

U.S. Fails to Convince Russia at Child Welfare Forum

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Members of a U.S. delegation to the third Russian-American Child Welfare Forum, which closed on Tuesday in Khanty-Mansiysk, seemed to be unsuccessful in trying to shift Russia's official commitment to ban U.S. adoptions of its children.

More than 250 government and nongovernmental organizations representatives from two countries attended in order to share expertise on how to protect children from violence and other forms of abuse.

Despite the official agenda, however, the most heated topic was the recent ban on adoptions of Russian children by American families, signed into law by President Vladimir Putin in December 2012.

The sides appeared to be unmoved on the issue.

In an address to conference participants posted on the Foreign Ministry's website, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said: "Unfortunately, despite all Russian efforts, we have not yet been successful in solving the problem [of protecting Russian children in the U.S]."

"That is why dialogue between civil society members of both countries is very important," Lavrov said.

Children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov was less diplomatic in his opening remarks.

"According to the official data we have, 20 Russian children have been killed by American citizens over the last 20 years," he said. "This testifies to the U.S.'s failure to protect adopted children."

Konstantin Dolgov, the Foreign Ministry's envoy for human rights, accused the U.S. of failing to take action against an Internet-based exchange where children can be traded in order to "avoid social and financial obligations before the adoptees." He did not specify the exchange's name.

Ahead of the forum, U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu criticized Astakhov's peremptory stance on the issue of adoption, calling him "an ass" who "doesn't want to hear the truth" in an interview to Radio Liberty.

Landrieu also urged Russians to get orphans out of institutions and "back into the loving arms of parents, relatives or families that will love them and care for them"

The U.S. delegation later apologized for Landrieu's remarks about Astakhov, RIA Novosti reported.

U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul was not present at the forum but said on Twitter that he hoped the two countries "would continue to cooperate on the issue."

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