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USCIS STRENGTHENS INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION PROCESS

Rollout of New Forms and Centralized Review Under Hague Adoption Convention

WASHINGTON — Children, birthparents and prospective adoptive parent(s) will have greater protections under the *Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption* (Hague Adoption Convention), effective April 1. New safeguards administered by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) under the Hague include the creation of new forms and improved, centralized examination processes for intercountry adoption applications and petitions under the Hague Adoption Convention.

The Hague Adoption Convention is an international treaty between convention member countries (www.travel.state.gov). The agreement provides a framework of rules and procedures for the countries to work jointly to ensure certain intercountry adoption protections. These include providing adoptees with permanent and loving homes and looking after children's best interests throughout the adoption process, thus preventing the abduction, sale or illegal traffic of children.

“These new protective and streamlining measures underscore our commitment to children, parents and prospective adoptive parents”, said Michael Valverde, acting Deputy Chief, USCIS Office of International Operations.

The new forms being introduced are an *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country* (I-800A), and the *Petition to Classify a Convention Adoptee as an Immediate Relative* (I-800). The purpose of the I-800A is to review the suitability and eligibility of prospective adoptive parent(s), while the I-800 determines a child's Convention classification eligibility.

Additionally, USCIS established a special unit to process all Hague intercountry adoption applications and petitions at its USCIS National Benefits Center. The special unit will also provide customer service support to prospective adoptive parents who have filed Form I-800A or Form I-800.

Prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to visit and download the forms and filing instructions and Hague Adoption Convention Fact Sheet, available on the Internet at www.uscis.gov.