

WIPO General Assembly

Forty-Second (22nd Extraordinary) Session Geneva, December 17 to 18, 2012

REPORT

adopted by the General Assembly

1. Convened by the Director General, the Forty-Second (22nd Extraordinary) session of the WIPO General Assembly was held on December 17 and 18, 2012, at the headquarters of WIPO in Geneva. Ambassador Uglješa Zvekić (Serbia), Chair of the General Assembly presided over the meeting.
2. The following Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and/or members of the Berne Union for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works were represented in the meeting: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia; Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Botswana; Brazil, Bulgaria; Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic; Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia; Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Libya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives; Mali, Mexico, Mongolia; Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname; Switzerland, Tanzania; Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and Zambia (76).
3. The European Union (EU) participated in the meeting in a member capacity.
4. The following intergovernmental organizations took part in the meeting in an observer capacity: African Union (AU), *Benelux de la Propriété Intellectuelle* (OBPI), Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), World Trade Organization (WTO) (4).

5. The following non-governmental organizations took part in the meeting in an observer capacity: American Intellectual Property Law Association (AIPLA), Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation (CCIRF), *Fédération internationale de la vidéo*/International Video Federation (IVF), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), International Group of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM), International Literary and Artistic Association (ALAI), International Publishers Association (IPA), Knowledge Ecology International, Inc. (KEI), Motion Picture Association (MPA) and World Blind Union (WBU) (10).

ITEM 1 OF THE AGENDA

OPENING OF THE SESSION

6. In October 2012 the Assembly had approved the recommendations proposed by the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) to convene that session and to evaluate the text prepared by the Committee at its 25th session on an International instrument/Treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons or persons with print disabilities, and then to make a decision on whether to convene a diplomatic conference in 2013. That decision was reflected in the General Assembly report document WO/GA/41/18. The Chair stated that was a key moment for making it possible for greater quantities of copyright-protected published material, both analog and digital, to be made available in accessible formats and disseminated across multiple jurisdictions in a timely way, to enhance opportunities for the literacy independence and productivity of the communities of persons with print disabilities. The Chair pointed out that the invitation to that session also mentioned the possibility of holding a Preparatory Committee meeting immediately afterwards, should a decision to convene a diplomatic conference in 2013 be taken by the Assembly. The days allocated to the meetings were December 17 and 18. The Chair turned to the agenda in document WO/GA/42/1, and declared it adopted.

7. Mr. Francis Gurry, the Director General of WIPO, stated that the political will of all the Member States to carry over the constructive spirit of engagement that had prevailed in Beijing to other parts of the normative agenda of the Organization had been demonstrated in the previous months. All delegations were aware of the significance that a positive result of the negotiations would have for intellectual property, for multilateralism in general, and for a deserving community.

ITEM 2 OF THE AGENDA

EVALUATION OF THE TEXT ON LIMITATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS/PERSONS WITH PRINT DISABILITIES AND DECISION ON WHETHER TO CONVENE A DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE IN 2013

8. Discussions were based on document WO/GA/42/2 containing document SCCR/25/2 (Draft Text of an International Instrument/Treaty on Limitations and Exceptions for Visually Impaired Persons/Persons with Print Disabilities)

9. The Chair invited the General Assembly to evaluate the text and decide whether a diplomatic conference to conclude a treaty to facilitate access to published works by visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities, to be held in 2013, should be convened. The core recommendations could be found in paragraphs 3 and 4 of document WO/GA/42/2. Paragraph 3 stated that if the General Assembly of WIPO decided to convene the diplomatic conference, the WIPO General Assembly was invited to direct further text-based work on the document in February 2013, as well as to instruct the WIPO Secretariat to make the resulting text available as the Basic Proposal for the Substantive Provisions to be considered at the diplomatic conference. The Chair of the WIPO General Assembly invited the Chair of the SCCR

to refer to those texts before giving the floor to the group coordinators and finally to the delegations.

10. Mr. Darlington Mwape, the Chair of the SCCR, said that the work developed by the SCCR in its 25th session held in November 2012 in relation to the issue of limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities was very productive as confirmed by the content of document SCCR/25/2. Attached to document WO/GA/42/2 there was the draft text on an International Instrumental/Treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities. The draft text comprised a preamble and 11 articles which included letters A to J, with G having been deleted, and also contained a cluster package on principles of application. Despite the fact that some brackets remained in the text and some provisions still presented alternative options, the level of engagement among delegations to resolve critical issues covered by the text was particularly high. It would be very beneficial to have some additional time for the SCCR to improve the draft text sooner, rather than later. In that connection, he hoped that the General Assembly would agree to convene a diplomatic conference based on the evaluation of the current text submitted for its consideration.

11. The Delegation of Cyprus passed the floor to the Representative of the European Union.

12. The Representative of the European Union, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member states, commended the commitment of all delegations and the Secretariat in moving forward work on improved access to books for visually impaired and persons with print disabilities. The European Union and its member states had been actively involved in the discussion on that matter and believed that considerable progress had been made. The objective was to ensure that visually impaired and persons with print disabilities anywhere in the world had the same access to books as any other person. They were encouraged by the work done at the previous sessions of the SCCR on that matter. A significant convergence was achieved on some substantive provisions of the draft. At the same time, important work remained to be done, including on key elements of the text that were necessary to achieve a focused, effective, and balanced result. On that basis, the European Union and its member states considered that it was necessary to find an agreement on some remaining key issues before a successful diplomatic conference could take place. Therefore, the European Union and its member states welcomed the suggestion to organize a special work session in February 2013. The session should at least establish consensus on the conditions for the cross border exchange of accessible format copies, technological protection measures, and the compliance of the parties with existing international obligations. It was possible to achieve positive and balanced results concerning those issues at the diplomatic conference, provided that negotiations remained focused on the problems that Member States were set to address and all delegations contributed to the work in a constructive manner. It expressed support for the convocation of a diplomatic conference in 2013. In order to ensure its successful outcome sufficient progress needed to be achieved in advance.

