

**Management Board**  
**Tuesday, 1 September 2020**

**Minutes**

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Ann Derwin, Austin Gormley, Joe Hackett, Sonja Hyland, Barbara Jones, Aingeal O'Donoghue, Orla O'Hanrahan*

*Apologies: James Kingston, Eamonn McKee, Fergal Mythen*

**1. Statement of Strategy**

Julie Connell, Director SGCU, presented a first draft of the Statement of Strategy to the Management Board. The Board considered the strategic outcomes and associated outputs included in the draft strategy, as well as its overall structure. The importance of reflecting the impact of Covid-19 on the work of the Department in the strategy was noted. The Board agreed to discuss the draft strategy at an upcoming meeting of the Policy Development Group, prior to its circulation to Divisions and Units for further input, with a view to finalisation and publication by the end of October.

**2. Reflections on Department of Finance Secondment**

Gerard Keown, Director UN Policy, shared reflections on his recent secondment to the Department of Finance with the Management Board, and suggested potential opportunities for further learning, collaboration and exchange between the two Departments.

**3. Incoming Visits and Outgoing Travel**

The Management Board considered the issue of incoming high-level visits to Ireland, and outgoing Ministerial and official travel. The Board agreed that Missions should refer proposals for incoming visits to Ireland to the relevant geographic Division or Unit at HQ for guidance, before advancing any arrangements. Regarding official travel, the Board restated the current position that officials travelling abroad on Government business are required to restrict their movements for a period of 14 days on return to Ireland, in line with Government guidelines.

**Management Board**  
**Tuesday, 8 September 2020**

**Minutes**

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Joe Hackett, Sonja Hyland, Barbara Jones, Fergal Mythen, Orla O’Hanrahan*

*Apologies: Ann Derwin, James Kingston, Aingeal O’Donoghue*

**1. Additional Third Secretary Postings**

Marianne Bolger, Director HR Workforce Planning, made a presentation to the Management Board in relation to additional Third Secretary postings, which was considered by the members. Decisions of the Board are communicated by HR to the individuals concerned in the first instance, with the list of posting decisions appended to Management Board minutes following notification of all officers.

**2. Covid-19 Response Plan**

Barry Mulligan, Director HR Strategy and Operations, and Aoife McGarry, Corporate Services Management Unit, presented the Department’s Covid-19 Response Plan for approval by the Management Board. The plan sets out the policies and practices required for the Department to adhere to the Government’s ‘Return to Work Safely Protocol’ and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace. The importance of clear and coherent communication with staff members and managers on all aspects of the plan was noted by the Board.

The Board approved the Plan subject to some minor amendments, and recommended that it issue to staff in the coming days. The Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis and amended to reflect new guidance as required.

**3. Update on UNSC Preparations**

The Political Director provided the Board with an update on preparations for Ireland’s membership of the UN Security Council.

**4. Foreign Policy Start Up**

Maeve Von Heynitz, DHOM Embassy Berlin, advised the Board that three applications have been shortlisted as part of the selection process for the Foreign Policy Start Up initiative. The Policy Development Group will assess the shortlisted applications and select the successful proposal on 18 September. The high quality of three additional applications received was also noted by the Board.

Maeve also raised a number of initial lessons learned with the Board.

## 5. HOMs Conference

Julie Connell, Director SGCU, updated the Board on preparations for the Departmental HOMs Conference, which will take place from 15 to 17 September. The Conference will include three external sessions, which will be moderated by journalist Dearbhail McDonald and broadcast live on RTE News Now, as well as a number of internal sessions.

## 6. Publication of Management Board Minutes

The Secretary General advised the Board of a recent decision to publish minutes of Management Board meetings on the Department's website on a quarterly basis, as part of the Department's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme.

## AOB

- **Management Board Responsibilities:** The Secretary General advised that Assistant Secretary Orla O'Hanrahan will shortly assume responsibility for the Global Irish Services Division, as Assistant Secretary Ann Derwin transitions to her new role as Ireland's Ambassador to China. Assistant Secretary John Conlan has assumed the role of Director General with responsibility for Human Resources, in addition to his role as Chief Financial Officer. Ambassador Barbara Jones will return to a Director General role at HQ next month assuming responsibility for ICT, Property Management, Security and Compliance.

