

**Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs  
Maura Harty**

**Remarks at the Holt International Conference on  
“Looking Forward: A Global Response to Homeless Children”**

**“Looking Forward, Getting it Right”**

**Eugene, Oregon**

**Friday, October 20, 2006  
8:30 – 9:30 a.m.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE AND TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND OUR WORK ON BEHALF OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD.

THERE ARE MANY DISTINGUISHED VISITORS AND PARTICIPANTS HERE TODAY, AND I AM HUMBLED TO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO JOIN YOUR COMPANY. I WOULD ESPECIALLY LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE MR. HANS VAN LOON, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PERMANENT BUREAU OF THE HAGUE CONFERENCE ON PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW. THE PRESENCE OF ADOPTION AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES FROM AROUND THE WORLD AT THIS CONFERENCE IS PROOF THAT YOU RECOGNIZE THAT THE NEED TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR CHILDREN IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ONE COUNTRY, ONE CULTURE OR ONE BODY. IT IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK GARY GAMER, SUSAN COX, AND EVERYONE AT HOLT INTERNATIONAL FOR ARRANGING THIS CONFERENCE, AND TO CONGRATULATE HOLT INTERNATIONAL ON FIFTY YEARS OF TIRELESS SERVICE ON BEHALF OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN. FOR HALF A CENTURY, HOLT HAS BEEN A LEADER IN CARING FOR CHILDREN AT RISK, WHETHER BY HELPING FAMILIES TO STAY TOGETHER, PROMOTING FAMILY REUNIFICATION, OR CONTRIBUTING TO AMERICAN CITIZENS' ABILITY TO PURSUE INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS. THROUGHOUT THIS TIME HOLT HAS BEEN GUIDED BY THE FIRM COMMITMENT TO DO THE RIGHT THING IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN.

## **BENEFITS OF THE HAGUE ADOPTION CONVENTION**

DURING THIS CONFERENCE YOU WILL HAVE EXPLORED A VARIETY OF APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING PERMANENT HOMES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED. OF COURSE, ANY APPROACH NEEDS A SET OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES. I BELIEVE THE HAGUE CONVENTION ON PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND CO-OPERATION IN RESPECT OF INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT SET OF PRINCIPLES THAT, IF WE FOLLOW THEM, WILL HELP US GET IT RIGHT FOR THOSE CHILDREN.

AS ALL OF YOU KNOW, THE HAGUE ADOPTION CONVENTION IS A MULTILATERAL TREATY AMONG NEARLY 70 COUNTRIES. IT PROMOTES PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES FOCUSED ON PROTECTING THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILDREN. FULL STOP. THERE ARE NO HIDDEN AGENDAS OR MOTIVES. IT DOESN'T BENEFIT ONE COUNTRY MORE THAN ANOTHER. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CHILDREN.

I KNOW THAT MANY OF YOU HAVE LONG EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH THE CONVENTION, AND I AM HONORED TO BE AMONG YOU TODAY. MANY OF YOU WERE EVEN INVOLVED IN THE DRAFTING OF THIS IMPORTANT TREATY. SO I'LL LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS TO TALK ABOUT THE SPECIFIC TERMS OF THE CONVENTION. FOR MY PART, I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU WHY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS THE HAGUE ADOPTION CONVENTION, AND WHY WE'RE COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING IT.

WE SUPPORT THE CONVENTION BECAUSE IT IS FLEXIBLE, TO ACCOUNT FOR DIFFERENT SYSTEMS AND MODELS OF CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. AT THE SAME TIME, ITS PREMISE IS THAT TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICAL PRACTICE SHOULD APPLY TO ALL CHILDREN INVOLVED IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION, REGARDLESS OF THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OR COUNTRY OF RECEPTION. THE CONVENTION CAN AND SHOULD BE IN FORCE AROUND THE WORLD.

WE SUPPORT THE CONVENTION BECAUSE IT RECOGNIZES THAT INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION IS A VALUABLE OPTION TO HELP CHILDREN IN NEED. IT PROMOTES ADOPTION NOT AS AN END IN ITSELF, BUT AS PART OF THE GREATER GOAL OF DOING

WHATEVER IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF A CHILD. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TAKES THIS SAME APPROACH IN OUR EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN.

