

Cross-Party Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Monday 25th November 2024, 16:00 to 16:15

Minutes

Present

MSPs

- John Mason MSP
- Stephen Kerr MSP
- Jeremy Balfour MSP
- Murdo Fraser MSP

Non-MSP Members

- Jamie Spurway
- Hajra Ilyas

Apologies

None recorded.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

John Mason MSP opened the meeting, noting that it was convened primarily to fulfil the statutory requirement to hold a Cross-Party Group (CPG) meeting within 13 months. He welcomed attendees and confirmed the meeting was quorate with four MSPs present (John Mason, Stephen Kerr, Jeremy Balfour, and Murdo Fraser).

2. Secretariat Update

- **Interfaith Scotland Retirement:** Interfaith Scotland confirmed their retirement as the secretariat for the CPG due to workload constraints.

- **Replacement Process:** A call for interest had been circulated but received little response. No replacement was identified during the meeting, and members acknowledged this would need to be resolved.

3. Summary of the Previous Year

John Mason MSP provided a summary of the group's activities over the past year:

- **October 2023:** Dialogue featuring four faith groups (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Jews).
- **March 2024:** Presentation by UN Special Rapporteur Dr. Nazila Ghanea on global challenges to freedom of religion or belief.
- **November 2024:** Discussion led by John Kinahan of Forum18, focusing on violations of religious freedom in Russia and Russian-controlled Ukraine.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous AGM were formally adopted, proposed by Stephen Kerr MSP and seconded by Murdo Fraser MSP.

5. Election of Office Bearers

- **Convener:** John Mason MSP was re-elected as Convener, seconded by Stephen Kerr MSP.
- **Deputy Convener:** Murdo Fraser MSP was re-elected as Deputy Convener, seconded by John Mason MSP.

6. Closing Remarks

John Mason MSP thanked Interfaith Scotland for their service as secretariat and expressed hope that a replacement could be found. The meeting concluded with acknowledgment of the need for continued advocacy and engagement on freedom of religion or belief.