

21st International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) in July 2010 in Vancouver, Canada

The 21st International Congress on Education of the Deaf (ICED) will be held in Vancouver, Canada from July 18 to 22, 2010. Educators and researchers in Deaf education have met regularly since their inaugural conference held in Paris in 1878 to discuss various issues in Deaf education. In the second ICED conference in Milan in 1880, the congress passed a number of resolutions that have had a lasting and negative effect on the education and lives of millions of Deaf people across the world, in particular, by removing the use of sign language from educational programs promoting strict adherence to a oralist education.

In 2008, a rather historic campaign was launched to request a rejection of the resolution passed in 1880 and issued a demand for a formal apology from educators and researchers meeting in Vancouver in 2010. The campaign originally started in British Columbia, Canada and spread to the US and many parts of the world. These proposals led to negotiations with the ICED 2010 planning committee. The final declaration is a collaboration between a group of Deaf grassroots activists and the ICED2010 planning committee and it will be presented at the ICED conference's opening meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Highlighting the linguistic human right aspect, the declaration calls upon all Nations to adhere to the principles of the United Nations emphasising especially those outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and calls for the endorsement of the resolutions adopted by the WFD Madrid Congress in 2007. In addition, the declaration includes a call for a commitment by the Congress to devote itself for working in partnership with Deaf people in order to ensure the educational rights of Deaf globally.

This declaration presents a historical moment for the Deaf community acknowledging the errors of the 1880 Milan Congress and the harmful consequences that have resulted from these resolutions. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) board discussed the drafted declaration in its most recent meeting in Turkey earlier this month and will make its comments known to the committee preparing the document. WFD is likely to be represented in the ICED conference in Vancouver by its president Mr. Markku Jokinen.