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08 ADDIS ABAB 2637 ETHIOPIA TAKES MEASURED APPROACH TO REVIEW.txt
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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA TAKES MEASURED APPROACH TO REVIEW OF INTERCOUNTRY
 ADOPTION PROCESS

REF: (A) Addis Ababa 1764 (B) Addis Ababa 1894

1. (SBU) The Government of Ethiopia is unlikely, at least in the short term, to revoke the licenses of any American adoption agencies currently licensed to operate in Ethiopia. According to Minelik Alemu, Assistant Director for International Law and Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the government's recent review of all adoption agencies found no problems with any agencies currently licensed to make referrals to American adoptive parents. He said the review did find fault with two agencies working with nationals of other countries, and that the committee charged with the review would recommend that their licenses be revoked. He declined to identify which agencies or which countries were affected or to detail the problems found.

2. (SBU) Alemu told conoff in a meeting September 16 that the government is making steady and substantial progress in its ongoing inter-ministerial review of the intercountry adoption process. However, he said it will likely take longer to conclude the review than was initially anticipated (Ref B). He said the emotions that spurred some Cabinet members in June to propose suspending intercountry adoptions because of improprieties (Ref A), have been replaced by a more considered approach. According to Alemu, there is general consensus in the government now that a careful and complete review and a thoughtful analysis is the best way to proceed.

3. (SBU) Three committees are charged with reviewing intercountry adoptions. The committee reviewing adoption agencies has nearly completed its work. A second committee that is reviewing the need for legal changes has begun its work and will likely recommend legislation that will substantially change and update Ethiopian family law. That analysis seeks to bring Ethiopian family law into accordance with requirements of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. A third committee, which has yet to begin its work, is charged with evaluating care facilities (orphanages) and the role of orphanages in the intercountry adoption process. That committee is expected to begin its review the week of September 22.

4. (SBU) Alemu opined that the orphanages are likely the weakest link in the process. Orphanages are responsible for verifying that children who come into their care have truly been abandoned and are not the victims of trafficking or other unethical practices. This is of course a critical element in the intercountry adoption process and one of particular concern for Ethiopian officials. Alemu

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08 ADDIS ABAB 2637 ETHIOPIA TAKES MEASURED APPROACH TO REVIEW.txt explained that while orphanages are required to follow uniform guidelines in admitting children for care, the orphanages are controlled by regional governments and often are operated by city administrations. That relationship needs to be reviewed, he suggested, noting that Ethiopia's federal system makes it difficult for authorities at the national level to exercise oversight over orphanages that are controlled by regional governments.

5. (SBU) Alemu said he anticipates that the inter-ministerial review will ultimately recommend that intercountry adoption cases come under greater scrutiny before being approved, and that as a result, fewer cases will be completed each year.

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