



**The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe**

## **Resolutions passed at all EBU General Assemblies**

**2024 - Resolutions adopted at the 12<sup>th</sup> EBU General Assembly, Lisbon, (Portugal) 11th -14th February.**

**2024 - 1**

### **Background**

- Finding the right candidates for the leading positions of EBU is essential to the well-being and smooth operations of the organisation. At this General Assembly, we are fortunate that the list of persons wishing to contribute to EBU either as members of the Board or officers elected directly by the assembly is full of well qualified candidates. However, we are also in a situation where it has proven very difficult to encourage candidates for the position of EBU president.
- While we recognise the efforts and dedicated work of the nominations committee and the need to continue having a nominations committee, we do also realise there is a great need to modernise the process of nomination. This to ensure first of all that both candidates and organisations are well informed about what it involves and what is expected of those elected for the various positions. And second of all, to ensure that delegates have access to relevant information about candidates such as curriculum vitae etc. before voting.
- Finally, we are concerned that some organisations refrain from nominating candidates because they fear the financial and administrative impact.

**This 12th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in Lisbon, Portugal on 11-14 February 2024 resolves as follows**

- I. • The EBU Board prepares and circulates brief descriptions of the various positions within EBU. These descriptions must provide information on which essential competencies are required to fulfil a position, expected tasks to be carried out if elected, requirements set out in the constitution etc.

- II.
  - The EBU nominations committee ensures that candidates provide adequate information such as motivational letter, CV etc. to be circulated to delegates prior to the general assembly.

## **2024 - 2**

### **Background**

- In 2024, the EBU Women's Network is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Throughout the years EBU has passed resolutions and taken actions regarding gender equality issues. The Women's Network wants to ensure that diversity and equality are an integrated part of the EBU agenda, following best practice. This should also be promoted at the national level with member organisations where needed. It is about an inclusive way of thinking and acting. EBU and its national member organisations are working towards an inclusive society with equal opportunities for all to participate in all aspects of life, and we should lead by example.
- This element of work is still an area that needs development.

### **This 12th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in Lisbon, Portugal on 11-14 February 2024 resolves as follows**

Based on the outcomes of the Women's Network meeting of 11 February, to fund a forum of blind and partially sighted women prior to all general assemblies, as stated in resolution 2019-4 approved by the 11th General Assembly in Rome.

## **2019 - Resolutions adopted at the 11th EBU General Assembly, Rome (Italy) 28th-30th October.**

### **2019 - 1**

#### **Background**

- Considering that EBU is one of the six regional organizations of the World Blind Union and that it shares the same principles and values of that organization;
- Recognizing that the UNCRPD is a fundamental instrument to defend the rights and dignity of blind and partially sighted persons all over of the world;
- Recalling that the Sustainable Development Goals require concrete action needed to make the situations of blind and partially sighted persons visible in policy making as enshrined in the list of priorities of the strategic orientation plan of the EBU in the coming years, in line with the title of the 11<sup>th</sup> General Assembly "Leaving no one behind: EBU driving full inclusion through the SDGs";
- Recalling that despite of these instruments blind and partially sighted persons in the world still do not fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms and face restrictions in their daily lives;
- Noting the decision of the World Blind Union and ICEVI that the WBU/ICEVI Assemblies and associated events will be held in Madrid, Spain, from 17<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020, including an international technology exhibition;

- Taking note that these world meetings, together with other important events, will be called *World Blindness Summit – Changing what it means to be blind*.

**This 11th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in Rome, Italy on 28-30 October 2019 resolves as follows:**

- III. EBU supports the celebration of the World Blindness Summit in Madrid that will aim at advancing in the implementation of the SDGs and UN CPRD agenda for blind and partially sighted persons over the world;
- IV. EBU calls on all European organisations of blind and partially sighted persons to make sure that they fully participate in the events of the World Blindness Summit;
- V. EBU encourages all its members to support the participation of other WBU national member organisations, including European countries, to participate in the World Blindness Summit;
- VI. EBU supports European candidates running for different positions in the WBU coming elections;
- VII. EBU commits to encourage European technology businesses to exhibit their products and services for blind and partially sighted persons in the international technology exhibition “TIFLOINNOVA” that will take place during the World Blindness Summit.

## **2019 - 2**

**Background** - In many of our national organisations there is a limit to the number of periods an elected official can serve. Such measures are taken to secure renewal and force the organisations to cultivate new talents. Even though experience is and should be highly valued in our organisation, EBU, it is equally important that we keep with the times and that our board mirrors the broad spectrum of blind and partially sighted persons in Europe.

In the EBU constitution the article V - BOARD, section 1 -Composition, the paragraph 1.4 states: “All members of the Board shall be eligible for re-election”. However, there are no rules about how often the Board members or the President can be re-elected.

**This 11th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in Rome, Italy on 28-30 October 2019 resolves as follows:**

- The EBU Board conducts an investigation into the reasons and mechanisms preventing balanced representation.
- The EBU Board ensures that results and recommendations from this investigation are made available to all members well in advance of the EBU General Assembly 2023 in order for this information to be considered prior to nominations.

## 2019 - 3

**Background** - Action 20 in the presented Strategic Orientation Plan submitted to the General Assembly for the period 2020-2023 states that EBU should strive towards inclusion of under-represented groups. This issue has been addressed at several EBU general assemblies but the nominations for this general assembly have not yielded significant improvement on the matter. This raises some questions as, for example, which are the mechanisms preventing fair representation. Are structural issues or the nature and organisation of the EBU work preventing member organisations from nominating and including all groups in EBU activities?

**This 11th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in Rome, Italy on 28-30 October 2019 resolves as follows:**

To propose to amend the constitution by establishing a limit of two consecutive terms of office for all elected members of EBU bodies.

## 2019 - 4

**Background** - Women with visual impairments face multiple forms of discrimination in society, but also within our national organisations as well as within EBU, gender equality issues are still pressing and equal representation is hardly the case, despite previous resolutions and actions taken.

**This 11th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in Rome, Italy on 28-30 October 2019 resolves as follows:**

1. set up a permanent gender equality committee/working group while maintaining the current set up of the EBU women's network as an email list in the working period 2019 to 2023;
2. facilitate face-to-face networking meetings on gender equality on a regular basis, at least every four years in conjunction with each General Assembly and preferably also mid-term;
3. amend the constitution by adopting a quota system for the purpose of balanced representation of blind and partially sighted women and men of all ages on the Board in the working period 2019 to 2023 and present the amended constitution on the GA in 2023.

This resolution is based on the **EBU Malmo declaration**, a call for action agreed upon by the participants in the EBU GEAR conference held in Malmo, Sweden, June 14-16, 2019.

## 2015 - Resolutions adopted at the 10th EBU General Assembly, London (UK) 26th-28th October.

### 2015 - 1

**Background** - Countries in Europe have started working towards inclusive education in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disability, Article 24. Successful inclusive education requires a variety of activities including amongst others financial resources for equipment, teaching materials and personal support. Adequate training for professionals in nurseries and schools aimed at increasing awareness of the consequences of vision loss for teaching and the measures that are needed to compensate for it is also a necessity. An individualized and holistic support of habilitation intervention for children and young people, beginning early, is a prerequisite for strengthening children's emotional, social and technological skills ahead of preschool and primary school.

Support for children and young families as well as other relatives is also crucial as they need to be included in the process. This requires collaboration between different actors in education and health care, so that children and young people can get the best conditions for an equivalent education.

**This 10th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in London, United Kingdom on 26-28 October 2015 resolves that:**

The Board should consider holding a joint annual member activity with the ICEVI-Europe that focuses on the pre-requisites for a successful inclusive education for children and young people with visual impairments.

## **2015 – 2**

**Background** - In 1951, following the surge of refugees after Second World War, the UN adopted the Convention and subsequent Protocol ensuring the rights and status of refugees

Article 11 in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of humanitarian emergencies. The article further states the obligations for state parties to ensure these rights.

**This 10th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in London, United Kingdom on 26-28 October 2015 resolves that:**

The EBU should lobby the EU and encourage its organisations to lobby their respective Governments to ensure that blind and partially sighted refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants are accorded equal treatment with their sighted peers in line with Article 11 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

## **2015 – 3**

**Background** - The EBU needs to continue its work on improving the gender balance within the organisation's executive and working bodies. There is currently a considerable gender imbalance amongst board officers and members of commissions. As an organisation working for equal opportunities and full participation of blind and partially sighted people in Europe EBU's credibility needs to build on it being an organisation where gender equality is the rule when positions of trust are awarded. Hence, the EBU and its member organisations should urgently assume responsibility in addressing the gender

imbalance amongst positions of trust. As a starting point the EBU needs to improve its knowledge about the state of gender representation amongst its members and review ways in which it can help members to strengthen the gender balance within their organisations. The EBU can draw on experiences of some member states that are already well underway in obtaining full equality as to positions of trust.

**This 10th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in London, United Kingdom on 26-28 October 2015 resolves that:**

The EBU should undertake an inventory of its members on the state of gender equality in decision-making bodies; and should gather best practice regarding efforts to improve gender equality and present a plan of activities to the Board indicating how the EBU can help its members in this work through such activities as work-shops and training sessions.

**2015 – 4**

**Background** - The review of the fees and contributions structure is also an opportunity to revise the current division of member states that are currently divided into “industrial” and “non-industrial” countries. The spirit of solidarity and fair contribution of resources, meaning that financially strong members contribute to increased participation of financially weaker members, has long underpinned the cooperation within the EBU. The terminology used to group member states is however dated and no longer a reflection of the social and economic realities in Europe.

**This 10th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in London, United Kingdom on 26-28 October 2015 resolves that:**

The current terminology to categorise countries should be revised; consequently, the Board is instructed to formulate a proposal to update the terminology so that it is aligned with current socio-economic realities.

**2015 – 5**

**Background** - Sustainable funding and continuity are crucial for EBU's ability to perform its tasks and achieve agreed objectives. Likewise, the sustainability of the reviewed fees and contributions structure is dependent on a timely fulfilment of all members' financial obligations. The review is therefore also an opportunity to not only consolidate EBU's finances but also to increase transparency and strengthen oversight of financial matters by member organisations.

**This 10th General Assembly of the European Blind Union held in London, United Kingdom on 26-28 October 2015 resolves that:**

An agreement on the new fees structure be accompanied by a decision on the need for increased transparency and insight into EBU's budgetary situation including the frequency of reporting on the state and use of EBU's finances; henceforth, the EBU's central office under the oversight of the Treasurer should be tasked to report to the board ahead of each meeting; the report

shall be submitted in English, along with all annexes, two weeks before the meeting to allow time for reflection on the content; the report shall be presented in a comprehensive but easily accessible format to simplify the transcription and dissemination of accessible copies.

