

Title	1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions: Update
Document	Prel. Doc. No 8A of February 2026
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Agenda Item	Item III.1.b
Mandate(s)	C&D No 27 of CGAP 2025
Objective	To provide an update on activities pertaining to the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions
Action to be Taken	For Decision <input type="checkbox"/> For Approval <input type="checkbox"/> For Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> For Action / Completion <input type="checkbox"/> For Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Annexes	N/A
Related Documents	N/A

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1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions: Update

I. Introduction

1 This document reports on the work carried out in relation to projects pertaining to the *Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction* (1980 Child Abduction Convention or 1980 Convention) and the *Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children* (1996 Child Protection Convention or 1996 Convention) since the previous Council on General Affairs and Policy (CGAP) in 2025.

II. Activities since CGAP 2025

A. Development of tools

1. Country Profile and draft Cooperation Request Recommended Model Form for the 1996 Child Protection Convention

2 The Working Group (WG) established for this project in March 2024¹ completed its work on the Country Profile under the 1996 Child Protection Convention in October 2024.² In March 2025, the WG met online to discuss the structure and contents of a draft Cooperation Request Recommended Model Form for the 1996 Child Protection Convention, taking into account the comments provided by Members and Contracting Parties to the Conventions ahead of the Eighth Meeting of the Special Commission (SC) on the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions in October 2023.

3 In addition, the WG met four more times, once in April, twice in May and once in June 2025, to finalise this draft Model Form, which was then circulated to HCCH Members for comments in June 2025.³ The consultation period remained open until 19 September 2025. The revised Model Form will be circulated for approval by HCCH Members in the near future.

2. e-Country Profile Project

4 Under the e-Country Profile Project, the Permanent Bureau (PB), in cooperation with an external contractor developed a standardised e-Country Profile webpage for each of the core HCCH Conventions, including the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions, enabling Contracting Parties to complete, view and update their Country Profiles electronically. The Country Profiles under these Conventions are now online and available for completion / updating electronically.⁴

¹ “Conclusions and Decisions of CGAP 2024 (5-8 March 2024)”, C&D Nos 23-24 (available on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under “Governance” => “Council on General Affairs and Policy” => “Archive (2000-2025)”).

² The Country Profile was subsequently approved by Members in November 2024.

³ See Circular No 41(25) of 10 June 2025 available on the Secure Portal of the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under “Governance” => “Circulars”.

⁴ For more details on the e-Country Profile Project, see [Prel. Doc. No 13 of January 2026](#), available on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under “Governance” => “Council on General Affairs and Policy”.

B. Specific topics

1. Malta Process and the Working Party on Mediation⁵

5 In 2025, CGAP welcomed the Government of Malta's announcement of plans to hold a sixth Malta Conference (Malta VI) in April 2027 and encouraged Members to consider making voluntary contributions (VCs), preferably at least one year in advance of Malta VI, to support the participation of more Official Development Assistance (ODA) Shari'a States.⁶ In December 2025, a request for VCs along those lines was sent to all Members.⁷

6 After CGAP 2025, the Working Party on Mediation met on two occasions online (13 June and 26 November 2025). The meetings were co-chaired by Sweden (Contracting Parties' co-Chair) and Jordan (co-Chair for non-Contracting Parties). During the June meeting, three independent experts made presentations on examples of mediation cases between Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Party Shari'a States, which was followed by a discussion. During the November meeting, participants learned about the system of cross-border mediation and family reconciliation in Jordan. Participants then discussed examples of mediation cases between Contracting Parties to the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions and non-Contracting Party Shari'a States via two case studies. Interpretation in English, French, and Arabic was provided during these meetings thanks to the support of the European Union (EU).

7 The Working Party will continue to meet on a regular basis, in principle twice a year. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 2026.

2. Article 13(1)(b) and domestic violence: Second Forum on Domestic Violence and the 1980 Child Abduction Convention – with a focus on the Operation of Article 13(1)(b)

8 From 27 to 30 October 2025, the HCCH and the Government of Brazil co-hosted, in Fortaleza, the Second Forum on Domestic Violence and the 1980 Child Abduction Convention – with a focus on the Operation of Article 13(1)(b).⁸ The Forum had almost 500 registered participants, of whom over 150 attended in person, representing HCCH Members, non-Member Contracting Parties, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations including those representing persons with lived experiences, and independent experts.

9 The second Forum built on the discussions held during the first Forum, which took place in Sandton, South Africa, in June 2024.⁹ The second Forum once again brought together representatives from all relevant perspectives to deepen the open, informal dialogue on the operation of the 1980 Convention in cases involving domestic violence. This time, participants focused on possible practical solutions – discussing concrete and workable approaches to ensure the effective operation of the Convention, in particular Article 13(1)(b), in cases where domestic violence has been alleged.¹⁰

⁵ The Working Party on Mediation was established in 2009 to promote, in the context of the Malta Process, the development of mediation structures to help resolve cross-border family disputes concerning custody of, or contact with, children, including cases of unilateral removal of a child to another State, where the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions do not apply between the concerned States.

