



**MINUTES ARISING FROM THE INDEPENDENT CHIEF INSPECTOR OF THE UKBA,  
INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP ON COUNTRY INFORMATION (IAGCI)– 11 MAY 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)	-	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
Christopher McDowell (CM)	-	The City University, London
Alan Deve (AD)	-	UNHCR (London)
Richard Lederle (RL)	-	UK Border Agency
Robin Titchener (RT)	-	UK Border Agency
Laura Hammond (LH)	-	School of Oriental & African Studies
Ian Readhead (IR)	-	Director of Information, ACPO
Garry Cullen (GC)	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Alex Marinkovic (AM)	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Michael Collyer (MC)	-	University of Sussex

**Apologies:**

Jerome Sabety	-	UNHCR (Geneva)
Andrew Jordan	-	Asylum Immigration Tribunal
Jake McClure	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Dulani Kulasinghe	-	University of Sussex
Magali Kazayi	-	Reel ID
David Rampton	-	School of Oriental & African Studies

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Action point</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	The chair welcomed everyone to the Chief Inspector's Independent Advisory Group on Country Information. KK asked if there were any amendments to the minutes but there were none.	
<b>1.0</b> <u>Chair's report</u>	KK reminded the group that the last time they met was on 17.02.10 for the EGM. One thing that came out of this meeting was a revised Terms of Reference (ToR). It has been circulated amongst the group for their comments and will be circulated again for further comment. Within the ToR, KK will look at the process with regards to COIS having a second opportunity to comment on the ICIUKBA's recommendations.	<b>KK will look at the process with regards to COIS</b>
<b>1.1</b>	KK informed the group about issues surrounding the commissioning of reviews of COIS reports. The usual process is that an Invitation to Tender (ITT) is posted on the IAGCI website within one week of the IAGCI meeting where the countries for review are identified. The closing date for tenders will be 14 days after the ITT is posted. If no tenders are received then the IAGCI members widen their search by emailing colleagues and research centres/academic institutions to see if they can suggest a suitable reviewer. KK felt that the IAGCI needed to be broader in advertising tenders by advertising on sites such as 'Forced Migration On-line', LH suggested using the IASFM member's list, and agreed to post future ITTs on this list AD suggested keeping a database of reviewers, RL suggested tendering earlier once the work plan had been agreed by the Group. MC suggested going directly to research centres.	
<b>1.2</b>	LH updated the group on the launch of IAS's report on the legacy of the APCI, an event she attended. KK asked if IAS were satisfied with our response to their report. GC said that they were and that John Vine's response to IAS would be circulated amongst the group	<b>John Vine's response to IAS would be circulated amongst the group as well as RL and RK</b>
<b>1.3</b>	GC gave an update of the RAF meeting on 20.04.10., which was attended for IAGCI by Andrew Jordan. He reported that there was a lot of interest in the recently published asylum report and there had been some criticism from ILPA. The RAF discussed COI information and a possible inspection on that subject.	<b>GC to speak to MV about IAGCI involvement in a possible inspection</b>
<b>2.0</b> <u>IAGCI Commissioned Reviews: Somalia</u>	KK informed the group that, not only were the EGM minutes not on our website, but neither were the Somalia review or IAGCI note – all due to 'purdah'. The review had been critical of the Somalia COI Report and while COIS had accepted the large majority of the recommendations it had not accepted the overall conclusion. IAGCI members formed a small working	<b>Somalia report, IAGCI note and new</b>

	<p>group to look further at the review and they produced a note for the Independent Chief Inspector. It was agreed that the new Somalia report should be published by COIS rather than wait for another review. The IAGCI would commission a review of the new report. There was a discussion about whether the reviewer should be the same as the one that reviewed the original report. RL suggested that using a new reviewer may lead to entirely new areas being identified within the report which may not reflect the effort taken by COIS in the new revised version following the initial reviewers recommendations and the focus to address these. However the decision was made to use a different reviewer if possible.</p>	<p><b>Somalia report to be put on website after Purdah</b></p>
<p><b>3.0</b> <b><u>IAGCI Commissioned Reviews: Return conditions</u></b></p>	<p>KK introduced Michael Collyer who was commissioned with Dulani Kulasinghe to carry out a cross-cutting review on return issues. MC summarised his report. He looked at the 20 COIS reports for the most significant countries of origin for asylum seekers to the UK in 2009; but noted that some of those countries that he looked at were not also in the top 20 most significant countries for removals. He suggested that those countries could be looked at further. He thought that the reports for Algeria (legal section), Sri Lanka (official process) and Nigeria (citizenship) were all examples of good practice. The Burma report however was an example of where more information was needed. He stated that there was no section that covered all returns issues (though all reports have a section titled 'Exit and return') within COIS reports but there was information about returns in a number of different sections. MC made the recommendation that COIS reports should have a substantial return section; as should Key Documents for countries outside the top 20 intake countries but with many returns. He also proposed a template for presenting information in return conditions; made suggestions for further research; analysis of Home Office records, targeted literature reviews, primary research by FCO staff and interviews with returnees.</p>	
<p><b>3.1</b></p>	<p>KK asked COIS if they found the report useful. RL felt it was very useful and a very good report. He was particularly pleased with the template that MC had developed. He informed the group that Key Documents would be phased out and be replaced with full COIS reports for countries that were placed 21<sup>st</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> in terms of asylum intake. RL said that they were also keen to look into the structure of COIS reports. He said that COIS reports are demand led and that the report structure reflected this. He also commented that asking the FCO to undertake research for COIS reports was resource intensive and this would have an impact on how much information could be obtained. KK asked RL why there was no separate return section in COIS reports. RL felt that the information was there in a number of sections such as 'Exit and Return'; 'Freedom of Movement' and 'Citizenship and Nationality' and that if it wasn't then the information could be requested using the COIS request</p>	