## Management Board

Tuesday, 22 September 2020

### Minutes

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Ann Derwin, Sonja Hyland, Barbara Jones, Fergal Mythen, Orla O’Hanrahan*

*Apologies: Joe Hackett, James Kingston, Aingeal O’Donoghue*

#### **1. Covid-19 Response Reflections**

Tom Hennessey and Elaine Kennedy, Evaluation and Audit Unit, presented the key recommendations of the Covid-19 Initial Response Report to the Management Board for further consideration, following on from an initial discussion in July. The recommendations are based on the Department’s immediate response to the Covid-19 crisis and relate to a number of areas including governance, risk management and communications.

During discussions on this item, the Board acknowledged that the Department has now moved from coping in the initial crisis response phase of the pandemic, to adapting to its prolonged impact on our work. It was agreed that this should be reflected in the Department’s medium term priorities and associated policy and operational decisions.

The Board identified a number of practical ways to support the work of the Department at HQ and across the mission network over the coming months. These include supports to staff for remote and office working, clarity on essential Departmental travel, internal communications, and governance systems. It was agreed that these issues would be explored by the Executive Management Group at its next meeting, before returning to the Management Board for further discussion.

The Board also agreed on the need to reflect on the Department’s medium-term policy priorities, including those relating to the diaspora and Irish citizens abroad, against the backdrop of the pandemic. This work will be undertaken by the Policy Development Group in the first instance.

During the discussion, Board members also recalled the Department’s achievements since the onset of the pandemic, including the consular response, the HR and ICT response, the UN Security Council campaign and the maintenance of our development programme.

#### **2. Passport Reform Programme Update**

Ann Derwin, Director General, Global Irish Services and Siobhán Byrne, Head of Passport Reform, updated the Board on the Passport Reform Programme. Under the programme, passport applications from the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand will move online by the end of 2020, bringing a total of 98% of applications online. An update on the timeline for completion of the procurement process for the Passport Insurance and Processing System (PIPS) was also provided.

### **3. Heads of Mission Conference**

The Board reflected on the recent Global Ireland Heads of Mission Conference and acknowledged the rich discussions that took place in both the internal and external sessions. Collaboration with RTE and promotion of the event as an external platform for Global Ireland and the work of the Department enabled a large number of colleagues and external contacts to 'attend' the conference. The Conference also enabled the Department to develop its ICT capacity for digital engagement significantly, which will support future virtual events.

The Secretary General thanked Julie Connell and her team in Strategy Governance and Change Unit for delivering the conference.

#### **A Points**

- The Board approved the Vehicle Management Policy which was considered by the Executive Management Group on 11 September
- The Board noted the Security and Corporate Compliance Q1&2 2020 Update which was considered by the Executive Management Group on 11 September

## Management Board

Tuesday, 6 October 2020

### Minutes

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Ann Derwin, Sonja Hyland, Barbara Jones, Fergal Mythen, Aingeal O'Donoghue, Orla O'Hanrahan*

*Apologies: Joe Hackett, James Kingston*

#### **1. Update on Assignments**

The Board considered and agreed an additional assignment at First Secretary level in the context of Ireland's UNSC membership.

Marianne Bolger, Director HR Workforce Planning, updated the Board on the 2020 postings process, and noted the important role of the HR Abroad team in supporting colleagues and their families in the very complex moves overseas during the pandemic.

In her presentation, Marianne noted that 83 officers were posted during this year's summer rotation. This number comprises 20 General Service officers, 22 Third Secretaries, 26 First Secretaries, 3 Development Specialists and 12 officers at Counsellor level and above. Officers were assigned to locations in Europe (32), Africa (9), the Americas (10), Asia (4), the Middle East (4), and to multilateral missions (24). In terms of gender balance, 41 female and 42 male officers were assigned in the 2020 rotation.

