

**JUDGES' SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF THE CHILD  
DE RUWENBERG, 3-6 JUNE 2000**

Upon the request of the French and German Ministries of Justice, the Hague Conference on Private International Law hosted a Judicial Seminar on the International Protection of Children at the Conference Centre De Ruwenberg from 3-6 June 2000. Nearly 40 Judges from France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands engaged in intensive discussions on the application of the international instruments concerned with the protection of children. The Seminar provided an excellent opportunity for Judges from different jurisdictions to share knowledge, concerns, and ideas regarding the *Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*. At the close of the Seminar, the Judges unanimously adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Seminar has been an important event in establishing mutual understanding, respect and trust between the Judges from the different countries – factors which are essential to the effective operation of the international instruments concerned with the protection of children, and in particular the *Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*.
2. The format of the Seminar, involving intensive discussions among Judges from four jurisdictions around a number of practical cases, has been a success and is a model for such seminars in the future. Differences of approach, where they exist, have been revealed and the way has been opened to greater consistency in interpretation and practice under the Conventions.
3. The Judges participating in the Seminar will endeavour to inform their colleagues in their respective jurisdictions about the seminar and its outcome, and will in particular make available information about the International Child Abduction Database (<http://www.incadat.com>) and about the Special Commission on the practical operation of the *Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*, which is to be held at The Hague in March 2001.
4. It is recognised that, in cases involving the international protection of children, considerable advantages are to be gained from a concentration of jurisdiction in a limited number of courts / tribunals. These advantages include the accumulation of experience among the Judges and practitioners concerned and the development of greater mutual confidence between legal systems.
5. The need for more effective methods of international judicial co-operation in respect of child protection is emphasised, as well as the necessity for direct communication between Judges in different jurisdictions in certain cases. The idea of the appointment of liaison Judges in the different jurisdictions, to act as channels of communication in international cases, is supported. Further exploration of the administrative and legal aspects of this concept should be carried out. The continued development of an international network of Judges in the field of international child protection to promote personal contacts and the exchange of information is also supported.