### **Votes of thanks**

EBU General Assembly Vote of thanks and appreciation.

Our British host, the Royal National Institute of Blind people (RNIB) has without sparing any effort, utilized enormous resources to plan, organise and implement The 10th EBU General assembly.

The 10th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in London, United Kingdom, on 26–28 October 2015, resolves that:

It be put on record that the Union itself, all participants, delegates, observers and guides, express their deepest and most heartfelt thanks to the host RNIB, for the excellent work that has led to this successfully arranged and conducted Assembly. We thank everybody involved, including the Local Organising Committee, engaged staff, volunteers and sponsors.

The Assembly furthermore wishes to acknowledge and pay tribute to the dedicated work carried out over the past four years by the leadership of EBU and would like to also take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to its past and present President, Wolfgang Angerman, for his immense contribution and stewardship over the term of his presidency.

### **2011 - Resolutions proposed at the EBU 9th General Assembly, Fredericia (Denmark) 4th-7th October**

Resolutions – preamble

In considering the resolutions that had been submitted, the Committee were mindful that they should all be meaningful and achievable within the resources of the EBU and be likely to receive support from national members in achieving objectives. The Committee were conscious of the current economic climate in Europe and believe that the EBU needed to be focussed and targeted in their lobbying and campaigning.

## **2011- 1. The importance of early, broad and specialist support to children with visual impairments, their families and others close to the children.**

### **Background:**

Children with visual impairments, (VI), grow up and live with their families to a greater extent than before. There are still institutions in many countries but the number is decreasing. It is important that families and other persons who frequently meet a VI child, for instance in schools in the home area of the child, have the necessary knowledge so that they can create an environment for the children that develops their potential, skills and knowledge. All persons concerned with a VI child need to better understand their specialist needs in order to support them. The resources that are available in schools do not always reach families or others close to the children.

The 9th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011, resolves that:

- In support of the previous resolution from 2007 and as stated in the new strategic plan, we call on the EBU Board to highlight, within the countries represented by EBU national members, the importance of early, broad and specialist support to children with visual impairments, their families and others close to the children.
- And acts, in partnership with others, including ICEVI Europe, in order to create a service model and tool kit of materials that enable early intervention measures and successful inclusion in education, including the training of staff and provision of technical aids.

## **2011 – 2. Encourage and facilitate greater diversity in respect of gender, age and sight levels in all bodies within EBU**

### **Background:**

Attempts have been made through previous resolutions and initiatives, but very slow progress has been made to achieve greater diversity within the committees, Board and other bodies within EBU.

There has been much effort, particularly by the working groups covering women, youth, elderly, low vision and additional disabilities and the time is now right to bring about lasting change.



The 9th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011, resolves that:

The Board are asked to pay particular attention to measures that will encourage and facilitate greater diversity in respect of gender, age and sight level in all bodies within EBU. Noting that there have been previous resolutions and constitutional proposals, the Board should ensure that by the next General Assembly the issue of diversity has been addressed.

### **2011 – 3. Free circulation of labour within the European Union**

#### **Background:**

The free circulation of goods, services and labour is highly protected within the European Union (EU). In the EU member states this is also incorporated in national legislation. However, national rules and legislation often prevent persons with disabilities from using technical aids or accessing benefits received in their home country, which is an EU member, in another EU member state. Also other forms of support directed to persons with disabilities on the labour market are restricted to be used only in their home countries.

In a global world and in a labour market that is not limited to a separate country, it becomes even more important to spread experiences of work, studies and languages.

In Article 27, Work and Employment, in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (CRPD), it is stated that:

"Recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others"

Since the EU has ratified the CRPD this commitment should also cover the cooperation between the EU member states.

The 9th General Assembly of the European Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011, resolves that the EBU Board:

- Takes all forcible measures needed to influence EU, national governments and other relevant institutions to stop all forms of discrimination that prevent persons with disabilities from taking advantage of the free circulation of labour within EU.

- Makes sure that EU and all states that have ratified the CRPD are reminded of their commitments stated in its Article 27.

## **2011 - 4. Opening up EBU leadership**

### **Background:**

EBU is a strong organisation with competent leadership representing blind and partially sighted people all over Europe. In order to further strengthen EBU we need to find procedures that will guarantee the most representative and competent board and other bodies. We need a system that will promote continuity of experience, ensure renewal of expertise and guarantee knowledge and new ideas.

To further support democracy it is important to make it possible for the General Assembly to vote for the most suitable candidates nominated to the EBU positions, regardless of the financial situation of their national organisation.

The 9th General Assembly of the European Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011, resolves that:

The EBU board shall investigate revision of the EBU constitution in respect of the following:

- A maximum of two consecutive periods in the same position for all board members
- Financial support to allow participation in all EBU bodies

## **2011 – 5. EU Non Discrimination Directive**

### **Background:**

During many years EBU has tried to influence the work within the EU to make them adopt a directive against discrimination and in favour of visually impaired persons' right to full participation in society.

The EU non-discrimination directive is one of the most important issues when it comes to policies on persons with disabilities. The matter has been negotiated but not finalised and there is much work to be done.

The 9th General Assembly of the European Blind Union convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October, resolves that:

The strategic plan includes reference to the horizontal non-discrimination directive and, whilst it is believed that this will continue to be a hard struggle, the Board should continue it's lobbying for the adoption of an EU non-discrimination directive to include access to ICT, manufactured goods, television, transport systems and the built environment.

## **2011 - 6. Maintain the financial security and policies of inclusion for disabled people in Europe at a time of financial crisis.**

### **Background:**

We are extremely concerned that women and men with disabilities of all ages, and their families, are paying for the current economic crisis by reductions in their standard of living, income and benefits, education and employment opportunities and support services, or by cuts in support to their representative organisations.

The 9th General Assembly of the European Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011, calls on:

All EU institutions, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and all European Governments to ensure that people with disabilities and their families do not pay for the developing economic crisis.

They should continue to engage in supporting and developing policies of inclusion with concrete measures, such as those outlined in EBU's Dublin Declaration of May 2009. This means building a Europe for all its citizens where their contribution is rewarded with the development of the best economic, social and political future for all Europeans.

## **2011 – 7. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities and the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan**

### **Background:**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities gives a framework for building an inclusive society for blind and partially sighted people in Europe. Not all countries in Europe have ratified the Convention and its optional protocol.

The Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006 – 2015, includes similar but more specific measures for Europe and the mid-term review found that there is still much to be done. The Council of Europe includes all member countries of the EBU.

The 9th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011 calls on all governments throughout Europe:

- To ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and
- To fulfil by 2015 the requirements of the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 in line with the mid-term review conducted in 2010.

## **2011 – 8. Effectiveness in EBU Work**

### **Background:**

Due to lack of resources and time some commissions and steering groups have reported that they struggled with their work. In some cases this has also been due to a lack of expertise.

The EBU General Assembly has considered the draft strategic plan but the Board now needs to consider the proposals made by the 4 workshops and the implementation of the plan.

The 9th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011:

Encourages the Board to be realistic in its work programme and to focus on achievable goals with measurable outcomes. To that effect the Board should put in place appropriate structures, such as time limited task or project groups, standing commissions and steering groups.

## **2011- 9. Vote of thanks and appreciation**

The General Assembly of the EBU is considered the prime and most important event when it comes to meetings, exchange of political points of view, developing strong and powerful policies, making friends, networking, electing leaders and bringing together all EBU's available resources with the explicit intention of improving organisational capacity across Europe as well as the lives of visually impaired citizens throughout the Union.

Our Danish host, the Danish Association of the Blind (DAB), has with co-operation and support from the Nordic countries, without sparing any effort,

utilized enormous resources to plan, organise and now implement the event in which we have all taken part.

**The 9th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Fredericia, Denmark, on 4-7 October 2011, resolves that:**

It be put on record that the Union itself, all participants, delegates, observers and guides, express their deepest and most heartfelt thanks to the host, DAB, for the excellent work that has led to this successfully arranged and conducted Assembly. We thank everybody involved, including the Local Organising Committee and sponsors.

The Assembly furthermore wishes to acknowledge and pay tribute to the dedicated work carried out over the past four years by the leadership of EBU and would like to also take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to its outgoing President, Lord Colin Low, for his immense contribution and stewardship over the term of his presidency.

**2007 - Resolutions adopted at the EBU 8th General Assembly, Antalya (Turkey), 24-26 October**

[Final text as proof read by John Wall and Colin Low.  
22 January 2008]

**2007-1. THE RIGHT TO ACCESS BOOKS IN THEIR UNABRIDGED FORM**

Background:

In the European national context, visually impaired people are often offered certain books in alternative formats only in their abridged version.

It is apparent that people with a visual impairment have access to books in suitable formats such as recorded and in braille, to a significantly smaller extent and generally at a much higher price compared with sighted persons.

**The 8th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Antalya, Turkey, on 24-26 October 2007, resolves that:**

visually impaired people have the right to read all works transcribed into any format which is accessible to them in their entirety

**and therefore the Assembly**

- calls for action by the EBU Board (together with the appropriate thematic

body as well as national organizations of the blind) aimed at authors' and publishers' associations at European and national level to convince them to apply at least the same copyright exceptions given to public libraries, to the centres for the production and distribution of books for the blind, the partially sighted and other persons with a reading difficulty. Every effort should also be made towards achieving equality with regard to availability and pricing of books in relevant accessible formats.

The General Assembly furthermore urges associations of the blind and partially sighted within Europe to be on the look-out for the appropriate application of the principles of the EU Copyright Directive and to keep themselves updated on national legislation that incorporates it, asking for severe sanctions in case of non-compliance.

## **2007-2. THE EBU TO BE ACTIVE IN PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, TOGETHER WITH ITS OPTIONAL PROTOCOL**

Background:

One of the most significant achievements by the disability movement on the international scene is the adoption of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

However, from adoption at UN level there is much to be done before the Convention can ensure progress and compel enforcement so as to improve the situation of and opportunities for persons with disabilities in industrialized as well as in developing countries.

The Convention has to be signed by a number of countries, a first step which has taken place to a large degree.

Countries have to adapt, change and modify their legislation, practice, administrative rules and bodies in order to prepare the ground for ratification which, from the perspective of the individual with a disability, is the decisive step towards true implementation of the principles contained in the UN Convention.

Ratification should then take place, preferably by more than the minimum number of twenty states, so as to bring the Convention into force and, finally, the optional protocol giving individual citizens a right to complain to the monitoring body must also be adopted and ratified. This last step is necessary to ensure that individuals and their organizations may file complaints if the human rights of persons with disabilities are violated, and it is also of paramount importance to ensure that the Convention is observed

internationally and that the principles and intentions of the UN Convention are carried out at national level.

