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## PRESS RELEASE

### Chief Commissioner speaks at Mela

“Ten years ago just 8 people in every thousand in Northern Ireland belonged to minority ethnic groups. The most recent census showed us that that figure had more than doubled, to 18 in every thousand - that’s 32,400 people and it has made Northern Ireland a more diverse and interesting place.”

The Equality Commission’s Chief Commissioner, Michael Wardlow, will reflect on the changing make-up of Northern Ireland’s population when he addresses the expected 25,000 visitors to this year’s Belfast Mela.

Mr Wardlow explains: “We don’t have to look far to see that racial hatred is still a reality in Northern Ireland - last week racist slogans were daubed on a house where two young men from Nigeria were living. An event like Mela sends a strong message that the true spirit of most people in Northern Ireland is welcoming and inclusive and that this type of behaviour is viewed as repulsive and unacceptable.”

“The Commission works to promote good race relations and greater racial equality. We challenge discrimination by supporting people to take complaints to court or tribunal. We also provide advice and information for employers and businesses to help them comply with the law and, where necessary, we work to encourage the strengthening of race laws and to ensure that race equality considerations are embedded in public policy making and service delivery.”



Equality Commission staff at the event will be asking visitors to complete a survey to gather information about their attitudes and experiences in relation to race.

Mr Wardlow concludes: “We are always interested in hearing about people’s experiences of discrimination or about what they’ve been doing to promote equality of opportunity and good relationships. Celebrations like Mela remind us that there is a strong positive dimension to the growing diversity of our community.”

Notes to editors

#### 1. Belfast Mela.

Celebrating culture and creativity, Belfast Mela is an international showcase of food, music, dance, and arts from over 30 nationalities. Mela promotes better race relations by developing understanding and encouraging dialogue between communities in a shared and inclusive space. It takes place in Botanic Gardens Belfast on Sunday 25 August.

It is organised by Artsekta, Northern Ireland’s leading multi-cultural arts organisation, which also runs Diwali, Samhain and Festival of Colours every year.

#### 2. 2011 Census data.

Based on main ethnic group, 98 per cent of people usually resident in Northern Ireland on Census Day 2011 were white, 1.1 per cent (19,100) were Asian, 0.3 per cent (6,000) were mixed, 0.2 per cent (3,600) were black and 0.1 per cent (2,400) belonged to other ethnic groups. Compared with 2001, while the largest numerical increase occurred among people who were of white ethnicity (up 107,100; 6.4 per cent), larger proportionate increases occurred among people who belonged to the black (up 2,500; 218 per cent), Asian (up 12,300; 180 per cent), other (up 1,100; 82 per cent) or mixed (up 2,700; 81 per cent) ethnic groups (Table DC2101NI).

The largest minority ethnic sub-groups in 2011 were Chinese (6,300 people; up from 4,100 in 2001), Indian (6,200; up from 1,600), and other Asian (5,000; up from 200), each accounting for around 0.3 per cent of the usually resident population (Table DC2248NI). Including the 1,300 Irish Travellers, 1.8 per cent (32,400) of usual residents

belonged to minority ethnic groups in 2011, more than double the proportion in 2001 (0.8 per cent) (Table DC2101NI).

3. Anyone who has a problem with discrimination can contact the Commission on 028 90 500 600 or email [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)