13. The Delegation of Egypt, speaking on behalf of the African Group, welcomed the significant progress achieved on advancing the draft text of the WIPO Treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities, which was adopted in November 2012 by the SCCR in its 25th session. The African Group attached great importance to that treaty and supported a successful conclusion to effectively and meaningfully address the needs and priorities of the visually impaired persons in Africa and all over the world. While acknowledging the fact that a few remaining issues needed to be discussed in the following special session with a view to achieve convergence on them, the African Group thanked all the delegations and the WIPO Secretariat who worked hard and tirelessly in the previous years in drafting the text and advancing it to maturity. The African Group fully supported the convening of a diplomatic conference for the visually impaired in 2013 and called upon all other delegations and groups to unequivocally support that historical decision.

14. The Delegation of Sri Lanka, speaking on behalf of the Asian Group, emphasized the importance of the work undertaken at that session. At the same time, the work completed during the previous session of the SCCR had been of the utmost importance to visually impaired persons around the world. In that respect, the Group commended the spirit of good faith and constructive compromise that guided those discussions and hoped that those same principles would be their guidance for this meeting. The millions of visually impaired persons who would benefit, the lives impacted, and the positive change that would occur as a result of that work should be foremost in the minds of delegates. In conclusion, the Group expressed its fullest commitment toward the work set and extended its support toward the convening of a diplomatic conference for the visually impaired in 2013.

15. The Delegation of Belarus, speaking on behalf of the Group of Central Asia Caucasus and Eastern European States welcomed the idea of convening a diplomatic conference for the benefit of the visually impaired. In the conclusions reached by the SCCR there was a paragraph indicating the need to reach agreement on an appropriate draft. The Group was convinced that the efforts made thus far should be further supported and should be embodied in an international instrument or treaty that for the decades and the centuries ahead would allow the Member States to improve the lives of visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities, enhancing their access to information. For that reason, the Group was very supportive of the process.

16. The Delegation of Hungary, speaking on behalf of the Group of Central European and Baltic States (CEBS), reminded Member States that a long time had passed and considerable progress had been achieved since discussion began in the SCCR about how to effectively facilitate access to copyright protected published works by the visually impaired and other reading disabled persons. The Group believed that the progress was evidence of the fact that Member States shared a common goal in that regard. The differences emerged only concerning the means to properly pave the way forward towards creating equal access opportunities for disabled persons in all societies. The significant efforts made by all the delegations during the previous session of the SCCR had greatly contributed to solve the emerging and diverging issues. The Group believed that the proper framework had been created to hold a diplomatic conference during 2013. However, the success of the conference needed to be further assured and additional efforts were necessary to achieve a positive outcome. Keeping that in mind, the remaining open questions on the instrument should be settled before the diplomatic conference. For all groups, those open issues included the essential need to draft the text properly and elaborate more on the critical aspects of distributing and making available accessible format copies which in its view should be solely carried out by authorized entities. The criterion of commercial availability was also an element that must form part of the instrument in order to create a balanced basis for the diplomatic conference. Therefore the Group found very important that the General Assembly directed the SCCR to have an extra meeting in a special session in February 2013 to undertake further text-based work on the document concerned that would become the basic proposal for the conference. The Group could assure the other Member States that it remained committed to work in the most constructive manner in order to contribute to the future success of a diplomatic conference. The success meant the creation of a legal instrument that fulfilled the long-neglected needs of visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities and at the same time preserved the basic principles of the copyright system for the benefit of authors and other rights holders.

17. The Delegation of Peru, speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC), reminded the Assembly that members of the Group were the first to raise the need to discuss exceptions and limitations for visually impaired persons in the context of the SCCR, and they were also the first to propose an international treaty on the subject. GRULAC was one of the main defenders and as proponents of the process its members were still working hard to achieve the result of a treaty designed *inter alia* to improve the conditions for access to culture by the visually impaired. According to some figures obtained from the

World Health Organization (WHO) there were approximately 285 million persons with visual impairment, out of which 39 million were blind and 246 million had low vision. Approximately 90 per cent of those lived in developing countries. Uncorrected refractive errors were the most important cause of visual disability, but in the medium and low income countries, cataracts continued to be the main cause of blindness. Those were some of the reasons that led to GRULAC supporting a favorable decision of the Extraordinary General Assembly, with a view to convening a diplomatic conference to adopt an international treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities. That would be one of the most important instruments being negotiated within WIPO, and it would also be a valuable contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) issued by the United Nations (UN). GRULAC assured the meeting that it would continue to participate actively in the work leading to the adoption of the treaty and appealed to Member States and WIPO to continue constructive dialogue together with enhanced political will, which would enable the achievement of the desired results, namely, the convening of a diplomatic conference in 2013.

18. The Delegation of Brazil, speaking on behalf of the Development Agenda Group (DAG), highlighted that Member States had the opportunity to take a historic step in WIPO, which was to decide on whether or not to convene a diplomatic conference in 2013 to conclude a treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons. There were around 300 million people with visual disabilities in the world, the great majority of them living in developing countries; less than five per cent of published works were available in a special format. The SCCR made significant progress on the working text containing the substantive provisions of the treaty over its previous sessions. The DAG commended Member States and regional groups for their efforts and constructive engagement in that process. There was a firm and shared commitment to solve the remaining issues and agreement on them was within reach. The work accomplished so far had created all the necessary conditions for the General Assembly to take firm and positive steps towards a treaty that promoted access to works in special formats for blind people by means of a practical mechanism for those working on the ground. It was an extraordinary contribution that the organization could make to civil society and public policy objectives. The Group fully supported the convening of a diplomatic conference for visually impaired persons in 2013 and encouraged other groups and delegations to do so.

19. The Delegation of China affirmed that providing accessible format copies to VIPs so that they could have the same joy of reading as people without visual impairments was the consensual will of the International community. The Delegation was very pleased to see that the negotiations on those exceptions and limitations achieved constructive progress. It supported any consensus that would contribute to the convening of the diplomatic conference and hoped that the latter would be successful.

