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REPORT ON THE ACCESSIBLE BOOKS CONSORTIUM

Information document prepared by the Secretariat

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This is the second annual *Report on the Accessible Books Consortium* prepared in the framework of the Assemblies of Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) was launched on June 30, 2014, before the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights as a complement to the *Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled* (“the Marrakesh VIP Treaty”). WIPO’s Member States adopted the Marrakesh VIP Treaty in June 2013 and it sets out the legal framework for the creation of exemptions in national copyright law to produce and make available works in accessible formats, as well as to facilitate the cross-border exchange of such works. Practical initiatives are needed to realize the objectives set forth in the Marrakesh VIP Treaty and ABC provides technical assistance at the operational level in the production, distribution and cross-border transfer of works in accessible formats.

2. ABC comprises an alliance of WIPO, organizations that represent or serve the print disabled, libraries, and rights-holders. It includes the following organizations:

- The World Blind Union;
- The DAISY Consortium;
- The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment;
- The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions;
- Perkins School for the Blind;
- Sightsavers;

- The International Publishers Association;
- The International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations; and
- The International Authors Forum.

B. ACTIVITIES OF THE ACCESSIBLE BOOKS CONSORTIUM

ABC Book Service

3. The ABC Book Service (“the Service”), formerly known as TIGAR, is a global online catalogue of books in accessible formats that provides libraries serving people who are print-disabled with the ability to search and make requests for accessible books. The Service is an international library-to-library technical platform that supports the Marrakesh VIP Treaty’s goals by making operational the treaty’s cross-border provisions. Through the Service, libraries serving the print-disabled (authorized entities as defined in Article 2(c) of the Marrakesh VIP Treaty) can supplement their collections of accessible books from their counterparts in other countries. The Service can assist in preventing the same book from being produced in accessible formats by more than one authorized entity, thereby avoiding duplication.

4. Nineteen authorized entities in 16 countries are already participating in the Service and the catalogue now contains 315,000 titles in more than 55 languages. As of May 31, 2016, more than 5,100 titles had been downloaded by authorized entities with an estimated saving in production costs of USD 10.2 million (assuming production costs in developed countries of approximately USD 2,000 for a book read by a human narrator). Accessible books from this service were loaned *via* participating libraries to their patrons 79,000 times as of March 31, 2016.

5. Pending the entry into force and effective implementation of the Marrakesh VIP Treaty on a national level, the biggest challenge has been increasing the number of titles that have been cleared for use within the Service. Where a title has not been cleared for use, there is typically a delay between the time of the request and the delivery of the accessible electronic file of the book to the participating authorized entity. As of May 31, 2016, 14,000 titles in the Service have the rights cleared for the cross-border exchange of the work.

6. ABC is continuing to expand the service and is approaching prospective libraries that have significant collections of accessible format works in widely-read languages. Interest in joining the Service has been expressed by schools and universities that do not produce accessible books but would like to make accessible books available to students who are print-disabled. It is proposed that organizations that meet the definition of “authorized entity”, as set out in the Marrakesh VIP Treaty, be provided with a “receive only” service option on a pilot basis.

Capacity Building

7. The second phase of ABC capacity building activities in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka will benefit an estimated 88,500 students with visual impairments through the production of educational materials in accessible formats in national languages. Following the successful completion in 2015 of the first phase of capacity building projects, an agreement between the Government of Australia and WIPO was signed in February 2016, and ABC was allocated CHF 250,000 for the second phase of its capacity building activities. Detailed work plans have been submitted for the second phase of projects in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka funded by the Government of Australia and ABC is currently exploring the establishment of one additional project in the South East Asia region.

8. Additionally, the Government of the Republic of Korea has agreed to fund the second phase of a capacity building project in India in three additional provinces not covered in the first phase. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ABC's implementing partner in India was signed in June 2016.

