



**MINUTES ARISING FROM THE INDEPENDENT CHIEF INSPECTOR OF THE UKBA,
INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP ON COUNTRY INFORMATION (IAGCI)– 27 JANUARY
2010**

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

Present:

Khalid Koser (Chair)	-	Geneva Centre for Security Policy
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
Richard Titchener	-	UK Border Agency
John Vine	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Stuart Harwood	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Patricia Macready	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Alex Marinkovic	-	Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency (Representative)
Andrew Jordon	-	Asylum Immigration Tribunal
Parikrana Gupta	-	The City University, London
Judith Gardner	-	Independent consultant

Apologies:

Garry Cullen	-	Office of the Independent Chief Inspector
Dr Laura Hammond	-	School of Oriental & African Studies
Ian Readhead	-	Director of Information, ACPO

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Action point</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<p>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.</p>	
<u>Chair's report</u>	<p>KK then covered the action points arising from the last meeting. AD informed the group that, following NS' invitation to the group to undergo a four week e-based training course used by UKBA, he was unable to attend on the day but he did follow online. He found it very useful and recommended it to the group.</p> <p>The next action point was the terms of reference for country reviewers. KK would present this at the forthcoming Extraordinary Meeting in February.</p> <p>NS spoke about how COIS run 4 feedback sessions a year. The purpose was to gauge the usefulness of the COIS reports and to find out if they were successful from the perspective of the Case Owner's (CO). NS handed out copies of the feedback form they use. He said it was difficult for CO's to find time to think about how they use COIS reports but he felt a working group with CO's in attendance would be beneficial to all concerned.</p> <p>JV wanted to know how the IAGCI could look at COIS reports and their influence. KK suggested the potential value of an EU comparison. JV suggested that the group could submit a business case to him if they wanted to look at a particular subject.</p> <p>KK reported that he had attended the last RAF meeting and had made a brief presentation on the IAGCI. He made a commitment that an IAGCI member will always attend RAF meetings</p> <p>KK talked about the coming Extraordinary Meeting and it being a stock take. He intends to review membership, stakeholder engagement and to look at the IAS' report on the legacy of the APCI as well as the IAGCI and consider the recommendations within it.</p> <p>He mentioned that the 'virtual meeting' conducted by the group was a success and could be used again if necessary. KK stated that the IAGCI's annual report would be published within two weeks.</p>	<p>Draft Annual Report to be circulated to all members for comments (KK)</p>
<u>IAGCI Commissioned Reviews: Somalia</u>	<p>JG summed up her review of the COIS report for Somalia. She highlighted some areas where she felt the report was incorrect.</p> <p>NS explained that COIS reports were not academic reports. He recognised that COIS could make this clearer as it was a common criticism. The reports are a collation of extracts meant as a starting point for CO's to understand the country concerned and to enable them to research further. Whilst he accepted that reports can become out of date quickly, there was a service within COIS to counter this. A CO could make a COI request and they would receive more up to date</p>	

	<p>information. He acknowledged that JG had made some useful recommendations and had provided useful references.</p> <p>There was a general discussion about the Somalia report. A subsequent review of the amended report would be undertaken for IAGCI.</p>	
<p><u>IAGCI Commissioned Reviews: India</u></p>	<p>KK stated that this was a re-review carried out by PG to assess to what extent the recommendations made by the original reviewer had been carried out by COIS. PG said that the majority of changes had been made. She recommended some new sources, raised issues with the organisation and editing, and also pointed out a few inaccuracies.</p> <p>NS felt that the re-review was thorough and helpful. He noted that the use of neutral criticism was particularly helpful to COIS. NS noted the tendency in this report to rely in some places on US State Department information but also pointed out that these reports tend to cover the main issues well.</p> <p>KK asked if economic and geographical information was useful, CM felt that it wasn't necessary but AJ suggested it was sometimes useful to have some background to a country even if it wasn't directly relevant. NS said COIS were interested in knowing from CO's what information they wanted and referred back to the feedback forms and working groups he had mentioned previously.</p> <p>The question of whether in what circumstances it is appropriate to re-review a revised report was raised, and left for discussion at the Extraordinary Meeting. The procedures for commissioning and selecting expert reviewers will also be considered at that meeting.</p>	<p>JV to meet with COIS team.</p>
<p><u>IAGCI Commissioned Reviews: China</u></p>	<p>The Group discussed Professor Frank Pieke's review on the China COI report. This review was overwhelmingly positive. KK said that the reviewer had carried out a review in 2007 and that the recommendations he made then had largely been incorporated into the 2009 report. NS said he had accepted all the corrections but not all of the recommendations.</p>	
<p><u>Terms of Reference for Thematic Review on Returns</u></p>	<p>CM, LH and KK have worked on the terms of reference, NS made some changes and LH largely accepted these in a letter to the group written as a result of her absence. CM also accepted these changes as did KK.</p> <p>The group then discussed this thematic further. GZ thought that they should look at the reintegration of failed asylum seekers and more specifically their access to health care. AJ pointed out that leaving some countries illegally is in itself an offence, and this could be looked at. KK agreed and stated that these suggestions would be incorporated into the study.</p>	
<p><u>Next meeting</u></p>	<p>The group agreed provisional dates for the next two IAGCI meetings. The first date was 11 May 2010 and the following meeting on 28 September 2010. Fixing these dates enables the Refugee and Asylum Forum (RAF) meetings to be scheduled two weeks before the IAGCI meetings. This would allow the RAF members to have an input into these meetings.</p>	

<u>Proposal for next country reviews</u>	<p>KK suggested Sri Lanka and Vietnam. KK felt some time had passed since they were last reviewed and that Sri Lanka was an interesting country to look at due to the recent political changes. CM felt that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) should also be looked at. KK explained that he also consulted with NS about proposed countries to review. The agenda was finalised. The group would review returns thematically, a re-review of Somalia and new reviews on; Sri Lanka, Vietnam and DRC.</p>	
<u>AOB</u>	<p>KK asked if there was any other business but there was none. The meeting was then concluded.</p>	
<u>Next Meeting</u>	<p>The next meeting is on 11 May 2010 at 8-10 Great George Street. A date for the Extraordinary Meeting would be circulated shortly.</p>	