20. The Delegation of Benin, speaking on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group was fully convinced that Member States would achieve very constructive results that would satisfy the expectations in terms of overcoming the challenges faced, and therefore produce an International legal instrument in order to facilitate access to published works for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities. The LDC Group assured the meeting of its support for the process. Member States gathered in order to assess the text on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities, and to decide whether to convene a diplomatic conference in 2013. There was a real commitment to the Organization's humanitarian vocation, and it was clear that Member States were willing to do the utmost in order to ensure that visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities could enjoy access to the fruits of progress. The LDC Group wished to commend the work that was done by the Committee over more than 14 years. People had worked very carefully on the text, and they produced a very carefully crafted document. There was a need to ensure that it did strike the right balance between copyright on the one hand and the needs of visually impaired persons on the other. It was time to get down to action, to work constructively in order to produce a positive outcome. The LDC Group believed that a positive outcome from the meeting could be a significant step forward in overcoming the natural discrimination which

still affected a part of the population of the planet. In a wish to promote justice and equity and fairness, Member States must ensure that access to knowledge was shared by all and access to education was available to all. Millions of people were visually impaired, and more than 90 per cent of those people lived in developing countries, a very high proportion of them in LDCs. Those people were expecting a decision to improve the way in which they live, to improve their standard of living, and to allow them to participate actively in the life of their communities.

21. The Delegation of Morocco was very happy that there was a positive and constructive spirit that prevailed throughout the fruitful negotiations that took place within the context of the Committee. The negotiations on drafting a text on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities made good progress and a very positive outcome could be achieved. Member States should grasp the opportunity to send out a strong signal to the millions of visually impaired people and blind throughout the world. There were almost 300 million visually impaired people, around 100 million blind people. Statistics of WHO indicated that the number of visually impaired people would double by 2020. It was important to reaffirm the political will shared by all Member States to respond to the legitimate basic needs of that segment of the International community. Looking beyond that, it was in favor of working towards achieving a legal instrument allowing visually impaired persons the full enjoyment of their basic human rights, such as the right to knowledge, to reading, and to information. The Delegation therefore urged all Member States and all other stakeholders to redouble their efforts, to step up cooperation to conclude negotiations on an International instrument in the following six months. The Delegation submitted the candidacy of Morocco as a host for the diplomatic conference of June 2013. That submission reflected the commitment of Morocco to people with disabilities to enable them to enjoy their legitimate rights. It also reflected the wish to intensify cooperation and partnership with WIPO, as well as to be a more active part of the International community working on behalf of visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities. The Delegation appealed to all Member States to allow Morocco to take the opportunity. It was happy to see a broad commitment to the cause of assisting visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities; that was a noble objective. The International instrument could enhance the rights of the people concerned, but at the same time could also take due consideration of the need to protect copyright; it could be an instrument striking the right balance bearing in mind that the effort was to support those who were suffering. The Chair of the Committee had reminded Member States of some of the challenges to be faced. There were paragraphs in square brackets and many alternatives, but there was also political will to move forward, and that political will could prevail over any other consideration. The instrument being developed was something that had waited for too long. The community of blind people and visually impaired persons were a forgotten and marginalized community; and as was already said, 90 per cent of that community lived in the southern hemisphere, in developing countries, and LDCs. Providing access for that community to general knowledge, to culture, to books, was really crucial. The obstacles that remained in the path were not insurmountable. What still had to be done was much less than what was already done. Deciding upon a conference in itself was a strong signal to send out, but meant also high pressure on the negotiators. Setting dates for the conference, and taking a clear decision about that would indeed help future negotiations. Flexibility was required by all parties to achieve this important human rights' objective. Morocco was ready to spare no effort in ensuring that the Marrakech conference would be a great event. It was going to be a cornerstone in WIPO's history of working on behalf of human rights. WIPO does not exist only for patent and copyright holders. Marrakech had always been a very important venue for different conferences. The World Trade Organization (WTO), for instance, had a conference there. The Delegation however pointed out that before going to Marrakech there was important work to be done that needed flexibility and political commitment.

22. The Chair thanked Morocco very much for such a generous offer to host the conference, and welcomed the government's further engagement in smoothing the ten meters that needed to be run until the end was reached.

23. The Delegation of Indonesia associated itself with the statement made by the Delegation of Brazil on behalf of the DAG and the Delegation of Sri Lanka on behalf of the Asian Group. It attached great importance to the issue of exceptions and limitations for visually impaired persons within the global IP system. Indonesia was estimated to have the highest blindness rate in Southeast Asia and therefore recognized the serious limitations and difficulties faced by visually impaired people. The Delegation fully supported the establishment of a treaty which provides exceptions for visually impaired people when accessing copyright work. Indonesia expressed its satisfaction about the outcome of the latest SCCR, in particular the significant progress made on the substantive provisions of the draft treaty on exceptions and limitations for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities. It expected the General Assembly to decide that a diplomatic conference would be confirmed during the first half of 2013. Member States must not miss the opportunity to conclude a treaty since it was a very important issue for both developing and developed countries. The Delegation noted with great concern that a significant number of visually impaired persons were still facing enormous barriers in accessing copyright works. Those barriers did not only exist in developing countries, where around 90 per cent of visually impaired persons resided, but also in developed countries where only less than five per cent of books were accessible to them. The Delegation wanted to have a treaty on behalf of visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities in the very near future.

24. The Delegation of Mongolia joined the Asian Group's statement and welcomed the progress made on the draft text of the treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons. Mongolia has more than 10,000 blind and visually impaired persons. This International instrument would have a huge impact on the quality of life, especially the quality of cultural life, of people with visual disabilities, enabling them to enjoy the same rights as persons without impairment. Therefore, the Delegation expressed its full support for the decision to convene a diplomatic conference in 2013 and its commitment towards further progress on the issue.