⁶ "Conclusions and Decisions of CGAP 2025 (4-7 March 2025)", C&D No 34 (see path indicated in note 1).

⁷ See Circular No 70(25) of 9 December 2025 (see path indicated in note 3).

⁸ See C&D No 26 of CGAP 2025.

⁹ The full programme, along with the hypothetical cases developed to enrich discussions as well as other relevant materials can be found on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under the "Child Abduction Section".

¹⁰ See Prel. Doc. No 8B of January 2026 for a report reflecting the contributions made during the Forum (available on the Secure Portal).

10 The PB is grateful to the Government of Brazil for its kind hospitality in hosting the event and thanks the Governments of Brazil, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom for their generous financial contribution to the organisation of the Forum.

3. Conference “15 Years of the HCCH Washington Declaration: Progress and Perspectives on International Family Relocation”

11 From 2 to 4 April 2025, the conference, “15 Years of the HCCH Washington Declaration: Progress and Perspectives on International Family Relocation”, was held at the Embassy of Canada in Washington, DC, United States of America. The conference, which aimed to encourage the wider dissemination of the [2010 Washington Declaration](#), was jointly organised by the Embassy of Canada, the International Academy of Family Lawyers (IAFL), and the HCCH.¹¹

12 The conference was conducted in hybrid format and was attended by over 200 participants representing 44 HCCH Members and five non-Member Contracting Parties to the 1980 Child Abduction, the 1996 Child Protection, and / or the 2007 Child Support Conventions. The conference was also attended by Fellows of the IAFL, as well as representatives from other Observer organisations to the HCCH. Among other things, participants discussed the extent to which accessible, efficient and effective relocation procedures may help to prevent international child abductions. Participants heard about the state of play of international family relocation in various jurisdictions as well as recent and ongoing research and policy work in the area and were able to exchange experiences and good practices.

13 The PB is grateful to the Embassy of Canada for hosting the conference and to the IAFL for its support and collaboration.¹²

4. First online forum for Central Authorities under the 1980 Child Abduction Convention

14 On 20 November 2025, over 120 participants representing Central Authorities from at least 40 Contracting Parties to the 1980 Child Abduction Convention, as well as representatives of the PB, met online for the first online forum for Central Authorities under the Convention. This first meeting was co-hosted by the Central Authorities of Israel and Switzerland.

15 The idea for the forum was initiated by Central Authorities during the October 2023 meeting of the SC on the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions, with the aim of providing Central Authorities with the opportunity to have in-depth discussions, in between SC meetings, on practical issues arising from the operation of the 1980 Convention. The forum enabled Central Authorities to share ideas and information, and to exchange best practices, thereby facilitating the effective execution of their duties under the Convention. The forum is run by Central Authorities and is not part of the PB’s work plan, nor does it draw on dedicated PB budgetary resources. The Central Authorities nevertheless expressed their gratitude to the PB for its targeted input and participation in the Steering Committee and the first forum meeting, as well as for the technical assistance provided.

16 The Steering Committee was comprised of representatives from the following countries: Argentina, Canada, Georgia, Israel, New Zealand, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, United Kingdom (England and Wales), United States of America, and Uruguay.

¹¹ See [C&R Nos 53-55](#) of the Eighth Meeting of the SC on the practical operation of the 1980 Child Abduction and the 1996 Child Protection Conventions.

¹² The 2010 Washington Declaration and further information on the conference are available on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under the “Child Abduction Section”.

17 The topic of the first meeting was “Discovering the whereabouts of a child who has been wrongfully removed or retained (Art. 7 of the Convention)”. Participants heard brief but comprehensive overviews from several States regarding the systems they have in place and tools available for locating a child in their jurisdiction.

18 Following the presentations, participants had the opportunity to discuss their own experiences and ask questions. From the discussions, the meeting co-hosts identified the following key takeaways:

- The process and tools available to locate a child differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.
- Other government bodies / agencies may be able to assist the Central Authority in their efforts to locate a child (e.g., federal government agencies, law enforcement bodies / police) and that such assistance may be useful.
- Databases (public or private) may also prove useful in the effort to locate a child (e.g., pension / welfare authorities, utility / tax authorities, educational bodies, healthcare services, drivers' / motor vehicle registration authorities, immigration authorities, banks, telecom providers). Access to such databases depends on national law and, in some States, Article 7(a) of the 1980 Child Abduction Convention might provide a sufficient legal basis for such access. It was stressed that any data accessed must be treated with appropriate confidentiality.

19 Participants highlighted the usefulness of enabling Central Authorities to exchange ideas, information and good practices, and expressed interest in having periodic meetings.

C. Work related to the IHNJ

1. The Judges' Newsletter on International Child Protection

20 In 2025, the PB published Volumes XXVI and XXVII of the *Judges' Newsletter on International Child Protection* (JNL).¹³

21 Volume XXVI covers the Experts' Meeting on Nurturing the 1980 Hague Convention, convened by Professor Marilyn Freeman and held at the University of Westminster in London from 19 to 20 October 2023. Volume XXVI of the JNL aims to serve as a repository for the remarks and contributions of the organisers, chairpersons and panellists.