The 2021 postings round will commence in coming weeks. This year, colleagues will be asked to submit their preferences through the new online postings portal.

The Secretary General expressed his appreciation to colleagues in HR for their work in supporting the postings process.

#### **2. Covid-19 Response**

Barry Mulligan, Director HR Strategy and Operations, and Katie Morrisroe, Passport Office, advised the Board on the impacts of changes in Government restriction levels on the Department's work and operations.

Barry also provided an overview of existing supports for staff who are working from home and in the office, which include: [the Covid-19 intranet site](#); virtual training on the OneLearning portal; advice on how to remove chairs and ICT equipment from the office to home; and guidance on how to set up a home workstation. Information on each of these supports is summarised in a [Covid-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#) document on the Intranet which will be updated to reflect developments.

The Board also acknowledged the need to engage with senior managers in coming weeks on the impact of Covid-19 and the prolonged working from home period on their teams and priorities.

Elizabeth McCullough, Director Consular Directorate, updated the Board on possible changes to international travel arrangements if the proposed EU traffic light system is adopted by Member States later this month. The structural and resource implications of the potential changes to travel arrangements will be explored by the Executive Management Group at its meeting on Friday 10 October.

### **3. Updated Organigram**

The Board noted the [updated Departmental organigram](#), which will be shared with all staff on the intranet in coming days.

### **4. Programme Oversight Board Terms of Reference**

The Board approved revised [Terms of Reference](#) for the Programme Oversight Board.

**Management Board**  
**Tuesday, 20 October 2020**  
**Minutes**

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Ann Derwin, Joe Hackett, Sonja Hyland, Barbara Jones, Fergal Mythen, Aingeal O'Donoghue, Orla O'Hanrahan*

*Apologies: James Kingston*

**1. 2020 Postings Round**

Anne-Marie Callan, Director HR Abroad, provided the Board with a briefing on the 2020 postings process, which took place against the complexity of the Covid-19 pandemic. HR Abroad supported 263 officers and their family members in moves overseas to date in 2020. Further postings are underway which are likely to bring the total to 285 by year end.

HR Abroad faced a number of challenges in moving colleagues overseas during this summer's rotation, as a result of the pandemic. These included issues with flight bookings and cancellations, processing of diplomatic passports, acquisition of visas, border closures and entry restrictions, issues arising in relation to privileges and immunities, Covid-19 testing, quarantine requirements and protecting the overall health and welfare of officers and their families. The HR Abroad team adapted processes and devised new, innovative solutions to overcome these challenges and enable many colleagues to safely move overseas. They also worked closely with missions, regional desks, Consular Division, the HSE and a number of external partners to support the summer rotation.

The Board expressed their sincere appreciation for the hard work undertaken by all the colleagues in the HR Abroad team in ensuring the summer rotation could take place.

The Board also noted that some of the challenges encountered by both HR Abroad and officers rotating in summer 2020 may arise again during the 2021 postings process. This will be considered by the Board when finalising assignments for 2021, in addition to the preferences and circumstances of posted officers. The importance of gathering feedback on this year's postings process from relevant officers was emphasised by the Board.

An overview of the number and profile of staff overseas in 2019 was also provided. Last year, 477 HQ based officers were serving in missions (353 permanent DFA staff and 124 officers seconded to missions from other Government Departments). These 477 officers were accompanied on post by 420 family members.

**2. Risk**

Joe Hackett, Chief Risk Officer, presented the Management Board High Level Risk Register for consideration. The Board discussed the current risks faced by the Department in the prolonged period of remote working ahead, and considered how risk management can best be incorporated into the 2021 business planning process.

The CRO also presented a draft Risk Appetite Statement, which will enable Divisions and Units to monitor risks to the delivery of the priorities of the new Departmental Statement of Strategy.

Carina O'Brien, Strategy, Governance and Change Unit, presented a report on one of the thematic clusters of risk to the Department, namely Political and Reputational risk, which was considered by the Board.

