

CIS's Statement at SCCR 24 on the Treaty for the Visually Impaired

Centre for Internet and Society | 2012-07-22

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This was the statement read out by Pranesh Prakash at the 24th meeting of the WIPO Standing Committee for Copyright and Related Rights in Geneva, on Friday, July 20, 2012.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to associate CIS with the statements made by the WBU, eIFL, IFLA, KEI, ISOC, and CLA.

We NGOs been making statements at SCCR on this the topic of a treaty for the reading-disabled since 2009 now.

In this room there are a number of organizations that work with and for persons with disabilities which come here to Geneva, SCCR after SCCR. They do not come here to watch the enactment of an elaborate ritual, but to seek solutions for the very real knowledge drought that is being faced by the reading-disabled everywhere, and particularly in developing countries.

The way work on this treaty — or rather this binding-or-non-binding international instrument — has been stalled by some member states is a matter of shame. In India our Parliament recently passed an amendment to our copyright law that grants persons with disabilities, and those who are working for them, a strong yet simply-worded right to have equal access to copyrighted works as sighted persons.

An instrument that lays down detailed guidelines on rules and procedures to be followed by authorized entities will not work. An instrument that subjects the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms by persons with visual impairments to market forces and bureaucratic practices will not work.

Importantly, an instrument that ignores realities of the world: that the vast majority of persons with visual impairment live in developing countries just will not work.

I implore the delegations here to keep up the constructive spirit I have seen most of them display in the past two days, and ensure that the 2012 General Assembly convenes a Diplomatic Conference on this topic.