

**JOINT STATEMENT ON THE MEETING OF
THE HONOURABLE ATTORNEY GENERAL
SENATOR ANAND RAMLOGAN S.C.
AND MS. KANDICE RAMPERSAD,
HEAD OF THE CIVIL CHILD ABDUCTION AUTHORITY
WITH
MEGAN MACLEAN COUNTRY DESK OFFICER, US DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S ISSUES
AT THE MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, PORT OF SPAIN**

July 31, 2013: The Hague Abduction Convention treaty partnership between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America will take effect August 1, 2013. The partnership will effectively afford left-behind parents the full remedies of the Hague Convention to resolve child abduction cases.

In preparation for the partnership, Megan Maclean, Country Desk Officer assigned to Trinidad and Tobago from the State Department's Office of Children's Issues held high level discussions with Ms. Kandice Rampersad, Head of the Civil Child Abduction Authority on the mechanisms for maintaining an effective working relationship in anticipation of the partnership. That meeting took place in Port of Spain on July 22, 2013.

In keeping with the Trinidad and Tobago government's medium term policy, Attorney General Ramlogan is of the view that such a partnership with the U.S. will improve Trinidad and Tobago's diplomatic relations and highlights both countries' commitment to child protection.

In May 2013 the U.S. declared its acceptance of Trinidad and Tobago's accession to the Convention which is a multilateral treaty developed in 1980 by the Hague Conference on private international law. It provides an expeditious method to return a child wrongfully taken from one member nation to another by a parent or guardian. Trinidad and Tobago became a party to the Hague Convention on September 1, 2000. Under the Convention the US recognizes 68 countries as partners whilst Trinidad and Tobago recognizes 47 countries.

Prior to accepting another country's accession to the Convention, the U.S. Central Authority (USCA) undertakes a review of the country to determine whether the necessary legal and institutional mechanisms are in place to implement the principles of the Convention in that country. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago, through the Civil Child Abduction Authority, under the Ministry of the Attorney General, provided the necessary feedback to the USCA by answering several questionnaires that were submitted by the US Government. These questionnaires formed part of the USCA's assessment process of Trinidad and Tobago. In receiving feedback from the USCA on the answers provided, no "red-flags" or grave concerns were raised by the USCA.

Subsequently, on March 23 2013, Ambassador Susan Jacobs, the U.S. State Department's Special Advisor on Children's Issues, met with Attorney General Ramlogan and Ms. Rampersad, to discuss the two countries' shared goals and commitments toward resolving matters of parental abduction, in the framework of the Hague Convention. That meeting signaled the intention of the US to further solidify its relationship with Trinidad and Tobago on this matter.

Trinidad and Tobago and the US have and continue to enjoy longstanding diplomatic relations. As a consequence of decades of close ties and geographical proximity, many citizens of the United States and Trinidad and Tobago have roots in both countries. Many children have dual nationality, and parents of differing nationalities. At times, children also bear the brunt of the stress of separation or divorce. Split between two parents and two cultures, they may even be taken by one parent to a country they have never previously known, and without the permission of the other parent.

By both countries becoming contracting partners under the Hague Convention, requests can be made for assistance from the Authority to expedite the necessary process through the courts to ensure the speedy return of the child wrongfully removed to or from the U.S. or Trinidad and Tobago. Once the Hague Convention enters into force

between the U.S. and Trinidad and Tobago as Contracting States, left-behind parents would benefit from the additional force of this international Convention on parental abduction through the Civil Child Abduction Authority under the Ministry of the Attorney General.
