



## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the HCCH 1993 Adoption Convention 1993 – 2023

Wednesday 31 May 2023

### Presentation of Panellists and Speakers

The presentation will be updated as further panellists and speakers are confirmed

### ROUND TABLE: LEARNING FROM THE PAST

*Ms Luce de Bellefeuille, independent expert in international children's issues for the Ministry of Health and Social Services of Quebec, Canada*



Luce de Bellefeuille holds a Master's degree in psychosociology of communications from UQAM (Montreal). For 30 years, she has held senior positions defending the rights of women, citizens in health and social services, children and families. She has held senior positions at regional and governmental level, including 13 years as Director General and Secretary for Intercountry Adoption. She was also a member of the International Expert Group for the Verona Principles (surrogacy) and is currently a consultant on international children's issues for the Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services.

*Professor Yves Denéchère, Professor of Contemporary History - University of Angers, Director of TEMOS (Temps, Mondes, Sociétés), France*



Yves Denéchère, professor of contemporary history at the University of Angers (CNRS TEMOS), director of the *Pôle universitaire ligérien d'études sur l'enfance et la jeunesse* and holder of the Chair *Parole et pouvoir d'agir des enfants et des jeunes*. He has been working for nearly twenty years on the history of international adoption, and in addition to numerous articles, he has published *Des enfants venus de Loin* (Armand Colin, 2011, open access: <https://univ-angers.hal.science/hal-03972497v1>). He is co-author, with Fabio Macedo, of *Étude historique sur les pratiques illicites dans l'adoption internationale en France* (2023, open access: <https://univ-angers.hal.science/halshs-00623750v1>).

***Ms Nirmalee Perera, Senior Probation Officer, Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Central Authority, Sri Lanka***



Nirmalee Perera, as the Senior Probation Officer, covers subject matters that come within the purview of the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, the Central Authority in Sri Lanka, Child Protection systems strengthening, including alternative care system, legal protection and prevention of child abuse. The position primarily has responsibilities for policy, and technical support related to child protection work. Work focuses on provision of support to implement protection aspects of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), protection of child victims and encouraging diversions of child suspects and offenders, all matters in relation to intercountry adoption including matters with regard to search for origin of adoptees, training of officers, rolling out of national alternative care policy for children in Sri Lanka in collaboration with Government counterparts, including Academic and Professional Organisations and Civil Society.

***Mr James Timmermans, Manager INEA (National Center for Expertise in Intercountry Adoption), Netherlands***



James Timmermans was born in Recife, Brazil, in 1986. After three months he was adopted to the Netherlands. Before accepting the challenge as manager of INEA, he was an entrepreneur in several branches. Now he uses his talents of managing companies to achieve the goals for supporting adoptees in several ways with his team.

***Ms Carolina Von Schakmann Cabrales, Lawyer, Mejor Niñez, Central Authority, Chile***



Professional lawyer with 32 years of experience in adoption (national and international) and protection. She has participated in the elaboration of the Bill that modified the current adoption law in Chile, contributing through recommendations and observations. She is currently the Technical Head of the Adoption Department of the National Service for the Specialised Protection of Children and Adolescents of Chile, the legal continuation of the National Service for Minors (SENAME).

## ROUND TABLE: LIVED EXPERIENCES

### *Ms Claudia González, adopted person (Romania - Spain)*



Claudia González was born in Romania and was adopted at the age of 8 months by a Spanish family. She has studied cooking and photography. For Claudia, being adopted has always been painful, especially because she had no answers to her origins. She always felt different from others. She has received professional help. A few years ago, she traced her birth family, and recently she went to Romania to meet her birth family. She is now very happy to have been able to close this painful circle.

### *Ms Marie Marre, adopted person (Mali – France)*



Marie Marre is an adopted person of French nationality. She was born in Ségou, Mali, and holds a doctorate in general medicine. For the past 5 years, she has been living and practicing in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

In 1989, at the age of 19 months, she was adopted by a French couple via the accredited body *Rayon de Soleil de l'Enfant Étranger*. During her search for her origins, she discovered many irregularities in her adoption process. Realising that many cases similar to hers exist, she founded the *Collectif des adoptés Français du Mali* in 2020.

The collective helps adoptees from Mali in their search for their origins, in the discovery of Malian culture, and lobbies in France and internationally for the recognition of illegal intercountry adoptions and help in the search for the origins for intercountry adoptees by the States.

### *Ms Janeth Osorio, birth mother (Colombia)*



As a birth mother I was the bridge of life to give all my love through the decision of adoption and happiness to a woman... to a family that is looking forward to that being.

*Ms Micaela Piscitelli, adoptive mother (Italy)*



Micaela Piscitelli is an adoptive mother. She lives in Bari, South of Italy. She graduated in foreign languages (Spanish and English) in Bari. She is a teacher in High School, where she teaches Spanish and Italian to foreign students.

She adopted in 2016 with her husband Michele two boys who were 7 and 13 years old when adopted. Together with her husband, they usually take part in meetings for future families (adoptive and birth) sharing their lived experience as adoptive parents.

