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## Democratic Republic of the Congo

April 15, 2014

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### Democratic Republic of the Congo Authorities Postpone Visits to United States

On April 15, 2014, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) informed the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa that due to unforeseen circumstances, the DRC delegations are unable to participate in two trips to the United States previously scheduled for this month. The MFA explained that this is necessary in order to give the DRC government time to address: (1) the April 14 arrest of a Belgian woman, charged with child smuggling after attempting to bypass the DRC's exit controls and leave the country with her adopted child; (2) the death of a Congolese dignitary; and (3) the controversial deportation of over 1,000 Congolese from the Republic of Congo over the past week. The Department of State regrets that the delegations are not able to come to the United States as planned and looks forward to receiving proposed new dates for the delegations' travel.

The Congolese MFA, General Direction of Migration (DGM), Ministry of Social Welfare, and Children's Court participants were scheduled to visit the United States this month to meet with U.S. federal and state officials regarding the U.S. intercountry adoption process and U.S. child welfare protections for adopted children. The Department of State also arranged meetings with U.S. adoptive families whose Congolese children are already in the United States, U.S. adoption service providers, and U.S. stakeholder organizations. These meetings were designed to address the Congolese authorities' concerns about the intercountry adoption process and the welfare of children adopted from the DRC by U.S. citizen parents.

**Invitation to families to provide photos and videos:** The Department of State regrets that the many U.S. adoptive families who were willing to travel to meet with the delegation will no longer be able to demonstrate in person how well their children are faring in their new homes. Adoptive families whose Congolese children are in the United States are welcome to send the Department of State photos and videos on CDs illustrating the conditions in which their adopted children are residing and how they are adjusting in the United States. Adoptive parents are encouraged to send the CDs to the Department of State at the below address by May 9, 2014. The Department of State will then present the CDs to Congolese officials.

U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
CA/OCS/CI – SA-17, 9th Floor  
Washington, DC 20522-1709

**U.S. Government engagement:** The announcement of the suspension on exit permit issuances for adopted Congolese children was followed by extensive engagement by U.S. government officials, including U.S. Ambassador Swan, with Congolese authorities in a variety of Ministries, including at the highest levels within those ministries. Those conversations were initially very productive and resulted in the DGM agreeing to grandfather some cases, as outlined in the Department of State's [October 23 Adoption Alert](#). We continue to persistently raise the exit permit suspension in meetings with all Congolese officials who have a role in any part of the Congolese adoption process. The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa's staff has also raised the suspension with prominent local NGOs and the embassies of other countries also affected by the suspension. USAID in Kinshasa also continues to engage with Congolese officials and local NGOs on child welfare issues. In addition, the Department of State engaged the

DRC's Ambassador to the United States, which resulted in reversing a Congolese decision to suspend the issuance of visas to U.S. adoptive parents wishing to travel to the DRC.

Senior U.S. government officials both in Washington and at the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa will continue to actively encourage the lifting of the suspension on exit permit issuances so that children may travel to join their families in the United States. The issue of intercountry adoptions is a very sensitive subject for the Congolese people and government. The government has asked all affected countries to give them the time necessary to review its adoption policies and processes following the growing Congolese concerns of fraud, corruption, and child-buying in the adoption process. Given these sensitivities and concerns, Congolese government officials have not responded favorably to perceived foreign coercive pressure. We are aware of families from other receiving countries who were prohibited from remaining in the DRC with their children and who have not been allowed to visit the children after their governments took a more confrontational stance on the issue of adoptions.

This Adoption Notice is the sixth public announcement published on [Adoption.State.Gov](http://Adoption.State.Gov) since the suspension came into effect on September 25, 2013, and the Department of State remains committed to providing continued updates as soon as information becomes available. Please direct questions related to this notice, or a specific adoption from the DRC, to the Department of State, Office of Children's Issues at 1-888-407-4747 within the United States, or 202-501-4444 from outside the United States. Email inquiries may be directed to [AskCI@state.gov](mailto:AskCI@state.gov).