



**MINUTES ARISING FROM THE INDEPENDENT CHIEF INSPECTOR OF THE UKBA,  
INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP ON COUNTRY INFORMATION  
(IAGCI)– 21 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**Venue:** 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Globe House  
89 Eccleston Square  
London  
SW1V 1PN

**Present:**

(Chair) Khalid Koser (KK)	-	Geneva Centre for Security Policy
Gottfried Zuercher (GZ)	-	Advisory Board Member of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development
Christopher McDowell (CM)	-	The City University, London
Jerome Sabety (JS)	-	UNHCR (Geneva)
Andrew Jordan (AJ)	-	Asylum Immigration Tribunal
Richard Lederle (RL)	-	UK Border Agency
Robin Titchener (RT)	-	UK Border Agency
Roseanna Atherton	-	UK Border Agency
Laura Hammond (LH)	-	School of Oriental & African Studies
John Vine (JV)	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency
Stuart Harwood (SH)	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Alex Marinkovic (AM)	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Judith Gardner (JG)	-	Independent consultant
Claudia Seymour (CS)	-	SOAS
Dr Ceri Oepen (CO)	-	SOAS

**Apologies:**

Loren B Landau (LBL)	-	University of the Witwatersrand
Lynellyn Long (LL)	-	Independent reviewer
Alan Deve (AD)	-	UNHCR (London)

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Action point</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<p>JV updated the group about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed inspections in Abu Dhabi, Guangzhou and Loughborough</li> </ul> <p>Future inspections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence Thematic</li> <li>• Global file sample</li> <li>• Amman, Jordan</li> <li>• Scotland and Northern Ireland</li> <li>• How Country of Origin Information (COI) is used in decision making</li> </ul> <p>JV introduced SH and explained that he would represent the ICIUKBA at future IAGCI meetings.</p> <p>JV informed the group that he was travelling to Geneva to meet with UNHCR, IOM and the Red Cross.</p>	
<p><b>1.0</b></p> <p><u>Chair's report</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No amendments to minutes</li> <li>• KK thanked AM for his secretariat work and Country of Origin Information Service (COIS) for commenting quickly on reviews</li> <li>• KK informed the group that he will make a presentation on IAGCI at the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Country of Origin Sponsorship Conference in Budapest on 24 November</li> <li>• KK explained that there were delays in posting minutes, reviews, invitations to tender (ITT) and the terms of reference because of 'Purdah' and the ICIUKBA changed to a new website. It was stated that a web search for IAGCI currently opens the old site</li> <li>• No responses to ITT's but LH assisted in identifying reviewers. KK thanked her</li> <li>• Reviewers vetted by KK and use authorised by ICIUKBA as per the IAGCI terms of reference</li> </ul> <p>There was a discussion about how best to recruit country reviewers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed to have the ITT on the website's front page or in the latest news section (also on the front page)</li> </ul> <p>Another discussion centred on reasons why there was a</p>	<p><b>AM to ensure a search for IAGCI opens the new website</b></p> <p><b>ITT on the website's front page or in the latest news section</b></p>

	<p>difficulty in recruiting reviewers. It was suggested that,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential reviewers may be concerned that by working for the ICIUKBA they were 'too close' to UKBA</li> <li>• IAGCI could produce a leaflet explaining its work or an article could be written setting out its function and independence.</li> <li>• Reviewers who reviewed for APCI received £4000 for a review but now only £3000</li> <li>• JS noted that former reviewers were not notified if a country report they had previously reviewed was up for review again</li> <li>• LH suggested that we might consider a panel on IAGCI at a relevant academic conference to raise its profile</li> </ul>	<p><b>SH to follow up with LH on the idea of a public panel on IAGCI</b></p>
1.1	<p>LH gave update on Refugee and Asylum Form (RAF) meeting she attended as representative of IAGCI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She had agreed that the IAGCI should present a brief on their current work which would be circulated to the RAF members prior to their meeting</li> </ul>	<p><b>AM to circulate IAGCI update to RAF members and RAF minutes to IAGCI members</b></p>
1.2	<p>KK then went through a list of outstanding action points from previous IAGCI meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KK agreed to submit a brief summary of recommendations that the IAGCI had made and that UKBA had rejected although he noted there had been no examples of this thus far. However he would submit a brief report to the ICIUKBA after each meeting</li> <li>• JV to inform IAGCI of countries being considered for NSA designation but there had been no instances of this yet</li> <li>• ICIUKBA inspectors to discuss IAGCI involvement in COI inspection. The scoping for this inspection has only just started but this discussion will happen</li> <li>• COIS to be able to contact country reviewer directly if deemed appropriate. This has been actioned but will be inserted into the ToR</li> <li>• IAGCI membership to be discussed at September's meeting. JV and SH to discuss at a later date</li> </ul>	<p><b>KK to submit a brief report to the ICIUKBA after each meeting</b></p> <p><b>COIS to be able to contact country reviewer directly to be inserted into the ToR</b></p>
1.3	<p>RL had not received JV's letter to IAS which was an action point from May 2010.</p>	<p><b>Letter to be sent to IAGCI members</b></p>
2.0 <u>IAGCI</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CO felt the report was more user friendly, up-to-date and continued to improve including greater use of cross-referencing.</li> </ul>	

