

# **AFRICAN UNION OF THE BLIND (AFUB) UNION AFRICAINE DES AVEUGLES (UAFU)**

## **COPYRIGHT COMMENTS**

The following comments are a reply to the comments filed by Steven J. Metalitz on behalf of the Association of American Publishers (AAP), Independent Film and Television Alliance (IFTA), Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), National Music Publishers' Association (NMPA) and Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA)

- The WBU estimates that less than 5% of all published works are produced and available in accessible formats. For developing countries, the figure is far worse, less than 1%. As a result, over 20 million persons in Africa who are blind or otherwise print disabled are being deprived of the fundamental human right to equal access to knowledge, and to participate productively and effectively in cultural, economic and social activity.
- The WIPO Treaty for Sharing Accessible Formats of Copyrighted Works for Persons Who Are Blind or Have Other Reading Disabilities would allow for the cross-border import and export of copyrighted works published in formats accessible to persons who are blind, visually impaired, dyslexic or have other reading disabilities created under a global standard for ecopyright limitations and exceptions. In the United States, Bookshare offers around 40,000 titles and the National Library Services for the Blind and physically handicapped under the Library of Congress provides about 70,000 titles for US citizens to read. However, due to the territorial nature of copyright law, only a fraction of these titles offered to reading disabled persons in the United States under Bookshare and the National Library Services for the Blind can be shared across borders with reading disabled persons in 54 African countries. In comparison, the number of books available in accessible formats in our countries is only 500 owing to factors such as very limited local resources and capacity and the high costs involved in the production of such materials.
- English is one of the most widely spoken languages in our countries. Under the treaty, print disabled communities in the 54 African countries will be able to benefit greatly from gaining access to the vast English language collections of the United States. African countries will also be able to export their own collections to the United States as they develop.
- A treaty that allows for the import and export of accessible works is strongly aligned with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which the US is a signatory. We urge the United States to support the treaty and reinforce its commitment to protect the rights of reading disabled persons.

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