WE SUPPORT THE CONVENTION BECAUSE IT RECOGNIZES THAT ALL OF US – COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, RECEIVING COUNTRIES, GOVERNMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS, PRACTITIONERS, PARENTS – ALL OF US – HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS REGARD. ANYONE INVOLVED IN SERVING CHILDREN HAS AN INTEREST AND AN OBLIGATION TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO GET IT RIGHT.

THE PAST HALF-CENTURY HAS SEEN A REVOLUTION IN ATTITUDES TOWARD ADOPTION IN THIS COUNTRY. WHERE ONCE IT WAS ONLY WHISPERED ABOUT, NOW IT IS CELEBRATED. THE CREDIT FOR THAT GOES TO ORGANIZATIONS LIKE HOLT AND MANY OTHERS IN THIS ROOM, AND TO THE THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES WHO HAVE OPENED THEIR HEARTS AND HOMES TO CHILDREN NOT BECAUSE THEY MATCHED THEIR RACE OR RELIGION OR EXPECTATIONS OR PRECONCEPTIONS, BUT BECAUSE THE CHILDREN NEEDED LOVING HOMES AND FAMILIES.

ACCORDING TO OUR STATISTICS, U.S. FAMILIES HAVE WELCOMED MORE THAN 100,000 ADOPTIVE CHILDREN FROM OTHER COUNTRIES DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS ALONE. I AM PROUD OF OUR NATION FOR OPENING OUR HEARTS AND HOMES TO THESE CHILDREN – PROUD THAT THE STRENGTH OF AMERICA AS A DIVERSE AND OPEN COUNTRY MANIFESTS ITSELF DAILY THROUGH SHARING AND CARING FAMILIES.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING THE CONVENTION BECAUSE THE SAFEGUARDS IT PROMOTES ARE VITAL FOR EACH AND EVERY INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION. NO MATTER HOW MANY THERE ARE, EACH INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION OF EACH CHILD GIVES US A MORAL OBLIGATION TO DO IT RIGHT. IF THE BEST INTEREST OF A CHILD IS IGNORED IN EVEN ONE INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION, WE HAVE FAILED IN A NEARLY SACRED OBLIGATION.

#### **HAGUE IMPLEMENTATION: GETTING IT RIGHT**

THE UNITED STATES EARLY ON RECOGNIZED THE VALUE OF THE CONVENTION AND ITS GOALS. WE PARTICIPATED IN ITS ELABORATION, AND SIGNED IT IN 1994. IN

LATE 2000, CONGRESS PASSED THE INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION ACT TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION. SINCE THEN, WE HAVE WORKED EVERY DAY TO MAKE THE REGULATORY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES WE NEED TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION.

MANY HAVE ASKED, WONDERED AND YES, COMPLAINED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS HAS TAKEN A LONG TIME. THIS IS TRUE. IT HAS. WE HAVE MOVED CAREFULLY BUT UNCEASINGLY, BECAUSE WE RECOGNIZE HOW CRITICAL IT IS THAT WE GET ALL OF THE PIECES RIGHT: REGULATIONS, AN ACCREDITATION SYSTEM, AND OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS, ALL OF WHICH ARE CRITICAL TO OUR SUCCESS. WE HAVE PREFERRED, AS MY HUSBAND THE FORMER SHOP TEACHER USED TO SAY, TO “MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE,” BECAUSE THE STAKES ARE SO HIGH. AND WE ARE CLOSE NOW.

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF THIS PROCESS, WE HAVE CONSULTED WITH STAKEHOLDERS – AGENCIES, PARENTS, ORGANIZATIONS – BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE EXPERTS. YOU HAVE THE EXPERIENCE, YOU KNOW WHAT WORKS AND WHAT HASN’T WORKED. YOU’RE THE ONES DOING THE VITAL WORK WITH PARENTS AND CHILDREN. THAT COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION TAKES TIME. IN FACT, IT IS ESSENTIAL IF THE SYSTEM WE ARE DEVELOPING IS TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THOSE IT AFFECTS, AND IS TO REACH ITS GOAL OF IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS FOR INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION.