With this complicated, lengthy but important process in mind, **the 8th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Antalya, Turkey, on 24-26 October 2007, resolves that**

European countries and the European Union should take the initiative and be an example to others by adopting all necessary measures to implement the UN Convention and its optional protocol and to make the rules operational in as many European countries as possible;

the EBU Board should ensure that a conference is held midway through the term to review progress and serve as an opportunity to exchange experiences of implementing the intentions and principles of the UN Convention and its protocol;

the EBU Board should make it a priority to assist in preparing and publishing to all EBU members written material informing them about the Convention and its protocol, which may serve as a basis for training and educational activities so that members will be able to promote and lobby for the national ratification and implementation of the Convention and its protocol and

the EBU, through its relevant political and other influential bodies, should use its best endeavours to ensure that the Convention and Protocol are treated and promoted like all other UN Human Rights instruments as regards their geographical extent and conceptual interpretation, including the establishment of administrative and monitoring measures.

### **2007-3. IMPROVED REPRESENTATION AND DIVERSITY IN NATIONAL DELEGATIONS, ETC.**

Background:

At General Assemblies of the EBU since 1987, resolutions have repeatedly highlighted the importance, benefits and the sensible use of resources achieved by ensuring gender balance in national delegations and an increased presence of visually impaired women in commissions and in EBU's governing bodies. With the indisputable fact in mind that the EBU is composed of national and other members, is financed through and finds its resources from within the national blind movements, the desired changes at EBU level must first begin as national initiatives.

The continuous respect for, and functioning and strengthening of, EBU is closely geared to respect for the sovereignty of its national members. It is therefore necessary to find methods to achieve the desired goal of

accelerating gender balance without violating the sense of ownership by national members and national self-determination. Strong sanctions may be counter-productive.

The need to improve gender balance is, as stated, of paramount importance as a characteristic of a contemporary, modern international body.

Key words in today's discourse are: Equal opportunities, equality and equity, networking and participation based on interchange and dialogue. Those principles should be determinative in attaining the above goals.

Based on existing network initiatives and the trend, although too slow, towards a gender balanced EBU, it is resolved

**that the 8th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Antalya, Turkey, on 24-26 October 2007, charges the Board to ensure that**

- (1) a formal network of women within EBU be established;
- (2) a woman member of the EBU Board be appointed to formally link up with the network;
- (3) 3-5 other active women are appointed to form a steering committee to support and coordinate the network;
- (4) one woman from each member country is appointed to maintain and safeguard national influence and receive information from the work of EBU;
- (5) the steering committee has the right to contact other commissions and working groups within EBU, to promote their gender work and bring back information to the network.
- (6) Furthermore, the Board may consider how a subsidy policy might be developed that favours gender balanced national delegations and, moreover, how best practice initiatives in specific countries have led to improved representation at international meetings.

#### **2007-4. THE RIGHT TO LEARN BRAILLE**

Education of blind children is an issue which enjoys very high priority. The cultural emancipation of the blind worldwide has been made possible by the revolutionary invention of the braille writing and reading system. The introduction of computers and speech synthesizers is bringing about dramatic changes in the upbringing and education of students with a visual impairment.



In some countries important events were arranged to commemorate, in 2002, 150 years since the death of Louis Braille. Moreover, it is noted with excitement that numerous events are being planned for the commemoration and celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of Louis Braille in 2009. Finally, competitions like the Onkyo Braille Contest are an excellent way to promote braille and highlighted the many personal reasons for guarding, using and promoting braille.

**With this in mind, the 8th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Antalya, Turkey, on 24-26 October 2007, resolves**

that the EBU Board, together with the Commission dealing with educational matters, should be charged with developing a concrete work plan and promotional material, the release of which should coincide with the celebration taking place in 2009. This plan, and the proposed material, should highlight and make recommendations aimed at ensuring that the following requirements are in place in all EBU member countries:

- 1) Acceptance that correct and thorough knowledge of the braille reading and writing system is an important foundation for the independence and freedom of all persons who are blind or severely partially sighted, that is, whose residual sight does not enable them to read.
- 2) That blind persons have at their disposal appropriate braille training material and proficient braille instructors who, free of charge, can offer training on various levels.
- 3) All people with a severe visual impairment have the right to learn braille and use it, whether embossed on paper or made available in conjunction with modern ICT technology.
- 4) The above EBU bodies, as well as the Technology and Liaising Commissions, should be aware of the potential promotion of braille on pharmaceutical products and other consumer product packaging as a useful opportunity and a good reason to become acquainted with and even conversant with braille.

**2007-5. INTER-GENERATIONAL AND GENDER COHESION**

As society has changed, and the extended family is no longer the norm in most European societies, there are strong reasons to believe that interaction between the young and the elderly has decreased.

Many elderly people feel that there are aspects of society which put

participating in it out of their reach due to such things as increasing dependency on high technology, and the vast youth culture that shapes the young in ways difficult to grasp if you are not a part of it.

At the same time, the EBU and national organizations must appreciate the knowledge and experience that elderly blind and partially sighted people can contribute.

Many young people find that they cannot make their voices heard due to a lack of knowledge and experience of the decision-making processes of society, or they feel uncertain about how to approach the labour market, which education they should choose or how they can manage a family as visually impaired persons.

At the same time all organizations must face the fact that its young members, when properly trained, are needed as a future natural replacement. They can offer inspiration and act as an asset towards innovation and creativity.

These problems can be combated and potential utilized through an increase in contact between people of both sexes and of different ages. Consequently, EBU urges its member organizations to do their utmost to create accessible venues that accommodate people of all ages regardless of sex. Mentor programs, joint workshops and champions for youth and the elderly should also be put in place.

Ensuring that different age groups are represented in official bodies of the organization makes for greater diversity, and diversity is the fuel of dynamics.

**With the above in mind, and in the spirit of diversity, the 8th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Antalya, Turkey, on 24-26 October 2007, resolves that**

the EBU urges all member organizations to:

Incorporate the perspectives of life-long learning and inter-generational cohesion into all activities

Work towards age and gender balance within official bodies

Set up mentor programmes, inter-generational workshops that facilitate training and debate, and generally work towards establishing venues where people of different ages and both sexes meet and exchange experiences.

Likewise the EBU Board is charged with ensuring that an equality and diversity forum will precede the 9th General Assembly so that a specific focus

can be given to the needs, challenges and strengths stemming from the young and the elderly sections of the blind movement, as well as the necessary and indisputable need for equal participation and opportunities between the sexes.

## **2007-6. EBU FOCUS ON BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED CHILDREN**

Children are the building bricks of tomorrow in our society and in our organizational work.

Children are entitled to enjoy a special place in the work of international organizations, and in human rights instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and, likewise, within the blindness movement itself through the WBU children's Committee. It should also be recalled that, in the Millennium Development Goals, a commitment has been made to achieve a substantial increase in the provision of basic primary education. This goal is directly targeted at children and aims at increasing their opportunities and improving their chances of enjoying prosperity in adult life. This goal should benefit all children, including children with disabilities, and, more specifically, visually impaired children.

In the European environment today, those speaking on behalf of children with a visual impairment are their parents, and those active within the professional environment such as teachers, represented through ICEVI, pedagogues, developers of technology and other professionals. Children cannot speak for themselves.

The challenges, needs and other issues relating to children with visual impairment have not so far enjoyed vast attention within the EBU, although bodies dealing with education and rehabilitation have at times offered some attention.

**The 8th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Antalya, Turkey, on 24-26 October 2007, resolves the following in order to introduce change and proactive development within this field:**

1. For the Board, together with the Commission on Culture and Education, to develop a plan on how and when to embark on this new policy area. The plan should also indicate how to generate necessary resources. It should be considered how children's issues could become a cross-cutting issue which in the future could be dealt with by all relevant EBU bodies.
2. In due course to establish co-operation with ICEVI with a view to developing a framework and necessary instruction toolkits for organizations of the blind in countries where mainstream (inclusive) education of the blind is non-existent

or only exists to a small extent.

3. In close co-operation with ICEVI Europe, to identify ways and means of establishing a comprehensive mapping exercise and, if deemed necessary, research to establish reliable information about visually impaired children's needs and the extent of respect for their fundamental rights in all relevant areas, from early intervention until the end of their formal education.

4. To initiate specific activities aimed at developing, emancipating and empowering children and youth, be it in camps, through excursions or in other ways that create independence and a framework for excitement. The Children's World Congress arranged by the WBU in collaboration with ONCE, Spain, is a good example which could serve as inspiration for further similar events.

5. The Board is charged with submitting to the 9th General Assembly a report on the accomplishments so far and recommendations for future action.

## **2007-7. VOTE OF THANKS AND APPRECIATION**

The General Assembly of the EBU is considered the prime and most important event when it comes to meetings, exchange of political points of view, developing strong and powerful policies, making friends, networking, electing leaders and bringing together all EBU's available resources with the explicit intention of improving organizational capacity across Europe as well as the lives of visually impaired citizens throughout the Union.

Our Turkish host, the Turkish Federation of the Blind (TFB), has, without sparing any effort throughout the past two years, utilized enormous resources to plan, organise and now implement the event in which we have all taken part.

**The 8th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, convened in Antalya, Turkey, on 24-26 October 2007, resolves that** it be put on record that the Union itself, all participants, delegates, observers and guides, express their deepest and most heartfelt thanks to the host, TFB, for the excellent work that has led to this successfully arranged and conducted Assembly. Everybody involved, including the Planning Committee and the organization, including its leadership under the able chairmanship of Hasan Tatar, having generously offered financial and manpower resources, coordination and auxiliary staff, guides, interpreters and volunteers, did their utmost to create an outstanding framework for the Assembly.

A word of appreciation is also extended to Turkey's Publicity Fund under the Prime Minister's Office for financial support, as well as the EU representation

in Ankara, who supported the youth project financially, The Turkish Republic Cooperation Agency which supported the air travel of delegates from six less wealthy countries, and the Marinal Transport Administration of the Istanbul Municipality who provided the gifts in the delegates' bags. Finally a word of thanks to the governor and mayor of Antalya who arranged for transport and other important services.

The staff and management at the Dedeman Hotel made our stay most enjoyable and rendered excellent, friendly service at all times.

The Assembly furthermore wishes to acknowledge and pay tribute to the dedicated work carried out over the past four years by the leadership of EBU:

President Lord Colin Low  
First Vice-president Mr. Alexandre Neumyvakin  
Second Vice-President Prof. Tommaso Daniele  
Secretary General Mr. Vaclav Polasek  
Treasurer M. Julien Aimi

Board members:  
Wolfgang Angermann  
Birgitta Blokland  
Vassil Dolaptschiev  
Ann-Christin Fast  
Xavier Grau Sabaté  
Yannis Vardakastanis

and Chairpersons of all commissions, committees and working groups.