### **3. Vote 27 and Vote 28 Financial Reports**

John Conlan, Chief Financial Officer, presented the Board with financial reports to the end of September for Votes 27 and 28, and outlined projected spending to year end across both Votes. The CFO noted the increase of €20 million in the Department's Overseas Development Aid budget for 2021, which was confirmed in the recent Estimates process.

### **4. Freedom of Information Publication Scheme**

The Board approved a recommendation from the FOI Officer to publish a number of documents under the Department's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme.

### **5. Commercial Attaché Scheme Review**

The Board noted the review of the Commercial Attaché Scheme undertaken by colleagues in Evaluation and Audit Unit.

**Management Board**  
**Tuesday, 3 November 2020**  
**Minutes**

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Ann Derwin, Joe Hackett, Sonja Hyland, Barbara Jones, Aingeal O'Donoghue, Orla O'Hanrahan*

*Apologies: Fergal Mythen, James Kingston*

## **1. Senior Management Team Meetings Report**

Julie Connell and Anne-Marie Flynn, Strategy, Governance and Change Unit, presented the Board with a draft report on the Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings hosted by the Secretary General on 21, 22 and 29 October. The objective of the meetings was to provide an opportunity for senior managers at the level of PO or equivalent grade to discuss the impact of Covid-19 and the challenges and opportunities of the prolonged period of remote working on the Department. During the meetings, senior managers also considered how management can best support staff and ensure the effectiveness of the Department in the medium term.

The discussion covered a number of positive outcomes associated with the move to remote working, which include increased work-life balance for many colleagues, and additional opportunities to advance policy priorities in a number of areas by participating in virtual external meetings and events.

It also addressed the challenges currently faced by managers and teams in the Department because of working from home. These range from practical challenges relating to equipment, furniture and technology to larger policy questions including achieving the Department's policy priorities in the medium term and consideration of what working arrangements will look like for the next 12 to 15 months.

The Board considered recommendations from senior managers on steps the Department can take in the coming weeks to support staff in delivering their work in the prolonged remote working period ahead.

The Board will revert to the issue at its next meeting on 17 November, with a view to responding to the issues raised and deepening the engagement across senior management at HQ.

## **2. Contact and Event Management System Update**

David Linehan, Strategy, Governance and Change Unit, and Niall Brady, Economic Promotion Unit, updated the Board on the roll out of the Contact and Event Management System (CEMS). Over 800 colleagues in missions and HQ business units now have access to the CEMS. Over 61,000 contacts have been uploaded to system, and it has been used to organise some 300 across HQ and the mission network. The system's Eventbrite feature is particularly useful for organising events and analysing data on attendance, and has also been used by colleagues to issue newsletters to internal and external contacts.

The Board also received a demonstration on the new CEMS mobile app, which can be made available to CEMS users on DFA-issued iPhone and iPads, upon request to the project team.

### **3. Management Board Agenda Planning**

The Board reviewed provisional agendas for Management Board meetings until the end of 2020. Items scheduled for discussion during this period include the new 2021-2023 Statement of Strategy, the Languages Policy, Risk Management, Business Planning and updates on Brexit and our UN Security Council membership.

**Management Board**  
**Tuesday, 17 November 2020**  
**Minutes**

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairi de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Ann Derwin, Joe Hackett, Sonja Hyland, Barbara Jones, Fergal Mythen, Aingeal O'Donoghue, Orla O'Hanrahan*

*Apologies: James Kingston*

**1. Draft Statement of Strategy**

Julie Connell, Director, and Denise Tully, Deputy Director, Strategy, Governance and Change Unit, presented the Management Board with a draft of the new 2021 – 2023 Statement of Strategy. The draft was welcomed by members.

During discussions on this item, Board members emphasised the importance of reflecting in the strategy the Department's role in supporting economic recovery and engaging in health diplomacy in the medium term, as well as the aim to significantly expand Ireland's international imprint and influence during the lifetime of the strategy, under the Global Ireland initiative.

It was agreed that SGCU will incorporate some minor additions suggested by Board members before finalising the draft Statement of Strategy, with a view to its approval by the Minister and then by Cabinet before the end of the year.

