



Address by IFLA President Sinikka Sipilä at the General Assembly of the 80th IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Lyon, France

Dear IFLA Members, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen!

I wish you have had a great conference with many new experiences and contacts and plenty of ideas to take home from the presentations and discussions here during the week. Before we part I would like to share with you some of the achievements during my first year as IFLA President and expectations I have for the second year.

I am happy to say that the IFLA activities during the past year exceeded my expectations in many ways. I have seen many developments taking place around my theme that also promotes IFLA's Strategic Plan and Key Initiatives.

When I took office as IFLA President I was looking forward to promote the progress of the important issues on the IFLA Strategic Plan and Key Initiatives throughout the world and continue to promote libraries in societies. Doing IFLA's work is very inspiring and that inspiration motivates me in my daily work for IFLA. This is especially important as I see a very strong bond between libraries and development which is the core of my Presidential theme building stronger libraries for stronger societies.

As the IFLA President, I will continue to support library development in areas of policy through our key initiatives, to empower libraries around the world. IFLA continues to grow and it is evolving and responding to the needs and challenges of libraries and society.

IFLA has over 1400 members in nearly 150 countries around the world. I have been asked if it is it even possible for such a diverse organization to speak with one voice. I have answered yes, it is possible. As I mentioned in my Opening Address, the Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of the Human Rights, concerning the freedom of opinion and expression, is the leading principle of IFLA and the library and information sector. This is the principle that unites all the libraries, whether a small rural library or a big research library in a developing, transitioning or developed country. They all work for the same goal: to offer as wide access as possible to as much information and knowledge as possible to as many people as possible. This democratic ideal of freedom of access to information is one of the core pillars of strong libraries.

As you may be aware, the current IFLA Key initiatives will come to an end in 2014 and the IFLA GB started the discussion process for the new Key Initiatives for 2015-2016 here in Lyon, defining the priorities of IFLA activities for the next two years.

To help embrace the concept of Digital Democracy and how libraries can encourage citizens participation in the digital age, speakers were invited to the president's session during the conference to further deliberate on my presidential theme, 'Strong Libraries, Strong Societies', building on the IFLA Trend Report.

It is my firm believe that what makes a society strong is its ability to include all of its members in decision-making processes. The President's session, looked at the fundamental conditions necessary for citizen participation in decision making online, including media and information literacy competencies. Availability of local and relevant content and awareness of how the emerging participatory digital society works in practice remained our focus.

With more governments embracing the idea of citizen driven policy initiatives, panellists examined how these ideas work in practice and assessed the extent to which law makers will take up the challenge of citizen participation in the years to come.

The IFLA Trend Report has been discussed all around the world and created positive impact on the role played by libraries in many countries. The Report has been used for instance in drafting library policies and strategies to position libraries in the evolving digital information environment. Although there has been this positive development, IFLA would continue to rely on your input to further develop the Trend Report for the next cycle. So please share with us the outcomes of your discussions on the Trend Report Platform. Send us summaries, videos, photos and blogs where the five key trends have been discussed in your libraries, in your library associations or at your conferences in your respective countries. We discuss the Trend Report also at my second President's Meeting in Istanbul, Turkey on 3-5 June 2015.

Access to information has always been a key priority for IFLA. With a shift from a print environment to a digital one, IFLA increased its advocacy on reforming the copyright laws that shape the ways in which libraries are able to provide their patrons with digital content. Indeed, this has been a focus of IFLA's advocacy efforts at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) for nearly a decade.

We need to appreciate all efforts and positive gains so far, including all lessons learned from the two meetings with WIPO Standing Committee on Copyright & Related Rights (SCCR) this year. Although the meeting did not end conclusively, there has been positive feedback from many WIPO Member states and the WIPO Secretariat during the first meeting. The future work plan of the committee (and fate of libraries and archives) must be decided at the WIPO General Assembly in September 2014. Through IFLA, Libraries are asking for a further extension of the work plan for another two years, and equal time to be given to libraries and archives, alongside broadcasting, on the agenda.

Meanwhile, IFLA will continue to increase its efforts on influencing copyright reform at the national level through its new capacity building grant from Global Libraries. It is for US\$4.9 million over 4 years to "support policy change at national, regional and international levels by building capacity in library networks to advocate for policy frameworks that support public access to digital information in the public libraries."

Advocacy for the Lyon Declaration that was launched on Monday at this conference is our next big effort. The Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development was developed to provide IFLA with an advocacy document that can be used to positively influence the content of the United Nations post-2015 development agenda. More than 200 institutions and associations from within and beyond the library have signed pre-launch, already making the Lyon Declaration the most successful campaign

of its type that IFLA has ever undertaken. Following the launch, IFLA will continue to seek signatories over the next year to increase the profile of the Declaration, and more importantly, the advocacy message that access to information be recognised in the United Nations post-2015 development framework. We need your support in taking it to your library communities and especially to your governments and representatives in the UN. It is very useful if you contact the officials and decision makers in your countries and explain the importance of access to information for development. Because without information there is no development.

One of the key areas that IFLA is focusing on is our cultural heritage. We need to protect our heritage especially in times of disaster and conflict, as we have seen in Timbuktu, Haiti, Indonesia, to name just a few.

Over the coming year, IFLA will launch the IFLA Risk Register for Documentary Cultural Heritage for documentary cultural heritage collections and information resources in areas at risk from natural disasters or conflict; with the broader aim of being compatible with the Blue Shield (ICBS) and UNESCO activities in this area.

IFLA will approach institutions with questionnaires about their documentary cultural heritage and create a secure database with the data gathered. The database will only be accessible for the Blue Shield partners and UNESCO.

Dear IFLA members, dear colleagues, these are just a few highlights of IFLA that will help in building stronger libraries and with their support stronger societies where equality, democracy, social and economic development and general well-being would be possible to reach by as many citizens of the world as possible.

I am looking forward to work with you for the next year, to see these plans come true, to advance the library and information service sector in our societies so that they meet the needs and challenges of library users in an evolving information environment.

I thank you. Merci.

Sinikka Sipilä

IFLA President 2013-2015