



**MINUTES ARISING FROM THE INDEPENDENT CHIEF INSPECTOR OF THE UKBA,  
INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP ON COUNTRY INFORMATION (IAGCI)– 08  
SEPTEMBER 2009**

**Venue:** 4th Floor Boardroom  
8-10 Great George Street  
London  
SW1P 3AE.

**Present:**

Khalid Koser (Chair)	-	Geneva Centre for Security Policy
Dr Laura Hammond	-	School of Oriental & African Studies
Gottfried Zuercher	-	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
Christopher McDowell	-	The City University, London
Jerome Sabety	-	UNHCR (Geneva)
Alan Deve	-	UNHCR (London)
Nick Swift	-	UK Border Agency
Phil Douglas	-	UK Border Agency
Garry Cullen	-	Office of the Independent Chief Inspector
Akua Brew-Abekah	-	Office of the Independent Chief Inspector
Prof. Shaun Gregory	-	University of Bradford

**Apologies:**

Dr Chris Smith	-	Chatham House, London
JoAnn McGregor	-	University College, London
Jocelyn Alexander	-	University of Oxford
Andrew Jordon	-	Asylum Immigration Tribunal

<b><u>Agenda Item</u></b>	<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Action point</u></b>
<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	The chair welcomed everyone to the Chief Inspector's Independent Advisory Group on Country Information.	
<b><u>Chair's report</u></b>	The chair stated that the IAS had invited him to participate in research they are currently undertaking. Although he had declined the request, other members of the Group were welcome to participate if they were approached.  LH informed the group she had attended an IAS meeting on	

	<p>the use of Operational Guidance Notes (OGNs). She concluded that their emerging findings indicated OGNs were a problem area for UKBA.</p> <p>The chair confirmed that the panel felt that the inspection of OGNs was a priority and would support the Chief Inspector in any subsequent inspections that might take place on the use of OGNs within UKBA.</p> <p>NS informed the Group that all new COI researchers to UKBA would undergo a four week e-based training course and that members of the Group were welcome to view parts of training on-line and / or attend the final wash up session at the end of the month.</p>	<p><b>NS to invite members of the Group to attend training session on 30<sup>th</sup> September.</b></p>
<p><u>IAGCI Commissioned Reviews: Pakistan</u></p>	<p>The Group discussed Professor Shaun Gregory's review on the Pakistan COI report.</p> <p>SG commented favourably on the COI report, stating that it was comprehensive, up to date and balanced.</p> <p>He stated that the Group may want to address the terms of reference it provides to reviewers so it is clear what is expected from them.</p> <p>UKBA responded positively to the recommendations made by Professor Shaun Gregory and had amended the COI report accordingly where relevant.</p> <p>It was noted that UNHCR had also submitted comments. These will be considered by the UKBA.</p> <p>A discussion was held on the most appropriate format of comments made by reviewers and UKBA in response. JS suggested that there could be a method within MS Word. He will investigate and advise accordingly.</p>	<p><b>KK to revise terms of reference for reviewers</b></p>
<p><u>IAGCI Commissioned Reviews: India</u></p>	<p>The Group discussed Dr Chris Smith's review on the India COI report.</p> <p>Dr Chris Smith commented negatively on the COI report. The main points of contention were that the structure of the report could be improved; the report was not a comprehensive document; there was an over reliance on certain sources; and a failure to inform the user what is required in terms of information from claimants.</p> <p>NS of UKBA did not accept the criticisms in their entirety, but agreed that the next India COI should be reviewed by the Group. The Chair would ask Dr Smith for suggested sources to cover areas where had identified a need for further information. The next India COI will be completed in time for the January meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that UNHCR had also submitted comments. These will be considered by the UKBA.</p>	
<p><u>IAGCI Commissioned</u></p>	<p>The Group discussed JoAnn McGregor and Jocelyn Alexander's' review on the Zimbabwe COI report.</p>	

