve the staff representative in any of the actions described above.

### **11.14 Conflict Of Interest**

The REC Caucasus expects the Employee:

- not to engage in any outside work, be involved in any business or undertaking, or hold any interest, either personally, or through any company or agent, which will or may be in conflict with employment in the REC Caucasus, because:
  - it will affect the employees capability to work
  - the outside work is in direct contradiction with the mission of the REC Caucasus
- to inform the REC Caucasus about any outside work engagements or business activities;
- not to accept any personal consideration or gratuity whatsoever for any form of activity, which includes advice given, or materials prepared in connection with any application, submission, service, request or proposal made to the REC Caucasus, or be a party to, or have any interest, direct or indirect, in any transaction or contract to which the REC Caucasus is a participant;
- not to accept any personal remuneration or other advantages, which may be money, property, position or favour of any kind whether it be received at present or in the future, from any person or organization having, or seeking to have dealings with the REC Caucasus. The Employee shall immediately report to the responsible supervisor any offer of any such money, property, position or favour;
- not to represent any private or other non-REC Caucasus interest before the REC Caucasus, or use REC Caucasus facilities (except with approval of the Executive Director), products or equipment for such purpose;
- not to participate in any project for private purpose that is undertaken by REC Caucasus grantees, and not to accept payments, fees or honoraria for the same purpose, that may arise from these activities;
- not to serve on outside boards of institutions or organizations whose activities are in any relation to REC Caucasus's activities, or hold any remunerative positions without REC Caucasus approval.

### **11.15 Confidentiality**

The REC Caucasus will protect all personal information of its staff as required by Georgian law. Unless authorized by their supervisors, staff employed by the REC Caucasus will not disclose any information about the REC Caucasus that is internally classified as confidential to any unauthorized member of the staff, or outside person. Information may be classified confidential by the Executive Director and/or the respective legislation.

The Finance and Administration Department Head will maintain personnel records on all staff in accordance with employment legislation. Staff is entitled to look into their own files at any time.

All personnel records are termed strictly confidential, and the REC Caucasus will not disclose any related information to unauthorized staff or outside persons.

Managers have access to the personnel records of staff employed in their programs.

Staff are requested to submit within 24 hours any changes in their personal conditions to the Financial and Administrative Officer in writing. These details may be address, marital status, birth of children, etc.

**Annexes**

**Annex 1: Candidate Self-Declaration Form**

**Candidate Self-Declaration**

I hereby declare that I have not been subject to disciplinary, administrative, or criminal sanctions related to sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment, nor have I left employment during a SEA-related investigation or refused to cooperate with such an investigation.

Candidate Name

Signature

Date

## Annex 2: Confidential Grievance/GBV Reporting Form

This form allows individuals to confidentially report incidents of discrimination, harassment, or GBV.

| Field                                    | Details  |
|--|----------|
| Date of Report                           |          |
| Name of Complainant (Optional)           |          |
| Position/Role                            |          |
| Date of Incident                         |          |
| Location of Incident                     |          |
| Description of Incident                  |          |
| Names of Individuals Involved (if known) |          |
| Witnesses (if any)                       |          |
| Preferred Action or Outcome              |          |
| Do you request confidentiality?          | Yes / No |
| Signature (if submitting in hard copy)   |          |





This document was reviewed, adopted, and approved on [date] by the REC Caucasus Executive Body (Collegial Trio) in accordance with the organization's internal governance procedures, and shall enter into force as of the date of approval.

**Headquarters**  
48/50, Mtskheta str.,  
0179 Tbilisi, Georgia  
E-Mail: [info@rec-caucasus.org](mailto:info@rec-caucasus.org)  
[www.rec-caucasus.org](http://www.rec-caucasus.org)

**Country Office in Armenia**  
1, Charents Street; 2nd floor  
0025 Yerevan, Armenia  
Tel/Fax: +374 10 574743

**Country Office in Azerbaijan**  
100a, B. Agayev Street  
1073 Baku, Azerbaijan  
Tel: + 994 12 4924173

