



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Our Ref: FOI/Req/2020/085

29 May, 2020

Dear Mr. Burke,

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:

All records held in the Department of Foreign Affairs in relation to the recent decisions to 1) quadruple Ireland's annual financial contribution to the World Health Organisation and 2) make an additional €1 million available for the World Health Organisation's programme of assistance to combat Covid-19 in Ethiopia.

To include, but not be limited to, the following;

Any email or written correspondence between any official of the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and any World Health Organisation official between 1st January 2020 and 20th April 2020 which relates to either or both of the decisions outlined above.

Records of any contact other than email or written correspondence between any official of the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and any World Health Organisation official between 1st January 2020 and 20th April 2020 which relates to either or both of the decisions outlined above.

Records of any contact between any official of the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and any representative of the Ethiopian government between 1st January 2020 and 20th April 2020 which relates to either or both of the decisions outlined above.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 29 April 2020.

In setting the scope of the request, I have included any records that document the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's decision-making in relation to funding to the World Health Organization's COVID-19 response. This funding is comprised of six discrete grants, three to the WHO global appeal and three to its country programmes in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade uses a standardised approach to grant management to manage the disbursement of funds to partners from both HQ and embassies. Funding decisions are made by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support Ireland's foreign policy objectives. The decision to grant funding is documented in an *appraisal, recommendation and approval (ARA)* document.

I have identified eight records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the attached schedule. I have made a decision to grant four (records 1, 2, 3 & 6) and part-grant four of the records (records 4, 5, 7 & 8). Where access has been refused the information is exempt from release under Security, defence and international relations *Section 33, (3), (c)*.

In addition, sections from two granted records are outside the scope of the request and, as such, have been redacted.

Security, defence and international relations

I have considered Section 33 (3) (c) of the 2014 Act in making my decision not to release certain information in four records. My interpretation of this is informed by the Office of the Information Commissioner's Guidance Note no. 13 *FOI and International Relations*. In applying Section 33 (3) (c) to records relating to information provided in confidence by an international organisation, refusal to grant access is mandatory. The relevant text in the Appraisal, Recommendation and Approval (ARA) documents has therefore been redacted.

Notwithstanding the mandatory nature of the non-disclosure, it should be borne in mind that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade operates in a complex and diverse international environment. A mutuality of confidence exists in the communication between this Department and our interlocutors. There is a possibility and likelihood that the release of this information could result in negative consequences, and prejudice the ability of this Department to effectively discharge its functions. To do otherwise would risk compromising the State's capacity to engage with international partners through diplomatic and other channels.

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 02 DX45 or by email to 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. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at foi@dfa.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

Matthew Cogan