

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE 13TH MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS ON
THE ISLAND OF IRELAND
(THE JOINT COMMITTEE)**

Held at 10.30am on Thursday the 9th September 2004

At the offices of the IHRC, Jervis House, Jervis Street, Dublin 1

Present:

IHRC: Maurice Manning (President) - Chair
William Binchy
Suzanne Egan
Maureen Harding Clark
Nuala Kelly
Tom O'Higgins

NIHRC: Brice Dickson (Chief Commissioner)
Tom Donnelly
Margaret-Ann Dinsmore

In Attendance: Alpha Connelly (Chief Executive, IHRC)
Gavin McSpadden (General Administrator, IHRC)

Apologies: IHRC Olive Braiden
Mervyn Taylor
Katherine Zappone
Martin Collins
Michael Farrell
Robert Daly
Fionnuala Ní Aoláin
Clodach McGrory
Gerard Quinn

NIHRC Christine Eames
Tom Hadden
Kevin McLaughlin
Paddy Sloan (Chief Executive)

1.0 Minutes of the 12th Meeting of the Joint Committee

1.1 The minutes of the 11th December 2003 meeting of the Joint Committee were agreed as an accurate record subject to the following amendments:

1. In paragraph 4.3 the replacement of the name “Shirley” by “Charlotte”.
2. Paragraph 6.1, 2nd line, to read “It was agreed that the position should be formalised pro-tem until the next meeting of the Joint Committee.”
3. The line in paragraph 7.1 in relation to research on migrant workers to be deleted.
4. In paragraph 7.1.3 the replacement of the initials “NIHRC” with “IHRC”.

2.0 Matters arising

2.1 No matters arose.

3.0 Sub-Committee Reports

(i) Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland

3.1 It was agreed to accede to the request from Colin Harvey for access to the pre-consultation document.

3.2 It was agreed that sub-committee minutes would only be made available publicly once approved by the relevant Committee and reported on at the following meeting of the Joint Committee.

3.3 It was noted that the IHRC was to place the pre-consultation document on its web-site.

3.4 It was agreed that the document circulated on the responses to the pre-consultation document would be an internal document only and needed further revision.

3.5 It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would meet in the near future and decide on the format of a letter to be sent to all those pre-circulated. This letter would indicate that the Joint Committee is seeking the views of the political parties.

3.6 It was agreed that the President and Chief Commissioner would write to all political parties on the island seeking their views and requesting a meeting to discuss the issues.

3.7 It was noted that the membership of the Joint Committee Sub-Committee on a Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland would henceforth comprise the following Commissioners subject to the consent of those not present.

1. Nuala Kelly (Convenor)
2. William Binchy
3. Maurice Manning
4. Suzanne Egan
5. Martin Collins
6. Brice Dickson
7. Michael Farrell
8. Tom Hadden

(ii) Racism Sub-Committee

In the absence of the Convenor there was no formal report.

- 3.8 The Chief Commissioner tabled a paper on the definitions of Migrant Workers and spoke to it. It was agreed that the matter would be forwarded to the Racism Sub-Committee for their comments thereon. It was also agreed to send this paper to the Migration Policy Group, on which both Commissions are represented, if the Convenor of the Committee, Michael Farrell, should so agree.
- 3.9 It was noted that the President and Chief Commissioner had written to their respective Governments urging ratification of the Migrant Workers Convention. The Chief Commissioner noted that it would seem that other National Institutions were not that keen to urge their respective governments likewise.
- 3.10 The President informed the Chief Commissioner that he had referred his letter in relation to a proposed handbook on the rights of Migrant Workers to the Racism Committee of the IHRC for its comment thereon.
- 3.11 There ensued a short discussion on recent seemingly racist motivated attacks in Northern Ireland.

(iii) Emergency Laws Sub-Committee

- 3.12 It was noted that this Committee had not met.
- 3.13 The President noted that this item was on the agenda of the Committee on the Administration of Justice of the IHRC. He noted also that Maureen Harding Clark had recently joined this Committee.
- 3.14 The Chief Commissioner noted that the NIHRC had made its submission on the Home Office's discussion paper published in February 2004, "Counter-Terrorism Measures – Reconciling Security and Liberty in an Open Society". It was proposed that this paper be considered by the Sub-Committee.

4.0 Update on activities of the two Commissions

- 4.1 The Chief Executive spoke to her paper on the activities of the IHRC which had been previously circulated.

It was agreed that a note of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Joint Committee held in Belfast to discuss the Citizenship Referendum in the Republic would be made available by the NIHRC.

- 4.2 The Chief Commissioner tabled and spoke to his paper on the activities of the NIHRC. He indicated that he would make available to the IHRC both their Casework and Commissioners Manual.

5.0 Date of next meeting

- 5.1 It was agreed that the next meeting will be held in Belfast on Thursday the 2nd of December 2004.

6.0 Any Other Business

- 6.1 It was agreed that the NIHRC would progress outstanding issues in relation to the Treaties Database and that the database would be updated and finalised before the next meeting.
- 6.2 It was agreed that the Sub-Committee on the charter would discuss the request from the Organisation of the Unemployed for a meeting.
- 6.3 The Chief Commissioner indicated that he had met with the Omagh Support and Self Help Group. He indicated that he would write to the President enquiring whether the IHRC wished to examine the files which this group had submitted to the NIHRC.