



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

# Joint Statement

November 17, 2003

## **THE DEPARTMENTS OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND STATE HONOR NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH BY CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS**

On the occasion of National Adoption Month, the Departments of State and Homeland Security applaud those parents who, through adoption, have provided loving homes to children in need. Recognizing that an increasing number of prospective adoptive parents are looking abroad to adopt, the Departments of State and Homeland Security are working together towards the full implementation of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, in accordance with the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000.

The Hague Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act codify the U.S. Government's long-standing efforts to ensure that the best interests of adopted children remain the focus of all intercountry adoptions. The Departments of State and Homeland Security strongly support transparent, consistently applied adoption processes that provide strong safeguards for the welfare and interests of children, birth parents and adoptive parents. We work actively to eliminate illegal activities in the adoption process and facilitate the appropriate, legal international movement of adopted children.

In an effort to meet these goals and create a transparent framework for U.S. citizen prospective adoptive parents to operate in, the first proposed regulations to implement the Intercountry Adoption Act were recently published in the *Federal Register*. The proposed regulations, pertaining to the accreditation of non-profit and approval of for-profit U.S. adoption service providers to provide such services in and with Hague Convention member countries are open for public comment until December 15, 2003.

The Departments of State and Homeland Security will be working closely together during the coming year to craft new regulations to implement the Intercountry Adoption Act's expanded definition of "adoptable children", and address procedural changes and new responsibilities that will be assumed in order to make Hague implementation a reality.

The U.S. government will continue to urge foreign governments to establish transparent procedures with adequate safeguards to ensure that the interests and welfare of adopted children, birth parents and adoptive parents are protected and child abuse and trafficking is prevented.

On March 1, 2003, U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing the integrity of our nation's security.