

INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION

U.S. Department of State • Bureau of Consular Affairs



U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Action Report on International Parental
Child Abduction

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Introduction

The U.S. Department of State's Office of Children's Issues serves as the U.S. Central Authority under the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Convention). In 2016, the Department submitted its Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction (Annual Report) pursuant to the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act (the Act). We reported on the Department's efforts to support the resolution of international parental child abduction cases involving children whose habitual residence is the United States. We also reported on the number of cases processed and our extensive work in more than 83 countries where we received reports of abductions in 2015.

The Department's work does not end with the publication of the Annual Report. In countries that do not meet their Convention obligations or work with the U.S. Central Authority to resolve international parental child abductions, the Department takes appropriate actions as listed in the Act. In addition, the Department takes actions that are consistent with how we advance U.S. foreign interests in other high priority areas. We establish and maintain communications, we identify challenges, we exchange information and technical expertise, and we press countries to meet their Convention obligations.

The Department submits, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. § 9122(c)(4), this report to Congress on the specific actions taken against countries determined to have been engaged in a pattern of noncompliance as defined by the Act. Additionally, we report on actions the Department took against countries that failed to comply with one or more of their obligations under the Act

The Department's Action Report on International Parental Child Abduction

Diplomatic engagement remains one of our most effective tools with all countries to assist in resolving international parental child abduction cases. We take every appropriate opportunity to raise international parental child abduction cases with foreign government officials at the highest appropriate levels and to ensure the foreign government understands the U.S. government's concern for the welfare of U.S. citizens overseas, especially children.

After the Department released the 2016 Annual Report, our missions abroad delivered demarches to the countries we cited. In frank conversations with foreign government officials, our diplomats expressed what actions host governments must take to improve their nations' ability to resolve and prevent international parental child abductions within their borders. Department officials met with foreign missions in Washington, D.C., to deliver the same message.

The Department continues to refine strategies for U.S. government engagement with numerous countries on international parental child abduction. These strategies use the tools of the Department, as well as those of other U.S. government entities such as law enforcement, to provide a government-wide approach to combat and resolve abductions. Our strategy in each country is uniquely tailored to take into account each country's evolving political and cultural environment.

In some cases, where the United States is a Convention partner with the country at issue, the Convention's remedy for return may not apply to all abduction cases. In particular, Convention remedies are available only in cases filed after the Convention entered into force between the United States and the other country. However, we are committed to the resolution of all cases of international parental child abduction regardless of whether return under the Convention is available as a remedy.

In this Action Report, we share the specific actions the United States has taken with regard to the countries we cited in the 2016 Annual Report, both for noncompliance and for failure to comply with one or more obligations under the Convention. We also report on developments in international parental child abduction cases in these countries.

Actions the Department of State Took with Regard to International Parental Child Abduction in Countries Cited in the Annual Report for Demonstrating a Pattern of Noncompliance

The following country-specific summaries detail the actions that the Department took:

Argentina

The Department frequently raised concerns about the Argentine judiciary's failure to meet its Convention obligations in both public and private fora. In summer 2016, Secretary of State John F. Kerry pressed Argentina's Foreign Minister on compliance with the Convention, and Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Michele Thoren Bond expressed U.S. concerns to the Argentine Central Authority and the Argentine Under Secretary for Foreign Relations. Assistant Secretary Bond publicly raised these concerns at a press conference in Buenos Aires.

In September, Special Advisor for Children's Issues Ambassador Susan Jacobs led a Department delegation to Buenos Aires to demarche the Argentine Central Authority about unresolved cases. She raised concerns about Argentina's Convention performance and engaged with judicial officials.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, the Department notified Argentine authorities in a demarche that the Department had cited Argentina in the 2016 Annual Report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

The Acting Deputy Chief of Mission from U.S. Embassy Buenos Aires met with the Argentine Under Secretary for Foreign Relations and the Minister of the Foreign Ministry's North American Affairs Division to discuss Argentina's citation in the report. The Office of Children's Issues delivered the same message to consular officials from the Embassy of Argentina in Washington, D.C.

