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EDITORIAL

2009: quicker, faster, further, stronger!

It is our February editorial (instead of January) that looks back on 2009 to present our activities and recall the events that shaped intercountry adoption last year given that current realities have somewhat disrupted our habits.

2009 came to a close at full speed for the ISS/IRC team, whose interventions were much solicited throughout the year. As a result of the diversity of our global commitments, we have the opportunity to assess our activities and are able to paint a picture of the prevailing trends in the contemporary intercountry adoption scene.

2009 was punctuated by a great number of projects and activities: 13 conferences (Buenos Aires, The Hague, Florence, Oslo, Reykjavik, Mannheim, Cape Town, Zaragoza, Strasbourg, Montreal, Barcelona, Ouagadougou, Paris), and three training courses (for UNICEF, in Kyrgyzstan and Madagascar), a mission to evaluate the adoption system in Vietnam, without overlooking the “Guidelines project for Alternative Care of Children” which was brought to an end by the UN General Assembly’s reception of them last November.

As far as the basic work of ISS/IRC, 207 requests for information varying in nature were treated during the year (an increase of 40% compared with 2008), 22 country reports were produced or updated and 10 monthly bulletins were published. The new General Secretariat Internet website was also (finally) completed, which was no small feat.

A popular and functional programme

After 12 years of activity, the ISS/IRC programme has found its place in the world of adoption and NGOs thanks to the faithful and precious support of the Central Authorities of the

receiving countries which finance us (and whom we thank here once more). It has been possible to acquire an expertise over the years, enabling professionals around the world to have access to first hand information. The growth of our mandates also shows that the countries of origin are continually requesting support whether it is for information, legislative expertise or to exchange information. There too, the financial commitments of the larger international organisations such as UNICEF or that of receiving countries, remains vital for assuring the accomplishment of these projects. In view of the engagements that are already emerging for 2010, we are confident in the development of these activities.

Intercountry adoptions: trends in 2009

The statistics for 2008 collected in 2009 showed once more a global reduction of the number of intercountry adoptions around the world and the latest figures for the United States (1 October 2008 to 30 September 2009) further support the trend with a reduction of 27% compared with the previous period. If that is confirmed at the global level, we must face the fear of increasing pressure on the countries of origin with the well known consequences. We should further bear in mind that in absolute numbers more than half of the children from intercountry adoptions originate from non-Hague countries.

It is worth noting two other striking trends if we read the monthly bulletins of ISS/IRC 2009

again. Firstly, there is an increase in the number of new adoption laws and/or child protection laws (one or two per month, about 15 per year) as well as an augmentation in the number of countries of origins making decisions aiming to better regulate the procedures of adoption. Such trends are heartening and illustrate well the fact that the protection of children (including adoption) has become a real political and legislative topic which is being translated into action.

The other element that arises from our bulletins, is the impressive number of studies, publications and reports published throughout the year, which not only deal with different aspects of adoption, but also other steps for providing alternative care for children, which illustrate a renewed interest of researchers and professionals in the fields of these delicate subjects.

It is also worth noting that in 2009 the African continent hosted two large scale international conferences, namely the first inter-country conference on providing family care for children held in Nairobi in September and the Forum on Adoption that took place in Ouagadougou in December, which brought together more than

200 participants from 16 countries. No one doubts that these types of events will contribute to giving those active in this continent a place which they merit.

And for 2010?

The Special Commission which will meet in the Hague in June and this will be a major event this year. Several crucial topics will be discussed, some are already undertaking preparatory studies such accreditation questions of the agencies. For its part ISS/IRC is preparing a study of bad practices that are not covered by the Convention.

The question of co-operation in adoption will also be subject of debates. It has become important to better specify the precise nature of this term given all the kinds of initiatives, it covers today. We will come back to this question in a future bulletin.

Challenges will therefore not be missing in 2010. The entire ISS/IRC team hopes you will you approach this New Year with confidence and courage.

ISS/IRC team
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