**2. Postings**

Marianne Bolger, Director HR Workforce Planning, made a presentation to the Management Board on Third Secretary postings, which was considered by members. Decisions of the Board are communicated by HR to the individuals concerned in the first instance, with the list of posting decisions appended to Management Board minutes following notification of all officers.

**3. End October Financial Reports – Vote 27 and 28**

John Conlan, Chief Financial Officer, presented the Board with financial reports to the end of October for Votes 27 and 28, and outlined projected spending to year end across both Votes. The CFO noted that the significant scaling down of passport operations to comply with Covid-19 restrictions throughout the year has impacted negatively on the Department's income stream. However, despite this, it is envisaged that spending will remain within profile across both votes to year end.

**4. Senior Management Team Meetings Response**

Further to the feedback received during recent meetings of the Senior Management Team (PO/Counsellor level officers at HQ), Barbara Jones, Director General for Corporate Services advised that a survey will issue to colleagues in the coming days to identify staff needs in terms of enhanced ICT equipment and office furniture.

The Secretary General advised that additional recommendations emerging from the Senior Management Team meetings will be considered and advanced by the Executive Management Group over the weeks ahead.

A similar series of six consultation meetings, hosted by the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General, with Heads of Mission has commenced and will run until 25 November. The aim of these meetings is to consider the impact of the pandemic on Missions and how management can support Heads of Missions in achieving their objectives and ensuring the wellbeing of their teams in the months ahead.

**Management Board**  
**Tuesday, 1 December 2020**  
**Minutes**

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, Julie Connell, Joe Hackett, Barbara Jones, James Kingston, Fergal Mythen, Aingeal O'Donoghue, Orla O'Hanrahan*

*Apologies: John Conlan, Ann Derwin, Sonja Hyland*

**1. Languages Policy**

Marianne Bolger, Director HR Workforce Planning, Barry Mulligan, Director HR Strategy and Operations and Daragh Holmes, Training Director presented the draft Foreign Languages Policy to the Board for approval. The policy identifies a number of actions to strengthen foreign language capability in the Department and to improve methods for measuring and testing it going forward. The policy also sets out the processes for colleagues across the Department to apply for and undertake foreign language lessons.

The Board approved the Foreign Languages Policy and commended the colleagues in HR for their work in delivering it. The Board recommended that the Foreign Languages Policy is integrated with existing Departmental processes, including workforce planning and PMDS. The Board agreed to review the implementation of the policy in Q4 2021.

**2. Postings**

Marianne Bolger, Director HR Workforce Planning, made a presentation to the Management Board on First Secretary, Senior Development Specialist and Development Specialist postings, which was considered by members. Decisions of the Board are communicated by HR to the individuals concerned in the first instance, with the list of posting decisions appended to Management Board minutes following notification of all officers.

**3. Economic Recovery**

Damien Cole, Director, Policy Planning Unit, Michael Lonergan, Director, Economic Promotion Unit and Micheál Smith, Director, Global Ireland Unit joined the Board for a discussion on the Department's role in supporting economic recovery in the medium-term, including plans for the 2021 St Patrick's Day programme.

The Board agreed on the need to engage with relevant Government Departments and state agencies before finalising the Department's support for the economic recovery in 2021, and of situating our economic activities within the framework of the Global Ireland initiative. The importance of considering Expo Dubai as part of economic recovery was also noted, given the significant Government investment in Ireland's participation.

The Board will discuss the Department's approach to economic recovery and plans for St Patrick's Day with the Minister when they meet later this month. Further discussion on economic recovery will take place at the Policy Development Group over the coming weeks, with a view to a subsequent Management Board discussion on this topic in early 2021.

#### **4. Governance**

Julie Connell, Director and Anne-Marie Flynn, Deputy Director, Strategy, Governance and Change Unit updated the Board on work undertaken in 2020 to strengthen and embed governance structures across the Department, and on proposals to build on this work in 2021.

