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Notice: Changes at Embassy Kinshasa for adoption-related immigrant visa processing

Due to the increase in the volume of intercountry adoptions from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by U.S. citizen families, U.S. Embassy Kinshasa announces several changes to its procedures for adoption related immigrant visa processing. On January 31, 2013, Embassy Kinshasa held a teleconference with U.S. offices of adoption service providers (ASPs) operating in the DRC, to announce these changes. A meeting will take place February 7 at the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa with local ASP representatives to share the same information. This notice summarizes the information shared in those meetings.

Embassy Kinshasa will now conduct the required field investigation after the approved I-600 petition is electronically received from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), or, for petitions filed in the DRC, upon receipt of the petition. The Embassy will notify the petitioner, their ASP, and their designated representative to schedule a visa interview only once the field investigation is complete. The Embassy will **not** schedule the interview until the field investigation is complete. Adoptive families should be advised that field investigations may take approximately 3-6 months to complete, possibly longer if the case originates from an area experiencing civil unrest. This change is effective immediately, but does not affect any appointments already scheduled.

Because of the security situation in the country, Embassy Kinshasa discourages U.S. citizens from traveling to the DRC solely for the purpose of filing the I-600 petition, and recommends that anyone considering travel to the DRC first review the Department of State's travel warning for the DRC. The option of filing the I-600 petition at Embassy Kinshasa is intended primarily for U.S. citizens resident in the DRC. Residents of the United States should file their I-600 petition directly with USCIS National Benefits Center. Petitions filed at Embassy Kinshasa may be filed by either spouse listed on the petition. The absent spouse must sign the I-600 petition before it is submitted, but the petition does not need to be notarized. The child's Congolese passport is no longer required by Embassy Kinshasa to file the I-600 petition. It must, however, be ready before the immigrant visa application and interview.

As a courtesy, the Embassy has gathered information about processing passport and exit visa paperwork with the Congolese government; however, please be advised that these processes are solely administered by the Congolese government and are subject to change. The processing time for an application with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for a Congolese passport for an adopted child is approximately 2 weeks. The fee for the Congolese passport is \$170. The processing time for an exit permit with the Direction Generale de Migration (DGM) is approximately 1 week. There is no fee for the exit permit. The MFA and DGM conduct their own investigations to ensure Congolese procedures have been followed. Embassy Kinshasa will not make calls to expedite processing of either the passport or the exit permit.

Embassy Kinshasa received reports that some individuals have paid "expediting fees" to various Congolese offices in order to receive services related to adoption more quickly. The Embassy strongly discourages this practice, as these "fees" can be seen as bribes that encourage corruption.