9. The Basic Implementation Agreement between WIPO and the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP), which acts on behalf of the United Nations Foundation, was signed in April 2016. Further to an application for a grant made to the U.N. and Skoll Foundations, these two foundations provided a donation for ABC capacity building activities in India. WIPO intends to implement this project in six Indian provinces through the provision of training and technical assistance in the production of Braille and audio books.

10. ABC issued an invitation for the submission of project proposals at the Africa Forum in Uganda in October 2015. The Africa Forum is the premier conference in Africa for blindness advocates and leaders, which takes place once every four years. Organizations from 16 African countries expressed an interest in ABC capacity building activities and were sent an ABC Capacity Building Guide, which contains explanations of how to submit a proposal to WIPO for a capacity building project. Work is currently underway to establish a viable and effective capacity building project in Africa following the successful model established in the four pilot projects in South East Asia.

11. With the objective of establishing a capacity building project in Latin America, ABC coordinated with the Copyright Law Division on a *Regional Workshop for the Implementation of the Marrakesh VIP Treaty* that took place in Panama from June 21 to 23, 2016. The workshop included a seminar on accessible book production techniques, as well as presentations on the ABC Book Service as a possible technical platform for the cross-border exchange of accessible books in the region. Participants from 19 Member States attended, including representatives from national organizations for the blind, national copyright offices, the Latin American Association for the Blind (ULAC), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO), the International Publishers Association (IPA). In this manner, ABC is exploring interesting opportunities to establish training and technical assistance projects in Latin America.

Accessible Publishing

12. ABC promotes the production of "born accessible" works by publishers, that is, books that are usable from the start by both sighted persons and the print disabled. In addition to its support of the *ABC Charter for Accessible Publishing*, which contains eight high-level aspirational principles relating to digital publications in accessible formats that publishers are invited to sign, this year ABC again organized the *ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing*. The winners of the 2016 ABC International Excellence Award were Elsevier, the DK Braille Development Team, which is part of Penguin Random House, and the Action on Disability Rights and Development (ADRAD), Nepal. The awards were presented at the London Book Fair in April 2016 to recognize these organizations for having provided outstanding leadership and achievements in the advancement of the accessibility of commercial e-books or other digital publications to persons with print disabilities.

13. Two guides were released to supplement the existing online resources on Accessible Publishing located on the ABC website. The *Accessibility Guidelines for Self-Publishing Authors* produced by ABC and the International Authors Forum were launched in April 2016. These Guidelines offer clear instructions on how to make digital publications accessible and it includes a handy checklist and explains how to avoid common accessibility pitfalls that hinder the experience of print-disabled readers. Additionally, the *Starter Kit for Accessible Publishing in Developing Countries*, which was released by ABC and the DAISY Consortium in 2016 with funding by the Government of Australia, provides key stakeholders such as NGOs representing

or serving people who are print disabled, departments of education, and publishers in developing and least-developed countries (LDCs), with information about how to increase the number of books in accessible formats at the national level. The Starter Kit focuses both on how to establish a national “Books for All” strategy and on the various technologies and procedures to produce works in accessible formats.

Fundraising

14. ABC has now been operational for two years. In view of the interest generated in ABC activities, and in order to be able to meet those expectations, the International Bureau is planning to enhance its efforts to obtain funding from sources other than the WIPO Regular Budget. The International Bureau plans to retain a company with expertise in fundraising to assist with the solicitation of donations from private sector sources such as charitable foundations, corporate giving programs or individual donations/crowd-sourcing for both general ABC activities and specific capacity building projects. As reported to Member States in the 2015 Report on the Accessible Books Consortium (document A/55/INF/9), the International Bureau will continue to proceed cautiously, gradually, and transparently in the development and implementation of a comprehensive fundraising strategy, which may also consist in the possible establishment of, and partnership with, non-profit entities (which would be subject to the laws and regulations of the countries in which such entities may be created), in order to attract donations that would benefit from the status of tax deductions.

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