The Board agreed the proposed governance work plan for 2021, which includes: implementation of an annual calendar for the Management Board; revising the Department's Corporate Governance Framework; development of a management dashboard and strengthening internal communications and transparency around governance and decision making.

The Board also noted a report on implementation of Management Board decisions and the new [Governance intranet page](#), which includes information on the work of the Management Board and each of its subcommittees.

#### **5. Risk Appetite Statement**

Joe Hackett, Chief Risk Officer presented the Board with a draft Risk Appetite Statement. This document reflects the level of risk appetite associated with each output of the Department's new draft Statement of Strategy, and is based on input from Division and Units.

The Board suggested that Divisions and Units consider their risk appetite as part of the 2021 Business Planning process. The Board also agreed to have a further discussion on risk appetite early in the new year, with a view to finalising the risk appetite statement in parallel with new Departmental Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023.

#### **6. Business Planning 2021**

The Board noted the update on [2021 Business Planning](#) provided by Strategy, Governance and Change Unit, underlining the need for all business Units at home and abroad to engage with the process and upload final business plans by 18 December.

#### **7. Passport Reform Programme Update**

The Board noted the Q3 Passport Reform Programme Update.

**Management Board**  
**Tuesday, 15 December 2020**  
**Minutes**

*Present: SG Burgess, Brendan Rogers, Ruairí de Búrca, John Conlan, Julie Connell, Ann Derwin, Joe Hackett, Barbara Jones, James Kingston, Fergal Mythen, Orla O’Hanrahan*

*Apologies: Sonja Hyland, Aingeal O’Donoghue*

**1. China Policy Review**

The Management Board had a strategic policy discussion on Ireland’s engagement with China, as part of the ongoing work being undertaken by Asia Pacific Unit.

Tim Mawe, Director, Asia Pacific Unit, opened the discussion with a presentation on Ireland’s relationship with China, bilaterally and as an EU Member State.

During discussions, the Board agreed on the importance of engaging with relevant Departments and Agencies on the future development of Ireland’s relationship with China and on the need to strengthen expertise and language skills in the Department to support the relationship in the longer term.

The Board commended Tim Mawe, Eoin McDonnell and Sarah Finn in Asia Pacific Unit for their work on this topic.

**2. Heads of Mission Meetings Summary Report and Follow-Up**

Anne-Marie Flynn, Strategy, Governance and Change Unit, presented the Board with a draft report on the Heads of Mission meetings hosted by the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General between 16 and 26 November. The meetings aimed to explore the impact of Covid-19 on the Mission network, and how the Department can optimally support Heads of Mission and their teams over the months ahead.

The Board considered some of the positive aspects of online working brought about by the pandemic mentioned by Heads of Mission, including stronger internal communications and increased work-life balance for many colleagues, as well as the challenges currently faced by HOMs and their teams, including those relating to home working, family support and Missions’ ability to engage with new and existing contacts in the context of Covid restrictions.

The Board also considered the recommendations put forward by Heads of Mission to address these challenges. It was agreed that these recommendations, along with those suggested during the Senior Management Team meetings in October, will be compiled to form a work plan for implementation by the Executive Management Group from January 2021. The Board also noted the progress that has already been made in implementing a number of recommendations relating to technology and home working support.

### **3. Data Protection**

Kieran Houlihan, Data Protection Officer, updated the Board on data protection activities in 2021. These included the signature of a Data Protection Agreement with the Department of Justice and Equality to support visa processing; strengthening of GDPR compliance across the Honorary Consul network and preparatory work to enable the Department to transfer personal data to the UK in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

The Board also received an update on data breaches in the Department in 2020, and agreed to return to this issue in 2021.

### **4. End November Financial Reports – Vote 27 and 28**

John Conlan, Chief Financial Officer, presented the Board with financial reports to the end of November for Votes 27 and 28, and outlined projected spending to year end across both Votes. The CFO envisages that the Department will return approximately €12 million to the Exchequer from Vote 28 at the end of the year, as a result of a slowdown in activities across the Department and mission network due to Covid-19.