<p><u>Reviews:</u> <u>Zimbabwe</u></p>	<p>The chair noted that the main concern regarding the COI report was that it appeared to be overly positive because it did not include recent events within the main body of the report. Although there was a separate news section that detailed these events, it was felt that this could be overlooked by case owners.</p> <p>NS commented that the recent news events could not be incorporated into the main report because of the timing of events and the report's proximity to publication.</p> <p>The Group discussed how recent news events could be highlighted within relevant sections of the document.</p> <p>UKBA stated that they had accepted comments from the reviewers about annexes.</p>	<p><b>NS to consider how recent news events can be incorporated within upcoming reports.</b></p>
<p><u>Review of IAGCI procedures</u></p>	<p>The chair explained that the forum was yet to define all of its procedures.</p> <p>The Group discussed responsibility for updates to the website. It was agreed that this would be maintained by staff in the independent chief inspectorate.</p> <p>The Group discussed the procedure for commissioning reviews of COI reports. It was agreed that for further reviews, adverts would be placed in key subscriptions.</p> <p>NS proposed that a prescriptive commissioning note should be provided which should include a checklist of items the reviewer should cover.</p> <p>The group discussed the level of fees offered to reviewers. It was noted that there would be some flexibility on the part of the inspectorate and fees would vary according to the volume and nature of work to be undertaken.</p> <p>The Chair agreed to review the former APCI processes with a view of replicating those that would be suitable for the IAGCI.</p> <p>NS tabled a proposal that the forum should put a tender out to organisations instead of individual reviewers to ensure consistency in reviews.</p> <p>The group discussed this proposal and agreed that it had advantages in principle but that organisations that had representatives on the IAGCI forum may be disqualified. This would limit the range of organisations that could be targeted.</p> <p>GC commented that agreeing more prescriptive terms of reference for reviewers may suffice but that the forum should be presented with a paper on this proposal.</p> <p>NS stated that the criteria for reviewing reports should reflect the specific needs of the UKBA customers, as opposed to a general academic perspective. To ensure the reports were serving the purpose for UKBA case owners, it was suggested that the Chief Inspector may instigate research to investigate this.</p> <p>GC suggested UKBA should do this internally without the need for an external review conducted by IAGCI. Apart from</p>	<p><b>KK to advise GC of best subscriptions to place adverts.</b></p> <p><b>NS to forward KK the project template used by APCI</b></p> <p><b>NS to forward proposal on whether COI reports meet the needs of case owners.</b></p> <p><b>NS to invite members of the Group to meeting in December of</b></p>

	<p>the issue of cost, it was for UKBA to collect the views of staff about the products they use to help them in their work. NS mentioned there was a meeting of the quarterly feedback forum for users in December and suggested that it might be useful for a member of this group to attend.</p>	<b>end users.</b>
<p><u>Forthcoming reviews of countries for NSA designation</u></p>	<p>The Chair informed panel members of an issue raised recently by UKBA, who wished to designate two countries for NSA, based on reports that were over 12 months old. He commented that neither the Group nor the Independent Chief Inspector had supported the use of these reports for NSA designation, due to the time that had elapsed.</p> <p>As a result UKBA had asked that both countries be reviewed by IAGCI as a matter of urgency. The Chair proposed a virtual meeting be held after a two week review period for both countries and a provisional date for this would be around the 15<sup>th</sup> October.</p>	
<p><u>Next meeting</u></p>	<p>It was agreed that the forum would commission a thematic paper on the subject of 'returns'.</p> <p>In addition, the forum would commission COI reviews on China and Somalia.</p> <p>The group agreed a provisional date of 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010 (pm) for the next IAGCI.</p>	<p><b>KK to draw up TOR's for the thematic review</b></p>
<p>AOB</p>	<p>It was confirmed that UKBA representatives would remain members of the IAGCI forum until this was reviewed at the end of the year.</p>	