



**WIPO Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights
Nineteenth Session, Geneva, December 14-18, 2009**

**Statement on Agenda Item 4
Limitations and Exceptions**

**Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL.net)
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
(IFLA)**

Thank you, Mr Chairman. This statement is made on behalf of Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL.net) and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). We extend our congratulations to Ambassador Clarke

We will speak about the proposal by Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay relating to limitations and exceptions for blind, visually impaired and other reading disabled people (SCCR/18/5). Blind and visually impaired people have the same information needs as sighted people. Libraries have long played a role in supporting this community. Special libraries serving the blind and visually impaired people serve an important function because of the need to create and build collections in alternative formats, often due to the lack of accessible material. At the same time, all types of libraries including academic and public libraries serve blind and reading disabled clients.

I believe that we need ask ourselves only one basic question. Should blind and reading disabled people be afforded the same access to copyrighted materials as sighted persons? If the answer is yes, then the path ahead is clear: Member States should work for the adoption of an international treaty that facilitates access.

Distinguished delegates, I come from Senegal in the developing world where more than 90% of blind and reading disabled people live. I work as a librarian at the University Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar. One of my greatest dreams as a librarian is to be able to create a repository of documents in accessible formats for visually impaired people. However, the fact is that we can offer them nothing at all because our libraries have no resources available dedicated to their needs.

It is both sad and a pity because the availability of resources would open up such great opportunities and put an end to a terrible waste of human potential.

However, the law in many African countries does not permit copying for the benefit of blind and visually impaired people, despite the great need that exists. Yet many resources in accessible formats are already available from organisations such as CNIB Canada. Adoption of this treaty would provide an opportunity to resolve this shameful situation by permitting the cross-border sharing of already available content.

Finally, the World Health Organization estimates that the number of blind people in the world is set to double over the next twenty years including in high income countries, due in part to the fact that people are living longer. So this issue may touch us all in the future. The

technology is there, but we need a supporting legal framework. Now all we need is the political will to resolve it. I respectfully urge distinguished delegates to adopt this treaty proposal.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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