In April 2016, Department consular officials spoke with the Argentine Central Authority and raised concerns about the Argentine judiciary's failure to meet its Convention obligations.

The Bahamas

Throughout the year, the Department helped The Bahamas strengthen compliance with the Convention. For example, the Chief Counsel and magistrates from the Bahamian Office of the Attorney General participated in a Department-sponsored International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) in the United States. This program demonstrated how U.S. courts and agencies implement the Convention and provided a valuable opportunity for an exchange of best practices. In addition, the Department met with the Deputy Chief of Mission to the Embassy of The Bahamas in Washington, D.C., to discuss Convention best practices and abduction issues.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Nassau notified the Permanent Secretary of the Bahamian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a demarche that the Department had cited The Bahamas in the report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

Brazil

U.S. government officials at all levels engaged with the Government of Brazil to address our longstanding concerns regarding Brazil's failure to implement and comply with the Convention. For example, in 2016 Secretary of State John F. Kerry and Brazil's Foreign Minister discussed Brazil's non-compliance with the Convention and unresolved abduction cases. The Secretary urged the Brazilian government to pass legislation to streamline its judicial process. Additionally, U.S. officials publicly voiced these concerns. At a press conference in Washington, D.C., Assistant Secretary Bond publicly discussed Brazil's non-compliance, noting that the Department had cited Brazil many times for its judicial performance and delays. She urged Brazil to honor its obligations under the Convention, including resolving all cases expeditiously.

In fall 2015, the Assistant Secretary Bond met in Brasilia with the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs and senior Brazilian officials to stress the importance of international cooperation on and compliance with the Convention. The Acting Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs also raised international parental child abduction issues with Brazilian Foreign Ministry officials in 2016.

U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Liliana Ayalde discussed international parental child abduction cases, Convention compliance issues, and judicial delays with Brazilian officials including the Minister of Justice and the Under Secretary General for Brazilian Communities Abroad. Upon release of the 2016 Annual

Report, U.S. Embassy Brasilia delivered a demarche notifying the Brazilian government that the Department had cited Brazil as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

The Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs at U.S. Embassy Brasilia delivered a demarche to the Under Secretary General for Brazilian Communities Abroad and discussed the need for timely resolution of the 13 unresolved cases in Brazil. The Minister Counselor and other U.S. Embassy officials met regularly with Brazilian government officials, including at the Brazilian Supreme Court, Superior Court, and National Council of Justice, to express our concerns about unresolved abduction cases.

In Washington, D.C., Ambassador Jacobs met with the Brazilian Ambassador on numerous occasions to urge Brazil to expeditiously resolve all its cases. In fall 2015, the Department's Director of the Office of Brazilian and Southern Cone Affairs met with high-level Brazilian officials to express concern about unresolved international parental child abduction cases, to include numerous cases plagued by judicial delays and continuing Convention compliance issues.

Colombia

The Department worked with Colombian authorities to strengthen collaboration and improve our partnership to resolve international parental child abduction cases. As a result of this engagement, the Office of Children's Issues observed a significant improvement in the frequency of communication with the Colombian Central Authority in 2016. In May 2016, in collaboration with the Department, the Colombian Central Authority prompted the resolution of an abduction case by sending information about Convention norms on expeditious procedures to a Colombian court.

Key elements of our engagement include meetings between Jacobs and the Colombian Embassy; U.S. Embassy Bogota officials and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Colombian Central Authority officials; and the Office of Children's Issues and the Colombian Embassy in Washington, D.C. These meetings focused on discussing opportunities for Colombia to strengthen its compliance with the Convention.