WE ARE ON TRACK TO REACH OUR GOAL OF RATIFYING THE CONVENTION IN 2007. I WANT TO BRIEFLY UPDATE YOU ON THE STATUS OF THIS PROJECT.

WE HAVE VIRTUALLY COMPLETED WORK ON FOUR SETS OF REGULATIONS – ALL OF WHICH WERE PUBLISHED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT. NOTABLY, THIS INCLUDES THE FIRST-EVER FEDERAL REGULATIONS ON THE ACCREDITATION AND APPROVAL OF ADOPTION SERVICE PROVIDERS. THIS IS A COMPREHENSIVE, DETAILED REGULATION THAT I THINK IS AN OUTSTANDING PIECE OF WORK AND WILL – I HOPE – PROVIDE THE GOLD STANDARD IN THIS FIELD. IT WAS THE PRODUCT OF CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH, INTERAGENCY COORDINATION, AND INPUT FROM THE ADOPTION COMMUNITY –

INCLUDING ROUGHLY 1,500 PUBLIC COMMENTS, WHICH WE PAINSTAKINGLY REVIEWED AND CONSIDERED. I THANK ALL OF YOU WHO PROVIDED INCREDIBLY VALUABLE INPUT TO THE DRAFTING OF THOSE REGULATIONS.

THE PUBLIC ALSO HAD A CHANCE TO COMMENT ON PROPOSED RULES COVERING OUTGOING CASES, REPORTING ON CASES INVOLVING AMERICAN CHILDREN ADOPTED INTO FOREIGN FAMILIES, AND CONSULAR OFFICER PROCEDURES FOR CONVENTION CASES. WE WILL FINALIZE THESE RULES IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

IN JULY 2006 WE DESIGNATED TWO ENTITIES THAT WILL ACCREDIT ADOPTION SERVICE PROVIDERS USING THE HAGUE STANDARDS – THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES AND THE COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION. BEFORE SIGNING AGREEMENTS WITH THEM, WE EVALUATED THEM AND OTHER ACCREDITING ENTITY CANDIDATES EXTENSIVELY – AND CONDUCTED MULTIPLE SITE VISITS – TO BE CERTAIN THAT THEY HAD THE CAPACITY AND DESIRE TO FULLY EXECUTE THEIR ACCREDITING ENTITY RESPONSIBILITIES. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THEY WILL BE OUTSTANDING PARTNERS WHO WILL RIGOROUSLY AND FAIRLY APPLY THE STANDARDS, AND EXERCISE RESPONSIBLE OVERSIGHT OVER ACCREDITED ADOPTION SERVICE PROVIDERS. I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO COLORADO AND THE COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION FOR THEIR CLEAR DESIRE TO ADD VALUE TO THIS PROCESS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THEM. THEY HAVE PROMISED THEIR COMMITMENT TO THIS SOLEMN UNDERTAKING.

ON OCTOBER 4 WE PUBLISHED IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER* A KEY MILESTONE DATE FOR ADOPTION SERVICE PROVIDERS SEEKING ACCREDITATION – THE TRANSITIONAL APPLICATION DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 17. BY THAT DATE ADOPTION SERVICE PROVIDERS INTERESTED IN BECOMING ACCREDITED, TEMPORARILY ACCREDITED, OR APPROVED BY THE TIME THE CONVENTION ENTERS INTO FORCE FOR THE UNITED STATES MUST HAVE APPLIED TO AN ACCREDITING ENTITY FOR HAGUE ACCREDITATION. AFTER WE LEARN THE NUMBER OF ADOPTION SERVICE PROVIDERS WHO ARE SEEKING TO BECOME ACCREDITED OR APPROVED, WE AND THE ACCREDITING

ENTITIES WILL HAVE A CLEARER IDEA OF HOW LONG THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS IS LIKELY TO TAKE, AND THUS WHEN WE WILL BE ABLE TO RATIFY THE CONVENTION. YOU CAN SEE THAT WE ARE GETTING CLOSE.