*Ms Karabo Ozah, Director, Centre for Child Law, South Africa (Moderator)*



Karabo Ozah is the Director at the Centre for Child and a Lecturer in the Department of Private Law of the University of Pretoria in South Africa. The Centre for Child Law is an organisation that protects and promotes children's rights through research, advocacy and strategic litigation. Karabo has contributed to the work of the Centre, including litigation successes in the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Appeal and the High Courts. She serves on the Advisory Committee of the South African Law Reform Commission's Project 100D on Care of and Contact with Children (incorporating Family Dispute Resolution).

Karabo was one of the co-Chairs at the 2022 Special Commission on the practical operation of the 1993 Adoption Convention and was also a member of the HCCH Expert Group on Parentage and Surrogacy that is tasked with researching the possibility of a HCCH treaty in this field.



## ROUND TABLE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

*Ms Bernadette Abejo, independent expert, Former Executive Director of Intercountry Adoption Board, Philippines*



Bernadette Abejo is a graduate of the University of the Philippines College of Law class of 1990, Social Work in 2016 at the UP Open University. She was the Executive Director of the National Authority for Child Care formerly the Intercountry Adoption Board (ICAB), the Philippine Central Authority on the 1993 Adoption Convention from 2008 to 2022.

She was a consultant of the Permanent Bureau (PB) of the HCCH on the PB's Intercountry Adoption Technical Assistance Program (ICATAP). She has provided practical advice on the crafting of and implementation of the 1993 Adoption Convention for Asian countries on the structure and functions of the Central Authorities of the sending countries. She has provided legal advice on the internal regulations pertaining to intercountry adoption procedure and processes. She chaired the 4<sup>th</sup> Special Commission of the 1993 Adoption Convention held on June 8 to 12, 2015, chaired the Experts' Group on financial aspects of intercountry adoption and was a member of the Working Group on illicit practices in intercountry adoption.

*Mr Antonio Ferrandis, Head of the Adoption Service, Central Authority, Madrid Region, Spain*



Antonio Ferrandis, Social Pedagogue, has been working as a child protection technician for more than 35 years. Ph.D. in Social Education after a long-term research on the residential and foster homes within the Child Protection System. He also runs training courses for educators, families and experts. Since 1999, he is in charge of the Service for Domestic and Intercountry Adoption of the Autonomous Region of Madrid. He has travelled to most of the countries of origin and collaborated in International Conferences and Expert Groups on child protection, prevention of child abuse, foster care and adoption, and financial issues in the intercountry adoptions.

*Professor Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Eleanor Roosevelt Fellow at the Harvard Law School, Human Rights Program, and member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*



Benyam Dawit Mezmur is currently Eleanor Roosevelt Fellow at the Harvard Law School, Human Rights Program. He is a Professor of Law at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town (UWC), South Africa, and serves as Deputy Dean for Research and Post-Graduate Studies at the Law Faculty. He is also Coordinator of the Children's Rights Project at the Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law, Governance, and Human Rights, at UWC.

Since 2012, he is serving on the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and served its Chairperson from 2015-2017. For further details please click [here](#).

***Ms Markéta Kačerová Nováková, Deputy Director, Office for International Legal Protection of Children, Central Authority, Czech Republic***



Markéta Kačerová Nováková has been working almost her whole professional career as the lawyer and later the Deputy Director of the Czech Central Authority. She leads the team of 25 colleagues (lawyers and psychologists) who deal with cases according to the HCCH conventions and European regulations concerning the protection of children (inter-country adoptions, child abductions, maintenance enforcement, parental responsibility etc.). She has provided training for Czech and European judges, social workers and other experts. She is a member of the Czech Judicial Network and of the Czech Association of Family Judges.

***Ms Charlotte Luthander, Social Worker, Adoptionscentrum, (Member of EurAdopt and Nordic Adoption Council (NAC))***



Charlotte Luthander was born in Seoul South Korea, in 1985 and came to her adoptive family in Sweden the same year. She has a bachelor's degree in social science with additional studies in psychology. Since 2016, Charlotte has been working professionally in the field of Post Adoption Services, mainly supporting adoptees when reuniting with their biological or cultural roots, as an employee of Swedish Adoptionscentrum. She will be representing Nordic Adoption Council and EurAdopt for this event.

## LAUNCHING OF THE TOOLKIT FOR PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING ILLICIT PRACTICES IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

*Ms Carine Rosalia, Chair of the HCCH Working Group on Preventing and Addressing Illicit Practices, Attorney Advisor, Department of State, United States of America*



Carine Rosalia serves as an attorney adviser for the U.S. Department of State where she primarily handles matters of intercountry adoption. Since joining the Department, Carine has acted as the Chair of the Working Group on Preventing and Addressing Illicit Practices in Intercountry Adoption and co-chaired the 2022 Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the 1993 Adoption Convention. She also worked as a legal officer with the Permanent Bureau in 2012. Before joining the U.S. Government, Carine represented children, adoptive parents, and birth parents in adoption and immigration proceedings, and co-authored parts of The International Adoption Sourcebook.