25. The Delegation of Algeria supported the statements made by the Delegations of Egypt and Brazil on behalf of the African Group and the DAG. Member States were meeting in a decision-making body of WIPO to take a historic decision for the community of the visually impaired throughout the world. Member States were to decide whether to convene a diplomatic conference in 2013 to adopt the treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities. The treaty would enable those persons to have access to special format copies. At its session of November 2012, the SCCR made significant progress on the substantive provisions of the issue. For instance, the authorized entities and the key elements of the preamble had been resolved. However, extra progress had to be made in order to overcome differences of opinion, and unresolved issues that were outstanding concerning the effective implementation of the limitations and exceptions envisaged in the treaty. The Delegation believed there was a good basis for continuing the work with a view to preparing a balanced and effective treaty on exceptions and limitations for the visually impaired which would have a real added value for that community. Therefore the Delegation was in favor of convening a diplomatic conference for the conclusion of a treaty in 2013.

26. The Delegation of Mexico welcomed the significant progress of the negotiations on a legal instrument which would help the visually impaired to have access to books. Over the previous years, big efforts were put in place by delegations in order to reach an agreement on that subject. Without any doubt, Member States already had negotiated text in a very advanced form that would enable visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities to overcome serious problems affecting millions of people today. Therefore, Mexico considered that the Assembly must unconditionally convene a diplomatic conference in 2013 to conclude the drafting of the instrument. Before that, it was necessary to hold an additional meeting of one week that would enable delegations to fine tune the current text and assure the success of the conference.

27. The Delegation of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) supported the holding of a diplomatic conference on the subject. Convening that conference, which had major human rights implications, would be a very significant political signal. Member States should not condition the conference to the overcoming of the very few difficulties that still existed. To try and condition the diplomatic conference at that stage would be a hidden form of not wanting concrete results and that would not be conducive to the necessary balance that needed to be found. All Member States wished to help the visually impaired.

28. The Delegation of Malaysia wanted to associate itself with the statements delivered by the Delegation of Brazil on behalf of the DAG and the Delegation of Sri Lanka on behalf of the Asian Group. Malaysia was positively encouraged by the progress made by the SCCR and the evolution of the draft text on the instrument on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons or persons with print disabilities. Malaysia attached great importance to the eventual adoption of the draft text intended to benefit millions of persons with visual and print disabilities throughout the world. While it was still a work in progress, the Delegation believed that the draft text would provide adequate and effective limitations and exceptions to facilitate access and use of copyright works by the visually impaired, while protecting the rights holders' interests. Malaysia was supportive of the proposal to convene a diplomatic conference to conclude the treaty in 2013.

29. The Delegation of the United States of America noted that in December 2009, it concluded that it was time to fashion new norms in International copyright to address what was a genuine problem, the book famine, the unjustifiable lack of availability of special format copies for persons with print disabilities throughout the world. In 2010, it made a proposal in the SCCR for an instrument to address directly cross border exchange of special format copies. At the time, it was open to the nature of the instrument that would establish those new International copyright norms, including the possibility of a treaty. The Delegation said that the content of the International norms was more important to it than the form of the instrument. The important thing was to get the system right: To provide a workable, balanced approach that significantly improves access to culture, knowledge and education for persons with print disabilities, while safeguarding the integrity of the copyright system and the incentives it provides for the creation and dissemination of works for all people, including those with print disabilities. Indeed, over 15 years before, the United States of America was at the forefront of the roughly 60 countries that had exceptions for persons with print disabilities in their national law. Recognizing a preference for and the importance of rights holders making their works available, it nonetheless concluded that carefully balanced exceptions were needed in that area and such exceptions were established in 1996. The Delegation appreciated the tremendous efforts of many delegations. It wanted to recognize the 2008 proposal of Chile, Brazil, Nicaragua and Uruguay on copyright exceptions; the submission by Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay later joined by Mexico and Argentina of the World Blind Union (WBU) Treaty text; the European Union's proposal for a joint recommendation on print disabilities; and the Africa Group's draft treaty proposal on copyright exceptions. It wanted to express appreciation to partners in the informal meetings in 2011 that eventually produced the first Chairman's text, and the increasing number of delegations that participated in the continuing informal meetings in 2012, and the tremendous efforts made by all delegations in the recent SCCRs. Those had been meetings of tremendous good will among delegations of unquestionably strong wills. Member States had a clear path with both challenges and opportunities to produce a complete, well-balanced instrument. The Delegation was pleased to join the consensus in calling for a diplomatic conference in June 2013, to complete the work and to produce a legally binding agreement to establish International norms for copyright exceptions for persons with print disabilities. It profoundly believed that nothing was more important to improve the situation of the world's blind than improving their access to the written word. The goal was to improve greatly the library that was available to millions of persons with print disabilities in all countries. The United States of America agreed with other delegations in supporting a mandate for further discussions before the diplomatic conference to clarify and settle as many outstanding issues as possible before June, including with respect to the agreed statements. It supported having the Member States

make a final review in February to ensure that they were in a position for a successful diplomatic conference in June 2013. The Delegation was committed to working with all other Member States in the months leading up to June, because the Committee cannot afford to leave people with print disabilities throughout the world without a solution.

30. The Delegation of Argentina endorsed the statements of GRULAC and the DAG. It welcomed the holding of the Extraordinary General Assembly to decide on convening a diplomatic conference on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons. Argentina along with several other Members States in GRULAC and other developing countries has been a strong proponent of the treaty which would become a landmark not only for WIPO but also for the international system at large. Argentina had participated actively in negotiations on the draft treaty. The main provisions of the mechanisms on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons had been definitely improved sufficiently to take a decision on the convening of a diplomatic conference without any conditions attached. Likewise, there were portions of the text needing more work but they concerned safeguards to the system and they were important concepts for some delegations but not necessarily essential for the treaty. All positions could be harmonized with work between that session of the General Assembly and the diplomatic conference. The progress made during the previous session of the SCCR in November 2012 demonstrated that there was no reason to postpone the common decision to convene a diplomatic conference in order to help improve the situation of the visually impaired.

