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Intercountry Adoption Numbers Continue to Decline

January 25, 2013 – Alexandria, VA – This week the U.S. Department of State released its *FY 2012 Annual Report on Intercountry Adoption*. **According to the report**, American families adopted 8,668 foreign-born children in 2012, a decline from the 9,319 that they adopted in 2011 – making 2012 the eighth straight year in which intercountry adoptions have decreased since the peak year of 2004, when close to 23,000 children were adopted from other countries.

Intercountry adoptions by American families began in the 1950s, when Harry and Bertha Holt appealed to Congress to change existing law and allow Americans to adopt children from other countries. Although the numbers were relatively low in those early years, intercountry adoptions to the U.S. began to rise sharply in the 1990s, following the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu's regime in Romania. It was learned that tens of thousands of children had been orphaned or abandoned, and were living in orphanages in Romania. Americans responded by adopting thousands of these orphaned and vulnerable children.

In 2008, the U.S. implemented The Hague Adoption Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption (The Hague Convention), an international agreement established to provide universal protections and regulations for the adoption of children and promote cooperation among signatories of the agreement.

Many advocates believed that The Hague Convention would result in increased opportunities for orphaned and abandoned children to find safe, permanent, loving families through intercountry adoption, but that has not occurred. No new countries have opened intercountry adoption programs under The Hague Convention since the treaty was implemented by the U.S., and several countries have closed to address issues within their adoption programs and reorganize under a new Hague Convention-compliant system.

The number of intercountry adoptions will likely continue to decline as adoption programs in both Hague and non-Hague nations slow or shut down. American families adopted nearly 1,000 Russian-born orphans in 2011, but **Russia recently banned Americans from adopting Russian orphans as a result of the U.S. passage of the Magnitsky Act in December 2012.** Two Countries, Vietnam and Cambodia, have recently announced their succession to the Hague Convention and readiness to resume intercountry adoption with the U.S. but as yet the U.S. has not agreed to work with them on behalf of children in need of a family.

“The decline in the number of intercountry adoptions has occurred at a time when the global orphan population has increased dramatically,” notes Chuck Johnson, president and CEO of National Council For Adoption. “There are millions upon millions of children living outside of permanent family care – and for many, their best chance at securing a loving and permanent family is through intercountry adoption. The continued decline in intercountry adoptions is not good for children, and it is a disgrace and a travesty that more isn’t being done to offer children the hope of a family through intercountry adoption.”

NCFA continues to support The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, which requires much stronger oversight and greater transparency in the intercountry adoption process. “The Hague Convention is a foundation for transparent, ethical, and lawful adoption practices, and now that it is in place we must use it,” says Chuck Johnson. “We must do more to expand opportunities for children in need of families to be adopted by those qualified and eager to adopt. We call upon children’s advocates, child welfare officials, and government stakeholders in all nations to work together more effectively on behalf of orphaned and abandoned children, with the sense of compassion and urgency they deserve.”

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