

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

Tuesday, 21 January 2003, 2p.m.

Reading Room, Stephen's Green Club, 9 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2

Present: IHRC

Maurice Manning, President

William Binchy

Robert Daly

Suzanne Egan

Michael Farrell

Nuala Kelly

Jane Liddy

Clodach McGrory

Tom O'Higgins

Mervyn Taylor

Katherine Zappone

NIHRC

Brice Dickson, Chief Commissioner

Tom Hadden

Paddy Kelly

In attendance: Alpha Connelly, Chief Executive, IHRC

Paddy Sloan, Chief Executive, NIHRC

Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Margaret Ann Dinsmore, Tom Donnelly, Christine Eames, Harold Good, Christopher McGimpsey, Frank McGuinness, Kevin McLaughlin and Patrick Yu of the HIHRC, and from Fionnuala NI Aoláin, Olive Braiden, Martin Collins and Gerard Quinn of the IHRC.

2. Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of 3 September 2002

2.1 The minutes were approved subject to the following amendments to paragraph 2.2:

- deletion of the words “produce a” in the third line and insertion of these words before the word “document” in the fifth line;
- deletion of the words “the publication on” in the sixth line and insertion of the words “publication on this” before the word “issue” in the last line.

3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

3.1 Regarding paragraph 6.2, the President of the IHRC said that it would be premature to arrange a meeting of the Joint Committee with the British-Irish Secretariat. The Chief Commissioner of the NIHRC indicated that the NIHRC would be meeting with the Secretariat on 4 February 2003 concerning the Northern Ireland Bill of Rights.

3.2 Regarding paragraph 2.1, the possibility of the two Commissions themselves conducting the audit of the human rights commitments was raised, and the Chief Executive of the NIHRC offered to contact former NIHRC Commissioner, Christine Bell, about the audit.

4. Sub-Committee Reports

Sub-Committee on a Charter of Rights

4.1 The convenor of the Sub-Committee, Paddy Kelly, reported on a meeting of the Sub-Committee which had been held the previous week.

4.2 Following a discussion of the draft Consultation Paper, it was agreed that each Commission would individually examine the revised draft of 16 January 2003 and communicate its views thereon to the Sub-Committee before the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

4.3 It was also agreed that the Sub-Committee would in the first instance consider the form of the proposed consultation process as well as questions of expenses and research and bring its proposals thereon to the Joint Committee.

4.4 It was further agreed that the consultation process would be conducted in stages, that there would be more than one stage and that it would be premature to decide the actual number of stages at present.

Sub-Committee on Racism

4.5 The convenor of the Sub-Committee, Michael Farrell, tabled and spoke to minutes of a meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 3 September 2002, and reported that there had been no meeting of the Sub-Committee since then. As previously agreed, the IHRC had established its own committee on racism.

4.6 The Chief Executive of the NIHRC mentioned that the NIHRC Committee on Racism had met in November 2002.

4.7 A paper entitled “Progress work on North/South doc. on CERD for Sub-Committee on Racism of Joint Committee (JC/SC)” was tabled and presented by Nuala Kelly.

5 Accreditation of National Human Rights Institutions at International Meetings

5.1 The Chief Commissioner of the NIHRC spoke to his paper “Accreditation arrangements for national human rights institutions (NHRIs) at international meetings” (draft of 2 January 2003).

5.2 Jane Liddy drew the attention of members of the Joint Committee to the fact that a paper on the role of national human rights institutions had been delivered at a human rights conference in Dublin on behalf of Gil Robles, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

6. Emergency Legislation

6.1 The President of the IHRC mentioned that the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform had referred the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Bill to the IHRC for its views on the implications of the Bill for human rights.

6.2 A briefing paper by Fionnuala NI Aoláin on the work of the IHRC related to emergency powers was tabled at the meeting.

6.3 As there was no immediate urgency about the item, it was agreed that each Commission would consider it further; and Tom Hadden offered to draw up some guidelines based on relevant international documents for the consideration of the Joint Committee.

7. Conference of European Human Rights Institutions, 14-16 November 2002

7.1 A report on the conference was tabled; and the Chief Executives of the IHRC and the NIHRC commented on the success of the conference.

7.2 It was agreed that each Commission would pay its own expenses related to the hosting of the conference.

8. Update on Activities

8.1 The written updates on the activities of the IHRC and the NIHRC were noted.

9 Next Meeting

9.1 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Joint Committee would be held in Belfast at noon on 16 April 2003 and that the date of each meeting of the Joint Committee would be set at the preceding meeting of the Committee.

10 *Any Other Business*

10.1 Attention was drawn to the request to each Commission by the NUI Galway's Human Rights Society to make a contribution towards the cost of the 1st Annual Irish Students for Human Rights Convention to be held in Galway, 28-30 March 2003. The meeting closed at approximately 4.30p.m.