31. The Delegation of Chile reminded Member States that it was the first to ask the WIPO Secretariat to include the item of limitations and exceptions for persons with disabilities to have access to education, libraries and so forth on the Committee agenda. In 2005, in stating the importance of the debate, the Delegation had said that one of the main purposes was to build consensus on exceptions and limitations for purposes of public interest, and that the issue should be looked at from the public interest point of view. Eight long years had elapsed since then, and that idea had evolved dramatically. The convening of a diplomatic conference on exceptions and limitations to help the visually impaired people and persons with print disabilities would be a landmark for the Organization, and also for the development of the international system of copyright and related rights. Chile joined in the GRULAC statement and also joined all those delegations that had expressed support for convening a diplomatic conference. The negotiations on the draft text were not entirely completed. The Committee had made significant progress that could enable Member States to ensure that the outstanding issues could be resolved in the intersessional meeting in February and during the diplomatic conference itself. The Delegation trusted that there was sufficient political will and commitment to decide on the convening of a diplomatic conference in 2013.

32. The Delegation of Nigeria aligned itself with the statements made by the Delegation of Egypt on behalf of the African Group, the Delegation of Benin on behalf of the LDCs Group, the Delegation of Algeria and the Delegation of Morocco. It also appreciated the convening of the Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly to discuss and make decisions that would be integral to the development of visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities and their role in their societies. The Delegation welcomed the progress that was proposed on the draft text of the treaty as it recognized that the working draft was not yet stable. It therefore called on all Member States to work seriously towards the realization of a workable, fair and meaningful treaty for the 285 million blind population, of which more than 90 per cent resided in developing countries. Nigeria was optimistic about the final outcome of the treaty and looked forward to the Special Session of the SCCR in 2013 to constructively advance the text and reach positions that could work for all in terms of functionality, balance and impact. In that regard, the Delegation supported the call for the diplomatic conference in 2013 to negotiate the treaty on exceptions and limitations for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities.

33. The Delegation of Canada reiterated its support for the development of a treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities and for the convening of the diplomatic conference in 2013, aimed at concluding that treaty.

The Delegation appreciated the role that limitations and exceptions in national copyright laws could play in facilitating access for the print disabled. Canada had recently brought into play amendments to the copyright exceptions framework as part of the Copyright Modernization Act that addressed that issue directly. The Delegation thanked all other delegations for their hard work in advancing the working text to its current state. As there was not yet a consensus on certain elements in the draft text, the Delegation encouraged all Member States to work diligently with the objective of addressing the outstanding matters prior to the diplomatic conference. Therefore, it considered the proposal to convene the Special Session of the SCCR in February 2013 as a positive step to achieve that objective. The Delegation expressed its commitment to continue working with other delegations to advance progress on the text with a view towards concluding a new treaty for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities.

34. The Delegation of Panama supported the statement made by the Delegation of Peru on behalf of GRULAC. For Panama that subject was of prime importance, because it would enable visually impaired persons with low or moderate income levels to have full access on an equal footing to information and communication. Panama had developed a national strategic plan for the social inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families. One of the purposes of that strategic plan was education, namely to guarantee the opportunity of access to schooling and graduation to those persons with disabilities in the educational system and at all levels. In order to continue complying with its objectives and to combat the book famine, the Delegation expressed its support at the General Assembly by approving the convening of a diplomatic conference.

35. The Delegation of the Russian Federation supported the convening of a diplomatic conference in 2013 to adopt a treaty for facilitating access for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities to print information. The Delegation stated that for the Russian Federation having that instrument was of great significance since that country had a large number of people with visual impairment. Furthermore, the Delegation recognized the need to strike an appropriate balance between the rights and needs of visually impaired persons and copyright. It also pointed out that the time had come to think about special format copies being made available. An appropriate mechanism that would allow visually impaired persons to get access to works and to productions by appropriate means was needed. The Delegation indicated that while that had to be done at a national level, there was a need to have rules established at the international level as that would allow having a framework within which a country could work domestically. The Delegation supported the work of the Committee as well as the holding of the Extraordinary Session of the SCCR in February 2013 on the basis of the content from document WO/GA/42/2. The Delegation agreed with the convening of the diplomatic conference in 2013 and expressed its interest in holding that conference in Russia; preliminary negotiations for that had begun. The Delegation of Morocco though had already done a lot of work and was prepared for hosting the diplomatic conference. The Delegation was thus willing to withdraw its candidacy for the hosting of that conference and expressed its interest in hosting a conference on industrial designs instead.

36. The Delegation of Barbados associated itself with the statement of the Delegation of Peru on behalf of GRULAC. The Delegation wished to add to that statement that, in the first place, it had worked constructively in an effort to ensure that the text on limitations and exceptions would be effective in realizing the goal of improving access to copyright protected works for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities; and second, the text should not unduly restrict authorized entities from making accessible formats available under national law exceptions. The availability of those works would enhance their cross border exchange. Therefore, the Delegation emphasized that provisions should not render the text ineffective through exposing authorized entities easily to possible liability or making their work administratively burdensome. Third, there should not be provisions in the text which would make blind people in countries of small economies, such as Barbados, pay more for accessible formats than persons in countries who enjoyed better economic conditions overall.

The Delegation acknowledged that although significant progress had been made on the text, there was still a fair amount of work to be done. However, political will existed for WIPO Member States to conclude a treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities. Therefore, the Delegation supported the convening of the diplomatic conference in 2013 and any necessary work prior to the conference that would lead to its success.

37. The Delegation of Senegal indicated that the question of whether or not the diplomatic conference should be convened in 2013 was the question that had to be answered by the Extraordinary Session of the WIPO General Assembly. The answer had to be not only political, but also just and responsible, as more than 200 million people throughout the world were listening to that reply and their future depended upon it. An international instrument that would facilitate access to information, education and communication for persons with visual disabilities or impairment and persons with print disabilities was something that would have been a benefit to all. It would certainly benefit visually impaired persons and their development, but in more general terms it would contribute to the development of their countries as well. The Delegation highlighted that the Committee had been very courageous in undertaking the work required to craft an appropriate international instrument dealing with limitations and exceptions for the designated beneficiaries, a work in which the delicate balance between rights and rights holders had been respected. The given draft text of an instrument/treaty was the outcome of constructive work done by all Member States, who had sought to respect the principle of nondiscrimination and equality for all and the need for human development, solidarity and justice. That text had been considerably elaborated, but there were still a number of outstanding matters that had to be resolved bearing in mind the interests of the beneficiaries. The Delegation declared that it remained committed to the achievement of convening a diplomatic conference in 2013. The draft text had to be improved and that had to be done at the Special Session of the SCCR that was foreseen for February 2013. The treaty needed to be useful for blind people and visually impaired persons, especially those in developing countries, as it had to be taken into account that those persons did not have great financial means available to them. Therefore it had to be ensured that the fruits of the work on the draft text could be shared by all beneficiaries throughout the world. The Delegation welcomed the offer made by Morocco to host the diplomatic conference in 2013.

