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**Publication of the 2011 Annual Report of
THE OFFICE OF THE REFUGEE APPLICATIONS COMMISSIONER
(ORAC)**

The eleventh Annual Report of the Refugee Applications Commissioner has now been published.

The Annual Report details the progress made during 2011 in delivering on the goals and objectives set out in the Office's *Strategy Statement 2010 - 2012*.

The Refugee Applications Commissioner, David Costello, reported that in 2011 the total number of applications for refugee status received was 1,290. This represents a 33.5% reduction in applications compared to 2010 and asylum applications are now at levels last seen in the mid-nineties.

During 2011, significant progress continued to be made in the processing of applications. A total of 1,834 cases were finalised. At the end of the year there were some 248 cases on hands, only 22 of which were on hand for over 6 months.

Applications processed under the Ministerial Prioritisation Directive were completed within a median processing time of 30 days from the date of application. Non-prioritised cases were processed to completion within a median time of 11.7 weeks for most of 2011. In the final quarter of 2011, the median processing time was 9.6 weeks.

During 2011, ORAC continued to utilise the Dublin II Regulation, which determines the Contracting State responsible for processing an asylum application, with some 243 determinations being made.

Some 1,010 sets of fingerprints of asylum applicants were sent to the EURODAC fingerprinting system with 135 hits, showing those applicants had made asylum applications in other Contracting States.

The Commissioner continued to be represented at appeal hearings before the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) and, in consultation with the Tribunal, ORAC ensured that the maximum number of hearings per week could be serviced by its Presenting Unit. Some 795 hearings were serviced during 2011.

Note: The Annual Report is available on the website of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner at www.orac.ie.

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Notes for Editors

- The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner is an independent Office established under the Refugee Act, 1996, which considers applications for refugee status at first instance and makes recommendations to the Minister for Justice and Equality on whether such status should be granted. It is also responsible for the investigation and preparation of reports to the Minister on applications from those granted refugee status who subsequently seek permission for a family member to enter and live in the State.

Additional key points in the Report include:

- The top five applicant countries for 2011 were Nigeria (14.1%), Pakistan (13.6%), China (11%), Democratic Republic of Congo (5.4%) and Afghanistan (5.2%) as compared to Nigeria, China, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan for 2010.
- In 2011, 26 applications were received from Unaccompanied Minors seeking asylum, which accounted for 2% of the total number of applications received.
- ORAC continued to prioritise applications made by persons in detention in line with statutory requirements. A total of 75 applications were received from persons in detention in 2011. This figure constitutes 5.8% of all applications received.
- 244 applications for Family Reunification were received from the Minister for Justice and Equality for investigation in 2011, a decrease of 24.4% over the 2010 figure.
- A total of 424 asylum applications were deemed withdrawn from the process for various reasons including applicants failing to co-operate or attend for interview.
- 79 legal challenges were taken against ORAC during 2011 compared with 112 cases during 2010.
- Through various initiatives highlighted in the Annual Report 2011, ORAC continued to underline the importance of quality in the investigation and processing of asylum applications supported by ongoing staff training and development.
- ORAC wishes to thank the Dublin Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its ongoing assistance during the year including its support of staff training and development initiatives.

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