



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the Diplomatic Conference to conclude a Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired Persons and Persons with Print Disabilities
Marrakech, Morocco, 27 June 2013

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See joins previous speakers and expresses its satisfaction for the successful achievement of a *Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled*. It warmly thanks the Government of Morocco and the city of Marrakech for hosting this Diplomatic Conference as well as the WIPO's team, led by the Director General Francis Gurry, and everyone who has contributed to a smooth and constructive task.

The International Community has shown the way forward. Looking at the future, a lesson emerges from the process of negotiations and the political will to reach out to visually impaired people. It is a deep sense of human solidarity with victims of disabilities and the openness to their full participation in the life of society. As new priorities are debated for the post-2015 development concerns, placing the needy at the center will provide the right approach and it confirms that success is effective when the human family is seen as one.

Mr. President,

It took some years of hard work to arrive at this happy conclusion. The result, however, shows not only a sense of balance and respect for all interested parties, but also a substantive achievement. Such achievement makes a difference in the daily life of the beneficiaries of this Treaty: their quality of life can be improved by their easier access to a vast field of knowledge that will enrich them personally and make them more useful to society.

At the same time this historic Treaty becomes a strong signal that multilateralism not only is alive, but that it can serve well as an effective system for the concrete implementation of the common good through the responsible involvement of all parties in any negotiations undertaken.

Allow me, Mr. President, to conclude by quoting from a recent message by Pope Francis to an association of blind and visually impaired people. The Holy Father wished

this association well and, for the human and spiritual promotion of its constituency, invited it to «*spread always the culture of encounter, of solidarity, of acceptance of people with disabilities, not only by asking for just social measures, but also by promoting their active participation in the life of society*»¹. The Holy See, prompted by the words of the Holy Father and by the humanitarian dimension and the potential benefit for tens of millions of visually impaired persons, has decided to immediately sign and it looks forward to a wide ratification of the new Treaty.

¹http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/messages/pont-messages/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130611_audiomessaggio-ciechi_it.html (last consultation 26 June 2013).