

**MINUTES OF THE 33RD MEETING OF THE JOINT
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO HUMAN
RIGHTS COMMISSIONS ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND
(THE JOINT COMMITTEE)**

**Held on 14 October 2010 at the offices of the Irish
Human Rights Commission in Dublin**

Present:

IHRC

Commissioners

Maurice Manning (Chair)

Michael Farrell

Tom O'Higgins

Staff

Eamonn MacAodha, Chief Executive

Kirsten Roberts, Director of Research, Policy and Promotion

Des Hogan, Deputy Chief Executive (for item 7)

NIHRC

Commissioners

Monica McWilliams

Ann Hope

Alan Henry

Colm Larkin

Staff

Peter O'Neill, Chief Executive

Ciaran O'Maolain

1. Apologies

It was agreed not to record apologies for this meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held

These were agreed.

3. Matters arising from the meeting

The NIHRC Chief Commissioner inquired as to progress on meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. She reported that she would be visiting Westminster the following week and would be meeting with a high level delegation. On the back of that visit it would be good to meet with the Oireachtas Joint Committee. The IHRC President undertook to again speak to the Chair of the Joint Committee.

4. Activity reports from the two Commissions

The Chief Executive of the NIHRC spoke to his report on activities since the previous meeting. Amongst items arising in discussion was the announcement by the Northern Ireland Office to cut the budget of the NIHRC by 25% by 2014/2015. It was reported that NIHRC Commissioners were engaged in robust lobbying highlighting the impact of the cuts on the ability of the NIHRC to carry out its mandate. The CEO noted that this budget cut was compounded by the refusal of the NIO to allow a grant to be received from Atlantic Philanthropies. The CEO also reported on the success of the NIHRC annual conference on 16 September, and thanked the IHRC for its contribution. A discussion also took place on; the Parades Commission policy, recent activities by the NIHRC legal services and their work on institutional child abuse. It was also reported that the NIHRC were planning to take their first case in their own name in relation to a case concerning the rights of Travellers.

The IHRC Chief Executive presented his report on the activities of the Commission since the previous meeting. Items arising in discussion included; follow up to the 2nd and 3rd Enquiry reports, use of the IHRC *amicus curiae* power, work on mandatory life sentences and the forthcoming Conference on Religion and Education. The recent submission of the IHRC on transgender rights was also discussed. The IHRC CEO

reported on the launch on 29 September of the Human Rights Guide for the Civil and Public Service and developments on the Human Rights Education and Training Project. He further reported on developments in relation to IHRC shadow reports on CERD and CAT. It was further reported that the IHRC was in the process of recruiting a UPR Project Officer to undertake the IHRC's work in this area over the coming 10 months. The launch of the Annual Report was noted as were forthcoming events including a NGO Consultation on UPR and the Joint Conference with the Law Society of Ireland and 4 Jurisdictions meeting. The revamp of the IHRC website was also discussed.

Commissioner Farrell reported on a conference he had attended on behalf of the IHRC in Strasbourg on equality bodies. The IHRC President reported on his visit to Dolphin House, in particular in relation to ESC Rights. Commissioner Farrell also noted the forthcoming publication of the Equality and Rights Alliance 'roadmap' on the Irish human rights infrastructure.

5. Report from the Racism Sub-Committee

The Chair of the sub-committee reported that the Committee hadn't met that morning, but that there were two oral reports on the activities of the respective Commissions. Commissioner Farrell reported on the IHRC meeting on Direct Provision and the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010. The NIHRC reported on work on the Common Travel Area, Traveller Accommodation and ID cards for non EEA nationals, as well as no recourse to public funds.

6. Future work on the Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland

A discussion took place on this issue. It was agreed that it was preferable to return to the issue after elections in both jurisdictions and that work at present should focus on equivalence of rights. The NIHRC have advertised for a professional placement to undertake some work on the issue and the Chief Commissioner proposed that those with expertise in this area might be approached to see if they had a professional interest in pursuing research in this area. It was agreed that the IHRC President would contact the Oireachtas Committee and that a definitive view would be taken in December.

7. Equivalence

Mr Hogan presented his paper on equivalence of rights in relation to international treaties applicable to both jurisdictions. He noted that there was a proposal for a press release wherein the two Commissions called for the ratification of treaties in both jurisdictions. The press release and paper were agreed with minor amendments. The Committee expressed its thanks to Mr Hogan.

8. International developments

The IHRC Chief Executive reported on recent international developments.

9. Any Other Business

The NIHRC updated on latest developments in relation to the Denis Donaldson inquest.

10. Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 14 December 2010 in Belfast.