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# Agreement

on the Status and Functions of the International Commission on Missing  
Persons

Brussels, 15 December 2014

[The Agreement has not been ratified by the United Kingdom]

*Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
by Command of Her Majesty  
February 2015*



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## **AGREEMENT ON THE STATUS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON MISSING PERSONS**

The Parties to this Agreement,

Concerned that in the world today large numbers of persons go missing every year as a result of armed conflicts, human rights abuses, natural and man-made disasters and other involuntary reasons;

Noting that the problem of missing persons does not respect borders and that the issue of the missing is increasingly viewed as a global concern, which warrants a structured and sustainable international response;

Understanding that in the last two decades there have been important advancements in addressing the issue, including law-based efforts to locate missing persons and the use of modern forensic methods to accurately account for them;

Aware of the cost to societies and families resulting from a failure to locate the missing, including the anguish suffered as a consequence of not knowing a loved-one's whereabouts or the circumstances of their disappearance;

Noting that predominantly men go missing, particularly as a result of armed conflicts and human rights abuses, and that those left behind, women and children, are especially vulnerable;

Acknowledging the efforts of governmental and nongovernmental organizations to address the issue of the missing around the world;

Affirming that States should take all practicable steps to locate the missing, as part of their commitments under international law, in particular human rights instruments and Articles 32-34 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions;

Noting the extensive experience on issues of the missing that has been gained through the International Commission on Missing Persons, and expressing their commitment to improve on legal frameworks underpinning efforts to locate the missing;

Recalling that the International Commission was established at the initiative of US President Bill Clinton in 1996 at the G-7 Summit in Lyon, France, initially to secure the cooperation of governments to locate persons missing from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia;

Further recalling that since 2004, the International Commission on Missing Persons has been a globally active organisation, assisting public authorities in locating and identifying missing persons, whether as a consequence of armed conflicts, human rights abuses, natural and man-made disasters and other involuntary reasons, and contributing to justice and the advancement of the rule of law, thus redressing omissions in humanitarian law;

Welcoming the initiatives taken at the International Conference “The Missing: An Agenda for the Future,” The Hague, 2013, including the establishment of a Global Forum on Missing Persons;

Recognising the successful work of, and wishing to establish a clear legal status for, the International Commission on Missing Persons as an international organisation in order to better enable it to carry out its functions internationally;

Have agreed as follows:

## ARTICLE I

### **Establishment and Status**

1. The International Commission on Missing Persons is hereby established as an international organisation, hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”.
2. The Commission shall possess full international legal personality and enjoy such capacities as may be necessary for the exercise of its functions and the fulfilment of its purposes.
3. The Commission shall operate in accordance with this Agreement.

## ARTICLE II

### **Purposes and Functions**

The Commission endeavours to secure the co-operation of governments and other authorities in locating persons missing as a result of armed conflicts, human rights abuses, natural and man-made disasters and other involuntary reasons and to assist them in doing so. The Commission also supports the work of other organisations in their efforts, encourages public involvement in its activities and contributes to the development of appropriate expressions of commemoration and tribute to the missing.

## ARTICLE III

### **Board of Commissioners and Director General**

1. The Commission shall be composed of a Board of Commissioners, a Director General and Staff. The Commissioners shall be appointed from among eminent persons. The current members of the Board of Commissioners are listed in the Annex to this Agreement.
2. The Board of Commissioners shall have the right to adopt Regulations regarding *inter alia* the appointment of Commissioners and their terms, the terms of

appointment of the Director General and other staff of the Commission. The Board of Commissioners shall adopt a programme of work that may be amended from time to time. The programme of work shall normally not exceed five years and shall include the Commission's requirements for completing such work.

3. The Board of Commissioners shall take decisions to invite others to join the Board of Commissioners by consensus. Other decisions may be taken with one dissenting vote or abstention. The Board of Commissioners shall elect a Commissioner as chairperson.

4. The Board of Commissioners may decide to invite other eminent persons to join them as necessary and may invite the nomination of Commissioners by States, whether or not such States are Parties to this Agreement.

5. The Director General may retain external advisers and experts and maintain advisory mechanisms that include representatives of international and other organisations, as well as of civil society and academia.

#### ARTICLE IV

##### **Conference of States Parties**

1. The Conference shall represent the States Parties to this Agreement.
2. The Government of each State Party shall appoint a representative to act as a member of the Conference.
3. The Conference shall elect a President and a Vice President.
4. The Board of Commissioners and the Director General shall invite the Conference to convene at least every 3 years.
5. If the Conference wishes to meet in between the periods mentioned in paragraph 4 of this Article, such a meeting must be called by the Board of Commissioners and the Director General at the request of a majority of the Conference members.
6. The Conference shall:
  - a. consider the Commission's reports on activity;
  - b. propose policy directives for the Board of Commissioners' programme of work;
  - c. recommend to States Parties measures to advance the aims of the Commission;
  - d. adopt the Conference's rules of procedure.