	<p>service. KK asked the group for their comments in relation to the report. GZ and LH agreed that the report was very interesting and that the template was very useful. CM wondered if Case Owners consider issues surrounding returning an asylum seeker when making their decisions and RL felt that they did. CM asked if there were COIS requests about returning asylum seekers and RL said that there were. CM asked about training for decision makers on return issues and on the basis of his previous experience as a decision maker RL said that in his opinion it did exist and that it formed part of the fundamental consideration of the UK's obligations under the conventions.</p>	
<p><b>4.0</b> <b><u>IAGCI</u></b> <b><u>Commissioned</u></b> <b><u>Reviews: Sri</u></b> <b><u>Lanka</u></b></p>	<p>KK explained that DR was not available to talk about his review. KK instead spoke about the review. DR had also been commissioned for the 2006 review and he found that the COIS report was much improved. However he felt that a number of subsections were still problematic. RL was happy that an improvement had been noted. RL said that the review was useful because it recommended and identified further sources that COIS could use. He said that reviewers were often commented on the structure of COIS reports but it was hoped that the letter drafted by COIS (and submitted to IAGCI for comment – see paragraph 7.0) explaining the purpose of reports would assist reviewers in understanding why reports are structured as they are. He also stated that the level of detail suggested by DR on groups and minorities whilst interesting and providing a fuller picture as to the origins of the conflict was unnecessary in deciding most individual claims. That said he proposed an idea that he may look into providing a static and separate detailed background document on each country that covers this for context when considering claims. This would allow for a more succinct COI report to concentrate on the main asylum/human rights issues relevant for decision makers whilst providing greater background detail referred to by DR within his review.</p>	
<p><b>4.2</b></p>	<p>RL asked the group if they felt that COIS responses to the reports tabled were adequate. KK thought the comments were more helpful. KK asked who at COIS was responsible for responding to reviews and RL informed the group that it went first to the specific country researcher and was then checked by himself and RT. RL commented that it would be helpful to be able to contact the reviewer directly especially to obtain more sources. KK felt that this should be possible.</p>	<p><b>KK to include in reviewer ToRs that COIS able to contact country reviewer directly</b></p>
<p><b>5.0</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>	<p>KK explained that this review was carried out by a consultant as no academic put in a tender. There was a discussion about the review. It was felt to be a very brief report. It was agreed that LH would look at the review to see if it covered all the issues or whether it has missed some.</p>	

<p><b>6.0</b> <b><u>Annual Work Plan</u></b></p>	<p>KK said that that the work plan would be published after the 'purdah' period was over. There was then a discussion about the work plan. KK will propose a work plan for the group, covering 20 COI reports over two years plus one cross-cutting review per year. This was considered by the group to be ambitious but the group agreed to try to achieve this. GC pointed out that if the annual work plan proved too much then the group should inform the ICIUKBA. LH suggested dividing work up so that 2 members looked in some depth at one report and the rest would take a brief look.</p>	<p><b>Annual work plan to be published</b></p> <p><b>KK to propose plan for September</b></p>
<p><b>6.1</b></p>	<p>KK asked for suggestion for cross-cutting reviews. Health and the structure of COIS reports were suggested by various members; or repeat reviews of gender and children.</p>	<p><b>Group to submit ideas for cross-cutting reviews</b></p>
<p><b>7.0</b> <b><u>AOB</u></b></p>	<p>KK asked if there was any other business. RT informed the group that COIS intended to publish responses to individual requests for information received from decision makers. KK said he would consider how these would be looked at by reviewers. The COIS drafted letter briefing reviewers on the purpose and structure of COI reports was discussed. It was agreed that the letter should come from the ICIUKBA. The group were offered the chance to comment on the letter at a later date as there was not enough time in this meeting. The meeting was then concluded.</p>	<p><b>Group to submit comments on COIS letter to commissioned reviewers</b></p>
<p><b><u>Next Meeting</u></b></p>	<p><b>The next meeting is on 21 September 2010 at 1300-1700hrs in Globe House</b></p>	