WE ALSO HAVE ENGAGED IN EXTENSIVE OUTREACH TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE CONVENTION AND OUR IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS:

- IN MARCH 2006, I OPENED A PUBLIC MEETING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS DIRECTLY FROM ADOPTION COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS ON THE ACCREDITATION REGULATIONS.
- WE ORGANIZED A WEBCHAT IN APRIL 2006 SO THAT I COULD SPEAK ONLINE WITH ADOPTION AGENCIES ABOUT HAGUE IMPLEMENTATION.
- OUR HAGUE TEAM HAS BARNSTORMED THE COUNTRY TO EXPLAIN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT TO ORGANIZATIONS, AGENCIES, ATTORNEYS, STATE OFFICIALS AND OTHERS.
- WE PRODUCED EXTENSIVE PUBLIC OUTREACH MATERIALS, INCLUDING THE BOOKLET "HAGUE CONVENTION ACCREDITATION AND APPROVAL—WHAT YOUR ORGANIZATION NEEDS TO KNOW" AND OUR JUST-RELEASED BOOKLET ENTITLED "THE HAGUE CONVENTION ON INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION: A GUIDE FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS."

I THINK OUR MILESTONES THUS FAR ARE MANY AND ARE ON TRACK. I AM SO PROUD OF THE DEDICATED TEAM MEMBERS WHO ARE WORKING ON THIS. OUR OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S ISSUES HAS A TEAM OF FIVE OFFICERS DEDICATED SOLELY TO THIS PROJECT, AND WE WILL MAINTAIN OUR PACE UNTIL WE HAVE COMPLETED THE JOB. LOTS OF OTHERS CONTRIBUTED ALSO ON AN AS-NEEDED BASIS. I FRANKLY COUNT MYSELF AMONG THEM. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE ADOPTION COMMUNITY. I WAS TOUCHED THAT ANNA MARY COBURN, ONE OF THE KEY DRAFTERS OF THE ACCREDITATION REGULATIONS, AND HERSELF AN ADOPTIVE MOTHER, WAS LAST MONTH RECOGNIZED BY THE CONGRESSIONAL COALITION ON ADOPTION INSTITUTE AS AN "ANGEL IN ADOPTION."

**BILATERAL EFFORTS TO GET IT RIGHT**

IN ADDITION TO OUR WORK TO IMPLEMENT THE HAGUE CONVENTION, WE ARE WORKING BILATERALLY WITH A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES ON INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO GETTING IT RIGHT ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN.

NEXT MONTH I WILL CELEBRATE MY FOURTH YEAR AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS. WHAT A PRIVILEGE THIS HAS BEEN! DURING THIS TIME I HAVE TRAVELED AROUND THE WORLD, MAKING VISITS TO OUR EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES. DURING A GREAT MANY OF THESE VISITS I HAVE MADE A POINT OF MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO PROMOTE AND EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION AND TO EXPRESS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S FIRM ADVOCACY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITH RESPECT TO INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION. LAST MONTH ALONE, I VISITED KOREA, CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM, PRIMARILY TO DISCUSS INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION ISSUES. EVEN MORE RECENTLY, AT A MEETING OF A NUMBER OF EU MEMBERS IN LAPPEENRANTA, FINLAND, I RAISED, AS I HAVE IN EVERY FORUM, OUR SERIOUS CONCERNS WITH ADOPTION PROSPECTS IN ROMANIA.

OUR BILATERAL EFFORTS HAVE THREE BROAD GOALS:

- TO ENCOURAGE TRANSPARENCY IN LAWS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES;
- TO PROMOTE REFORMS CONSISTENT WITH HAGUE CONVENTION GOALS;
- AND
- TO DO WHAT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILDREN CONCERNED.

I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT OUR WORK WITH SOME KEY COUNTRIES.

