ISKCON

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
FOUNDER ACHARYA HIS DIVINE GRACE A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (IGCRT)

14 February 2025

PROPOSAL

to

ISKCON Governing Body Commission

WHEREAS:

ISKCON is a global organization with temples, installed Deities, congregational and temple resident devotees, projects and programs, and other assets, in almost every country of the world;

WHEREAS:

Unforeseen events and crises may include natural events such as fire, flood, and earthquakes; leadership issues, including moral and ethical violations; technology failures; breakdown of financial systems; legal or regulatory issues; political upheavals; and more

WHEREAS:

Crises can, and have, threatened ISKCON's financial sustainability, organizational integrity, global reputation, and can lead to the loss of faith of devotees;

WHEREAS:

ISKCON management teams alone may not have the skills or expertise to prepare for and respond to such crises, nor the ability to address "smoldering crises" (See Addendum One);

WHEREAS:

Crises need to be handled by teams established in advance by ISKCON leadership at the global GBC and the RGB/zonal/regional levels, and as appropriate, local levels;

WHEREAS:

Depending on their locale, impact and severity, crises should be managed by local, regional or global teams provided they are properly trained and coordinated;

WHEREAS:

Unpredictable or unexpected events, especially, often require an immediate response by a dedicated, trained and coordinated leadership team;

WHEREAS:

ISKCON needs a comprehensive system to both prepare for, and respond to, all types of crises;

WHEREAS:

A crisis response system, beginning at the global level, needs to be a sufficiently resourced, multi-disciplinary team that is preemptive in its approach, and empowered to be responsive as needed;

WHEREAS:

A sub-committee of the Organizational Development Committee (composed of the GBC Legal Counsel, the ISKCON Communications Minister, a thrice-serving former GBC Executive Chairman, and the former GBC Executive Office Chairperson) have studied this issue in depth and offered their analysis:

Therefore, it is resolved that:

1. An ISKCON Global Crisis Response Team (IGCRT) is hereby formed. The IGCRT will serve under the authority of the GBC Body.

2. Its members shall consist of:

   Standing Members:

   a. GBC Executive Committee Chair, or another GBC EC member designated annually
   b. Director GBC Executive Secretariat Office
   c. Global Communications Minister
   d. ESO Communications Director
   e. Crisis Officer[1]
   f. Administrative Assistant

   Ad hoc Members

   a. GBC General Counsel (GGC)
   b. Expert consultants, engaged as needed to address a particular crisis

3. Regional Governing Bodies (RGB) and other regional, national, and zonal governing bodies will be strongly advised to establish Regional Crisis Response Teams within two years of the passage of this resolution, following a similar format, including that the GBC Member who oversees that Zone/Area must be on the Crisis Response Team, as well as the Legal Advisor or Director, the Communications Director, and other experts as available. It is recommended that individual temples establish Local Crisis Response Teams as appropriate, with a similar structure, ie., they must include the local Temple President, Legal Advisor or Director, Communications Director, and other crisis experts as available.

4. Depending on the severity and geographical impact of any crisis, a crisis shall be addressed by the Global, Zonal or Regional Crisis Response Team, or Local Crisis Response Team. When clarity is needed on jurisdiction of response, the decisions of the IGCRT take precedence.

---

[1] The Crisis Officer shall be nominated by the ESO Director and appointed by majority vote of the IGCRT members annually. The initial Crisis Officer will be Madhavi-Gopi dd, of the UK.

5. The ESO Director will coordinate and support the work of the Global and Regional Crisis Response Teams as required.

6. The initial budget for the IGCRT shall be $10,000, for travel and development expenses.

DUTIES OF THE ISKCON GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

"The functions of the ISKCON Global Crisis Response Team would include a comprehensive response to an immediate crisis. The IGCRT will also provide training to adopt a preventative strategy in protecting ISKCON.

Specific additional functions, including but are not limited to, are:

Pre-crisis:

1. Define, categorize and anticipate the types of crises, including smoldering crises, that may impact ISKCON
2. Clarify principles to guide any response
3. Design potential action plans/responses for different types of crises
4. Test specific CRP plans/response
5. Adopt preventative strategy by identifying and addressing risks as well as advocating for ethical leadership at all levels of ISKCON
6. Clarify roles of IGCRT members when a crisis is identified
7. When requested, advise RGB, national, zonal and local ISKCON Crisis Response Teams

Response to a Crisis:

1. Convene in the event of a crisis or an impending crisis
2. Determine what, if any, ad hoc members need to be involved in any given response
3. Clarify roles of IGCRT members specific to a particular response
4. Investigate all issues pertaining to the crisis
5. Develop a specific Crisis Response Plan (CRP) for this event with set timelines
6. Assign tasks for response plan roll-out including allocating tasks across ISKCON management levels and particularly for those actively involved in the CRP and crisis resolution.

7. Establish and execute a communication strategy to notify all stakeholders including the GBC, ISKCON devotees and the general public as appropriate
8. Identify other resources (personnel, financial) if needed

Post Crisis:

1. Update procedures with lessons learnt
2. Submit a final summary document to the GBC after a CRP is executed as appropriate, while considering confidentiality issues.
3. Ensure proper data and records are kept in a secure electronic database

DUTIES OF ISKCON GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS

GBC Executive Committee Chair or Other EC Member

The GBC EC Chair, or other designated member of the GBC EC, must be a standing member of the IGCRT in order that the IGCRT has credibility and authority within ISKCON.

