

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

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Pranesh Prakash

This was the opening statement of the Indian delegation, delivered by G.R. Raghavender, on Thursday, July 19, 2012, at the 24th meeting of the SCCR at WIPO in Geneva.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Indian delegation is a little bit disappointed about the way we have started this topic of the Treaty for the Visually Impaired. Forgive me, Mr. Chairman, we have confidence in your abilities, but unfortunately we have already lost one hour in this afternoon session. We have only two hours left, unless and until we decide to work beyond 6:00 P.M.

We have a document, SCCR/23/7, on the table. Everybody has this document. We all decided in the last SCCR that we will work on this document and move towards a meaningful treaty. We said, in this very 24th SCCR, we will be ready for that. We should have started article-by-article discussions by now. And as we are involved in the general statements in our agenda, I can go on reading a statement for another 20 minutes as I have about five pages written out. But given our support for the treaty, I won't.

I'm sorry, I respect all the distinguished delegations: they have their own concerns, but Mr. Chairman, under your leadership we should have started article-by-article discussions by now. Yesterday, in the evening at the Chairman plus group leaders plus 3, we all requested that. Whatever happened during the 14, 15 intersessional meetings, we have no objection to that, but people raise the issue of transparency and availability of the document. Whatever changes have been made to the document must be public. If no one is ready to post that document either during the informal discussions, or here in the plenary, they can always come out with the changes made to particular articles, or para in the preamble, when the discussion starts.

We should be ready to work towards finalizing this treaty. We are even open to working on Saturday and Sunday, Mr. Chairman.

If we don't finalize in this SCCR, we cannot go to the General Assembly in the first week of the month of October. If we lose that time, we will have to wait

until the next General Assembly, because we cannot have a General Assembly in between.

So we will be simply wasting our time in the November SCCR and again next July SCCR, waiting for the next General Assembly.

So kindly guide us to start text-based article-by-article discussions, so that we won't go back empty-handed. The Indian delegation won't go back empty-handed, facing the 15 million blind people in India, which is almost 50 percent of the world blind population, that is 37 million.

Thank you.