## **2003 - The following resolutions were passed by the EBU Seventh General Assembly, Athens, 26-28 November.**

### **2003 A. Resolutions Submitted by the Women's Forum**

#### **2003 A1. Towards a culture of equality**

Whereas the EBU Women's Forum and General Assembly 1999 called for a plan on equality,

The EBU Women's Forum gathered in Athens 21st-24th of November 2003,

- adopts the equality plan proposed by the EBU CAIBPSW and urges the EBU to implement this plan in the working period 2003-2007 as a basis to achieve a strong and democratic organization, that truly defends the interests of ALL

blind and partially sighted people in Europe ;

- requests the EBU Board to explore possibilities for funding activities that are needed for implementing the plan.

## **2003 A2. Balanced representation**

**2.1** Whereas the Women's Forum held in Athens from 21st-24th November 2003 notes with regret the lack of gender balance in the composition of national delegations to the 7th EBU General Assembly,

Whereas the Women's Forum notices that the constitutional amendment, adopted by the 6th General Assembly in 1999 does not show the expected outcome,

The Women's Forum gathered in Athens, Greece 21st – 24th of November 2003, resolves :

- That national members should be urged to respect and comply with the EBU constitution,

- That as from the start of the 8th General Assembly :

Sanctions should be imposed on those members whose delegations do not comply with the constitution

By depriving that national member of any votes which are in excess of the number it could cast were it complying with the gender balance rule.

Sanction would not be applied against these delegations if their unbalanced gender composition compensates the result of the overall gender unbalance in the General Assembly.

**2.2** Whereas balanced representation in the EBU bodies is still not a fact,

Whereas balanced representation is a matter of democracy,

The EBU Women's Forum, gathered in Athens, Greece, 21st–24th of November 2003 resolves that every commission's membership is composed of a minimum of one third of a different gender, with exception of the women's commission, respecting its specific function and tasks.

## **2003 A3. The right to motherhood**

Whereas it is stated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article One, that everyone is equal in rights and dignity,

the EBU Women's Forum gathered in Athens 21st – 24th November 2003 advocates every blind and partially sighted women's human right to decide

whether or not to have a child.

We request the EBU board and national members to make the appropriate authorities responsible for maternity services aware that accessible information must be available for all perspective parents taking into account the views of blind and partially sighted women. However we defend the human right of the blind or partially sighted woman to make the final decision.

#### **2003 A4. Right to adoption**

The EBU Women's Forum gathered in Athens 21st – 24th November 2003 calls upon the EBU board and national members to campaign for and inform the adoption services on the following statement :

Blindness or partial sight may never be an a ground to be refused to adopt, nor be an obstacle to have the same opportunities regarding the right to adoption.

And that all information must be provided in accessible formats.

#### **2003 A5. Violence and discrimination**

Whereas it is a human right to live without violence and discrimination,  
Whereas the EBU Daphne project results show that a great number of blind and partially sighted European women do suffer or have suffered all kinds of violence,

Whereas these results only are a first step towards combatting violence,

The EBU Women's Forum gathered in Athens November 21st – 24th 2003

- resolves that the EBU and all national members must recognise and support all action to eliminate all forms of violence,

- urges the EBU to seek funding to follow up this very important project in the framework of the EU Daphne Program, in order to continue campaigning for research and work in raising awareness, combatting and preventing all kinds of violence against blind and partially sighted women,

- resolves the campaigning for inclusion of self-defence courses and assertiveness training in rehabilitation programmes offered to all blind and partially sighted.

#### **2003 A6. ICT for all**

Whereas IT literacy in our days is indispensable to access information, to equal opportunities to become full and active members in society and to employment,

Whereas in most countries subsidies for computer equipment and adaptations are limited to those who are working or are students,

Whereas women do not have equal opportunities to access these subsidies as they are under represented, especially in employment,

Whereas training, software and hardware because of their price are not accessible for many, especially women,

Be it resolved at the EBU Women's Forum 2003, gathered in Athens 21-24 of November

That the same provisions should be available for all blind and partially sighted people, regardless of their employment or student status,

That EBU and its members lobby for this with the governments,

That ongoing training is provided by national members to ensure equal opportunities to using equipment and programmes and thus increasing employability,

That hard and software should be made available by offering these at an accessible price or by a lending system, including a maintenance and upgrade contract.

### **2003 A7. Elderly women**

Whereas the elderly women represent more than half of the blind and partially sighted people in this age group, the Women's Forum gathered in Athens, Greece 21st-24th of November 2003,

Urges the EBU Board and national organisations to pay more attention to the day-to-day needs of the growing numbers of elderly blind and partially sighted women.

### **2003 A8. Solidarity**

Whereas people with disabilities in developing countries are often among the poorest of the poor,

Whereas women with visual impairment in developing countries are suffering from multiple discrimination, for being blind or partially sighted, and secondly for being women,

The EBU Women's Forum, gathered in Athens 21st-24th of November 2003



Requests the EBU Board to encourage the national members to take up projects in developing countries which include the gender aspect.

## **B. Resolutions Submitted by the Board**

### **2003 B1. Mobility**

The Mobility and Transport Conference, held on 14 and 15 October 2002, in Paris, organised by the European Blind Union Commission on Mobility and Guide Dogs, and the Commission on the Partially-Sighted, resolves that:

#### **Resolution 1**

Concerning mobility training for blind and partially sighted people, and the education of instructors in mobility:

1. Mobility training should be available to all blind and partially-sighted people in all age groups, and should include people with additional disabilities. Mobility training must be funded and regulated by national government.
2. Information about where and how blind and partially-sighted people can obtain mobility training should be widely available in all reading formats.
3. Mobility instructors must be well trained including the use of various mobility systems and technical aids, and special needs provisions. The mobility instructors need not be guide dog instructors, but they should know about guide dogs.
4. The quality of training of mobility instructors should be appraised on a regular basis, involving users of the service.
5. High quality mobility training should be available to children in both ordinary and special schools.

#### **Resolution 2**

To enable blind and partially-sighted people to travel at all times, independently, safely and with confidence:

1. All relevant travel information should be available in accessible formats, such as Braille, large print, tape and disk.
2. All public transport vehicles should be designed to reflect the needs of blind and partially-sighted people.
3. All vehicles, and bus and rail stations should be adequately staffed at all times when in use.

4. All forms of public transport, including taxis, must accept guide dogs, without imposing extra charges.

5. Travel concessions should be standardised throughout Europe.

### **Resolution 3**

All public buildings should be so designed as to be fully accessible for people with physical or sensory disabilities, and guide dogs should be admitted free of charge.

### **Resolution 4**

To enable all blind and partially-sighted people to walk and travel safely and independently, we should work with local and national governments to achieve standardisation throughout Europe, which should include pavements, tactile paving, road crossings and traffic signals. There should also be standardisation in the design of public facilities such as toilets.

### **Resolution 5**

All drivers should have five-yearly medical checks, including eye tests, and both health checks and eye tests should be annually after age seventy. They should be instructed to cease driving if their eyesight falls below an acceptable standard. All drivers should understand the significance of the white cane and the guide dog harness, and also the deafblind symbol cane.

### **Resolution 6**

Each country should provide a guide dog training course, available free to any blind person who requires a guide dog as their mobility aid. This training should be of a high quality standard, approved by organisations of blind people. This high standard of training should be maintained throughout the life of the dog.

The following resolution was added by the EBU Commission on the Activities of Elderly Blind and Visually Impaired People :

### **Resolution 7**

It is acknowledged that the majority of blind and partially sighted people are over the age of 65. The needs of older people should be particularly considered in the provision of facilities. Special areas include:

- mobility skills training to meet the needs of elderly persons ;
- provision of door to door transport and properly trained guides ;
- accessible public transport that accommodates the specific needs of older people who are also frail.

## **2003 B2. Youth**

The EBU Youth Commission have submitted the following resolutions :

### **Resolution 1**

European Blind Union and Unity among Visually Impaired Youth

Centralisation is a double edged sword, as the decision making will be further from the citizen, and the poorer countries can get directives which would be too expensive to follow. Even so the European Blind Union's Youth Commission (EBUYC) is convinced that centralisation can be to the disabled people's benefit. However, this depends on the European Blind Union's (EBU) ability to balance between the edges. The EBUYC see it as imperative to work for central decisions that are economically possible for all EU countries to apply, and in the spirit of universal design. As such, it is at least as important to stop all directives that might result in any kind of discrimination.

As young people are a minority in the EBU there are certain measures which need to be taken to ensure an active political environment among youth, and the recruitment to the EBU: It is a must to have frequent gatherings that include all interested youth in Europe. The Youth Commission find European youth camps - like the one held in Poland in July 2003 - and conferences to be the most suitable venues. To help make a good community for visually impaired youth in Europe, it is important to have an open and informal discussion forum. This will be attractive to youth who are not already politically active, and thus hopefully increase participation. The EBUYC intends to encourage the creation of an informal meeting place on the Internet.

It is of great importance that youth are included in the political work of the EBU. The visually impaired youth of Europe are concerned about their future. The EBUYC would like the EBU to focus more on integration. It is also necessary to work more actively on changing the attitudes towards visually impaired.

### **Resolution 2**

Abled by Disability

Can it be that disabled people see things others don't ? We think yes. The improvements that are considered necessary to make society accessible for disabled people point out solutions that make everyone's everyday life easier :

- Signs that are good for visually impaired are great for the rest of society.
- The aural information blind depend on when using public transport, will be to your benefit whenever you go to an area you don't know.
- If a place is easy to get around in a wheelchair, it is also easy to get around

with a pram. When counters, switches, information, etc. is at a convenient height to a person in a wheelchair, it is also a good solution for anybody who is below average height. - Standardisation and logical infrastructures are important means of making buildings and surroundings possible to navigate for visually impaired. Obviously this is an advantage to anyone - in case of fire, the stairs should be by the elevators and not hidden away.

- Don't you get tired of reading all those long e-mails? Visually impaired and dyslexics get the computer to read them out loud. By using the technology of speech synthesis you could close your eyes, lean back and work at the same time. If you could do that, you wouldn't have to waste resources on printing out documents because the screen makes your eyes weary.

So always keep in mind that a disability makes people able to give you better solutions - simply because the blind man sees things you don't.