<p><b><u>Commissioned</u></b> <b><u>Reviews:</u></b> <b><u>Afghanistan</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Her main criticism concerned a few instances where the entire quote from the original sources had not been used, with potentially misleading results in the COI report</li> <li>• RT confirmed it was COIS practice to use complete quotations and not exclude relevant information on a topic (be it negative or positive). All reports go through a three tier quality assurance process to limit the scope of these instances from occurring and ensure the quality of the source information used. The examples were perhaps exceptions to the rule. Nevertheless COIS will identify this issue within the unit and refocus its attention to this detail.</li> <li>• AJ felt it was very important to make sure this policy is adhered to</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3.0</b> <b><u>IAGCI</u></b> <b><u>Commissioned</u></b> <b><u>Reviews:</u></b> <b><u>Democratic</u></b> <b><u>Republic of</u></b> <b><u>Congo</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS said the report was an objective, comprehensive and balanced account of the country.</li> <li>• As the COIS report was produced in June 2009 it would however require updating to be considered accurate</li> <li>• The Report reviewed was produced when the DRC was in the top 20 asylum intake countries but since then (for the majority of 2010) had slipped outside the top 20 (most recent statistics indicated it was 24). Previously countries outside the top 20 were covered by Key Documents but these were no longer being produced. COIS is now in the process of producing full reports for the top 30 asylum intake countries and will shortly be updating the DRC report.</li> <li>• Besides the report case owners can use COIS' specific request service, which provides individual responses for a specific claim or indeed an update to information contained within a report.</li> <li>• CS thought this was considered a good example of where greater use of French sources would be useful. RL noted concerns over possible budgetary constraints for using translators but added that COIS worked closely with the French and Belgium COI units and could explore with them options for obtaining more French source material.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4.0</b> <b><u>IAGCI</u></b> <b><u>Commissioned</u></b> <b><u>Reviews:</u></b> <b><u>South Africa</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report was considered a reasonably accurate account of contemporary South African politics and policies, and human rights conditions.</li> <li>• Review was positive with good identification of further source information for COIS to use in the next report</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.0</b> <b><u>IAGCI</u></b> <b><u>Commissioned</u></b></p>	<p>KK explained that this report was originally reviewed in November 2009 but the review was largely negative. A new report was produced and had now been reviewed. JG was the original reviewer.</p>	

<p><b><u>Reviews:</u></b> <b><u>Somalia</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report was a vast improvement, user friendly and coherent</li> <li>• Admiration for the way COIS addressed the recommendations in the original review</li> <li>• Work was still needed on the section relating to women and the risk of returning</li> <li>• KK commended Debbie Goodier, who was the Senior Researcher at COIS responsible for the Somalia report, for an excellent job</li> <li>• Review positive for COIS and the whole process showed the value of the IAGCI</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6.0</b> <b><u>IAGCI</u></b> <b><u>Commissioned</u></b> <b><u>Reviews:</u></b> <b><u>Vietnam</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report was found to provide a comprehensive overview of the current human rights situation in Vietnam, specifically covering the last two years.</li> <li>• It was considered there was an over reliance on US State Department information though it was clear from the review that there is generally a lack of source material on Vietnam, which in part explains the reliance on the USSD reports.</li> <li>• JS explained that the US State Department did not source their own information</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7.0</b> <b><u>Ideas for</u></b> <b><u>cross-cutting</u></b> <b><u>reviews</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IAGCI would look at cross cutting reviews involving 20 or 30 countries</li> <li>• The APCI had looked at Gender in 2007, Children in 2008, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons in 2009 and in 2010 the IAGCI had looked at returns</li> <li>• Could look at up to two themes a year</li> <li>• Consensus to look at the same themes again in sequence but some of the group had reservations about the added value</li> <li>• Could look at whether the recommendations of previous reports had been acted on</li> </ul>	<p><b>KK to work on ToR</b></p>
<p><b>8.0</b> <b><u>AOB</u></b></p>	<p>There was a discussion about whether COIS researchers could/should attend IAGCI meetings. The issues were,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be a good development opportunity</li> <li>• How would a researcher feel if the review was negative?</li> <li>• The IAGCI did not have observers, unlike the APCI, but perhaps this would be the most appropriate status of a researcher</li> <li>• Would reviewers be less critical if the COIS researcher was present?</li> </ul>	<p><b>KK to amend ToR to allow for occasional attendance</b></p>
<p><b>8.1</b></p>	<p>There was a discussion about swapping review of the Iraq report (scheduled for January 2011) for the Sudan report (scheduled for May 2011) in the work plan because the Iraq report was unlikely to be completed in time for the review and Sudan claims were rising and had now eclipsed Iraq in terms of intake. At the same time it was noted that the forthcoming referendum in Sudan may change conditions there rapidly after January 2011</p>	<p><b>Swap Iraq for Sudan in Workplan</b></p>

<b>8.2</b>	The dates for the 2011 IAGCI were discussed. The group provisionally agreed, <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011</li><li>• Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2011</li><li>• Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011</li></ul>	
<b><u>Next Meeting</u></b>	<b>The next meeting is on 25th January 2011 at 1300-1700hrs in Globe House</b>	