

CPDI Commends Landmark Signing of Marrakesh Treaty



Islamabad, December 12, 2023: In a historic move underscoring Pakistan's commitment to global inclusivity, the Marrakesh Treaty was signed today in an impressive ceremony held at the President's House, ushering in a new era of accessibility to published works for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled.

The signing of the Marrakesh Treaty follows a meeting on December 5, where a delegation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) engaged with the President of Pakistan. Led by CPDI Executive Director Mukhtar Ahmed Ali, the delegation presented a set of 'Recommendations for the President to Utilize His Office in Safeguarding and Enhancing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.' During this meeting, members of the delegation passionately advocated for the ratification of the Marrakech Treaty specifically designed for the Print Disabled.

Mukhtar Ahmed Ali, CPDI Executive Director, stated "The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) acknowledges the President's instrumental role in expediting the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty, a pivotal step towards facilitating access to published works for persons with print disabilities. This international treaty actively promotes the production and distribution of accessible formats, including large print, braille, and audiobooks."

The Marrakesh Treaty addresses a substantial challenge faced by individuals with print disabilities, particularly in developing nations such as Pakistan, by enhancing access to published materials for educational and employment purposes. The treaty empowers 'authorized entities,' such as blind people's organizations and libraries, to collaborate and consolidate their accessible collections, reducing redundancy and significantly amplifying the availability of accessible books.

The absence of access to published works in accessible formats contradicts the spirit and obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), a commitment proudly undertaken by Pakistan. The Marrakesh Treaty aligns seamlessly with UNCRPD obligations and plays a crucial role in achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

According to the World Blind Union, a mere 5-7 percent of the millions of books published worldwide annually are produced in accessible formats suitable for people with blindness or other disabilities. The Marrakesh Treaty addresses this imbalance by allowing 'authorized entities' to pool their accessible collections, reducing duplication of effort, saving resources, and increasing the availability of accessible books.

By creating an enabling legal environment, the Marrakesh Treaty not only addresses specific UNCRPD obligations but also makes substantial contributions to achieving multiple SDGs. Pakistan, as a signatory to both the UNCRPD and the Marrakesh Treaty, is poised to witness a positive transformation in ensuring improved access to published works for people with print disabilities while maintaining a delicate balance between the protection of authors' rights and the safeguarding of public interests.

About CPDI

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting peace, development, and good governance. With expertise in advocacy and governance, CPDI strives to bring about positive change in Pakistan.

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