### **Resolution 3**

Age has always been a way of measuring wisdom, but is it still a valid way to judge someone's experience by? Of course it is - but only to a certain extent. In our modern world, the most experienced group in high-tech communication is by far youth and young adults. Now as earlier, a young person does a continuous qualitative study of the educational systems around the world - harvesting experiences that could never be gathered by an older person without actually confronting the students.

Due to the changes in society the strong hierarchic structure between generations is no longer valid to the same extent. Only fifty years ago terms as "youth culture" and "young adults" were not used, but today these are commonly accepted as important factors in society. In itself, this shows that youth make certain exclusive experiences. Thus this supports the idea of the youth as a valuable partner in all activities - simply because knowledge is power.

We say that youth have unique knowledge on certain issues, but obviously this applies to all other groups in society as well. So, are there really any boundaries? Or are the boundaries of age artificial? As long as we keep in mind that people meet their challenges in different ways, and that equal respect is the key to good cooperation between generations, we think that the artificial boundaries of age will disappear.

In consequence, it is imperative that both youth and older members of the EBU forget their prejudices and let the better argument decide the course - not the age, gender or appearance of the person mediating it.

### **2003 B3. Partially Sighted People**

**Resolution:** To approve the EBU Policy Statement on Low Vision submitted by the Commission.

### **2003 B4 Commissions and Committees**

1. Italy has submitted the following resolution :

"Whereas considerable financial resources are needed to enable commissions to work,

"Whereas a considerable number of members of commissions, for various reasons, can only participate in the work of their commission occasionally, and in some cases they do not participate in any meetings during the whole work period,

"whereas the issues some commissions should deal with are very similar,

This general assembly resolves that EBU Board, in the execution of its duty to appoint commissions (see Section 1.1 of Article VI of the EBU Constitution) should limit the number of commissions to the bare minimum whenever possible, extending the tasks assigned to them if necessary."

2. The Commission on Human and Social Rights proposes that its name should be changed to the Commission on the Rights of Blind and Partially Sighted People.

3. The Commission on Mobility and Guide Dogs proposes that its name should be changed to the Commission on Mobility, Access and Guide Dogs.

4. The Chair of the Rehabilitation, Vocational Training and Employment Commission proposes that "rehabilitation" should be deleted from the remit of the Commission.

5. The Nominations Committee proposes that the general assembly should appoint a credentials committee.

### **2003 B5. Genetics**

The Board proposes the adoption of its policy paper on genetics (previously circulated).

### **2003 B6. Postal Services**

The EBU Working Group on Access to Information have submitted the resolutions below.

"The following principles should be recognised in relation to postal services for

blind and partially sighted people:

1. Postal services for blind and partially sighted people should be available from all service providers in the market, not just from one national universal service provider.
2. Postal services for blind and partially sighted people should be reliable, secure and have a guaranteed priority delivery speed.
3. Postal services for blind and partially sighted people should be physically accessible, i.e. service providers need to maintain a number of collection points and special collection and delivery arrangements in rural areas.
4. Postal services for blind and partially sighted people should be free of charge (freepost).
5. No distinction should be made between postal items and items of correspondence for or from a blind or partially sighted person or their organisations. All of these should be carried without charge. The same should apply to all special aids or equipment for blind and partially sighted people. A realistic weight allowance should be applied.
6. Liberalisation of the postal services market in any country or region should be conducted with carefully crafted guarantees for blind and partially sighted people, at it could otherwise seriously undermine these basic principles.“

### **2003 B7. Deafblindness**

In line with all United Nations conventions on Human Rights and the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for People with Disabilities :

We, representatives of the deafblind people in Europe, united at the 5th EBU Deafblind Conference on October 20th 2003, in Fredericia, Denmark, urge all governments in Europe

- To recognise deafblindness as a unique disability ;
- To recognise all persons with deafblindness as persons with the right to full participation in all areas of society including education, information, communication, employment, social and political life ;
- To ensure the quality of life, social inclusion, opportunities of employment, mobility, and full participation of all persons with deafblindness by providing the necessary services including :

Quality special education ;

Qualified interpreters ;

Personal assistants and guides ;

Rehabilitation ;

Accessible information ;

Full access to all aspects of the information society ;

Accessible communication in the format and language needed by each individual deafblind person ;

Provision of technical aids ;

Assistive and adapted devices ; and

Accessibility in the entire environment.

- To ensure a legal basis for the necessary provisions and services, as well as ensuring that the development and delivery of services take place in partnership and dialogue with deafblind persons and their organisations.

## **C. Resolutions Submitted by the Resolutions Committee**

### **C1. Optional Introduction of Quota Systems In the Labour Market**

The 7th General Assembly of the EBU convened in Athens from Nov. 25-28 2003, resolves that in such countries where the organizations of the blind consider it appropriate and useful to introduce special systems to promote the job for their members, legislation or other appropriate legal measures should be introduced to establish a quota system at private enterprises and state institutions. Such measures aim at improving the possibilities for young professionals with higher education to obtain employment in the labour market.

### **C2. Cooperation with Professionals in Europe**

The 7th General Assembly of the EBU convened in Athens from Nov. 25-28 2003, resolves that the EBU includes on its website a list covering a list of professions and occupations which blind and partially-sighted persons can carry out. This would serve as means to inspire others in their choice of professional career.

### **C3. The UN Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Dignity and Rights of Disabled Persons**

**Background:** The United Nations is preparing for a new convention on disability. Such a convention has been worked for among persons with disabilities for more than 20 years. The disability movement has clearly stated that such a document must lean on the basic principles of human rights.

**Recommendations:** On the basis of this, the 7th General Assembly of the EBU convened in Athens from Nov. 25-28 2003, resolves that all national members of EBU enlighten and educate themselves concerning this and other United Nations conventions, that national members be urged to lobby their national governments in support of a convention, and that EBU urge national members to use existing lobbying documents in this work such as the WBU manifesto on the UN Convention.

### **C4. The Need for In-depth Information on Legal Matters pertaining to Visually Impaired Persons in EBU countries**

**Background:** The society is rapidly changing. Conditions facing blind and partially-sighted persons within the EBU change with the same speed.

Liberalization of public services and drastic changes in the social benefits systems are developments that come close to the heart of the visually impaired and their organizations.

Restructuring of countries, enlargement of the European Union and a greater migration of people between countries are but some of the important international and cross-border events that take place and affect the everyday life in all areas.

Information technology is pounding its way into the lives of everybody and consequently, accessibility issues become increasingly pertinent.

In many countries, the awareness amongst politicians, in governments and at authority level on the needs and conditions facing visually impaired citizens is far too low if existing at all.

**Resolution:** In view of the above, the 7th General Assembly of the EBU convened in Athens from Nov. 25-28 2003, resolves that EBU through the Board takes necessary measures to :

A) Take stock of all available reports regarding legal issues pertaining to visually impaired in member countries, listing the issues and circulating the list to any interested member,



B) Map out key areas where information about legal issues is missing or very scarce (including educational, employment, health, social rights, and accessibility issues),

C) Develop necessary comprehensive questionnaires to obtain information from all national member organizations,

D) Do the utmost to oblige all members to reply to the circulated material and emphasizing that "no information" about an issue is better than no reply,

E) Compile, follow up and analyze replies from the member countries to produce understandable and persuasive reports which can be used in the campaigning and lobbying of any interested or needy organization.

F) The EBU Board should, when considered appropriate, present such information from the final report to European bodies such as the Council of Europe and the European Union. It should also present the reports to the European Disability Forum and use the information gathered as a means of highlighting the specific conditions and demands pertaining to visually impaired persons in Europe. When called upon by national members, the Board may also, in liaison with these members, present reports or parts thereof to the National governments to raise awareness and promote the necessity of improving the rights of the visually impaired in those countries.

A plan for implementation of the above actions should be set up by the board before the end of April 2004. The actions should, if possible, be carried out before the end of 2004.

### **C5. The need to constantly modernize and keep the EBU Constitution up-dated**

**Background:** An organization such as EBU is constantly under change. As the surrounding society develops, it is necessary constantly to review the legal framework determining the functioning of the EBU.

It is also necessary to adapt and adjust the EBU Constitution in accordance with the changes that the WBU constitution undergoes.

There is a particular need to look at the status of Board members including their national delegate position and the system on how to ensure a wider disbursement of delegation votes. It also is necessary to formulate a forceful, convincing text dealing with the strive towards gender balance which can be used at General Assemblies and when establishing commissions.

**Resolution:** In this perspective, the 7th General Assembly of the EBU convened in Athens from Nov. 25-28 2003, resolves that the board of the EBU

urgently take the necessary steps for reviewing the present constitution, including the above mentioned subjects, which can be presented at the 8th General Assembly of EBU in 2007.

## **C6. Requirements to Exhibitors at Assemblies**

**Background:** Braille is the special and only immediate way that blind persons may receive the information from documents in writing. Likewise, partially-sighted use large print.

At Assemblies, to offer manufacturers and distributors of equipment and devices for the visually impaired an opportunity to make their products known to potential users, they are given the opportunity to exhibit.

Regardless of the fact that the exhibitors mostly encounter visually impaired persons at general assembly events, they rather rarely present product information in relevant accessible formats for immediate reading (braille, large print).

**Resolution:** For the above reasons, the 7th General Assembly of the EBU convened in Athens from Nov. 25-28 2003, resolves that the Board and arrangers of the 8th General Assembly of the Union to put it as a indispensable demand to exhibitors at the Assembly site, that a substantial portion of brochures and other information material be available in relevant accessible formats (as a minimum, braille and large print).

## **C7. Documentation depicting the specifics of Blind and Partially-sighted Persons**

**Background :** Given the importance of the issues regarding the special conditions, needs and characteristics of partially-sighted persons that have been raised during deliberations at this General Assembly,

**Resolution :** The 7th General Assembly of the EBU convened in Athens from Nov. 25-28 2003, resolves that the incoming EBU Board is commissioned to prepare and adopt a declaration outlining the specific needs and characteristics of the blind and partially sighted respectively as expressed at this General Assembly, and to urge all EBU national members to disseminate and make public this declaration as widely as possible.

## **1999 - The 12 resolutions passed by the EBU 6th General Assembly held in Prague (Czech Republic) from 24 to 27 November :**

## **Resolution 99-1**

### **New methods for conducting EBU general assemblies and making use of commission's work and reports**

- Whereas working methods and operational procedures in an international body should always be considered and improved whenever deemed appropriate ;
- Whereas the co-operation, exchange of views and development of personal relations within the group of participants in the EBU general assembly and other general meetings should receive more impetus so as to create an enhanced understanding of the prevailing situation in member countries ;
- Whereas the large amount of reports and other policy documents cannot be dealt with on an individual detailed basis due to time constraints ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, that the EBU Board in its planning and preparations for future general assemblies should strive to develop methods in obtaining the above stated aims.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Board should consider how to preserve all compiled experience, findings and operational ideas so as to ensure continuity and prevent the loss of valuable fuel for the future work.