U.S. Embassy officials regularly held further discussions with the Colombian Central Authority in Bogota to explore opportunities for closer collaboration. Upon release of the Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Bogota delivered

a demarche to the Government of Colombia, noting that the Department had cited the country as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

Costa Rica

The Department continues to collaborate effectively with the Costa Rican Central Authority to promote prompt case processing of Convention return cases. As a result of this engagement, Costa Rican judicial authorities resolved Convention return cases more quickly in 2016 than they did in 2015. Key elements of our engagement included Ambassador Jacobs' meeting with the Costa Rican Ambassador to the United States to discuss our concerns that judicial delays significantly impede the implementation of the Convention. A member of the Costa Rican Central Authority participated in a Department-sponsored IVLP entitled "Children in the U.S. Justice System."

In 2016, U.S. Embassy San José officials discussed Convention compliance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy San José delivered a demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noting that the Department cited Costa Rica in the report for demonstrating a pattern of noncompliance. At the same time, the Office of Children's Issues discussed the citation with the Costa Rican Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Dominican Republic

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo delivered a demarche notifying the Dominican Republic that the Department cited the country as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

In July 2016, the Office of Children's Issues met with officials from the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in Washington, D.C., to discuss the citation in the Annual Report.

Ecuador

Throughout the year, the Office of Children's Issues and U.S. Embassy Quito encouraged Ecuadorian officials to address issues regarding Convention compliance. These include video conferences to discuss abduction cases and compliance issues and meetings with representatives of the Ecuadorian Public Defender's Office to discuss strategies for resolving pending abduction cases.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Quito delivered a demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noting that the Department had cited Ecuador in the report for demonstrating a pattern of noncompliance. At the same

time, the Office of Children's Issues spoke with the Embassy of Ecuador in Washington, D.C., about Ecuador's citation in the 2016 Annual Report.

Egypt

As a result of the Department citing Egypt in the 2015 Annual Report for lack of cooperation with the United States on international parental child abduction, Egyptian authorities worked extensively to engage with U.S. authorities to review possible methods for addressing cases. The Department continues to work with Egyptian authorities to implement procedures that will help resolve outstanding cases.

While there is much work to be done, there has been progress. In the spring of 2016, during meetings with Ambassador Jacobs, officials from the Egyptian Justice Ministry and a Ministry of Justice working group informed Ambassador Jacobs of Egypt's plan to form a subcommittee to study the possibility of Egypt ratifying the Convention. They further discussed opportunities to expand cooperation under the existing Memorandum of Understanding on Consular Cooperation in Cases Concerning Parental Access to Children between our two countries. Later, in discussions in Cairo with a technical team from the Department, Egypt agreed to expand the Memorandum to include regular meetings to discuss outstanding individual abduction cases.

Throughout the year, U.S. Embassy Cairo and Department officials in Washington encouraged Egyptian officials to ratify to the Convention and address existing cases. U.S. Ambassador to Egypt R. Stephen Beecroft conveyed to the Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for North American Affairs the importance the U.S. government places on international parental child abduction cases and urged the Government of Egypt to resolve existing cases. Ambassador Beecroft also hosted a meeting for the Egyptian Assistant Minister for Consular Affairs and his senior staff at his residence in Cairo to reiterate the same message.

In addition, U.S. diplomats at Embassy Cairo reviewed outstanding abduction cases with officials from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Ministry of Justice working group. Throughout the year, consular officials followed up with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to review additional options to resolve outstanding abduction cases.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Cairo delivered a demarche notifying Egypt that the Department had cited the country as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance. In July 2016, the Office of Children's

Issues met with officials from the Embassy of Egypt in Washington, D.C., to discuss the citation in the Annual Report.

Guatemala

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Guatemala City delivered a demarche notifying the Government of Guatemala that the Department had cited the country as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance. During the meeting, Guatemala's Solicitor General suggested creative solutions for stalled cases and expressed a willingness to engage in training of Guatemalan Central Authority staff and family court judges.

