



International Centre

FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

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24 April 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
c/o Cabinet Secretariat
Cabinet Public Relations Office
1-6-1 Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100 – 8968, Japan

Dear Prime Minister Abe,

In the year 2007, no nation is immune to the phenomenon of international child abduction. National boundaries are no barrier to the unlawful removal or retention of a child, and such removal or retention can have lasting effects. An abducted child can suffer significant physical and emotional harm and often finds him- or herself isolated and alone. A victim parent often faces difficult legal, financial, cultural, and linguistic barriers when trying to recover the child or even in gaining access to the child. While awareness of the issue of international child abduction is increasing, there is still a great deal left to do. All countries must work towards improving their legal and social systems in order to resolve these cases in a swift and consistent manner, and to better serve child victims and prevent additional trauma.

One mechanism that has become the most powerful tool for addressing international child abduction is the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Convention). The Convention represents a tangible commitment to finding a solution for and adopting a uniform, multinational response to the problem. To date, the Convention has been signed by 77 countries; however, Japan is not a signatory. The Convention provides an essential, reciprocal mechanism for all signatories to secure effective rights of access or the prompt return of a child who is abducted across international borders.

We support the Convention and urge every country to apply its principles. We encourage the government of Japan to take the necessary steps to ratify the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or to create a legal mechanism by which Japan can resolve cases of international child abduction with the United States and other countries.

Sincerely,

Ernie Allen
President and CEO

cc: Taro Aso, *Minister for Foreign Affairs*
Ryozo Kato, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the United States*
David Levy, *Children's Rights Council*
Jinen Nagase, *Minister for Justice*

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