## **Resolution 99-2**

### **Improved resources through fundraising**

- Whereas the EBU according to the guidelines given in Resolution 5 adopted at the Fifth General Assembly of the EBU in Giardini Naxos, Sicily (Italy), 1996, have developed and further strengthened the economic resources of the Union during the recent working period ;
  - Whereas it is considered of greatest importance to further consolidate the financial basis of the Union and augment it, if possible ;
  - Whereas, for merely economic reasons, appointed members of standing commissions from less wealthy organisations have refrained from participating in commission meetings, a sad consequence, which might occur repeatedly ;
- BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 NOVEMBER 1999, that the EBU Board shall investigate to what extent and through which means it might be ascertained that all representatives of member countries could have a real possibility to participate in the democratic life of the EBU and give their contribution of experience and ideas during their participation.

## **Resolution 99-3**

### **Resolution on the principle position of the European Blind Union regarding the right to represent blind and partially-sighted people**

- Whereas it is a fundamental principle laid down in the European Blind Union Constitution that the only true voice of blind and partially-sighted people is the one spoken by the authentic and acknowledged organisations specific to this disability group ;

- Whereas the situation prevailing in society in general and in many specific areas is characteristic for blind and partially-sighted people as opposed to other groupings of disabled ;

- Whereas the Constitution of the World Blind Union is based upon the same fundamental principles as the Constitution of the European Blind Union, and whereas the World Blind Union adopted two resolutions at its General Assemblies in Madrid, September 18-24, 1988, and Cairo, November 2-6, 1992, which recognised the need for collaboration between parallel authentic organisations representing specific disability groups and the willingness of World Blind Union to do so ;

- Whereas the European Blind Union at its 4th General Assembly in Ustron, Poland, September 7-9 1993, in its resolution regarding First European Day of Disabled People, reaffirmed that blind and partially-sighted people have interests and aspirations separate and distinct from those of other disabled people and that no other organisation in Europe has the right to represent those interests and aspirations ;

Let it be known that the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, fully supports the above points of view and establish:

(A) That all member organisations support the clear stand that all matters regarding blind and partially-sighted people in Europe and its respective countries are to be dealt with by the European Blind Union and its member organisations solely striving towards the improvement of the lives and opportunities of this specific group of disabled people ;

(B) That all organisations representing blind and partially-sighted people, European as well as national, representing adult people and/or children and youth, may benefit from co-operation, exchange of experience and sharing of knowledge with other single-disability organisations, but that this flow of information and experience at no time should be confused with policy making, decision-making or representative assignments or tasks.

## **Resolution 99-4**

### **The future representation of the interests of deaf-blind**

- Whereas the stand of the EBU Board is endorsed on full support of the deaf-blind in Europe and how they wish to be represented and organised ;

- Whereas an improved communication between the EBU and the representative bodies of the deaf-blind need take place ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, that the EBU Board shall be charged with the task to obtain a clear picture of the organisational scenario pertaining to the deaf-blind in Europe and world-wide and, together with apt representatives from this disability group, to determine the short- and long-term wishes regarding representation and organisation including the ties to the EBU.

## **Resolution 99-5**

### **Women's Forum Initiative**

The Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, wishes to put on record that it appreciates the hard and fruitful work carried out by the Women's Forum preceding the General Assembly. It recommends to the Board and the appropriate commissions that they all take into the greatest consideration possible the recommendations adopted by the Forum.

BE IT ALSO PUT ON RECORD that the General Assembly recommends that a similar Forum is held preceding the 7th General Assembly.

## **Resolution 99-6**

### **Violence towards blind and partially-sighted including in particular women and girls**

- Whereas it is reasonable to believe that violence and abuse take place towards blind and partially-sighted in general, and the female portion of this grouping in particular, to a larger extent than in the general population ;

- Whereas it is reasonable to believe that all types of violence (physical, sexual and psychological) are much more prevalent than known or reported ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, that

- All member organisations shall draw their attention to this serious problem and put the theme of violence and abuse on their own agenda and those of women's organisations,

- that they shall do their utmost to prevent the occurrence of such violence and

abuse,

- that it shall be ensured that any case of violence or abuse is brought forth and reported to the appropriate authorities,
- that the necessary support is given to the victims and
- that any violator be made responsible, and if necessary brought to justice, for such actions.

### **Resolution 99-7**

#### **Converting the Standard Rules into a convention with an improved dimension**

- Whereas the UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the UN in 1993 and has been of importance for the public awareness raising process in many countries and
- Whereas the Standard Rules are considered to have played a significant role in the promotion of human rights perspectives as regards many issues related to disabled persons in European countries and the European Union ;  
BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, that the Board is requested, in conjunction with the Commission on Social Rights, to work with the WBU, and other single-disability organisations representing the interests of disabled people, to assist with the preparation of a draft UN Convention that incorporates the principles embodied in the UN Standard Rules for submission to the UN, prohibiting discrimination against disabled people, and calls upon national members to urge their governments to support the ratification of this convention by the UN ;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in the event that the UN Standard Rules be revised or be converted into a convention text, the Board is urged, in co-operation with other suitable agencies, to promote that it is ensured that gender and children's perspectives be included.

### **Resolution 99-8**

#### **Economic resources and other means of assistance for blind and partially-sighted in developing countries**

- Whereas the continual support towards organisations of the blind in developing countries in general and African countries in particular remains a priority matter for the EBU ;
- Whereas the principles of independence and sustainability on the part of the African Blind Union is considered as important as it is for the European Blind Union ;

- Whereas independence and accessibility to information, education and employment may be promoted through the introduction of technical devices and services including solutions involving information technology ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, that

(A) All member organisations of the EBU shall on an ongoing basis consider how the work of the African Blind Union and other bodies truly representing the blind and partially-sighted in developing countries might be supported economically through established EBU funds and the AFUB Reserve Fund ;

(B) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in as much as it is considered desirable that technical equipment ranging from low-tech to advanced devices, new as well as second-hand, is donated to developing countries, all member organisations shall be aware of the potential detrimental effects when donating complicated and technically challenging equipment to partners in developing countries without ensuring sufficient environmental and servicing requirements as well as necessary training skills.

### **Resolution 99-9**

#### **Special requirements for the visually impaired as regards the principle: EDUCATION FOR ALL**

- Whereas the principle of inclusion of disabled persons in the mainstream educational system, referred to as "Education for All", has obtained a guiding status and is endorsed in the Salamanca Declaration ;

- Whereas this principle may deteriorate the educational level for blind and partially sighted students, if appropriate measures, necessary skills and fundamental subjects are not included as mandatory ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, that all member organisations shall focus on such important issues as:

(A) Blind pupils and students shall be ensured competent training in braille by teachers that have received qualified education and have obtained a detailed and satisfactory understanding about the best methodologies and pedagogic approaches ;

(B) All necessary textbooks shall be made available at the relevant point in time and in the most appropriate format, be it braille, large print, audio format or as electronic text ;

(C) Authorities and politicians in all member countries are charged with the responsibility of securing necessary financial resources for introducing digital

technology including the next generation talking book and for the establishment of full digital libraries covering the need for textbooks, leisure reading and literature relevant for all visually impaired persons entering or already working at the labour market;

(D) All other special activities necessary to compensate for the visual impairment shall be catered for such as daily living skills, physical education and mobility.

## **Resolution 99-10**

### **The expected effects of anti-discrimination legislation and regulations on the rights to compensatory measures**

- Whereas a contemporary human rights approach to the question of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in society is based upon anti-discrimination principles and legislation ;

- Whereas the principle of non-discrimination has been materialised in national legislation and/or practices in a number of countries as well as European Union rules and regulations, which is considered a desirable and satisfactory development to be further pursued ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic from 24 to 27 November 1999, that, as an additional measure to the above approach :

(A) The EBU and its member organisations wholeheartedly support that the national legislation in all European countries as well as the European Union regulations shall be based upon an approach by which blind and partially-sighted persons are entitled to compensatory measures such as assertive devices and services which will enable them to enjoy equal opportunities with respect to participation in the general areas in society such as education, employment, independent mobility, including transport and meaningful leisure activities ;

(B) In cases where severe visual impairment entails special expenses, these shall be compensated by a tax-free allowance to meet the expenses involved.

## **Resolution 99-11**

### **Resolution on accessible television**

- Whereas in recent years great strides have been made in the knowledge of how to provide audible subtitles and audiodescription which can make television programmes much more accessible to visually impaired people ;

- Whereas some countries' legislatures have laid down targets for the amount of audiodescribed programming which broadcasting companies must carry ;

- Whereas it is right that broadcasting companies should be making maximum



use of the increasing resources of technology to make their programmes accessible to the widest possible diversity of people ;

Whereas the efforts of some broadcasting companies to include audible subtitles and audiodescribed material in their schedules are very much to be welcomed ;

- Whereas the failure of manufacturers to incorporate facilities for receiving audiodescription into digital receivers limits the value of this new technology to visually impaired people and makes their access to television programmes less than it might be ; and

- Whereas this situation is now becoming critical with the rapid spread of digital broadcasting ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999:

- That national legislatures and the institutions of the European Union shall lay down progressive targets for the inclusion of audible subtitles and audiodescribed programming in broadcast schedules ; and

- That, in alliance with European broadcasting organisations, all necessary steps shall be taken as a matter of urgency to persuade manufacturers to incorporate the capacity for receiving audiodescription into future generations of digital receivers, and to make such receivers in a manner which makes them easy to use by visually impaired people.

## **Resolution 99-12**

### **Resolution on consumer electronics**

- Whereas the use of electronic devices such as devices used in the household, for communication and mobility are increasingly essential for operating in the modern world and accessing the information society ;

- Whereas the use of such devices is spreading at an increasingly rapid rate ; and

- Whereas such devices are frequently made in such a way that they are very difficult for visually impaired people to use ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Sixth General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Prague, Czech Republic, from 24 to 27 November 1999, that

- We call upon the manufacturers of consumer electronic equipment to design their products in such a way as to promote easy use by visually impaired people.

BE IT LIKEWISE RESOLVED that the Board, in co-operation with the Liaising Commission and the Commission on Technical Services and Devices,

consider to what effect blind and partially-sighted persons' special needs with respect to design, safety and accessibility may be known and enforced through representation in, or address to, specialised European standardisation bodies such as CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation).

