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social development

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DATE:	22 January 2008	FILE NR:	Adoptions and ISS
TO:	The Portfolio Committee	FROM:	Dr M Mabetoa

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDED COUNTRIES FOR THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT'S OVERSIGHT VISIT ON INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION.

1. PURPOSE:

To provide the Portfolio Committee with information on countries that they could visit regarding inter country adoption.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 2000, when the Child Care Act 1983 was found to be unconstitutional in terms of prohibiting South Africa from conducting intercountry adoptions, 11 countries (mostly receiving countries), which have signed and acceded to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoptions, have been working with South Africa (which is mainly as a sending country).

Working agreements are in place between some of the recognised child protection organizations and private social workers in South Africa and accredited adoption organizations in those countries.

The following are countries which have working agreements with South Africa regarding intercountry adoptions:

Country	Number of adopted children
Netherlands:	344
Germany	231
Sweden	356
Denmark	194
Norway	47
Finland	134
Austria	50
Belgium	70
Canada	30
Luxembourg	42
India (South Africa is a receiving country	

South Africa has also acceded to the Hague Conventions on Intercountry Adoptions in 2003 and has recently developed national legislation, the Children's Act Of 2005, to regulate among others intercountry adoptions. Since the Children's Act is expected to be promulgated during 2008, it is crucial for South Africa to familiarize itself with the intercountry adoption situation in the receiving and sending countries, to assess whether such countries are complying with international prescripts and their readiness to comply with the new South African legislation. The assessment is also important as part of ensuring that children who are adopted internationally are not at risk of child trafficking and exploitation.

3. RECOMMENDATION

The Department therefore support such an oversight visit to countries that have adopted South African children. Any of the above mentioned countries could be visited, however the following are recommended:

COUNTRY	STATISTICS
Sweden	356
Denmark	194
Finland	134
Norway	47
Netherlands	344

The reasons for recommendation:

- Three of these countries namely; Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands have a highest number of children adopted from South Africa
- All these countries are members of the Euro-Adopt which is an Association responsible for intercountry adoption practice in those countries.
- The intercountry adoption system in these countries is well established and professionally conducted as they have many years of experience in child protection and international adoption
- The Central Authorities responsible for intercountry adoptions consist of multi-professional teams and they have credible adoption organizations which are accredited to facilitate adoptions with and from other foreign countries
- The Department of Social Development visited these countries, with exception of the Netherlands, on 03 June 2007 to 16 June 2007
- The following South African organizations and foreign organizations have a working relationship in these countries:

FOREIGN ORGANIZATION	SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANIZATION
Adoption Centre (Sweden)	Abba Adoptions
AC International Child Support (Denmark)	Impilo Home for Orphans and Abandoned Children
DanAdopt (Demark)	Abba Adoptions
Intrpedia (Finland)	Abba Adoptions
City of Helsinki Local Authority (Finland)	Johannesburg Child Welfare Society
Wereldkideren (Netherland)	Abba Adoptions

The objectives of the oversight sight visit could include the following:

- Meet with the central authorities in various countries to evaluate their management and monitoring systems.
- Visit organizations that are accredited to work with their counterparts in South Africa to investigate their background and policies
- Evaluate the existing working agreements between the contract organizations.
- Explore the adoptions systems regarding screening, preparation and approval of applicants
- Explore the composition and functioning of the Central Authorities in these countries.
- Investigate the existing after care and support programs.
- Meet with the South African Embassies in each country to assess their role in intercountry adoptions
- Meet with families that have adopted South African children in order to assess how children are adjusting to their new countries.

Further information can be provided on the specific countries that would be chosen by the Portfolio Committee for the oversight visit or any other matter regarding the visit.

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