



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs**

Our Ref: Fol/Req/21/198

Date 22 September 2021

Dear Mr O’Caoimh,

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

Information sought:

“1. Records created on or after 1 January 2021 until 25 August 2021 relating to the the role of envoy for the Sahel and the appointment of Mr Kenneth Thompson to said role, and the salary and expenses expended in 2021, up to 25 August 2021, concerning Mr Thompson's appointment.

2. A copy of the document which sets out the terms of Mr Thompson's appointment.

Format in which information is sought

By email, either directly in the body of the email or as an attachment in any standard format eg xls,xlsx,doc, docx, pdf, rtf, txt

Any other information

(a) I am trying to find out how this envoy role developed, how Mr Thompson was selected and how much the role has cost, which I expect to primarily comprise a salary and expenses.”

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 1 September 2021 and your agreement to amend the request received by the Department on 21 September 2021.

I have identified 66 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant 35 of the records, part-grant 19 of the records, and refuse 12 of the records.

The appointment process for the Special Envoy took place in late 2020, the documents relating to the process by which the Special Envoy for francophone Africa and the Sahel was appointed are included here. The records are presented in chronological order. I would however refer you to Records 56 – 64 as a starting point, as these will give the clearest overview of the role and the appointment process. While it does not strictly come within the scope of your query, an overview has also been provided in Records 62, 63 and 64 of the extensive work completed to date by the Special Envoy.

You will find in these documents the estimated budget for the Special Envoy (see in particular Record 60), including information on the Special Envoy's stipend. These and a number of documents making reference to discussions around travel insurance for the Special Envoy and financial procedures, have been included for the sake of completeness and having applied the public interest test. However, the only amount actually expended to 25 August 2021 in relation to the Special Envoy is available at Record 24, and is €159.90 for printing of business cards.

Where records have been part-granted or refused, this has been done under exemptions outlined in the Freedom of Information Act 2014. The exemptions used are listed in the schedule. The use of the exemptions is explained below.

A number of records have been part-granted, rather than granted in full. Where this is the case, the relevant exemption under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 is referenced in the schedule.

### **Section 28 (Meetings of Government)**

Section 28 (1) (a) of the FOI act states that a head may refuse to grant an FOI request if the record concerned has been, or is proposed to be, submitted to the Government for its consideration by a Minister of the Government or the Attorney General and was created for that purpose. Records 36 and 37 relate to the submission of a memo to Government on the implementation of the first full year of the Government's Africa Strategy and, as such are exempt from release under Section 28(1)(a).

While Record 26 could also be exempt under this Section, I have decided to release this record in the public interest, as the report to Government on the Implementation of Ireland's Africa Strategy in 2020 was subsequently published and is now in the public domain.

### **Section 33 (Security, defence and international relations)**

Section 33(1)(d) stipulates that a head may refuse to grant an FOI request in relation to a record if, in the opinion of the head, its release could reasonably be expected to adversely affect international relations. Records 8, 10, 22 and 61 have been refused on this basis. Records 2-6, 16, 18, 19, 30, 34, and 62-64 have been partially refused on the basis that these records contain sensitive information encompassing the Department of Foreign Affairs' internal analyses of named countries and proposals for possible future actions that would adversely affect Ireland's international relations if released at the present time. This redacted information is, in records 2-6 and 18, and 19, contextual and not specifically related to the Special Envoy.

### **Section 35 (Information Given to an FOI Body in Confidence)**

Section 35(1)(b) provides for the exemption of records where the record concerns information given to an FOI body, in confidence and on the understanding that it would be treated as confidential and, in the opinion of the head, its disclosure would be likely to prejudice the giving to the body of further similar information from the same person or other

persons and it is of importance to the body that such further similar information as aforesaid should continue to be given to the body. Records 2, 63 and 64 include information that was provided in confidence by interlocutors and are partially refused on this basis, as well as under section 33(1)(d) above.

### **Section 36 (Commercially Sensitive Information)**

Section 36(1)(a) applies to a record containing trade secrets of someone other than the requester. Records 42, 47 and 66 are correspondence with insurance companies regarding the provision of quotes for health insurance to cover travel by the Special Envoy, and therefore contain commercially sensitive information, and are exempt for this reason. Record 49 has also been partially refused under this Section.

### **Section 37 (Personal Information)**

While Section 37(1) provides for the mandatory exemption of records, I am still obliged to consider whether the public interest would be best served by releasing the records in full. Under Section 37(1) a head shall refuse to grant an FOI request if, in the opinion of the head, access to the record concerned would involve the disclosure of personal information. Records 39, 40 and 46 include personal information relating to the Special Envoy and do not include any additional information that would determine that the public interest would be best served in releasing the record. Records 1, 11, 12, 16, 31, 41 have also been partially refused for this reason.

### **Right of Appeal**

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie). A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30, (€10 for medical card holders). A copy of the medical card should be provided to avail of the reduced fee. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie), or 01-4082618.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely

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Arianna Whelan