**GUATEMALA:** I AM DELIGHTED TO SEE GUATEMALA'S ROBUST REPRESENTATION AT THIS CONFERENCE. GUATEMALA IS A PARTY TO THE HAGUE CONVENTION BUT HAS NOT IMPLEMENTED IT. GUATEMALA'S ADOPTION SYSTEM DOES NOT CURRENTLY ASSIGN CONVENTION RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE MANNER PRESCRIBED BY THE CONVENTION. U.S. LAW AND REGULATION REQUIRE THAT, AFTER THE UNITED STATES HAS RATIFIED THE CONVENTION, ADOPTIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND OTHER CONVENTION COUNTRIES

MUST BE CARRIED OUT UNDER HAGUE PROCEDURES. AS UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE HENRIETTA FORE SAID IN A MEETING WITH GUATEMALA'S FIRST LADY JUST LAST MONTH,

“AFTER THE HAGUE ADOPTION CONVENTION ENTERS INTO FORCE FOR THE UNITED STATES, WE WILL NOT BE WILLING TO APPROVE ADOPTIONS FROM GUATEMALA UNLESS YOUR ADOPTION PROCESS IS CHANGED TO COMPLY WITH THE HAGUE STANDARDS.”

AS HAGUE CONVENTION PARTNERS BOTH WORKING TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION, THE UNITED STATES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA HAVE AN ONGOING DIALOGUE ON ADOPTION REFORM. WE APPRECIATE THAT A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT GUATEMALAN OFFICIALS ARE COMMITTED TO REFORM AND ARE LOOKING AT SOME CONCRETE PROPOSALS.

LAST WEEK I ASKED MY DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, CATHERINE BARRY, AND OTHERS TO GO TO GUATEMALA TO CONTINUE THIS DIALOGUE. THE TIMELINE IS SHORT, BUT WE BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE FOR BOTH COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION IN 2007.

**VIETNAM:** IN 2005, WE SIGNED A BILATERAL ADOPTION AGREEMENT WITH VIETNAM. I HAVE A PHOTO ON MY DESK FROM THAT SIGNING CEREMONY. THIS AGREEMENT ALLOWED ADOPTIONS TO RESUME AFTER A MORE THAN TWO-YEAR HIATUS. THE GOAL WAS TO CREATE A FRAMEWORK THAT PROMOTES TRANSPARENCY AND HAGUE-CONSISTENT PROCEDURES. I WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU WHO SUPPORTED, AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT, THIS AGREEMENT.

I TRAVELED TO VIETNAM LAST MONTH FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS (DIA), MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE EMBASSY IN HANOI AND CONSULATE IN HO CHI MINH CITY. I AM GLAD TO SEE DR. LONG AND MR. DAO FROM THE DIA IN THE AUDIENCE TODAY. WE REMAIN CONCERNED AND INTERESTED IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS IN VIETNAM, AND I APPRECIATE THE WORK OF OUR PARTNERS IN VIETNAM. WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK



WITH VIETNAM TO PROMOTE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ARRANGEMENTS, AND TRANSPARENCY, INCLUDING, I HOPE SOON, THE PUBLICATION OF A STANDARD FEE SCHEDULE.

**CAMBODIA:** AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE UNITED STATES SUSPENDED ADOPTIONS FROM CAMBODIA IN 2001 DUE TO WIDESPREAD CONCERNS ABOUT THE LACK OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT, AND PROVEN ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD, IMPROPER INDUCEMENT AND BABY-SELLING IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS, NONE OF WHICH WE CAN ABIDE. OUR CONCERNS PERSIST, SO THE SUSPENSION REMAINS IN PLACE. WE NEVERTHELESS BELIEVE WE MUST ENCOURAGE THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES. AS AN INITIAL STEP, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONED HOLT TO CONDUCT A SURVEY OF CAMBODIAN CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE TO DETERMINE THEIR NUMBER AND NEEDS. I'D LIKE TO THANK HOLT FOR THIS IMPORTANT WORK.

THE SURVEY FOUND THAT THERE ARE OVER 8,000 CHILDREN LIVING IN 204 INSTITUTIONS IN CAMBODIA. WHILE MANY WERE PLACED BECAUSE OF THE DEATH OF ONE OR BOTH PARENTS, MANY OTHERS HAVE PARENTS WHO PLACED THEM IN INSTITUTIONS TEMPORARILY, WITH NO INTENT TO RELINQUISH PARENTAL RIGHTS. THE RAW NUMBERS LOOK DAUNTING, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO CONCLUDE THAT EVEN A MAJORITY OF THE CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN CARE IN CAMBODIA ARE ELIGIBLE FOR INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION.

THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT HAS THE SURVEY DATA AS WELL AS OTHER INFORMATION PROVIDED BY UNICEF, AND WE'RE HOPING THEY CAN BEGIN TO MAKE PROGRESS. CAMBODIAN OFFICIALS TOLD ME LAST MONTH DURING MY VISIT THAT THEY HOPE TO PASS AN ADOPTION LAW THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE HAGUE CONVENTION SOON. WHILE WE SUPPORT THESE EFFORTS, THEY MUST BE ACCOMPANIED

BY REAL REFORM AT THE CHILD WELFARE LEVEL BEFORE WE CAN REVISIT INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS FROM CAMBODIA.

**UKRAINE:** WE HAVE WORKED CLOSELY THIS YEAR WITH UKRAINE ON A COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE AMERICAN ADOPTIVE PARENTS TO MEET UKRAINIAN POST-PLACEMENT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS. IT IS VITAL! I MET WITH MINISTER OF FAMILY, YOUTH AND SPORT PAVLENKO IN JANUARY, AND WITH MY UKRAINIAN COUNTERPART IN APRIL. IN ADDITION TO THE TIRELESS EFFORTS OF MY TEAM AND MANY OTHERS AROUND THE COUNTRY, I HAVE HELD TWO CONFERENCE CALLS WITH ASPS FROM AROUND THE UNITED STATES, WRITTEN TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND STATE ADOPTION AGENCY LICENSING ORGANIZATIONS, AND POSTED AN OPEN LETTER TO AMERICAN CITIZEN ADOPTIVE PARENTS ON OUR WEBSITE. OUR EMBASSY IN KIEV MEETS REGULARLY WITH THE NEW UKRAINIAN ADOPTION AUTHORITY TO EXPLORE HOW WE CAN WORK COOPERATIVELY TO IMPROVE THE POST-PLACEMENT REPORTING COMPLIANCE RATE.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO WORK WITH FAMILIES WHO HAVE ADOPTED FROM UKRAINE, I ASK YOU TO ENCOURAGE THESE FAMILIES TO COMPLY WITH THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST FOR THESE UPDATES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE NEW UKRAINIAN ADOPTION DEPARTMENT PLANS TO START PROCESSING NEW CASES IN JANUARY 2007. WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH UKRAINE AND THE U.S. ADOPTION COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE POST-PLACEMENT REPORTING SO THAT UKRAINIAN CHILDREN CAN CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM THE OPTION OF INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION TO THE UNITED STATES.

**ROMANIA:** ON ROMANIA I AM AFRAID I DON'T HAVE GOOD NEWS TO REPORT. DESPITE URGING FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, AS WELL AS APPEALS BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS, THE HELSINKI COMMISSION AND MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION, ROMANIA HAS SIGNALLED IT DOES NOT INTEND TO REVISIT ITS RESTRICTIVE ADOPTION LAW, NOR PERMIT INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION FOR CHILDREN WHOSE CASES WERE ALREADY PENDING WHEN THE LAW CHANGED.

I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT WE HAVE TRIED EVERY POSSIBLE MEANS, WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA, WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION AND OTHER COUNTRIES WITH CITIZENS ALSO SEEKING TO ADOPT FROM ROMANIA, TO TRY TO MAKE PROGRESS ON THIS ISSUE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLORE OPTIONS, BUT THIS MAY BE ONE AREA, I VERY SINCERELY REGRET TO SAY, IN WHICH WE EVENTUALLY MAY HAVE TO ACCEPT LESS THAN WE'D LIKE.

