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Guatemala

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Update on Intercountry Adoptions in Guatemala

Joint USCIS-State Delegation to Guatemala

During the week of May 13, 2013, Special Advisor for Children's Issues Ambassador Susan Jacobs traveled with USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas to Guatemala for meetings with Guatemalan government officials of agencies directly involved in adoptions, including the *Procuraduría General de la Nación* (PGN) and the Guatemalan National Council on Adoption (CNA). They also met with members of the Supreme Court, the *Ministerio Público* (MP), the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Their visit provided an important opportunity to meet recently-appointed Guatemalan officials and emphasize that the timely and transparent resolution of all the remaining pending transition adoption cases in the best interests of the children remains a top priority for the United States.

The meetings were also an opportunity to review the progress on completion of these remaining cases following recent administrative and personnel changes in the Government of Guatemala.

In the last several months, the Guatemalan government has accelerated its completion of cases, and fewer than 100 pending transition adoption cases are awaiting resolution as of the date of this notice. Twenty-nine cases have moved to CNA's *Acuerdo* process, and nine cases have concluded with the immigration of the adopted children to the United States with their U.S. citizen parent(s). Guatemala also completed an additional four cases under the notarial process and these children have joined their families in the United States. Some cases have concluded with the child's reunification with a biological family member in Guatemala.

Officials at the PGN, which has the authority to complete the investigations in the pending cases, report having 52 cases in various stages of investigation. The PGN has received renewed funding for its investigators, allowing them to continue their work with a goal of completing these investigations within two months. Once it has completed an investigation, PGN will request a hearing with a Guatemalan court judge for a determination of the child's adoptability, or reunification with biological or extended family. It is also possible, though not likely, that the judge will order the case to conclude via the notarial process. According to the Guatemalan Supreme Court, there currently are no backlogs at the courts in Guatemala City, so that legal process should proceed without delays. The cases with court decrees of adoptability will go to the CNA for evaluation of their eligibility for completion of the adoptions through the *Acuerdo* process.

The USCIS and Consular staff of the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City are in constant communication with the Guatemalan officials responsible for adoption procedures. U.S. Embassy staff monitor and promote Guatemalan progress in resolving the remaining cases by attending the semi-weekly meetings of the technical group where these authorities work through the cases. Prospective adoptive parents may contact USCIS directly at Guatemala.adoptions@dhs.gov, and the Immigrant Visa Unit of the Consular Section directly at AdoptGuatemala@state.gov, in order to inquire about the status of individual adoption cases.

