



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
STATEMENT
OF
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DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
OVERSEAS CITIZENS SERVICES
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
HEARING
ON
JUNE 11, 2015

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee – Thank you for this opportunity to discuss international parental child abduction (IPCA), and to review implementation of the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act (ICAPRA), including the Department of State’s first annual report under the new law.

The Department values your continuing interest and support of our efforts to prevent international parental child abduction, to facilitate the expeditious return of children to their homes, and to strengthen and expand the Hague Abduction Convention (Convention) to include more partner countries.

This new law is already encouraging more countries to consider becoming party to the Hague Convention, or to improve their performance under the Convention if they already are a Party. The U.S. Interagency Working Group on Prevention mandated by ICAPRA has already met twice, hosted by Special Advisor for Children’s Issues Ambassador Susan Jacobs, and has resulted in enhanced co-ordination in preventing abductions.

We devoted significant effort to analyze this new law, adapt our policies and procedures to implement it, and publish the first annual report. We fully recognize this first report will not meet all expectations. We welcome feedback from you, other Members of Congress, parents who are seeking the return of their children, and the public on how we can improve future iterations of the report.

As the law requires, 90 days following the annual report, the Department will submit to Congress a report on actions taken in response to patterns of non-compliance by countries in their handling of IPCA cases.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, distinguished Members of the subcommittee, we are committed to using every tool available to prevent and resolve international parental child abductions. We need and appreciate your continuing support, including through your feedback on our work and our reports to you.