LOOKING FORWARD, WE WILL CONTINUE THE COMMITMENT I HOPE I HAVE DEMONSTRATED THIS MORNING. WE ARE COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING THE HAGUE ADOPTION CONVENTION, SO THAT CHILDREN INVOLVED IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION TO THE UNITED STATES WILL BENEFIT FROM ITS SAFEGUARDS AND PRINCIPLES. WE ARE COMMITTED TO CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER COUNTRIES ON THE ISSUES OF INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION AND CHILD WELFARE, TO ENSURE THAT ALL CHILDREN HAVE THE CHANCE TO GROW UP IN A LOVING, PERMANENT FAMILY, WHEREVER THAT MAY BE. AND WE ARE COMMITTED TO CONTINUED DIALOGUE WITH THE ADOPTION COMMUNITY, TO EXPLORE TOGETHER IDEAS AND ACTIONS IN MEETING THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN.

WHEN DISCUSSING THE WORK OF THE BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS, OR THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, I OFTEN SAY THAT WE AS PUBLIC SERVANTS ARE THE BEARERS OF A SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY OF TRUST GRANTED BY OUR FELLOW CITIZENS. THAT RESPONSIBILITY CONFERS UPON US A DUTY TO MODEL INTEGRITY. I WOULD ARGUE THAT EACH OF US IN THIS ROOM – NGO, PRIVATE CITIZEN, PUBLIC SERVANT – HAS A SIMILAR DUTY. THE HOPES AND WELFARE OF THE WORLD'S MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS REST ON OUR EFFORTS AND THE EFFORTS OF OTHERS OF GOOD WILL AROUND THE WORLD. IN OUR WORK ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN, WE ALL MUST DO WHAT WE DO WITH INTEGRITY, AND SERVE AS MODELS THAT OTHERS WILL FOLLOW.

I THINK IT IS FITTING IN THIS TIME AND PLACE TO RECALL THE ACTIONS AND SPIRIT OF HARRY AND BERTHA HOLT, TWO OF THE PIONEERS OF INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION. IN THE MID-1950S HARRY AND BERTHA HOLT SAW A FILM ABOUT POOR

AMERASIAN CHILDREN WHO HAD BEEN ABANDONED IN KOREAN ORPHANAGES. THEY SENT THE CHILDREN MONEY AND CLOTHES, BUT FELT THAT IT WASN'T ENOUGH. THEY REALIZED THAT WHILE THE CHILDREN COULD USE THE MONEY AND CLOTHES, WHAT THEY REALLY NEEDED WAS A FAMILY.

HARRY AND BERTHA DECIDED TO ADOPT EIGHT KOREAN CHILDREN. THEY SOON LEARNED, HOWEVER, THAT THEIR GESTURE OF LOVE FACED A FORMIDABLE OBSTACLE: CONGRESS WOULD HAVE TO PASS A LAW TO PROVIDE FOR INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION.

“THEN THAT’S WHAT WE’LL DO,” BERTHA SAID.

HARRY AND BERTHA HAD THE COURAGE AND COMMITMENT TO DO THE RIGHT THING, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS DIFFICULT AND PERHAPS IN SOME QUARTERS UNPOPULAR. THEY FOREVER TOUCHED AND TRANSFORMED THE LIVES OF THOSE CHILDREN, AND IN THE PROCESS HELPED TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD. IF WE TOO HAVE THAT COURAGE AND COMMITMENT AND DO THE RIGHT THING, THEN WE TOO CAN TOUCH THE LIVES OF OTHERS, AND IN THE PROCESS ADD A LITTLE BIT OF EXTRA MEANING TO OUR OWN LIVES.

ONCE AGAIN, I WISH HOLT A VERY HAPPY 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY. ALTHOUGH I AM UNABLE TO STAY FOR THE REST OF THE CONFERENCE I AM SO VERY GRATEFUL TO HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO BE HERE. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO INTRODUCE CHRISTOPHER LAMORA, KEMY MONAHAN AND NYDA BUDIG, WHO WILL REMAIN HERE FOR THE DURATION OF THE CONFERENCE IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS AND TO MAKE SURE WE CONTINUE TO HEAR YOU, AND THAT WE CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER ON BEHALF OF THE CHILDREN.

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          CA/P:CJRichard  
          CA:Jruterbories  
          CA:WNesbitt