



IFLA, EIFL, ICA and German Library Association Statement on a Treaty for the Visually Impaired at SCCR 25, Geneva 21 November 2012

Thank you, Madam Chair. I speak on behalf of IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; EIFL, Electronic Information for Libraries; ICA, the International Council on Archives, and the German Library Association. We have, from its inception, supported the proposed treaty for the visually impaired that many Member States, the World Blind Union and related organizations are seeking; we believe that it is right, fair, just, and long overdue. We are therefore pleased that the Committee is making a concerted effort at this meeting to satisfactorily conclude an agreed proposal for a treaty that meets the human rights of visually impaired and print disabled people for equal access to information. We urge this Committee on Friday to make its long-awaited recommendation to the WIPO General Assembly, which is to reconvene in its 22d Extraordinary Session here next month, to summon a diplomatic conference to negotiate the treaty in 2013.

Libraries and archives have three particular concerns about the current texts. First is the definition of “authorized entity.” Libraries and archives everywhere are major providers of services assisting blind and other reading disabled people to access information. Such services are a core part of our missions, our “institutional obligations,” to serve all members of our particular constituencies. We believe strongly that the definition adopted for “authorized entity” in the treaty proposal and eventually in the treaty itself must explicitly and definitively recognize this core responsibility of all libraries and archives. Second, we believe that the VIP treaty must not be used to expand or “privilege” the reach of the 3ST, but should include a balancing statement affirming the public interest in the application of the 3ST to avoid restrictive interpretations. And third, we believe the VIP must include provisions establishing the primacy of limitations and exceptions over contracts and technological protection measures.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for your attention.