Key Actions of this role are, including but not limited to:

i. Work with the GBC Body to appoint the standing IGCRT
ii. Provide feedback to the IGCRT to ensure that the CRP aligns with ISKCON and GBC organizational policies and has philosophical integrity.
iii. Provide information to the GBC Body as appropriate during any crisis response
iv. Facilitate the allocation of annual resources and finances (approved by GBC Body).
    a. The IGCRT Budget should be a line item in the GBC Budget.
    b. The IGCRT should have an emergency travel fund and a legal fund to seek legal advice.
v. Approve additional emergency budgeting if required.
vi. Ensure that the GBC members efficiently execute any crisis response plan in their areas with the assistance of the ESO.
vii. To periodically review the effectiveness of the IGCRT with input from the GBC

Director GBC Executive Secretariat Office:

Key Actions, included but not limited to:

i. Ensure that the IGCRT convenes as required and that the IGCRT is working efficiently and effectively.
ii. Ensure execution of any Crisis Response Plan (CRP) with the ESO, GBCs, Zonal Supervisors and Temple Presidents (and others as indicated in the CRP)
iii. Assists in coordinating communications between the Communication Ministry / ESO Communications Office and ISKCON as a whole

Global Communications Minister and ESO Communications Director

Key Actions, including but not limited to:

i. Manages communications both internally and externally.
ii. Craft messages and manage media relations and other communications
iii. Pro-actively promote positive, ethical management and communications in ISKCON
iv. Aid in reducing the likelihood of crises and the negative impact of any crisis (possibly leading to a positive outcome.)

Crisis Officers (CO): Are persons who have professional training in crisis management and are aligned with ISKCON's mission. One Crisis Officer will serve as a member of the IGCRT. Others may be consulted on an ad hoc basis, especially in the design phase.

Key actions, including but not limited to:

i. Act as IGCRT Convener and keep the process on track.
ii. Provide expertise in the analysis of a crisis and in executing a plan to address it
iii. Compile a Handbook for ISKCON Crisis Response (Crisis Response Framework) to guide the functioning of the IGCRT
iv. Provide continuing analysis of the service of the IGCRT with the goal of continuous efficiency and effectiveness
v. Provide post crisis analysis

Expert Consultants:

These are ad hoc members who may be co-opted for the short term as needed depending on the nature of the crisis. These include experts on financials, property, data, child protection, or leader misconduct etc.

Key Actions, including but not limited to:

i. Assist as requested with analysis of the presenting crisis
ii. Offer advice

Administration Assistant:

Key Actions, including but not limited to:

i. Provide administrative support
ii. Remind members of meetings, keep minutes
iii. Keep documents securely
iv. Facilitate communications
v. Other duties as required

GBC General Counsel (GGC) on an ad hoc basis:

Key Actions, including but not limited to:

i. Provide legal advice and information pertaining to the crisis
ii. Vet the contents of the communication to ensure that the messaging is appropriate relevant, legally advisable, and compliant to appropriate laws and regulations
iii. Manage appropriate liaison with statutory and legal authorities

End.

ADDENDUM ONE: DEFINITIONS

What is a Crisis?

A crisis is an event that impacts the day-to-day operations of an organisation and is a significant threat to its financial stability, organizational integrity, and reputation. If handled properly, it can also lead to strengthening the organization and its reputation.

Some of the key features of a crisis are:

1. It requires immediate attention
2. A crisis brings uncertainty
3. Generally, crises attract a lot of external visibility and not just internal urgency
4. A crisis can impact day-to-day operations, assets, people and infrastructure.

A crisis can be caused by natural events such as fire, flood and earthquake. Crisis are also initiated by technology failures, financial system breakdowns, political change, leadership moral or ethical lapses, reputational, legal and regulatory issues.

Level of Crisis:

Levels of crisis	Characteristics
Minor	Usually manifests at local level and is usually of low impact. If handled well, recovery is easier.
Moderate	May impact the whole organization, but likely to affect specific functions or geographies. If proper attention is not given, it quickly escalates.
Major	Could threaten the functioning, reputation and survival of the organization and its long-term viability.

Types of Crises

Sudden Crises (30% of crises) - for example a fatal accident

- Occur without warning
- Catch the organization off-guard
- Can be caused by internal or external factors
- The crisis must be immediately addressed to prevent serious damage to the organization.

Smoldering Crises (70% of crises) - For example leader fall-down, financial fraud.

These are scenarios that may seem small, or smoldering, but are like embers of a fire that may not attract immediate attention but can burst into flames if unchecked. In the same way, this type of crisis can manifest into a full-blown crisis, if not treated in the "smoldering" phase.

- Start small and grow over time
- Often the result of poor management decisions
- Magnified by missteps in communications
- Can generate negative attitudes, both internally and externally
- Early warning signs are usually present - reports of misinformation, complaints, rumors

ADDENDUM TWO: ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Can a crisis be averted?

A crisis may be unannounced. But more often they fall into the category of Smoldering Crises; problems that could have been foreseen and corrected before they explode. These Smoldering Crises are generally caused by managerial problems, including ethical lapses, and/or inadequate communications. The GBC Body, its Executive Committee, individual GBCs and other ISKCON world leaders must be on guard to prevent Smoldering Crises from becoming full-blown crises.

Like risks, there can never be a zero-crisis environment. This is so, because not all crises are created internally. Sometimes there are factors beyond our control that can lead to a crisis.