38. The Delegation of Tunisia aligned itself with the statement made by the African Group and urged all Member States to work forward in a spirit of consensus in order to ensure that positive results were achieved at that meeting of the General Assembly. The Delegation welcomed the progress that had been made within the SCCR and supported the idea of holding a diplomatic conference in 2013 in Morocco.

39. The Delegation of Egypt supported the statement made by the African Group as well as the statement by the Delegation of Brazil on behalf of the DAG. Many steps had been taken to reach a consensus on the international treaty in favor of the visually impaired. Great progress on the text had been the result of cooperation amongst the numerous delegations and organizations. There were still a number of items which were important that would be dealt with during the negotiations at the Special Session of the SCCR in 2013 in order to reach a consensus that responded to the aspirations of the beneficiaries and that was in line with the actual status, economic and otherwise, of the visually impaired, most of whom lived in developing countries. The Delegation wished to point out that the visually impaired had played an important role in the progress of Arab culture in the middle as well as in the modern ages. Thus, it considered that there was a legal and moral duty to facilitate the rights of visually impaired persons to have access to knowledge and science, on the same footing as those who were not suffering from a visual impairment or disability. The Delegation supported the convening of the diplomatic conference in 2013 and was pleased to accept the invitation by the Government of Morocco for the convening of that conference in Morocco.

40. The Delegation of Paraguay expressed its commitment to the adoption of an international treaty for visually impaired persons and joined other delegations in their agreement to hold a diplomatic conference in 2013. The Delegation furthermore associated itself with the statement made by the Delegation of Peru on behalf of GRULAC and reiterated its firm commitment to continue working over the next months in order to have a successful diplomatic conference.

41. The Delegation of Australia believed that access to books was a significant issue for those millions of people around the world with print disabilities. The Australia Copyright Act recognized that important public interest by providing statutory licenses and free use exceptions allowing accessible format copies to be made available to persons with print disability. The SCCR had made good progress towards agreement on the text of a treaty that would deliver better access for persons with a print disability and had recognized the legitimate interests of authors and publishers. While some outstanding issues remained, the Delegation was confident that those could be resolved through further work in a Special Session of the SCCR in February 2013. The Delegation supported the convening of a diplomatic conference in June 2013.

42. The Delegation of Turkey announced its support for the proposal of convening a diplomatic conference in 2013 and welcomed the generous offer of Morocco to host that event. The text-based work had to advance and therefore the Delegation believed that the SCCR should meet early in 2013 to finalize the negotiations.

43. The Delegation of Singapore pointed out that the SCCR had devoted great effort towards addressing the needs of the visually impaired and other persons with print disabilities. The Delegation was in agreement that the issue needed to be addressed urgently. The book famine, from which the WBU estimated that 285 million visually impaired suffered, was unacceptable in a modern global information society where access to information was fundamental to a person's economic welfare and sense of well-being. While some countries had already taken the initiative to enact limitations and exceptions to provide for the needs of the visually impaired, others had chosen to create platforms for private groups and rights-holders to work together to provide avenues for access. The Member States of WIPO at the Extraordinary General Assembly had the opportunity to augment those measures and in that way contribute to global IP norm setting by ensuring that those developments were also dealt with coherently on a global scale. The Delegation therefore supported the effective conclusion of an international instrument on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities and believed that the text had been brought to a sufficient level of maturity for a diplomatic conference to be called. The Delegation was cognizant that complex and sensitive issues remained that required further negotiation. For the success of the diplomatic conference it was crucial that delegations showed flexibility and willingness to negotiate the status of the Cluster Package as well as the relationship between limitations and exceptions and the commercial availability of works. Those were central discussions determining the success or failure at creating solutions which delegations had recognized as desperately needed. In that regard, the Delegation also supported the proposal to hold a Special Session of the SCCR in the first half of 2013, before the diplomatic conference, to work further on outstanding issues. The Delegation urged the Organization and all delegations to continue to show the level of cooperation and flexibility that had made the Beijing Treaty of 2012 a success. Furthermore, it also wished to acknowledge the contributions of the various non-governmental organizations that had helped to inform and sustain the momentum of discussions. The Delegation expressed its engagement to work towards resolving all outstanding issues on the topic and make meaningful progress towards improving the access to works for visually impaired persons and other persons with print disabilities. It encouraged delegations to have faith in their ability to reach an agreement which benefit the blind people of the world. Many key delegations had spoken not just in support of a diplomatic conference but also for a treaty. The Delegation supported the adoption of a clear decision at the Extraordinary General Assembly.

44. The Delegation of Cameroon supported the statements made by the Delegation of Egypt, the Delegation of Benin and other delegations from the African Group. The Delegation stated that it was favorable to the convening of a diplomatic conference in June 2013 for concluding a treaty to facilitate access to knowledge for the visually impaired and persons with print disabilities. In view of the differences that still persisted on the draft text, it agreed to hold a Special Session to revise the work that had already been done and to prepare the text for a successful diplomatic conference.

45. The Delegation of Iran (Islamic Republic of) observed that during the 24th Session of the SCCR Member States had been constructively engaged in negotiations based on a common understanding of the needs of visually impaired persons and the interests of the right holders, which had led to further advancement in the substance of the draft text. The Delegation hoped that some significant parts of the text would be redrafted and expected that Members would be able to address some remaining substantive provisions with the same spirit of cooperation as in the previous session. A more mature text would ease the work at the diplomatic conference. It joined other delegations in expressing support for the convening of the diplomatic conference in June 2013. It also noted that further text-based work at the Special Session of the SCCR in February 2013 would help delegates to deliberate properly over those issues where divergent positions existed.

