

**MINUTES OF THE 19th MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS
ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND
(THE JOINT COMMITTEE)**

**Held at 11am on the 9th of November 2006, in the premises of the
Irish Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor, Jervis House, Jervis St,
Dublin 1**

Present: IHRC: Maurice Manning (President) - Chair
Tom O'Higgins
Helen O'Neill
Mervyn Taylor
Rosemary Byrne
Michael Farrell
Suzanne Egan
William Binchy

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

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

Apologies: IHRC: Katherine Zappone
Gerard Quinn
Roger Sweetman
Lia O'Hegarty
Olive Braidon
Robert Daly
Alice Leahy

NIHRC: Lady Christine Eames
Kevin McLaughlin
Geraldine Rice
Tom Duncan

1.0 Minutes of the 18th Meeting of the Joint Committee

1.1 The minutes were signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.0 Matters Arising

2.1 No matters arose.

Michael Farrell left the meeting for the discussion of the following item.

3.0 Omagh Support and Self Help Group

3.1 Professor William Binchy and Professor Monica McWilliams gave the views of the respective Commissions on the file submitted to both by the group. It was considered appropriate that respective independent legal advice be sought as to the effect of any possible recommendation of the joint committee on the matter particularly as regards any present or future criminal proceedings arising out of the Omagh bombing.

3.2 It was agreed that the President of the IHRC and the Chief Commissioner of the NIHRC would communicate this to the Omagh Support and Self Help Group.

4.0 ICC Meeting in Santa Cruz - Bolivia

4.1 The President of the IHRC congratulated the NIHRC on receiving "A" accreditation at the recent ICC meeting. He noted that the IHRC should consider its future relationship with the proposed Scottish and English and Welsh Commissions.

4.2 The Chief Commissioner of the NIHRC congratulated the IHRC on being elected chair of the European Co-ordinating Group of National Institutions and thanked the President of the IHRC for his assistance in gaining "A" status for the NIHRC.

4.3 She noted that the NIHRC had recently met with the UK Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. It was further noted that it was expected that the Commissioners of the new English & Welsh Commission would be appointed soon.

5.0 Joint Committee

- 5.1 There was a wide-ranging discussion on the working methods and operation, to date, of the Joint Committee. It was noted that the Irish Government had given a commitment to providing discrete funding to the Committee so as to enable it to have a dedicated secretariat. It was noted that the Northern Ireland Office had reservations in this regard.
- 5.2 It was agreed that the President of the IHRC, the Chief Commissioner of the NIHRC and respective Chief Executives would attempt to progress matters prior to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- 5.3 Michael Farrell spoke to his paper previously circulated. This was noted.
- 5.4 It was agreed that the IHRC would provide administrative support to the Joint Committee Sub-Committee on Racism and that the NIHRC would provide administrative support to the Joint Committee Sub-Committee on the Charter of Rights for the Island of Ireland.

6.0 Sub-Committee Reports

(a) Joint Committee Sub-Committee on Racism

- 6.1 Michael Farrell noted that the CERD Committee follow-up report on Ireland had been recently published. He further noted that the Committee on the Framework Convention on National Minorities had also recently published its latest report on Ireland.
- 6.2 Michael Farrell informed the Committee that the Irish Government had published Heads of an Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill and that the IHRC had been requested by the Tanaiste and Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to provide its views thereon pursuant to section 8(b) of the Human Rights Commission Act, 2000.
- 6.3 It was noted that the IHRC was to nominate its members to the Sub-Committee shortly. This arose out of the recent appointment process conducted by the Irish Government.

(b) Joint Committee Sub-Committee on the Charter of Rights

- 6.4 Colin Harvey noted that the IHRC was shortly to nominate its members to this Sub-Committee also and that a meeting would take place thereafter.

7.0 Update on activities of the two Commissions

7.1 Individual papers were circulated and spoken to by both Chief Executives outlining recent activities of both Commissions

8.0 AOB

8.1 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Joint Committee would be held in Belfast on the 8th of February 2007.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 12.45pm approximately.