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Publication of the 2010 Annual Report of

THE OFFICE OF THE REFUGEE APPLICATIONS COMMISSIONER

The tenth Annual Report of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) has now been published.

The Annual Report details the progress which was made during 2010 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 2010 the total number of applications for refugee status received was 1,939. This represents a 27.9% reduction in applications compared to 2009 and asylum applications are now at levels last seen in the mid-nineties.

During 2010, significant progress continued to be made in the processing of applications. A total of 2,192 cases were finalised. At the end of the year, there were some 541 cases on hands, 67 cases of which were on hand for over 6 months.

Applications processed under the Ministerial Prioritisation Directive were completed within 17 to 20 working days from the date of application. Non-prioritised cases were processed to completion within 8 to 9 weeks of the date of application for most of 2010. Towards the end of the year, average processing times for these cases were extended to 9 to 10 weeks, which took account of staff transfers to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) to deal with work priorities there.

During 2010, ORAC continued to make the maximum possible use of the Dublin II Regulation, which determines the Contracting State responsible for processing an asylum application, with some 263 determinations being made.

Some 1,515 sets of fingerprints of asylum applicants were sent to the EU EURODAC fingerprinting system with 208 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 1,828 hearings were serviced.

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 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 2010 were Nigeria (20%), China (11.8%) Pakistan (10.3%), Democratic Republic of Congo (3.7%) and Afghanistan (3.6%) as compared to Nigeria, Pakistan, China, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe for 2009.
- In 2010, 37 applications were received from Unaccompanied Minors seeking asylum, which accounted for 1.9% 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 130 applications were received from persons in detention in 2010. This figure constitutes 6.7% of all applications received.
- 323 applications for Family Reunification were received from the Minister for Justice and Equality for investigation in 2010, a decrease of 28.2% over the 2009 figure.
- A total of 525 asylum applications were deemed withdrawn from the process for various reasons including applicants failing to co-operate or attend for interview.
- 112 legal challenges were taken against ORAC during 2010 (including 24 cases taken in relation to the Dublin II Regulation) compared with 92 cases during 2009.

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