

## Scottish Refugee Council Press Release



18 May 2006

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### **European Refugee Organisations Gather in Glasgow Conference of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), 18-19 May 2006, Oran Mor, Top of Byres Road, Glasgow G12 9QX**

Scotland becomes the focus of efforts to build a better European asylum system this week, as refugee-assisting organisations from all over Europe gather for a two-day conference in Glasgow.

The event, hosted by Scottish Refugee Council, will look at ways of improving EU decision making processes on asylum, and ensuring that anyone seeking asylum in Europe gets a fair hearing.

The conference also marks the launch in Scotland of the ECRE Pamphlet "*The Way Forward: an Agenda for Change*", which offers constructive suggestions on improving all aspects of EU refugee and asylum policy.

Scottish Refugee Council Chief Executive and Vice Chair of ECRE, Sally Daghljan, said:

*" 'The Way Forward' is an essential reference tool, offering clear, unambiguous suggestions for ways in which the EU could do more to ensure that people who need protection receive it. We hope that it will find a place on the shelves of every MEP, researcher and campaigner. It argues that human rights and respect should be put at the heart of European refugee and asylum policy. Throughout the conference, we will be looking at ways of using 'The Way Forward' to press for improvements to the existing EU asylum system".*

"*The Way Forward*" calls on EU countries to:

- Offer help to developing countries - which shoulder most of the burden of caring for refugees - to ensure that refugees living there are safe, secure and have access to basic necessities.
- Create a Europe-wide resettlement programme, based on increasing public understanding of why people seek asylum, and helping refugees build new lives in Europe
- Improve the asylum system in Europe, to ensure that every applicant is given a fair hearing.
- Help refugees living in Europe to integrate by giving them secure legal status, access to education, language training and employment opportunities.
- Carry out returns of asylum applicants whose claims have been rejected in a dignified and humane manner

**ENDS**

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## Notes

1. **The European Council on Refugees & Exiles (ECRE)** is a pan-European network of refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations. It is concerned with the needs of all individuals who seek refuge and protection within Europe and aims to promote the protection and integration of refugees in Europe based on the values of human dignity, human rights, and an ethic of solidarity.

ECRE seeks to achieve this aim by:

1. Advocating a humane and generous European asylum policy and by promoting the development of a comprehensive and coherent response by the international community to refugee movements.
2. Strengthening networking between refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations in Europe.
3. Developing the institutional capacity of refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations in Europe.

ECRE draws on the energy, ideas and commitment of an active membership of refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations and a strong secretariat. It also strives to involve wider civil society, the political community and refugee communities in its work. It respects the cultural values of different parts of Europe.

It aims to ensure that its ideas and positions are of high quality, legally accurate and representative of a wide range of knowledge, experience and best practice throughout Europe.

Its working methods are guided by democratic values and the principle of seeking to mobilise the widest possible active involvement of its member agencies through working groups, advisory groups, regional fora and Europe-wide networks. It encourages, wherever appropriate, its member agencies to take the lead on a particular project.

## **2. Programme**

### **Day 1 Thursday May 18 2006**

- 9.15-9.45      Arrival and registration
- 9.45-10.00    Welcome by Chair – Eduard Nazarski
- 10.00-10.05   Welcome to Scotland – David Walsh, Chair of Scottish  
Refugee Council
- 10.05-10.15   What we are going to do over the next two days – Sally Daghljan, Chief  
Executive, Scottish Refugee Council
- 10.15-10.30   Who we all are? Why we are here? – Introduction to working groups around the  
tables

10.30-11.15 Keynote speech (including time for questions) Changing attitudes on a large scale – Richard Bennett, General Secretary of BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development) Who was Chair of the Make Poverty History Campaign

11.15-11.45 Coffee break

11.45am-12.15 Peer Baneke - ECRE General Secretary - The Way Forward advocacy document – How we got here

12.15-12.20 Eiko Smid – Dutch Postcode Lottery

12.20-12.45 Table review with delegates discussing and mapping out how the main themes of The Way Forward document match their own organisational priorities

12.45-2.00 Lunch

2.00-2.15 Introduction to afternoon workshop – Zafir Behlic – designer of The Way Forward

2.15-3.15 Working in small groups, discuss and agree, practical ways to use the new advocacy tool. Areas to consider might include briefing politicians, journalists, supporters, your own staff etc.

3.15-3.45 Coffee break

3.45-4.10 Feedback from working groups

4.10-4.30 Mock TV interview on a Way Forward topic – Keith Best and Scottish journalist

4.30-5.00 Business Meeting for ECRE Member Representatives

## **Day 2 Friday 19 May 2006**

9.30-10.15 Introduction to the Finnish Presidency – Leena-Kaisa Aberg Finnish Red Cross including questions to Leena-Kaisa and Thomas Bergman Refugee Advice Centre

10.15-11.00 Keynote address by Jean Lambert MEP including questions. Themes to include what MEPs find helpful from lobbying organisations and a look forward at EU refugee policy

11.00-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-12.40 Refugee Stories Project – Sara Buchanan. Presentation followed by working groups.

11.30-12.40 Parallel session on fundraising to include opportunity to meet with Dutch lottery, Information on latest EU funding streams and chance to discuss with people looking for European partners for funding.bids.

12.40-1.50 Lunch – during this break there will be a screening of a new 20 minute film “Asylum Realities” made by Scottish Refugee Council

1.50-2.05 Feedback from Refugee Stories Project

2.05-2.30 Introduction to ECRE advocacy focus on Dublin II – Chris Nash

2.30-4.00 Workshops to discuss and agree activities around Dublin II

4.00-4.30 Coffee break

4.30-4.50 Feedback from working groups

4.50-5.00 Closing remarks by chair

5.00 Conference closes