Honduras

As a result of diplomatic engagement throughout the year, the Department observed significant improvements in Honduran Central Authority performance and some improvement in judicial authority performance in 2016. The Honduran Central Authority and the Department's Office of Children's Issues established monthly conference calls to discuss Convention cases and international parental child abduction issues. The Honduran Central Authority, in collaboration with the Department, provided Honduran courts information about international best practices to swiftly resolve Convention cases. These efforts led to the return of a U.S. citizen child to her habitual residence in the United States.

The Office of Children's Issues regularly engaged the Honduran Embassy in Washington, D.C., on international parental child abduction issues and Convention compliance. In spring 2016, at the request of the Honduran Embassy the Department co-hosted an information session on international parental child abduction and the Convention. Representatives from the Honduran Central Authority, Honduran consular officials, and representatives from the U.S. and Honduran Embassies participated. Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Tegucigalpa delivered a demarche notifying Honduras that the Department had cited the country as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

India

Throughout the year, officials at the highest levels of the Department encouraged India to resolve international parental child abduction cases and to take steps to help facilitate the rights of access of left-behind parents whose children were abducted to India.

On the margins of the 2016 U.S.-India Strategic and Commercial Dialogue in New Delhi, Secretary of State John F. Kerry encouraged India to accede to the Convention and requested assistance with resolving reported cases. Under Secretary for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon, South and Central Asian Affairs Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary William Todd, and Assistant Secretary Bond have reiterated these messages in other dialogues with Indian officials. Assistant Secretary Bond highlighted international parental child abduction at the 2016 U.S.-India Consular Dialogue in New Delhi.

International parental child abduction was also a focus of the 2015 U.S.-India Consular Dialogue in Washington, D.C., with Assistant Secretary Bond urging Indian accession to the Convention and assistance with resolving abduction cases. Following this Dialogue, the Office of Children's Issues sought India's assistance to resolve all open abduction cases.

South and Central Asian Affairs Assistant Secretary Nisha Biswal raised abduction cases with Indian officials during a visit to New Delhi in 2016 and reiterated the importance of acceding to the Convention. Most recently, Ambassador Jacobs continued the Department's engagement with the Government of India. During a 2016 visit to India, she underscored the need for the Government of India to work with the Department to resolve international parental child abduction cases.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy New Delhi delivered a demarche to the Indian government noting that the Department had cited India in the 2016 Annual Report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance and requested India's assistance with resolving reported cases.

Jordan

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Amman delivered a demarche to the Government of Jordan notifying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Department had cited Jordan in the report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

Lebanon

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Beirut delivered demarche to the Government of Lebanon informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Department had cited Lebanon in the report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

Nicaragua

While the Nicaraguan Central Authority previously cooperated with the Department in efforts to resolve cases of children abducted to Nicaragua from the United States, that cooperation stopped in early 2016 when the Nicaraguan government asked the Department to communicate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead.

Nevertheless, the Department remains deeply engaged in efforts to address international parental child abduction cases in Nicaragua. In late winter, U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua Laura Dogu raised an international parental child abduction case with the Minister of the Family, and U.S. Embassy Managua delivered a diplomatic note to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting Nicaragua's assistance with this case.

In the spring 2016, U.S. Embassy Managua delivered a diplomatic note to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting Nicaragua's assistance with two international parental child abduction cases. Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Managua delivered a demarche to the Government of Nicaragua noting that the Department had cited Nicaragua in the report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance

Oman

Throughout the year, U.S. Embassy Muscat delivered multiple diplomatic notes to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting Oman's assistance with international parental child abduction cases. The U.S. Embassy met with the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to request assistance with allowing U.S. consular officers to visit the children in these cases.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Muscat delivered a demarche to the Government of Oman informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Department had cited Oman in the Annual Report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance. At the same time, the Office of Children's Issues met with the Embassy of Oman in Washington, D.C., to inform the Embassy of the citation in the report.