46. The Delegation of Switzerland thanked the Chair of the SCCR and the Secretariat for their efforts to foster the work towards a draft that would facilitate access for the visually impaired and persons with print disabilities to knowledge and to print works. It believed that the difficulties that hampered the way to helping the visually impaired could be overcome. The Delegation announced its commitment to conclude a treaty at the earliest possible date and was hence in favor of convening of a diplomatic conference in 2013 without any conditions. Aware of the work that was still necessary on the draft text and in order that a successful outcome would be reached, the Delegation supported the holding of a Special Session of the SCCR in February 2013 in order to pave the way to the diplomatic conference.

47. The Delegation of Libya supported the statement made by the Delegation of Egypt on behalf of the African Group as well as the statement made by the Delegation of Benin on behalf of the LDC Group. Moreover the Delegation associated itself with the statement made by the Delegation of Morocco and supported the holding of the conference in Morocco.

48. The Delegation of the Republic of Korea supported the convening of the diplomatic conference in June 2013 due to the progress made through the latest SCCR meetings on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities. However, the Delegation emphasized that agreement on the text was still needed to reach an appropriate balance between rights holders and users. Thus, the Delegation announced it would continue to work closely with Member States and the Secretariat to reach a common understanding and reach an effective binding International legal framework in the near future.

49. The Delegation of Togo associated itself with the statements made by the Delegations of Benin, Egypt and Brazil concerning the holding of a diplomatic conference, which should take place without any conditions being attached. Although there was still work outstanding that could be done in February 2013 in order to resolve all difficulties before the diplomatic conference, the Delegation did not see a Special Session of the SCCR in February 2013 as a condition for the holding of a conference of such importance, both for human rights and for the development of the Organization. For that reason the Delegation, like all other delegations, was in favor of the diplomatic conference being held as soon as possible.

50. The Delegation of Burkina Faso subscribed to the statements made by the Delegation of Egypt on behalf of the African Group and by the Delegation of Benin on behalf of the LDC Group. The Delegation also supported the holding of a diplomatic conference in 2013 for concluding an international instrument to provide greater access to visually impaired persons

and persons with print disabilities. The diplomatic conference was a process of great importance.

51. The Delegation of Mexico pointed out that there were some lessons to be learned out of the various statements of the delegations, most importantly that there was absolute certainty that all delegations were totally committed to bringing about a legally binding text on the subject as soon as possible, despite the possible technical difficulties. The upcoming challenge on the text that was being negotiated was a technical issue, not a matter of political will. In that sense the Delegation stressed that there was no technical problem that did not have a solution and that the delegations would not be able to resolve. The Delegation declared that it was prepared and committed to continue working to achieve the holding of the diplomatic conference.

52. The Representative of the World Blind Union (WBU) took the opportunity to thank the Delegations of Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay that had been the first to table the treaty proposal as well as the Delegation of Mexico and the other members of GRULAC, who also had been among the first to embrace the proposal at WIPO. The Representative agreed with a statement made by the Delegation of Morocco who said that the negotiations which had been carried out could mean a historic moment for print disabled people's rights and indeed for WIPO. Nevertheless, the WBU had not come to the SCCR to make history or to act as lobbyists for change in the world's copyright framework. WBU had rather come for the world's 285 million blind and partially sighted people. The aim was to end the book famine in which only one to seven per cent of the world's published books were available in formats that blind and partially sighted people could read. The WBU urged the delegations to agree on the work up to a diplomatic conference in 2013, which could in fact make a breakthrough in helping print disabled people to access books and reading. The treaty could help organizations such as the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) in the United Kingdom to share scarce accessible books with those who otherwise could not obtain them. Such a service was needed by people in developing countries wherein 90 per cent of the world's visually impaired population lived. The WBU highlighted that for the treaty to be of use, it had to be written in a simple, effective, and workable way to ensure its function to help print disabled people. In this regard, the intervention of the Delegation of Barbados expressed the WBU's concerns adequately when it stated that the treaty's provisions should not render the text nugatory through exposing authorized entities to possible liability or by making their work administratively burdensome. Member States should focus their efforts on ensuring that during the following sessions. The European Union had indicated that sufficient progress on the text was needed before a diplomatic conference could be held in 2013. WBU believed that the political will existed within all WIPO Member States to finalize the text and to hold a successful diplomatic conference in 2013. The WBU thanked all delegations for the outcomes reached so far and announced that it would continue working on the treaty and would keep reminding the delegations of the people the treaty was addressed to.

53. The Representative of Knowledge Ecology International (KEI) was concerned about the dynamic that was set up during the negotiations for getting complete consensus on every issue by February 2013. What the WBU and the delegations of many countries had said about the need for a treaty which was actually useful for blind people and worked in developing countries was an important matter. A case like the 1971 Appendix to the Berne Convention, where a very complicated text that had almost never been used was adopted, should be avoided. Furthermore, a decision had to be taken on the nature of the instrument. KEI considered it disappointing that the Delegation of the United States of America had not been in a position to say that what was being negotiated was a treaty and not just a kind of ambiguous instrument.

54. The Representative of the International Publishers Association (IPA) noted that the draft text of the treaty still contained large amounts of text in square brackets. There were also a number of legal and practical issues that had not been addressed yet, such as the impact of the instrument on literary works from Member States that had not yet been bound by the treaty. Equally, the issue of capacity building had to be considered. There might be numerous

organizations from LDCs that might need to be trained and equipped in order to be able to benefit from the instrument and from the generous offer that had been announced by the RNIB. Further concerns that had been raised by the WBU and which IPA had also acknowledged were practical and technical issues which could be resolved in the wording of the text. IPA was optimistic that those issues could and had to be addressed before a possible diplomatic conference in June 2013. The IPA community was committed to making books available to persons with print disabilities at the same time, at the same place and at the same price. Therefore, the Member States were invited to take inspiration from the progress that was being made by technology providers, publishers, and charities serving persons with print disabilities in improving access. In particular, a reference had to be the way that progress had been accelerating over the past three years. That progress had been strongest where all stakeholders had worked together, each contributing their perspective, expertise and good will. On its part, the IPA offered its expertise, insights, and good will to the process towards a text that was a practical basis for the diplomatic conference and was confident about all delegations being able to contribute to a fair and balanced international legal framework.

