

**MINUTES OF THE 17th MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS
ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND
(THE JOINT COMMITTEE)**

**Held on Wednesday, 26 April 2006 at 11am, in the Premises of
the Irish Human Rights Commission, Jervis House, Dublin 1**

Present: IHRC: Maurice Manning (President) - Chair
Michael Farrell
Nuala Kelly
Tom O'Higgins
Clodach McGrory
Maureen Harding Clark
Martin Collins
Gerard Quinn

NIHRC: Monica McWilliams (Chief Commissioner)
Jonathan Bell
Thomas Duncan
Anne Hope
Colin Harvey
Alan Henry
Eamonn O'Neill

In Attendance: Alpha Connelly (Chief Executive, IHRC)
Paddy Sloan (Chief Executive, NIHRC)
Claire McCann (Clerical Officer, IHRC)

1.0 Apologies:
IHRC Katherine Zappone
Fionnuala Ní Aoláin
Olive Braidén
Suzanne Egan
William Binchy
Robert Daly
Mervyn Taylor

NIHRC Christine Eames
Geraldine Rice

2.0 Minutes of the 16th Meeting of the Joint Committee

- 2.1 The second sentence of paragraph 3.6 of the minutes was amended to include the name of Alan Henry. The third sentence was amended to read; 'The members will be selected from the Irish Human Rights Commission's Committee on Racism to be representatives on the sub-committee'.
- 2.2 The minutes were signed as an accurate record of the 16th meeting subject to these amendments.

3.0 Matters Arising

- 3.1 In relation to Item 4, it was noted that paragraph 22 of the revised draft standing orders of the Joint Committee had been amended to take account of the difference of practice between the two Commissions in relation to conflict of interests. The Standing Orders were approved.

4.0 Sub-Committee Reports

- (a) Sub-Committee on a Charter of Rights for the Island of Ireland.
- 4.1 Colin Harvey informed the meeting that the last meeting had taken place on 16th February last. He tabled, and spoke to, a draft paper regarding themed research in this area.
- 4.2 The Joint Committee noted the contents of the paper and approved, in principle, the proposal for a research programme on the Charter of Rights. It was noted that such work could help form an important part of the proposals to be put to the two Governments by the respective Commissions in relation to additional and independent funding for the Joint Committee.
- (b) Sub-Committee on Racism
- 4.3 Michael Farrell informed the meeting that this Committee had met twice, on 28th February last and immediately preceding this meeting, since the last Joint Committee meeting. He further informed the meeting that he would try to ensure that the draft minutes of the Sub-Committee were sent out with the papers for the next Joint Committee meeting, as required by the Standing Orders.
- 4.4 The Sub-Committee recognised the need to have independent administrative support for the Joint Committee and its sub-committees.

- 4.5 Michael Farrell informed the meeting that it was hoped that Patrick Taran of the ILO would visit Ireland in June and meet with the Irish Commission's Racism Committee. It was noted that it might be valuable for a member of the Northern Ireland Commission to attend this meeting and that details would be circulated once this meeting was confirmed.
- 4.6 A paper regarding the proposal for a Booklet on the Migrant Workers' Convention was tabled. It was noted that this document would be very different from the User's Guide to CERD. In principle this proposal was approved and it was agreed that it should also make up part of the proposals to be put to the two Governments by the respective Commissions in relation to additional and independent funding for the Joint Committee. It was further agreed that if this funding was not forthcoming from the two Governments, then it should be prioritised and that the two Commissions should fund this booklet from existing resources.

(c) Sub-Committee on Research and General Purposes

- 4.7 Thomas Duncan informed the meeting that this Sub-Committee had not met, but tabled a document which detailed a plan for action. In the first instance a change of name of the Sub-Committee to the 'Focus Group Sub-Committee' was approved by the meeting.
- 4.8 The suggested plan of action was noted. It was noted that particular matters which may be considered by the Sub-Committee related to children in care, places of detention, older persons or international issues, such as the reform of the ECHR and Human Rights Council.
- 4.9 It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would meet to discuss these and other issues and bring any suggestions to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

5.0 Update on Activities of the two Commissions

- 5.1 Alpha Connelly tabled and spoke to the summary report on the activities of the Irish Human Rights Commission. She also drew the attention of the meeting to two further matters, namely the Coroner's Bill and the likelihood that legislation regarding digital imaging on passports would be referred by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- 5.2 Michael Farrell informed the meeting of the visit by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour to the Irish Human Rights Commission.

- 5.3 Paddy Sloan tabled and spoke to the report on the work of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. She drew particular attention to the Migrant Workers' Handbook, which is ready to go to the publishers and translators.
- 5.4 Monica McWilliams informed the meeting that the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission travelled to Washington around St Patrick's Day and met with several interested parties, including Mitchell Reiss (US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland) and An Taoiseach. She felt that this had been a very worthwhile visit.
- 5.5 Paddy Sloan informed the meeting that she had met with Minister Dermot Ahern TD.
- 5.6 Monica McWilliams updated the meeting on the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's contact with the Omagh Support and Self Help Group. She was concerned that the Irish Commission should reach a decision in the earliest possible delay regarding how to respond to their request. Maurice Manning informed the meeting that the group were due to visit the Irish Human Rights Commission the next day and a decision would be made after this. Michael Farrell took no part in this discussion.
- 5.7 Maurice Manning informed the meeting that he had been contacted by the British Embassy in relation to a possible visit of the British Home Secretary, Charles Clark, to the Human Rights Commission. He was unsure whether or not this visit would take place.
- 5.8 Paddy Sloan updated the meeting on the British Commission on Equality and Human Rights.

6.0 Date and Place of Next Meeting

- 6.1 It was agreed that the place of the next meeting would be Armagh, which would allow the Joint Committee to invite the Archbishops and representatives of cross-border bodies to the subsequent lunch. The date was scheduled for either Wednesday, 5th or Thursday, 6th July, to be confirmed at a later date.

7.0 Any other business

- 7.1 There being no further business the meeting ended at approximately 1pm.