

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT
Following the Symposium on International Parental Child Abduction

Canada, France, UK, United States

Tokyo, Japan
May 21, 2009

When one parent abducts a child with the intention of denying the other parent contact with his or her child, it is a tragedy for all concerned. Canada, France, the United Kingdom and the United States are all parties to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (“the Convention”), which was created to protect children from this tragedy.

The Convention seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of their wrongful removal or retention across international borders. The Convention further establishes procedures to ensure their prompt return to the State of their habitual residence where custody decisions can be made in the appropriate court of jurisdiction. It also secures protection for rights of access for both parents to their children. To date, over 80 countries have acceded to the Convention.

Japan is the only G-7 nation that has not signed the Convention. The left-behind parents of children abducted to or from Japan have little realistic hope of having their children returned and encounter great difficulties in obtaining access to their children and exercising their parental rights and responsibilities.

Because parental child abduction involving Japan affects so many of our citizens, officials from our embassies joined together in this symposium today at the Tokyo American Center to discuss our common concerns with a wide range of participants affected by or involved in these issues.

Japan is an important ally and partner and we share many common values. This makes our failure to develop tangible solutions to most cases of parental child abduction in Japan particularly troubling.

We place the highest priority on the welfare of children who have been the victims of international parental child abduction and believe that our children should grow up with access to both parents. We therefore call upon Japan to accede to the Convention. Meanwhile, we urge Japan to identify and implement measures to enable parents who are separated from their children to maintain contact with them and to visit them. We are eager for our relationship with Japan on this important issue to improve through Japan's accession to the Convention.

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