55. The Representative of the Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM) declared that an enabling legal framework would empower rather than threaten the ability of rights holders to serve the market of visually impaired persons. It would improve cooperation and public-private partnership and would support markets instead of only assisting access. Increasing access was not primarily a legal question but required cultural change of mainstreaming access for visually impaired persons by all actors in the information chain. An enormous amount of technical work was carried out by all stakeholders and progress was improving access beyond scale. STM was very encouraged by the spirit and political will that had been demonstrated particularly during the previous SCCR and meetings before. STM requested, therefore, that the delegations continue to recognize the interests and needs of visually impaired persons and at the same time support the rights and interests of authors and publishers of creative works in the process. A successful WIPO instrument or treaty had to focus on encouraging collaboration, give priority to commercial works, promote accessible publishing, and assist capacity building. More work needed to be done to achieve those aims in order that the principles of intellectual property treaties were not weakened, policy space reduced or cross border transfer in an uncoordinated fashion allowed. WIPO had thus to consider as truly enabling a legal framework that held up the existing international IPR framework, which could be an instrument or a treaty. Together with others, STM would in any event continue to support all efforts that devised effective mechanisms to improve access for print disabled persons to literary works, including under the framework which was being negotiated, under a future enabling legal framework and also at the time of practical implementation. STM had always aligned itself with the creation of a framework that supported access for print disabled people and which was consistent with the IPR framework, leading to appropriate national exceptions and well-crafted cross-border mechanisms.

56. The Chair pointed out that there was unanimous political commitment to hold the diplomatic conference in June 2013 in Morocco. The Chair also noted from the discussion that a little more work was needed in the formulation of the decision.

57. The Chair reminded Member States that some minor issues regarding the formulation of the decision of the General Assembly were dealt with during informal consultations and thanked all delegations for the dedicated effort to reach consensus and a good result. That good result would enable the normative objective of adopting the very important treaty for the benefit of the visually impaired. During the consultations there was agreement on the text of the decision of the Extraordinary Session that was circulated among delegations in all languages. Summarizing the content of the decision, the Chair said that the first point was to convene a diplomatic conference in June 2013. The second point was to establish a Preparatory Committee that would meet on December 18, after the closure of the Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly, with the task of establishing the necessary modalities for the diplomatic conference. Third, the offer of the Kingdom of Morocco to host the diplomatic conference in

June 2013 was welcomed with great gratitude. Fourth, the General Assembly would instruct the SCCR to meet in Special Session for five days in February to expedite further text-based work on the document SCCR/25/2 in order to reach a sufficient level of agreement. It would also instruct the Preparatory Committee to decide whether there would be a need for additional work towards the objective of holding the conference. As agreed, "additional work" meant additional work by either the SCCR or the Preparatory Committee, so that the latter could decide that either itself, or the SCCR, or both, might have additional work to do in order to prepare a revised text before and for the diplomatic conference. The final paragraph of the proposed decision of the General Assembly clarified that the basic proposal for the diplomatic conference would be the result of the work the Special Session of the SCCR on the text included in document SCCR/25/2, which was considered the provisional basic proposal for substantive provisions of the diplomatic conference. It was also understood that any Member State and the Special Delegation of the European Union might make proposals at the diplomatic conference.

58. On this basis, the Chair proposed that the WIPO General Assembly:

- (1) decides to convene a diplomatic conference on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities to be held in June 2013. The mandate of this Conference is to negotiate and adopt a treaty on limitations and exceptions for visually impaired persons/persons with print disabilities (pursuant to the draft text in SCCR/25/2);
- (2) convenes a Preparatory Committee on December 18, 2012, to establish the necessary modalities of the diplomatic conference. The Preparatory Committee will consider at this time the draft Rules of Procedure to be presented for adoption to the diplomatic conference, the list of invitees to participate in the Conference, and the text of the draft letters of invitation, as well as any other document or organizational question relating to the diplomatic conference. The Preparatory Committee will also approve the Basic Proposal for the administrative and final provisions of the Treaty;
- (3) welcomes with gratitude the offer of Morocco to host the diplomatic conference in June 2013;
- (4) directs the SCCR to meet in special session for five days in February 2013 to expedite further text-based work on document SCCR/25/2, in order to reach a sufficient level of agreement on the text, and directs the Preparatory Committee to meet at the end of the February SCCR meeting to decide, if needed, whether additional work is required with the objective of holding a successful Conference in June 2013. It is understood that the Preparatory Committee will invite Observer Delegations and Observers;
- (5) agrees that document SCCR/25/2, the Draft Text of an International Agreement/Treaty on Limitations and Exceptions for Visually Impaired Persons/Persons with Print Disabilities, will constitute the substantive articles of the Basic Proposal for the Diplomatic Conference. The Preparatory Committee shall incorporate in the Basic Proposal such further agreements of the SCCR as are reached pursuant to paragraph (4) above, with the understanding that any Member State and the special delegation of the European Union may make proposals at the diplomatic conference.

59. The Chair declared the decision adopted and opened the floor for statements. Given the high level of commitment shown by delegations, the Chair was confident that the February session of the SCCR would be successful.

60. Mr. Francis Gurry, the Director General of WIPO, extended his personal thanks to the Chair for his tireless work. He also thanked all delegations for their extremely constructive and good engagement and for their sense of compromise. Of course, everyone was aware that there was still some distance to travel before reaching the treaty, but the decision was a significant step forward along the road and put the Committee in a very good position to be able to deliver the objective; namely, to improve the situation of visually impaired persons and the print disabled.

61. The Chair thanked the Director General and the Secretariat and declared the session closed.

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