## **1996 - 19 resolutions adopted at EBU Fifth General Assembly, Giardini Naxos, Italy, 6-9 November.**

### **Resolution EBU 96-1**

#### **A general plan of action**

- Whereas, the limited resources of European Blind Union should be used in an optimal manner ;

- Whereas, it must always be a goal of the European Blind Union to strengthen its democratic methods ;

- Whereas, it should always be the aim of European Blind Union to prepare, execute and evaluate its actions ;

- Whereas, the General Assembly is the supreme body in European Blind Union ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

the European Blind Union Board prepare a plan of action for the next General Assembly.

Be it further resolved that

this plan of action states the working objectives of the European Blind Union and be made available for consultation and discussion.

### **Resolution EBU 96-2**

Whereas, the resolutions accepted at the end of a General Assembly form part of the plan of action for the subsequent years ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on the 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

at the beginning of the next General Assembly there is an evaluation of the implementation of the previous General Assembly's resolutions.

### **Resolution EBU 96-3**

- Whereas, a different problem requires a different way of handling it,
  - Whereas, in the work of EBU for some purposes it might be convenient to have a standing commission, for other problems a working group, an expert meeting, a conference, etc,
  - Whereas, the existing commission guidelines have proved not to be sufficient in all cases,  
BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on the 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that  
  
periodically the Board should evaluate the existing Organisation mechanism ;
- Be it further resolved that
- the Board should develop the commission guidelines.

### **Resolution EBU 96-4**

- Whereas, good communication is an essential prerequisite to raise the efficiency of the work of European Blind Union ;
  - Whereas, lack of communication is a major obstacle to obtain results in any organisation,  
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that
- the Board develops more effective ways of disseminating information between the Board, the Commissions and the member organisations.

### **Resolution EBU 96-5**

More economical resources in European Blind Union

- Whereas, the Headquarters of European Blind Union could benefit from greater resources ;
- Whereas, the work of the Commissions of European Blind Union would have a greater possibility of developing their activities if given more resources ;
- Whereas, it would be possible to elect candidates to the Board and to Commissions irrespective of the financial standing of sponsoring countries if there were more resources available;  
BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

we urge the Board of European Blind Union to explore all methods of fund-raising and of introducing differential payments of dues of member countries.

### **Resolution EBU 96-6**

Four years between the General Assemblies in European Blind Union  
- Whereas, the General Assemblies of World Blind Union will be held every 4th year ;

- Whereas, the coordination is important in any organisation ;  
BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

we urge the Board of European Blind Union to propose the necessary amendments to the Constitution of the 6th Assembly in relation to the four-year term of office.

Be it also resolved that

the Board of European Blind Union explores the possibility of annual conferences in European Blind Union.

### **Resolution EBU 96-7**

Whereas, development cooperation has been a significant part of the work of the European Blind Union ;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on the 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

all European Blind Union member organisations and the European organisations working for the blind give the highest priority to the promotion and strengthening of national organisations of visually impaired in developing countries with particular emphasis to Africa.

### **Resolution EBU 96-8**

- Whereas, more than half of the population of the member organisations of European Blind Union consists of women ;

- Whereas, women are still under-represented in decision-making bodies of EBU and its member organisations ;

- Whereas, EBU cannot afford to not use their capacity any longer ;  
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on the 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

the Board of EBU actively stimulates its members to develop an equal opportunity policy,

Therefore be it further resolved that

the Board of EBU periodically reports on the progress in this matter.

### **Resolution EBU 96-9**

- Whereas, in former years employment for visually impaired persons in Central and Eastern European countries was satisfactory ;

- Whereas, with the changing political situation there has been a sharp decline in job opportunities for visually impaired persons especially women, in these countries ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on the 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

we urge the Board of the European Blind Union, member countries and national organisations of and for the blind to bring the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities to the attention of all governments, particularly those of Central and Eastern European countries ;

Be it further resolved that

pressure should be put on all governments particularly those of Central and Eastern European countries to implement the United Nations Standard Rules with particular reference to employment.

### **Resolution EBU 96-10**

On the situation of the elderly blind and partially sighted

- Whereas, we are deeply concerned by the cuts to the financial benefits and services available for the elderly blind and partially sighted ;

- Whereas, all states which have sanctioned the United Nations Standard Rules to ensure disabled persons equality and full participation in society now have a moral obligation to improve the possibilities for the elderly blind and partially sighted to live an active and independent life ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

we urge the EBU Board to give priority to the threatening situation of the elderly blind and partially sighted.

## **Resolution EBU 96-11**

The advantages of United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

- Whereas, the forty-eighth session of the United Nations adopted Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities on the 1st October 1993 ;

- Whereas, the Standard Rules were addressed to the governments ;

- Whereas, organisations of the disabled can use these rules in their demand for equality and full participation in their societies ;

- Whereas, the value of the outlined principles is strongly linked to the strength of the organisations of the disabled ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

European Blind Union strives to work for the implementation of United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in all the states of Europe.

Be it furthermore resolved that

EBU strives for the acceptance of the Standard Rules as moral and political principles in Europe.

Be it also resolved that

the Standard Rules should be made known and used as a fundamental base for the work of the Board of European Blind Union and its Commissions.

## **Resolution EBU 96-12**

Gather and use the experience of anti-discriminatory laws

- Whereas, United States of America adopted its ADA\* laws in the beginning of the 1990s;

- Whereas, other states, including United Kingdom, adopted similar laws against discrimination ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

we demand the Board to gather, spread and use the experience of anti-discriminatory laws in the USA and other relevant countries.

Be it also resolved that

our goal is the successful implementation of this kind of law in all European states.

\* Americans with Disabilities Act

### **Resolution EBU 96-13**

- Whereas, television plays an important role for education and social and cultural integration and is the most popular pastime of visually impaired people;
  - Whereas, article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the right of everyone to take part in the cultural life of the community and to benefit from scientific advancements ;
  - Whereas, the advent of digital television (which will make more channels available) provides a technical solution for the transmission and reception of audio description ; and
  - Whereas, digital receivers must be easily usable by visually impaired people in order for digital television to be accessible to them ;
- NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

the European Blind Union is committed to:

- call on broadcasting legislators to recognise the right of visually impaired people to enjoy television and to dedicate a portion of digital transmission capacity to the audio description sound as and when digital television is being introduced ;
- call on state and commercial broadcasters to make a commitment to their visually impaired audiences to introduce audio description services as soon as a method for the transmission of the audio description sound becomes available ; and
- call on the cooperation of receiver manufacturers to incorporate the needs of blind and partially sighted people into the design of digital receivers.

### **Resolution EBU 96-14**

Accessibility to governmental information on the Internet

- Whereas, nowadays, governments all over the world use Internet to publish their information;
- Whereas, a blind or partially sighted person has a problem to access

information ;

- Whereas, modern technology should make more information accessible to everyone ;

- Whereas, there exists methods for blind or partially sighted computer users to read material published in text version ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

we urge all the Governments in Europe to always include a text version in their information on the Internet.

### **Resolution EBU 96-15**

Braille

Notwithstanding the immense benefits that information technology has brought to the lives of visually impaired people, particularly in the field of access to information, braille remains the principal method of acquiring literacy for blind people.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on the 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

the teaching of Braille to blind people capable of learning it must be given the central focus in education and rehabilitation programmes.

Be it further resolved that

braille instruction should be offered to partially sighted people if requested.

Be it further resolved that

all national organisations of and for the blind make resources available for the promotion of braille as an essential communication tool.

Be it further resolved that

all teachers of the blind should learn braille.

### **Resolution EBU 96-16**

- Whereas, there is an increasing desire on the part of visually impaired and other disabled people to travel throughout Europe ;



- Whereas, it is essential to advise staff in advance of their arrival at airports, ferry crossings and railway stations in order to obtain the necessary help ;  
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

the European Blind Union Board takes steps to set up at the EBU Office a directory of main airports, ferry crossings and interchange railway stations, together with details of accessibility and special services provided.

### **Resolution EBU 96-17**

- Whereas, in the majority of European countries there are concessionary fares for visually impaired and other disabled persons;  
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

the European Blind Union Board directs the Commission on Mobility and Guide Dogs to request the standing conference of European Transport Ministers to urge their Public Transport Authorities to grant to all visually impaired and other disabled travelers the same concessions on all forms of public transport as those pertaining to visually impaired residents in their country.

### **Resolution EBU 96-18**

- Whereas, in catalogues on magnifiers different measurements are used to describe their magnifying power;

- Whereas, this lack of comparable information occurs in many other devices as well ;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention this 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy,

to ensure that consumers get information that is clear enough to enable them to compare devices of the same type.

### **Resolution EBU 96-19**

- Whereas, the World Blind Union Assembly was gathered in Toronto, Canada, August 1996;

- Whereas, all members of European Blind Union are members of World Blind Union ;

BE IT RESOLVED by the European Blind Union General Assembly in convention on the 9th day of November 1996 in Giardini Naxos, Italy, that

the EBU Board includes in its work the relevant resolutions adopted by the World Blind Union.

## **1993 - 11 resolutions adopted at the EBU 4th General Assembly, 7-9 October, Ustron, Poland.**

### **Resolution EBU 93-1**

#### Cooperation with developing countries

Many EBU members cooperate with sister organizations in developing countries. The gap between rich and poor countries must be narrowed. To achieve this, the 4th General Assembly meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, advises its members to call upon national governments to devote one per cent of the Gross National Product to programmes in developing countries. Because ten per cent of the world population has significant disabilities, a similar proportion of these resources should go towards providing education, rehabilitation and vocational training for disabled people. There must be particular emphasis on improving conditions and status of women and children. The results of this campaign should be reported to the 5th General Assembly, 1996.

### **Resolution EBU 93-2**

#### Social Rights

This 4th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, calls upon all European governments to recognize the basic social rights of blind and visually impaired citizens and to ensure that they enjoy full and equal opportunities. Blind and partially sighted people are entitled to comprehensive financial support in order to meet the extra costs stemming from their disability.

### **Resolution EBU 93-3**

#### Recreation and Leisure

This 4th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, is of the opinion that, for blind and partially sighted people to lead full and rewarding lives, satisfactory provision must be made for recreational and leisure activities.

### **Resolution EBU 93-4**

#### Youth Work

Whereas youth work is an important investment for the future, it is of great concern that so few younger members are participating in the activities of our organizations of the blind and partially sighted.

Today, very few of the EBU member organizations have well-functioning youth work, tending instead to limit the activities for young visually impaired people to leisure and sport events arranged by different institutions. Although these activities are valuable, there is a need for more.

Young visually impaired people must be given the chance to meet and work together to discuss issues concerning their everyday life and their future.

It is important that the national organizations also consider the needs of young people in their regular work, and that young people too shall have the opportunity to attend different kinds of leadership training and to participate in the policy-making work of the organizations, both at the national and international levels.

