

**MINUTES OF THE 18TH 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 5 July 2006 at the Armagh City and District
Council offices, the Palace Demesne, Armagh**

Present: IHRC: Maurice Manning (President)
Michael Farrell
Nuala Kelly

NIHRC: Monica McWilliams (Chief Commissioner)
Jonathan Bell
Tom Duncan
Christine Eames
Ann Hope

In attendance: Alpha Connelly (Chief Executive, IHRC)
Paddy Sloan (Chief Executive, NIHRC)

Apologies: IHRC: Robert Daly
William Binchy
Suzanne Egan
Clodach McGrory
Tom O'Higgins
Mervyn Taylor
Katherine Zappone
Maureen Harding Clark
Gerard Quinn
Fionnuala Ni Aolain
Olive Braiden
Martin Collins

NIHRC: Kevin McLaughlin
Geraldine Rice
Alan Henry
Eamonn O'Neill
Colin Harvey

1.0 Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Joint Committee

- 1.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record, with slight textual change to item 4.1.

2.0 Matters Arising

- 2.1 It was noted that the NIHRC plans to visit the female prison Dochas in Mountjoy, Dublin in September. When arrangements have been confirmed, IHRC will be notified.
- 2.2 There followed some discussion on the respective roles of the Commissions in relation to the Prisoner Ombudsman in NI and the Inspector of Prisons in the RoI.
- 2.3 At item 5.7 it was noted that the possible visit referred to of the British Home Secretary, Charles Clark to the Irish Commission did not take place.

3.0 Sub-Committee Reports

- 3.1 Charter of Rights
It was agreed that the offices would establish email contact lists for all members of the sub-committee and that dates for future meetings would be arranged.
Further clarity on the funding situation for the proposed research would be forthcoming following the submission later in July of an application to the British and Irish governments for discrete funding for the work of the Joint Committee.
- 3.2 Research
It was agreed to change the name of this sub-committee to a focus group and decided to wait for the imminent appointment process at the IHRC to be completed before arranging the first meeting.
- 3.3 Racism
The Racism sub-committee had met just in advance of the Joint Committee. It was proposed to undertake research into the compatibility of the domestic legislation in NI and in the RoI with the Migrant Workers' Convention. The Executive Summary would provide a chapter of the planned Migrant Workers Convention booklet but be undertaken as a separate piece of work, and a publication in its own right.

The first mission visit of the CERD Committee was to Ireland, where Morten Kjaerum, acting on behalf of the Committee, secured a report from the Irish government on how it had implemented the Committee's concluding observations following their recent periodic report. It was noted that this was a very useful process, involving a series of meetings over a 4 day period and significant engagement with the IHRC.

It was agreed that any press work on the Joint Committee meeting in Armagh should also make reference to the meeting of the Racism sub-committee and express concern at recent racist attacks in Northern Ireland.

There followed discussion of a recent meeting of the NIHRC with the Head of the Immigration National Directorate (IND) and the intention to create an immigration unit in Belfast which will be jointly staffed with PSNI and Gardai.

4.0 Omagh Families

Michael Farrell left the meeting

- 4.1 Both Commissions have met independently with the Omagh group of families of victims of the bomb, and are seeking to identify a possible joint response to their demands for an independent cross-border public inquiry.
- 4.2 It was agreed that both the President and the Chief Commissioner would contact the group independently and explain the current position and that the Joint Committee would continue to consider the issue once each Commission has fully exhausted the options.

Michael Farrell re-joined the meeting

5.0 Resourcing the Joint Committee

- 5.1 A paper was tabled outlining the basis of an application to the British and Irish governments for additional resources specifically for the work of the Joint Committee. These would cover the cost of a member of staff and administrative support as well as programme costs for the various sub-committees for a period initially of one year. It was proposed to submit this application to the BIIGC meeting on 24 July.
- 5.2 It was agreed that the two Chief Executives and the President and Chief Commissioner would refine the application in light of the discussions and proceed. Any person appointed should be on a time limited consultancy basis.
- 5.3 With regard to the planned booklet on the Migrant Workers Convention, it was agreed that terms of reference for the proposed research into the compliance of domestic law in NI and RoI should be drawn up in the autumn, paying particular attention to the relationship of the booklet to the proposed additional research.

6.0 Commission Updates

6.1 Papers were presented by the two Chief Executives outlining the current priorities for each Commission.

7.0 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the Committee adjourned to meet with the Mayor of Armagh and members of the City council and civic society for a reception and lunch.