

## **UN General Assembly affirms World Braille Day**

(News Release from World Blind Union , December 17)

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted a World Blind Union's Resolution affirming World Braille Day, January 4. The purpose of the World Braille Day is to raise awareness of the importance of braille to converting the written word to tactile form for the benefit of blind and partially sighted persons worldwide.

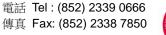
WBU members and partners around the world have reacted with excitement upon receiving the news.

"This is wonderful achievement especially because braille is the means of literacy for blind people. Literacy is the foundation of education and foundation of full integration of employment' says WBU's President **Dr. Fred Schroeder**, live from the UN Head Quarters in New York City. Watch his full remarks on WBU YouTube

Channel <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\_continue=29&v=uWwwLj</u> <u>BiG80</u>

"In United States braille has come to be recognised as an important item because if we can read and write, we can fully participate in all the activities in life that everybody else takes for granted, says Former President of the National Federation of the Blind-USA, **Mr. Marc Maurer.** Watch his full remarks on WBU YouTube Channel: <u>https://youtu.be/5YrrqwbAkIM</u>

From Rwanda, the WBU Second Vice President **Ms. Donatilla Kanimba**, said "This is a great opportunity to advocate for braille as the most important literacy tool for the blind community, especially children here in Africa who cannot pursue education because they cannot access braille for their literacy needs. "As the World Blind Union, we believe that reading is a human right and therefore we are grateful that the UN is





recognizing this right. We urge governments to recognize this right as well and provide braille literacy in schools".

WBU Honorary Life Member and Former CEO, **Dr. Penny Hartin**, says "This is great news indeed! It is wonderful that the UN has recognized the importance of braille. There have been few innovations that have made a more significant impact on the lives of persons with disabilities than the invention of braille. It has continued to bring independence, literacy and empowerment to millions of blind people worldwide. Unlike modern technology, which is too expensive for the majority of blind people around the world, braille can be written and read with the simplest of tools available and useable anywhere despite economic, geographic and linguistic barriers."

**Ms. Martine Abel-Williamson**, the WBU Treasurer from New Zealand, says "This is great news indeed! Braille is so every day – it's on key rings, coffee mugs and fridge magnets and in recipes, diaries and on tubes of skin moisturizer; yet, it also creeps into special occasions, being present in restaurant menus and on wine bottles. Braille enables us to keep in touch, to relate hands-on with the printed word and this in itself may be a touching experience. But in the end, it is us who have to interact with Braille. It is up to us to keep on connecting the dots, drawing the characters through into meaningful words – for it is the only true equivalent to print. Braille is our touch stone to literacy."

**Ms. Diane Bergeron**, Vice-President, Engagement and International Affairs for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), says "It is wonderful that World Braille Day has been acknowledged by the UN and will be commemorated on the birthday of Louis Braille who provided blind and partially sighted persons with a means to access the printed world. Literacy is important for everyone and people with sight loss are no different. Braille equals literacy and opens the doors for opportunities in education and employment. It allows us the chance to reach our goals and make our dreams come true."

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WBU Secretary General **Mr. Ajai Kummar Mittal**, from India, says "Continuous braille reading holds the key to learning good spelling. Also, Braille is essential for subjects requiring intensive study, like mathematics, science, geography, grammar, semantics, phonetics etc. These are just a few examples to show how critical Braille is for us. Braille will remain the doyen of systems for giving to the visually impaired access to knowledge which is the main source of empowerment."

The Resolution will be posted on the UN website: <u>www.un.org</u> as well as the WBU website. WBU will also issue a statement to commemorate the World Braille Day.

We encourage all our members to share their comments on WBU Facebook: <u>https://www.facebook.com/BlindUnion/,</u> Twitter: <u>https://twitter.com/BlindUnion</u> and YouTube: <u>https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3yNe9BFeSSRUbts1YJA</u> LuA

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