

Conference Ethical Compliance & Venue Governance Code

Preamble

The 9th SA Tuberculosis Conference is convened at a time of acute challenge for the HIV and tuberculosis response in South Africa and the region. The sudden withdrawal of significant international donor funding has placed severe pressure on scientific collaboration, programme coordination, and policy engagement at a moment when sustained evidence-based action is essential.

For 18 years, this Conference has provided a vital national platform bringing together researchers, clinicians, policymakers, implementers, and civil society. Preserving this forum, in both scale and accessibility, is a matter of public interest and central to maintaining an effective TB and HIV response.

In order to sustain the Conference under current financial constraints, the Conference Custodians resolved to relocate the event from its traditional host city of Durban to Gauteng, where the majority of scientific, government, and implementing stakeholders are based. This decision was taken to reduce barriers to participation and protect broad access for delegates.

The Committee recognises that there are very limited venues in Gauteng capable of hosting a conference of this scale at an affordable and accessible cost. In this context, the selected venue represents a **proportionate and necessary choice**, made in good faith to ensure the continued viability of the Conference and the advancement of its public-health purpose.

This **Conference Ethical Compliance & Venue Governance Code** is adopted to affirm the Organising Committee's commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct, scientific integrity, and public accountability, notwithstanding the exceptional circumstances in which the Conference is convened.

1. Purpose of this Code

This Compliance Code sets out the ethical, governance, and operational standards governing the organisation, sponsorship, exhibition, and conduct of the 9th South African Tuberculosis Conference (SATB 2026) ("the Conference").

The Code is adopted to:

- Ensure full alignment with applicable South African healthcare industry ethical marketing codes, including the **Medical Device Code of Ethical Marketing and Business Practice (Version 7)** and the **MCA Code of Conduct (v11, June 2018)**.
- Safeguard the scientific independence, integrity, and public credibility of the Conference.
- Prevent any form of inducement, inappropriate influence, or perception thereof in interactions with healthcare professionals (HCPs).
- Provide transparency and assurance to sponsors, exhibitors, regulators, and delegates.

2. Guiding Ethical Principles

The Conference is governed by the following principles:

1. **Scientific primacy**
The scientific, educational, and public-health objectives of the Conference shall at all times be paramount.
2. **Independence**
The content, faculty selection, and programme structure remain under the sole authority of the Conference Conveners.
3. **No inducement**
No activity, benefit, hospitality, or venue choice may reasonably be construed as an inducement to influence clinical, procurement, prescribing, or professional behaviour.
4. **Proportionality and necessity**
All decisions, including venue selection, are guided by necessity, accessibility, affordability, and public-interest considerations.
5. **Transparency and accountability**
All sponsorships, exhibitions, and financial relationships are transparent and auditable.

3. Venue Selection and Governance

3.1 General rule

The Conference acknowledges the guidance in the Medical Device Code that, **in general**, venues with on-site casinos are not considered compliant due to potential perceptions of entertainment-driven inducement.

3.2 Exceptional public-interest justification

The Organising Committee records that:

- The Conference addresses a **national and regional public-health emergency**, particularly in the context of HIV and tuberculosis, compounded by significant recent donor-funding withdrawals.
- There are **extremely limited venues in South Africa** capable of hosting the Conference at the required scale while remaining financially accessible to delegates, particularly those from low- and middle-income settings.
- The selected venue represents the **only viable and proportionate option** to ensure equitable access, affordability, and continuity of critical scientific exchange.

3.3 Mandatory ring-fencing measures

To mitigate any ethical or perceptual risk, the following safeguards are mandatory and non-negotiable:

- The Conference utilises **completely separate entrances and exits** from any casino facilities.
- Delegates are **not required to pass through, enter, or exit via** casino areas.
- No casino marketing, or promotional material appears in any Conference space.

- No formal conference sessions, social events, or hospitality activities are held in casino facilities.
- The Conference programme runs full scientific days, with no leisure-oriented gaps or entertainment elements.

These measures ensure that the venue **does not function as an entertainment attraction** and that the Conference environment remains strictly professional and scientific.

4. Sponsorship and Exhibition Standards

4.1 Permissible support

Medical device and healthcare industry sponsors may support the Conference only through:

- Educational grants.
- Exhibition space.
- Sponsorship of clearly defined scientific or educational activities.
- Satellite symposia conducted in accordance with applicable ethical codes.

4.2 Prohibited activities

Sponsors and exhibitors may **not**:

- Reference or promote any casino-related amenities or activities.
- Provide gifts, benefits, or incentives beyond what is permitted under applicable ethical codes.

5. Hospitality and Delegate Support

- Hospitality provided at the Conference is **strictly limited** to modest meals and refreshments that are subordinate in time and focus to the scientific programme.
- No hospitality is provided to spouses, partners, or guests of delegates.
- Accommodation and travel arrangements, where applicable, comply with ethical standards and do not extend beyond the official duration of the Conference.

6. Scientific Programme Integrity

- The scientific programme is developed independently by the Scientific Committee.
- Sponsors have **no control** over content, speakers, or educational outcomes.
- All sessions are clearly identified as scientific, educational, or industry-sponsored where applicable.
- Promotional activity is confined to designated exhibition areas and does not intrude into scientific sessions.

7. Transparency and Disclosure

- All sponsorships, grants, and industry relationships are disclosed in Conference materials.
- This Compliance Code is made available to sponsors, exhibitors, and delegates.
- Any perceived or actual conflicts of interest are declared and managed in accordance with best practice.

8. Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement

- The Conference Convener the Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) is responsible for monitoring compliance with this Code.
- Any breach may result in corrective action, including withdrawal of sponsorship or exhibition privileges.
- Serious or repeated breaches may be reported to relevant industry bodies.

9. Adoption and Authority

This Compliance Code is formally adopted by the **9th SA TB Conference Organising Committee** and applies to all sponsors, exhibitors, organisers, and associated parties.

By participating in the Conference, all parties agree to comply with this Code in full.

Approved on: 07/01/2026

On behalf of the Organising Committee: *Gloria Maimela*