

Seventh Meeting

1st March 2017, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Harcourt Street

Minutes: Formal Oversight Group Meeting

Attendees:

Oversight Group

Attendance

1. Nora Owen, Independent Chair
2. Gerard Considine, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
3. Nicola Donnelly, Cosc (National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence), Department of Justice and Equality
4. Michael Rowan, Independent Expert
5. Barry Lavin, Intl Security and Defence Policy Branch, Department of Defence
6. Catherine O'Rourke, Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster
7. Frank Smyth, Director of Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
8. Réiseal Ni Chéilleachair, Trócaire
9. Rob Kevlihan, Kimmage Development Studies Centre
10. Diane Nurse, Social Inclusion Unit, Health Services Executive
11. Nura Hagi, Mind the Gap

Guests

15. Bronagh Hinds, Midterm Review Consultant
16. Deborah Donnelly, Midterm Review Consultant
17. Susan Huggins, Evaluation & Audit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
18. Noreen Woulfe, Department of Defence

Secretariat

19. Paula Molloy, Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
20. Olivia Lucas, Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Apologies

- Sarah McGrath, IUKA, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Eoghan McDermott, Defence Forces
- Ruth Taillon, Centre for Cross Border Studies
- Colm Byrne, Oxfam
- Jacqueline Healy, National Women's Council of Ireland

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- Louise Synnott, An Garda Síochána
- Anastasia Crickley, Department of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University

1. Adoption of previous meeting's minutes

In opening the meeting the Chair welcomed the newest member of the Oversight Group, Ms. Nura Hagi of "Mind the Gap" - a development education arts programme working with schools and youth groups, using performance and visual arts to explore complex development and global justice issues. She will represent the perspectives of conflict-affected women living on the island of Ireland. The Chair gave a brief overview of the agenda for the day and encouraged the Oversight Group members to highlight any issues they felt had so far been neglected in the choice of topics for the thematic meetings. She also referred to an event organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on 23rd February, attended by a number of Oversight Group members, which featured an address by International Rescue Committee CEO David Miliband. Ms. Owen sat on the panel for the event and used the opportunity to highlight the positive work being carried out under the 2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in relation to migrant and asylum seeking women arriving in Ireland.

The minutes were formally approved.

2. Update on developments on WPS since Q4 2016 meeting

Matters arising from Q4 2016 meeting:

- Ms Hagi was again welcomed as the newest member of the Oversight Group.
- A response has been received from the Tánaiste to a letter sent by the Chair following the Q3 2016 meeting which addressed the experiences of conflict-affected refugee and asylum seeking women in Ireland. The response states that the DJE is committed to advancing the remaining 20% of McMahon Report recommendations which remain fully outstanding with mid-year analysis on progress still underway.
- A response to a letter issued to the Department of Health following the same meeting remains outstanding.
- A response has also been received from Minister Flanagan to a letter from the Chair following the 3rd OG meeting on 10th February 2016. The Minister's response highlights commitments in the Reconciliation Fund Strategy 2014-2017 and a recently funded piece of research on the funding challenges of women's groups in Northern Ireland.
- In response to an action point arising from the last meeting, a list of upcoming events in the WPS calendar has been circulated, highlighting opportunities for the Oversight Group members to get involved with these.

i) Update on the Work of the Secretariat

- a) Submissions have been made on behalf of the Oversight Group to the public consultations on the National Women's Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2020 and the HSE Intercultural Health Strategy.
- b) On 19th January the Secretariat updated the IDC on Conventional Weapons on developments in the WPS agenda in 2016. This represented a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of the WPS agenda with colleagues in other departments.

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- c) The Secretariat attended the first working-level EU Informal Taskforce on UNSCR 1325 of 2017 on 26th January.
- d) The Secretariat also participated in the first meeting of a specially created Working Group on Revision of the "Comprehensive Approach to EU Implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820". This revision process will be ongoing throughout 2017 with further working group meetings to be scheduled.
- e) Progress continues on the Oversight Group Communications Strategy. The mailing list has been extended further since the Q4 2016 meeting. The Oversight group were again encouraged to tweet under the hashtag #WPSIreland and to share the mailing list with any interested colleagues or contacts.
- f) Dates have yet to be confirmed for the meetings of the Joint Oireachtas Committees on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence and on Justice and Equality at which the Oversight Group will present the Midterm Review Report.

ii) Update on the WPS developments in Ireland and Abroad

- a) On Thursday 23rd February, Independent Chair of the Oversight Group, Nora Owen, took part in a panel discussion following a keynote address by International Rescue Committee CEO, David Miliband, as part of the Iveagh House Lectures series. The seminar was entitled 'Keeping women and girls safe in emergencies- evidence of what works and where the challenges lie'.
- b) The WPS agenda was raised as a priority in Ireland's statement during the recent Security Council open debate on "Conflict prevention and Sustaining Peace" (10th January 2017). The statement emphasised the importance of women's involvement at all stages along the peace continuum. It also noted that the Youth, Peace and Security agenda should act as an innovative tool to advance initiatives on conflict prevention.
- c) The National Action Plan and Midterm Review process were noted during Ireland's review before the CEDAW Committee in February.
- d) The critical role played by women in conflict prevention and resolution was included in Ireland's statement on "the contribution of human rights to peacebuilding through the enhancement of dialogue and international cooperation for the promotion of human rights" during the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council.

iii) Looking forward to Q2 2017

- a) The next few weeks will see the finalisation, publication and dissemination of the Midterm Review Report.
- b) DFAT will host an Informal EU Taskforce on UNSCR 1325 Workshop on 4th April. The workshop will look at the design and implementation of National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security with delegates from EU Member States, EU-level organisations and NGOs/civil society.

The Chair suggested that attention should be given to how to facilitate the participation of government Departments other than Foreign Affairs and Trade in regional and international fora on

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WPS issues. There was some dissatisfaction expressed with the format as well as regarding the precise meaning of the progress reported in the Tánaiste's response. Replies to letters from the Chair would be clearer if they directly reference the National Action Plan. Future letters from the Chair will encourage such direct references to be made. It was noted that a review of progress on the McMahon Report will be published soon and should be consulted before any further action is taken on this point.

In relation to Minister Flanagan's response, the Chair noted the new challenges being faced by Northern Ireland, namely Brexit and recent political crisis resulting in a snap Assembly Election. Given the fluidity of the situation, DFAT's support for WPS activities in Northern Ireland should remain under review.

3. Forthcoming Meetings

The Secretariat noted that at the last meeting the Chair had suggested that the themes for the Q2 and Q3 2017 meetings should be chosen based on the findings of the Midterm Review. The Secretariat's Work Plan had suggested the topics of a) the participation and representation of women and b) male engagement.

On the theme of male engagement, Ms Hagi noted that her personal experience working with a grassroots CSO coalition in Somalia had demonstrated the importance of training programming which engages men and boys in order to tackle the victimisation of women and girls. It was suggested that a thematic meeting on this topic could involve presentations from Irish Aid on their overseas programming and representatives from the domestic HeForShe and Safe Ireland: MAN UP campaigns. The ongoing problems for women resident in Direct Provision Accommodation was again highlighted. It is often difficult to address SGBV taking place in these centres in the absence of formal complaints. The RIA has taken positive steps in this regard, but there is still more to be done. It was suggested that a representative from one of the centre's resident committees formed in light of the McMahon Report should be invited to speak at a future meeting.

The Q2 meeting will be dedicated to a more in-depth discussion and planning around implementation of the Midterm Review findings.

4. AOB

There were no substantive matters raised under any other business.

Secretariat to the Oversight Group to the 2nd National action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

9th March 2017