

Marrakesh Treaty Assembly Kicks Off 10th Anniversary Celebrations at WIPO

The Assembly of the Marrakesh Treaty was held at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva, Switzerland on July 13, 2026 and it marked the beginning of celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

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A Milestone Assembly

The Assembly was chaired by Mr. Franklin Ponka Seukam of Cameroon, who opened the proceedings by welcoming four new Contracting Parties that have joined the Treaty since the last session: Albania, Angola, Cuba, and Mozambique, a testament to the growing global recognition of the right of persons who are print disabled to access knowledge on an equal basis. The delegate from Niger, Mr. Garba Sadou Abdoulaye, announced from the floor that Niger was also ready to deposit its instrument of accession to the Marrakesh Treaty, which would bring the number of Contracting Parties to 105, covering 131 countries.

Tags:
ABC – Accessible Books Consortium



Ms. Michele Woods, Director, WIPO Copyright Law Division (left), Ms. Sylvie Forbin, Deputy Director General, WIPO Copyright and Creative Industries Sector (center) and Mr. Franklin Ponka Seukam, Chair, Marrakesh Assembly (right). (Credit: WIPO)

World Blind Union President Urges Full Implementation

In an opening intervention from the floor, Mr. Santosh Kumar Rungta, President of the World Blind Union, delivered a statement underscoring the transformative impact of the Treaty and calling on Member States to go beyond ratification to achieve full and meaningful implementation. Reminding delegates that "the cost of exclusion is higher than the cost of inclusion," Mr. Rungta called on Member States that have yet to fully align their copyright laws with the Treaty to act with urgency.



"The success of the Marrakesh Treaty will not be measured by the number of ratifications, but by the number of lives transformed through equal access to published works. Let this Assembly commit to ending the global book famine by ensuring that no person who is blind, deafblind, or otherwise print disabled is denied timely access to books in the accessible format of their choice, including braille, during the next phase of the Treaty's implementation."

— Mr. Santosh Kumar Rungta, President, World Blind Union (Credit: WIPO)

Voices from Around the World

In a special segment dedicated to marking the Treaty's tenth anniversary of coming into force, delegates heard from a diverse group of stakeholders who shared their personal experiences of the Treaty's impact. These included:

- Dr. Praveena Sukraj Ely of South Africa, Senior Officer at the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI);
- Mr. Pablo Lecuona of Argentina, Founder and Director of Tiflonexos;

- Ms. Aria Indrawati of Indonesia, representing the Mitra Netra Foundation;
- Ms. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame of Ghana, Member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and
- Mr. Mark Riccobono of the United States, President of the National Federation of the Blind.

The Marrakesh Assembly also heard from over 20 Member State and Observer delegates who spoke from the floor, confirming their commitment to the principles of this important humanitarian treaty, as well as their support of the practical activities of the Accessible Books Consortium.

ABC Reports Significant Progress



Ms. Monica Halil Lövblad, Head, ABC (Credit: WIPO)

Monica Halil Lövblad, Head of the Accessible Books Consortium, presented the **2026 Report of the Accessible Books Consortium**, and highlighted ABC's key activities in implementing the objectives of the Treaty. In particular, she noted:

1. The ABC Global Book Service — WIPO's online catalogue of accessible books — now contains over 1.2 million accessible books in 80 languages, all available free of charge for cross-border exchange under the Marrakesh Treaty framework.
2. Direct access to the catalogue for persons who are print disabled is provided through ABC's Beneficiary Application and the Dolphin EasyReader App, allowing users to search and download books directly to their own reading devices.
3. ABC is currently collaborating with the DAISY Consortium and UNICEF on developing an AI tool to convert print publications into accessible formats, with a pilot version for authorized entities expected in the coming months.
4. Since 2015, ABC partner organizations have collectively produced over 24,000 educational books in accessible formats through ABC's training and funding programme.
5. ABC has partnered with the World Blind Union and ICEVI on a global braille literacy campaign affirming braille as the foundation of literacy and its continued relevance in the digital era.

Ms. Halil Lövblad concluded by calling on more countries to not only join the Treaty but to fully implement its provisions into national legislation, and invited authorized entities and people who are print disabled to make full use of ABC's free catalogue.

The Marrakesh Treaty formally entered into force on September 2016. Its tenth anniversary will be marked by further events later in 2026 and 2027.

For more information about the Accessible Books Consortium and the ABC Global Book Service, visit www.accessiblebooksconsortium.org.

About WIPO

The **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)** is the global forum for intellectual property policy, services, information and cooperation. A specialized agency of the United Nations, WIPO assists its 194 Member States in developing a balanced **international IP legal framework** to meet society's evolving needs. It provides business **services** for obtaining IP rights in multiple countries and resolving disputes. It delivers **capacity-building** programs to help developing countries benefit from using IP. And it provides free access to unique knowledge banks of **IP information**.