7. Decisions shall be taken by a majority of votes of States Parties present, including the election of the President and the Vice-President.

8. The Board of Commissioners and the Director General may on an *ad hoc* basis invite non-States Parties, as well as international and other organisations, that support the work of the Commission to participate in the meetings of the Conference in the capacity of observers.

9. A State Party shall be invited by the Director General to host the meeting of the Conference. Travel and accommodation costs related to the meeting will be borne by each State Party. The Director General shall provide the secretariat to the Conference.

10. The Conference shall have a Financial Committee.

## ARTICLE V

### **Financial Committee**

1. The Committee shall represent States Parties that have supported the Commission financially during a reporting period.

2. The Government of each State Party referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall appoint a representative to act as a member of the Committee.

3. The Committee shall elect a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson.

4. The Committee shall meet in the last quarter of each year.

5. The Committee shall:

- a. consider the Commission's report on activity for the elapsed year and coming year;
- b. adopt recommendations relating to the Commission's financial management in respect of which it shall take into account the views of important contributors to the Commission;
- c. review and approve the Commission's Financial Regulations and reporting format;
- d. adopt the Committee's rules of procedure.

6. The Chairperson, in consultation with the Director General may allow for the participation of other States, whether or not they are States Parties, as well as international and other organisations as observers without a vote.

7. The Committee shall take decisions by majority of votes of its members present.

8. Each year a member of the Committee shall be invited by the Director General to host the Committee's meeting. Travel and accommodation costs related to the meeting will be borne by each member.

## ARTICLE VI

### **Powers**

In furtherance of the foregoing purposes and activities, the Commission shall have the following powers:

- a. to acquire and dispose of real and personal property;
- b. to enter into contracts and other types of agreements, including agreements to operate bank accounts and engage in other banking and financial transactions;
- c. to employ persons;
- d. to institute and defend in legal proceedings; and
- e. to take other lawful action necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Commission.

## ARTICLE VII

### **Headquarters and International Agreements**

1. The Commission shall establish a Headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. It shall conclude with the Host State a Headquarters Agreement according to the Commission's staff, premises, archives and property the privileges and immunities that are necessary for the effective exercise of its functions and the fulfilment of its purposes.

2. The Commission shall seek agreements with the governments of States where its activities are to take place. These agreements should include provisions that accord its Commissioners, staff, premises, archives and property the privileges and immunities that are necessary for the effective exercise of its functions and the fulfilment of its purposes.

3. The Headquarters Agreement referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall constitute the point of reference for the Commission for the conclusion of the international agreements referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article.

## ARTICLE VIII

### **Financing**

The financial requirements of the Commission, including its programme of work, shall be met through voluntary contributions, grants, donations and similar forms of income. No State Party to this Agreement or any other State or international organisation shall be required under this Agreement to make assessed or other contributions to finance the work of the Commission.

## ARTICLE IX

### **Concluding Provisions**

1. This Agreement shall be open for signature by all States at Brussels on 15 December 2014 and at The Hague from 16 December 2014 to 16 December 2015. A State which has signed this Agreement may declare that it shall apply this Agreement provisionally pending its entry into force.
2. This Agreement is subject to ratification, acceptance or approval by signatory States. Instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval shall be deposited with the Government of the Netherlands.
3. This Agreement shall be open to accession by all States. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Government of the Netherlands.
4. This Agreement shall enter into force thirty days after two States have expressed their consent to be bound in accordance with paragraph 2 or 3 of this Article.
5. For each State consenting to be bound after the date of entry into force of this Agreement, the Agreement shall enter into force for that State thirty days after the deposit of its instrument expressing its consent to be bound.
6. Any State Party may withdraw from this Agreement. Withdrawal shall take effect twelve months after receipt of the notification of withdrawal by the Depositary.
7. This Agreement shall be concluded for an initial period of five years, following which it may be reviewed or amended at the initiative of the original signatory States. It shall be extended for an indefinite period of time thereafter.
8. This Agreement shall be deposited with the Government of the Netherlands, which shall serve as the Depositary and shall provide each State Party with a certified copy of the Agreement.



9. The Depositary shall notify the States that have signed, ratified, accepted, approved or have acceded to this Agreement in accordance with paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this Article of the following:

- a. the signatures, declarations, ratifications, acceptances, approvals and accessions referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this Article;
- b. the dates of entry into force referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 of this Article;
- c. any withdrawal and its date of effect referred to in paragraph 6 of this Article.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, being duly authorised thereto, have signed this Agreement.

DONE at Brussels, on 15 December 2014, in the English language, in a single copy.

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