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Intervention of CCIA on the Issue of Access to Works by the Visually Impaired Delivered at the 24th Session of the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, 20th July 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to speak in this debate and we congratulate you on your election and extend our compliments to the Secretariat for their excellent work in facilitating this session.

The Computer and Communications Industry Association's members represent a broad cross-section of the information and communications technology (ICT) industries; our members have a substantial stake in the effective operation of the international system of copyright and related rights as they are substantial IP owners and innovators.

We are pleased to see that there is real progress on the visually impaired instrument at this session of the SCCR. We are also glad to see that instead of weekend sessions exclusively dealing with the protection of signals we now see that the focus of these interessionals has changed to prioritise the visually impaired.

We agree strongly with those who have said that the linking of a solution to the visually impaired's needs to broadcasting or any other issue would be infamous. We are glad to see that the risk of such linkage seems to have either receded, and perhaps - we hope - eliminated. We strongly believe that this House, and this institution, should clearly commit itself to an effective and binding solution for the visually impaired before completing work on any other issue. The court of public opinion will not forgive any other outcome. We hope, Mr. Chairman, that this concept is something to which this House will collectively commit itself as an outcome of this meeting.

With respect to the text, Mr. Chairman, it seems to become only longer and more complex rather than simpler and more straightforward. With regard to authorised entities, does anyone seriously believe that it is essential to build in such complex and elaborate safeguard mechanisms that the difficulty and expense of compliance could surpass the capacity of even a well-funded organisation, all in order to prevent the visually impaired from wantonly sending digital books to those outside of their community? No, Mr. Chairman, but unfortunately recent proposals seem to us to far exceed any test of reasonableness and to border, frankly, on being insulting to the very community we are all trying to help. Copyright needs many things in the digital age to be more relevant, Mr. Chairman. Additional complexity is not one of them.



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Mr. Chairman, the credibility of the international copyright system depends upon this institution developing effective solutions for such humanitarian needs such as that articulated by the visually impaired. We beseech this House, Mr. Chairman - do not allow anything to prevent this session being in a position to conclude with a recommendation to the General Assembly that it convene a Diplomatic Conference to deliver a comprehensive and effective instrument for the visually impaired.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.