ISS Statement in the March 2026 Council on General Affairs and Policy of the Hague Conference on Private International Law

HCCH 1993 Child Adoption Convention

Thank you, Mister Chair.

The International Social Service expresses its strong support for convening an in person meeting of the Special Commission on Intercountry Adoption in 2027.

The context in which intercountry adoption operates today has changed significantly. There is a growing need to strengthen post-adoption work, including access to information and search for origins processes. Through its work worldwide, ISS encounters these needs daily and sees an urgent need to strengthen professional capacities and cooperation in these areas.

Further work could usefully include:

- strengthening post-adoption services and cooperation
- advancing guidance on search for origins and access to information
- strengthening responses to illicit and illegal adoption practices
- developing a Guide to Good Practice on post-adoption responsibilities

Important HCCH tools already exist to address illicit and illegal practices. However, they remain unevenly known and implemented. States and practitioners continue to face complex questions in responding to individual cases while addressing patterns of systemic wrongdoing in intercountry adoption. Further guidance, capacity-building, and practical cooperation are needed to ensure responses remain accessible, consistent, and centred on the rights of affected persons.

While some States increasingly adopt rights-based approaches, realities in many States remain uneven. Records may be incomplete, information limited, and support structures insufficient. Bridging this gap is essential to ensuring the full realisation of adoptees' rights.

At the same time, increased restrictions on intercountry adoption in some contexts — including moratoria or complete bans — may, if not accompanied by viable regulated alternatives, contribute to the growth of other cross-border care arrangements that operate outside established safeguards. In such situations, children may move across borders through informal or privately arranged pathways, including cross-border kafala or guardianship placements, international kinship care, or international surrogacy arrangements, which may in practice result in de facto intercountry adoptions but without equivalent procedural protections. The absence of effective oversight, clear accountability, and cooperation between authorities can increase risks and leave those concerned without adequate safeguards or remedies.

This evolving landscape reinforces the need for continued dialogue and cooperation. **The upcoming Special Commission in 2027 will offer a timely opportunity to address these realities and reinforce the implementation of the 1993 Hague Convention in a changing global context.**

Thank you.