22 Volume XXVII is dedicated to the Conference “15 Years of the HCCH Washington Declaration - Progress and Perspectives on International Family Relocation” (see section B above).

23 The upcoming volume of the JNL will cover several items, including the second Experts' Meeting on the Continued Nurturing of the 1980 Hague Convention, convened and organised by Professors Marilyn Freeman and Nicola Taylor in August 2025, and the Fourth Global Meeting of the IHNJ, which took place in May 2025. The PB plans to publish this volume of the JNL in the second quarter of 2026.

2. Fourth Global Meeting of the IHNJ and HCCH Judicial Roundtable

24 From 19 to 21 May 2025, the Fourth Global Meeting of the IHNJ was held in Singapore, co-hosted by the Singapore Family Justice Courts and the HCCH. It was attended by over 50 judges representing 34 HCCH Members.¹⁴

¹³ All editions of the *Judges' Newsletter* are available on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under the “Child Abduction Section”.

¹⁴ The C&R adopted during the meeting are available on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under the “Child Abduction Section” in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#).

25 The meeting covered recent HCCH and IHNJ developments since the previous Global Meeting in 2018, the current structure and role of the IHNJ and its relationship with other judicial networks, ways to enhance communication, cooperation, and mutual support among IHNJ members, and the relationship between IHNJ members and key domestic stakeholders. It also focused on promoting direct judicial communications, examined domestic and regional procedures applicable to cases under the 1980 Child Abduction Convention with an emphasis on expedition, and discussed examples of how the Emerging Guidance and General Principles on direct judicial communications¹⁵ are being implemented in domestic law.

26 On 22 May 2025, the HCCH Judicial Roundtable was held in Singapore, co-hosted by the Singapore Family Justice Courts and the HCCH. Organised in conjunction with the 3rd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Family Judges Forum, the event brought together over 65 judges from various jurisdictions, consisting of both members of the IHNJ, as well as family law judges from ASEAN Member States.¹⁶

27 The PB is grateful to the Singapore Family Justice Courts for its hospitality and generous support of the Fourth Global Meeting of the IHNJ and the HCCH Judicial Roundtable.

D. Work related to Ukraine

1. Roundtable and Training on the application of the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions, in particular concerning the children of Ukraine

28 On 11 and 12 September 2025, the PB hosted a Roundtable and Training on the application of the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions, in particular concerning the children of Ukraine. The event, held in hybrid format, had close to 85 registered participants, representing 25 HCCH Members and three Observers, in addition to members of the PB.

29 The Roundtable and Training provided participants with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the content and structure of the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions, with a view to supporting their effective implementation and operation in their respective jurisdictions. Over the course of the two days, participants discussed good practices in relation to the 1980 and 1996 Conventions in the context of children internationally displaced from Ukraine. They also familiarised themselves with the tools developed by the HCCH to assist with the implementation of the 1996 Child Protection Convention in the context of children internationally displaced from their State of origin. In addition, the Roundtable and Training provided an overview of tools developed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) pertaining to the safe return of children to their State of origin. Finally, participants learned about the work of the Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine.

¹⁵ Direct Judicial Communications - Emerging Guidance regarding the development of the International Hague Network of Judges and General Principles for Judicial Communications, including commonly accepted safeguards for Direct Judicial Communications in specific cases, within the context of the International Hague Network of Judges (available on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under “Child Abduction Section” => “Judicial Communications”).

¹⁶ More information on the HCCH Judicial Roundtable is available on the HCCH website (www.hcch.net) under “Child Abduction Section” => “Judicial and other conferences”.

2. HCCH involvement in the work of the Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU)

30 The CGU is a multilateral platform that brings together representatives from EU Member States, international organisations, civil society, and independent experts to support professionals working for and with Ukrainian children residing in Council of Europe Member States.¹⁷

31 Representatives from the HCCH have been attending the meetings of the CGU since December 2023, with a view to providing information on the 1980 and 1996 Conventions and their application to the children of Ukraine. The CGU has set up three thematic Dialogue Groups on the priority topics of concern: the first on transnational procedures and cooperation, the second on guardianship, and the third on psychological support and trauma-informed care. First Secretary Philippe Lortie served as Chair of the Dialogue Group on transnational procedures and cooperation (which in Q2 2025 became the Dialogue Group on transnational procedures and guardianship, of which he is now a co-Chair).

III. Proposal for CGAP

32 In the light of the above, the PB proposes the following C&Ds for CGAP's consideration:

CGAP took note of the updates provided by the PB on several projects and activities under the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions, and invited the PB to continue its efforts in raising awareness to these instruments, facilitating their effective implementation among Contracting Parties and promoting cooperation.

Recalling its previous Conclusion and Decision (C&D) No 34 of CGAP 2025, CGAP encouraged Members to consider making voluntary contributions, preferably at least one year in advance of the next Malta Conference (Malta VI) tentatively scheduled for April 2027, to support the participation of more Official Development Assistance (ODA) Shari'a States.

¹⁷ More information on the CGU and its work can be found [here](#).