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EDITORIAL

In the words of adoptees

On the occasion of the publication of the Charter of adoptees¹ in France, the ISS/IRC has chosen to give voice to the adopted; a voice that is becoming increasingly stronger, more frequently sought and hopefully, more listened to.

In December 2013, the National Council of French Adoptees, whose aim is to foster the necessary dialogue between the different players and stakeholders in adoption, issued a Charter highlighting the ten priorities for domestic and intercountry adoption. This action reflects the growth experienced by adoption associations worldwide and evidenced by the Danish experience presented on page 8. These associations not only provide support services to adoptees, their families and prospective adoptive parents, but also play for some, a real role in politics.

For ethics in adoption

In the Charter, the adoptees call for the fundamental ethical principles to be complied with during the adoption process and applied on a case-by-case basis. Among them, the need to respect and in particular, apply the principle of subsidiarity, including within the receiving country, 'it is urgent to work on the situation of neglected children [born on French soil] and their adoptability'. It is recommended that the adoption be required to be undertaken through an accredited body, and that the number of accredited bodies be restricted so as to avoid unnecessary competition and rising costs. A major focus is on the pre-adoptive support of the child, 'the adoptee must not leave his country of birth if it cannot be guaranteed or proven that

there was prior support for the adoption. It must be ensured that the departure is explained (...)'.

Respect for the rights of adoptees

'Adoption is not a humanitarian act', a phrase that from the mouth of an adoptee resonates even stronger. Adoption should focus primarily on the best interests of the adoptee and respect all of his rights: the right to have a protected childhood, to be able to build an identity and to own his story. The adoptees insist on their right to expect from their adoptive parents absolute sincerity, nothing should be hidden from them, they must be told the truth. As stated in this Charter, 'the life of the adopted child does not begin with the adoption; it is determined by the conditions of his birth as well as by his adoption'. Thus, adoptees claim their right to initiate proceedings and to see the intimate and personal nature of an adoption being recognised. Lastly, adoptees also have the right to be treated like other children and to be protected against any form of discrimination.

Towards greater political involvement?

Despite the expansion that an association such as the Voix des adoptés² has experienced in France - it has indeed become a key player in adoption - the fact remains that this type of association still has difficulty becoming integrated among the bodies in charge of adoption. However, their experiences and their reflection



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task should become part of the discussions relating to both domestic and intercountry adoption. The Charter of adoptees calls for the appointment of an adoptees' representative 'for each of the pilot sites, reflection, arbitration, decision-making processes in pre-adoption, adoption and post-adoption, or, failing that, for adoptees to be represented by an independent mediator'.

The ISS/IRC is pleased to make its Monthly Review available to adoptees in order for their views to be better heard and respected. The ISS/IRC would also like to continue this effort through the publication of other testimonies of associations for adoptees in a new section launched for this purpose: 'In the words of adoptees' (see p. 8).

The ISS/IRC team
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