Pakistan

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Islamabad delivered a demarche to the Government of Pakistan informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan's citation in the report as demonstrating patterns of noncompliance.

Peru

In an effort to address individual cases and other Convention compliance issues, the Department conducts monthly teleconferences with the Peruvian Central Authority. The Department also met with the Peruvian Central Authority about the Convention.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Lima delivered a demarche to the Government of Peru informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Department had cited Peru in the report for demonstrating patterns of noncompliance. At the same time, the Department met with the Embassy of Peru in Washington, D.C., to discuss Peru's citation in the report.

Romania

Following a series of discussions between the Department and Romanian authorities regarding Romania's citation in the 2015 Annual Report, the Romanian government passed an ordinance restoring preventive judicial supervision over the initiation of the enforcement procedure in Convention cases, which may improve Romania's ability to enforce Convention returns and access decisions.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Bucharest delivered a demarche to the Government of Romania to notify Romanian officials that the Department had cited the country in the report for demonstrating patterns of noncompliance. At the same time, the Office of Children's Issues met with the Romanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., to discuss Romania's citation in the report and to discuss international parental child abduction and Convention compliance issues.

Tunisia

At the highest levels, the Department has repeatedly urged Tunisia's accession to the Convention and the need for authorities to take appropriate actions to address existing cases. It was disappointing that the Tunisian government declined to send representatives to a symposium hosted by U.S. Embassy Abu Dhabi on implementing the Convention in countries with Islamic law traditions. However, they did send representatives to two conferences sponsored by the

Hague Permanent Bureau in Doha and Malta. At the Malta Conference, the Tunisian representative announced that his government intended to join the Convention in the near future.

Following multiple requests and letters from Assistant Secretary Bond and U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia Daniel Rubinstein, the Tunisian government named a central point of contact for abduction cases within its Ministry of Justice. Since then, U.S. Embassy Tunis met several times with the Ministry of Justice to discuss pending cases.

Ambassador Rubinstein regularly urged Tunisian authorities, including Tunisia's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to address pending cases. Ambassador Rubinstein also delivered a diplomatic note to the Tunisian Minister of Justice requesting their assistance on this issue. The Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs pressed the Tunisian Ambassador to the United States on the same points.

Ambassador Rubinstein and Deputy Chief of Mission Hanson continued to press the Tunisian Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs for a whole-of-government approach to resolving pending international parental child abduction cases. At the same time, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretaries for Consular Affairs and Near Eastern Affairs and Ambassador Jacobs met with the Tunisian Ambassador and the Tunisian Deputy Chief of Mission to express concern over pending abduction cases and communications on abductions within the Tunisian government. However, despite U.S. diplomatic engagement, there has been limited progress in abduction cases.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Tunis delivered a demarche to the Government of Tunisia to inform the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice that the Department had cited Tunisia in the report for persistently failing to work with the United States to resolve abduction cases. Ambassador Jacobs met with the Tunisian Ambassador to press for the resolution of international parental child abduction cases and provided a copy of Tunisia's citation in the report.

Actions the Department of State Took with Regard to International Parental Child Abduction in Countries Cited in the Annual Report for Failing to Comply with One or More of Their Obligations Under the Hague Abduction Convention

The following country-specific summaries detail the actions that the Department took:

Austria

To address concerns regarding judicial delays in the Austrian court system, the Office of Children's Issues met in Vienna with the Austrian Central Authority to discuss the new reporting requirements under the Act and ways Austria could improve processing of Convention cases. U.S. Embassy Vienna hosted a workshop on best practices for implementing the Convention. Representatives from 20 countries participated, including Austrian officials, staff from the Office of Children's Issues, and a U.S. Hague Network Judge.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Vienna notified the Austrian Central Authority in a demarche that the Department had cited Austria for failing to comply with one or more of the country's Convention obligations. The Office of Children's Issues met with the Austrian Consul General to the United States, in Washington, D.C., to deliver the same message.

