



*Legal Seat – Helsinki, Finland*

## **WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF**

An International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO, WHO and the Council of Europe. WFD was established in Rome in 1951.

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### **WFD Statement to be delivered by Eeva Tupi, Human Rights Officer at the opening of the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the CRPD Committee, 15 September 2014**

Thank you, Committee Members. My name is Eeva Tupi and I work as a Human Rights Officer at the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). Our organisation is a member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA). The WFD represents approximately 70 million deaf people around the world and has 133 national deaf associations as its ordinary members in all continents. More than 110 of these countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Deaf people need to understand the substance of the CRPD in order to be able to use it to advance the human rights of deaf people worldwide. To date, only about fifteen countries have ensured the accessibility of deaf communities to the CRPD by providing national sign language translations online. Since the 11<sup>th</sup> CRPD session, the WFD has conducted human rights training for deaf leaders in the Dominican Republic and Mongolia by a deaf trainer in sign language. This training has supported deaf leaders to become more participative in parallel reporting processes. The WFD is committed to continue informing and training our member organisations to support the work of your Committee. National governments and other stakeholders should be obliged to ensure that the CRPD is accessible in national sign languages and that deaf people are aware of their rights.

The WFD is concerned about the insufficient awareness of states parties on the variety of sign languages in implementing CRPD Article 21(e) to promote the use of sign languages. In May, the WFD released a [statement on the standardization of sign languages](#) stressing the importance of understanding that sign languages are fully-fledged natural languages and structurally independent from spoken languages. The Statement emphasises that it is important for sign language work to be done with leadership of deaf native sign language users and WFD Ordinary Members; it is important also to note that the CRPD requires governments to ensure that people with disability can express themselves freely, including in sign language. The WFD believes that any sign language work should reflect all the different signs used by a language community. Therefore, sign language dictionary work should always document all the different signs and their variations that deaf people in a community or area use. It is not advisable to select only one sign for one word when documenting sign languages. The WFD therefore does not support any formal standardization activities related to any sign language, but supports appropriately qualified linguistic research into and the documentation of all sign languages in the world. Mongolia is an example of a country where the government has taken the initiative to standardise sign language and this gives the WFD grave concerns.

In closing, the WFD looks forward to continued cooperation with the Committee in the advancement of human rights for deaf people in all areas of life. Thank you.