Therefore, this 4th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, resolves that all EBU member countries recognise the need for action to achieve these objectives and pledge themselves to take all steps to ensure that significant progress is made by the next General Assembly. They adopt and endorse the UN Declaration on Children's rights.

### **Resolution EBU 93-5**

#### Participation of Women

This 4th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, being mindful of the importance of implementing the resolution of the 3rd General Assembly "to ensure that women are equally represented on the Board and other decision-making bodies of EBU", calls upon all member organizations to take up their responsibility to nominate an ever-increasing number of women to their national delegations, to Commissions and to the Board of the EBU, as from this General Assembly, in the interest of democracy and to ensure that the expertise of women is fully represented.

### **Resolution EBU 93-6**

#### Political and economic changes

The political changes in Europe have had an especially devastating effect on blind and visually impaired people. Many of them have lost their jobs and are thus segregated from society. This 4th General Assembly of the European Blind Union, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, urges all governments and organizations involved to do their utmost so that blind and visually impaired people can resume their rightful place in society.

## **Resolution EBU 93-7**

### Partial Sight

This 4th General Assembly, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, strongly rejects the proposal from some countries for a yellow cane to be used as a specific symbol for partially sighted people. The Assembly is of the opinion that in traffic one and the same symbol for visual impairment should be used by all people with a visual handicap.

## **Resolution EBU 93-8**

### Inter-organizational cooperation

This 4th General Assembly, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, reaffirms the commitment of the EBU to cooperate with other organizations providing services and support for blind and visually impaired people in Europe, such as the International Council for the Education of the Visually Handicapped (ICEVH).

## **Resolution EBU 93-9**

First European Day of Disabled People, 3/4 December 1993

WHEREAS the World Blind Union, of which EBU is a constituent member, at its General Assembly in Cairo 2-6 November 1992, resolved to request the United Nations to recognise and declare that each year 15 October be known as United Nations White Cane Day ; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly wholeheartedly endorses and supports that resolution; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly reaffirms that blind and partially-sighted persons have interests and aspirations separate and distinct from those of other disable people and that no other organization in Europe has the right to represent those interests and aspirations ; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly takes note of the proposals for the first European Day of Disabled People on 3 December 1993 put forward by organizations representing other physically disabled people, and is willing to express solidarity with those organizations by cooperating in campaigns to achieve common objectives ;

This Fourth General Assembly of the European Blind Union, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993,

RESOLVES : -

That all member organizations be advised to seek the support of their governments for the implementation of the resolution referred to above and in the meantime to recognise 15 October each year as White Cane Day;

That all member organizations be advised to take part in the celebrations of 3 December 1993 on the clear understanding that other participating organizations recognise that organizations of blind and partially sighted people

are the only organizations which have the right to represent and speak for the interests and aspirations of blind and partially sighted people.

### **Resolution EBU 93-10**

#### Exchange of Information

This 4th General Assembly, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, urges all organizations of and for the blind to make a special effort to exchange information between member countries so that blind people can be kept informed of developments concerning every sphere of activities. This could include exchange of materials as well as meetings of journalists and presenters of the media for the blind and partially sighted.

### **Resolution EBU 93-11**

#### Distressed Regions of Europe

WHEREAS the on-going war in the former Yugoslavia has considerably worsened the plight of the blind and partially sighted in that region, this 4th General Assembly, meeting in Ustron, Poland, 7-9 October 1993, encourages all EBU member countries to prevail upon their highest national and international forums to hasten all forms of humanitarian aid to that region in a spirit of genuine concern and solidarity.

## **1990 - resolutions were passed by the EBU 3rd General Assembly, Lisbon (Portugal), 11-13 October.**

### **Resolution 1990-1**

Having received the two important papers discussing the future tasks and work of the EBU resulting from political evolution in our continent ;

And accepting the need for the EBU to take initiatives on behalf of blind and partially sighted people in order to meet this new situation ;

The Third General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Lisboa (Portugal) from 11 to 13 October 1990 INSTRUCTS the Board to take urgent steps to set up structures for ensuring cooperation between the member countries, in particular the sharing of information and expertise, it being deemed necessary for this purpose to set up an office to act as a focus for carrying out these executive tasks.

The EBU should acknowledge the challenges for blind and partially-sighted people and their national and international organizations resulting from the change from a continent divided into power blocks to a continent where some states have stronger economies than others and where in all states there is a danger that blind and partially-sighted people may lose or have called in

question the rights to which they are entitled.

What is needed is a strong organization, a democratic participation and flexibility in meeting the realities.

To achieve this, the global policy should be laid down by the General Assembly and the Board IS CALLED UPON to formulate a strategy which will be implemented by detailed working plans at all levels.

Member countries must recognise that the EBU and its achievements depend entirely on their active participation.

### **Resolution 1990-2**

Whereas the situation of women in Europe and in particular that of the blind and partially-sighted is still not equal:

The Third General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Lisboa (Portugal) from 11 to 13 October 1990 STRESSES

That the Board of EBU strive to find ways and means of engaging visually impaired women in its decision-making bodies;

That the member countries of EBU should all work actively in finding suitable forms of involvement for visually impaired women in areas of organisational work ;

That all member countries of the EBU are recommended to include visually handicapped women in their national delegations to general assemblies.

That it is stated as a principle that this striving for emancipation is used to strengthen the cause of the visually impaired as a minority group in society as a whole.

### **Resolution 1990-3**

Whereas in society in general the visually handicapped have very little influence over their own situation and the need arises to have at least a full control of their organizations ;

deems it desirable to ensure that the blind and partially sighted control their own their own interests, i.e. decide for themselves.

Therefore the Third General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Lisboa (Portugal) from 11 to 13 October 1990 RECOMMENDS that the EBU bodies should have a majority of blind and partially-sighted members.

## **Resolution 1990-4**

The Third General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Lisboa (Portugal) from 11 to 13 October 1990 ACCEPTS the following principles concerning the position and the rights of the partially sighted persons in Europe:

It is convenient to elaborate a legal definition of partial sight that takes into account the functional aspects.

Considering the fact that partially-sighted people represent the major part of the visually handicapped in the European countries, they should be called to participate more intensively in the work of EBU and its member organizations. EBU ought to help the national associations of visually handicapped to become effective associations of blind and partially sighted.

In legal documents concerning social rights and their harmonization, when the word "blind" is used, the words "and partially-sighted" shall be added.

## **Resolution 1990-5**

The Third General Assembly of the European Blind Union in convention in Lisboa (Portugal) from 11 to 13 October 1990 URGES every member country to start and/or increase development cooperation for the organizations of the visually handicapped in all developing countries with particular regard to Africa. The solidarity of all EBU member countries is needed in order to help the visually handicapped in developing countries to achieve independence, equality and full participation.

## **1987 - Resolutions were passed by the EBU Second General Assembly, Varna (Bulgaria), 3-4 June.**

### **Resolution 1987-1**

The General Assembly of the European Blind Union in Varna (Bulgaria), on June 3 and 4, 1987, referring to the resolution adopted by the 1986 International Conference on Partial Sightedness in the Netherlands, holds the opinion that:

- recognizing the fact that in most countries organizations of and for the blind have been in existence for many years, the interests of the visually impaired are served best within these organizations;

- the organizations of the blind should use all their influence and experience to advocate the interests of the visually impaired people with the same energy as those of the blind ;

The General Assembly recommends that within the scope of the EBU Commission for Rehabilitation and Social Legislation a subcommittee be set up with the task to identify focal points of activities in the field of visual

impairment and potential ways of integrating them into the work undertaken by the EBU. The subcommittee will submit an appropriate programme of work to the next General Assembly, which, if the need arises, will also cover the fields of activity of the other commissions.

### **Resolution 1987-2**

The General Assembly of the European Blind Union in Varna (Bulgaria), on June 3 and 4, 1987, expects that the blind and visually impaired people themselves will exercise the decisive influence at all times on the organisation and implementation of conferences held by the European Blind Union.

### **Resolution 1987-3**

The General Assembly of the European Blind Union in Varna (Bulgaria), on June 3 and 4, 1987, notes that, within the World Blind Union, unions of blind people have been created at all regional levels, except for Africa. After many years of efforts, there is now the outlook that the African Union of the Blind will be established in 1987.

For holding the Founding Assembly and for maintaining a secretariat, some financial assistance will be required. The General Assembly recommends the Board and the member nations to give efficient support to the creation of the African Union of the Blind by providing financial and other means.

### **Resolution 1987-4**

The General Assembly of the European Blind Union in Varna (Bulgaria), on June 3 and 4, 1987, has resolved to adopt the following resolution:

The delegates of the General Assembly note with satisfaction and gratification that in spite of a good many problems the work undertaken by the Board and the commissions, during the first working period of the EBU, towards the achievements of its objectives was good.

It is their special request, however, to receive more and as current as possible information on the work done by the Board and the commissions, including the participation of the EBU representatives serving on the bodies of the World Blind Union. This should be accomplished through disseminating minutes and reports. In this manner it is intended not only to secure an extensive knowledge of the current work conducted by the EBU but also to encourage and enable the member countries to maintain an intense collaboration.

The delegates note that the exchange of information, periodicals and books in braille, on tape and in large print meets the needs of all blind and visually impaired people in Europe. Therefore they call upon the EBU Board and the organizations of the member countries to urge their national governments or the appropriate agencies to create a free exchange of braille, tape and large



print matter for the blind, to be established between private persons and organizations of all countries in Europe and the world.

### **Resolution 1987-5**

The General Assembly of the European Blind Union in Varna (Bulgaria), on June 3 and 4, 1987, is convinced that the efforts made by the European Blind Union towards the maintenance and improvement of the status of the blind in society, in all countries, can only be continued with success, if peace prevails between the nations of Europe, nay of the entire world. They note with concern that vast arms arsenals jeopardize peace.

Therefore the General Assembly of the EBU welcomes all initiatives directed at preventing the danger of a world war. The delegates call upon all nations, parliaments, governments, organizations of society, but particularly upon all blind and visually impaired people in Europe to advocate with ardent hearts and with all their might all proposals which serve the achievement of peace, disarmament and detente, and the successive elimination of all weapons.

### **1984 - Appeal of the Participants of the Founding Assembly of the European Blind Union (HURDAL, Norway, 27 August) to the Governments and the Public in all Countries.**

All the European organizations participating in the Founding Assembly of the EBU declare that they shall do their best both on a national and international level to:

- Promote world peace and social justice indispensable for the proper solution of the problems of the blind and visually impaired and all disabled persons in general, and

- achieve disarmament and the allocation of more resources to meet social needs and improve social policy.

They further call upon all interested parties to find means for the resumption of talks on disarmament

**END OF DOUCMENT**