Japan

Following intensive engagement between the Department and the Japanese Central Authority (JCA) to build a working partnership that resolves abduction cases under the Convention, Japanese authorities processed several cases to conclusion, including two successful returns of children from Japan to the United States as of July 2016. In one of these, a Japanese court compelled the return of four U.S. citizen children to the United States. In addition, a Japanese court issued its first access order pursuant to the Convention, ruling on a petition filed by a left-behind parent in the United States. This access case arose before the United States and Japan became Convention partners.

Since the release of the Department of State's 2015 90-Day Report on International Parental Child Abduction in September 2015, Department officials regularly engaged the Japanese government to obtain the return of U.S. citizen

children abducted to Japan, and to press for meaningful access to abducted children by U.S. citizen parents. In Washington and Tokyo, senior Department and Embassy officials raised concerns about Japan's implementation of the Convention, particularly with regard to Japan's enforcement of Hague Convention court orders. U.S. senior officials also urged Japan to work with the United States and other Convention partners to address these concerns.

Actions taken by the Department to encourage Japan to improve its Convention implementation included a visit to Tokyo in October by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Overseas Citizens Services Karen L. Christensen to press for the resolution of all open Convention abduction cases from the United States to Japan. The Director of the U.S. Office of Children's Issues and the Director of the Office of Japanese Affairs met with the JCA Director to encourage Japan to resolve abduction cases and to highlight Convention best practices. At a press conference in Washington, D.C., in November 2015, Assistant Secretary Bond publicly expressed the Department's concerns with Japan's efforts to implement the Convention. In a December 2015 joint letter to their Japanese counterparts, Assistant Secretary Bond and Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel urged Japan to strengthen efforts to enforce court orders for returns in Convention abduction cases. Assistant Secretary Bond met with senior Japanese government officials in Tokyo in January 2016 to press Japan to improve its Convention implementation. Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy and Assistant Secretaries Bond and Russel met with the Japanese Ambassador in Washington, D.C., in April 2016 to discuss Japan's actions to resolve all outstanding abduction cases. In May 2016, Deputy Assistant Secretary Christensen visited Tokyo to urge Japanese officials to ensure the swift and effective enforcement of Convention court return orders.

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy and other senior Embassy officials encouraged Japan to adhere to its Convention obligations in 13 meetings with high-level Japanese officials, including the Chief Cabinet Secretary, Foreign Minister, and Vice Foreign Minister. These included seven approaches during 2015 to raise specific concerns about Japan's Convention implementation.

In addition to these senior-level meetings with Japanese government counterparts, the Department worked steadily to share Convention best practices with Japan. In February 2016, two Japanese attorneys and one official from the JCA participated in a three-week IVLP sponsored by the Department of State to visit five U.S. cities and learn about Convention practices in the United States.

Upon release of the 2016 Annual Report, U.S. Embassy Tokyo delivered a demarche notifying Japan that the Department had cited the country as failing to comply with one or more of its Convention obligations.

In April 2016, the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo hosted a roundtable discussion on Convention best practices with participation by Department officials, JCA officials, Japanese family law practitioners, and representatives from some of Japan's other Convention partners. The event underscored the need for effective enforcement of court orders, and provided examples from other Convention countries on how to overcome problems with enforcement.

In June 2016, Ambassador Jacobs delivered keynote remarks in Tokyo at the Hague Conference on Private International Law's symposium on promoting the Convention across the East Asia region and adoption of best practices for expedient returns in Japan.

Finally, in July 2016, the Department sponsored a visit to Tokyo and Osaka by social workers from the family advocacy staff of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The NCMEC speakers presented to audiences including the JCA and Tokyo Bar Association on the U.S. response in child abduction cases and the long-term impact that abduction can have on children, and provided examples of how to work with abducted children and their parents to facilitate returns.

The Department continues to engage with the Government of Japan to resolve pending cases, including the nearly 40 open pre-Convention abduction cases, and to improve enforcement of court orders.