



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Baile Átha Cliath 2

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dublin 2

Our Ref: FoI/Req/17/079

13 June 2017

Mr. Craig Hughes
Mail on Sunday
Embassy House
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4

Dear Mr. Hughes,

I refer to the request of 5 May 2017 which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

- All correspondents to/from senior Department officials i.e. Principal Officers – Management Board Members – Minister – other government agencies relating to Saudi Arabia’s membership of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.
- Briefing material prepared for Management Board Members – Minister on the issue.
- I wish for my request to cover the period between 1/5/16 – 4/5/17.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 15 May 2017

Section 42 of the Act sets out the exclusion of certain records from the scope of the FOI legislation including records given by an FOI body to a member of the Government or a Minister of State for use by him/her for the purposes of any proceedings in either House of the Oireachtas or any committee/subcommittee of either House (whether answered orally or in writing).

As set out in the attached schedule, four records have been released. Records have been part-granted or refused by virtue of relevant exemptions in Section 15. Refusal on administrative grounds to grant FOI requests and Section 33 Security, defence and international relations of the Act

Sections 33(2)(b)(i), 33(2)(b)(ii), 33(3)(c)(i) and 33(3)(c)(ii) are mandatory exemptions under the FOI legislation and I am obliged to refuse access to records falling under those sections of the Act.

With regard to international relations this Department is responsible for managing relations between Ireland and 178 countries, in a complex and diverse environment. Successful diplomatic relations depends upon the creation and maintenance of trust and confidence between governments. Based on the Department's direct knowledge and expertise in international relations, its strongly held position is that the mere granting of access to records will adversely affect the State's relations by introducing major doubts with regard to the security and confidentiality of our diplomatic communications. It is important to maintain that mutuality of trust to protect and promote Ireland's interests internationally. I have considered the possibility and likelihood that the release of the records could result in negative consequences and their likely severity. On balance I am satisfied that the balance favours refusal rather than release.

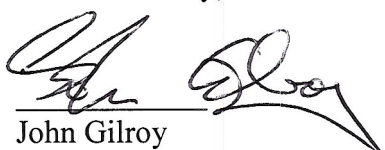
Ireland plays a very active role at the United Nations, in particular in the field of peacekeeping and humanitarian aid, and while we observe in letter and in spirit the rules governing votes in elections to UN bodies, our policy positions are a matter of public record as are our votes on UN resolutions.

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 and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to foi@dfat.ie. A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at foi@dfat.ie, or 01-4082857.

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,



John Gilroy
Deputy Director UN Coordination