

# Canada's Accession to Marrakesh Treaty Brings Treaty into Force

Geneva, June 30, 2016

PR/2016/792

Canada today became the key 20<sup>th</sup> nation to accede to the [Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled](#), which will bring the Treaty into force in three month's time on September 30, 2016.

**Video:** [Message from WIPO Director General](#)

“This is great news for people with visual impairments and for the multilateral intellectual property system. The Marrakesh Treaty will, when widely adopted throughout the world, create the framework for persons who are blind and visually impaired to enjoy access to literacy in a much more equal and inclusive way,” said [WIPO Director General](#) Francis Gurry. “I urge as many countries as possible to ratify the Treaty so that its benefits can be widely enjoyed throughout the world,” he added.

“I am honored that Canada is counted among the countries that together are enabling the coming into force of the Marrakesh Treaty internationally. Together, we are creating a more accessible world for people living with disabilities,” said Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Navdeep Bains. “The coming into force of the Treaty will mark the last step of a long journey toward a more inclusive global community, where print-disabled and visually impaired people can more fully and actively participate in society and reach their full potential,” he added.

“Today is an historic day for Canada, as we become the 20<sup>th</sup> country to accede to the Marrakesh Treaty, which thus brings the Treaty into force. I am proud that our government is standing up for Canadians with disabilities and providing those with print disabilities more equitable access to alternative-format published materials,” said Canada's Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities Carla Qualtrough. She added “As the coming into force of this treaty becomes a reality, Canadians will benefit from greater accessibility and opportunities in their communities and workplaces.”

Canada's accession was preceded a day earlier by Ecuador and Guatemala. Mr. Gurry paid tribute to countries in the Latin American region, who make up half of the contracting parties so far.



Le ministre des Affaires étrangères,

*Francis Gurry*

Minister of Foreign Affairs

YO, JAFETH CABRERA FRANCO  
Vicepresidente de la República de Guatemala  
en funciones de Presidente

DECLARO:

Que el Gobierno de la República de Guatemala, habiendo suscrito en Ginebra, Suiza, el 2 de junio de 2014 el TRATADO DE MARRAKECH PARA FACILITAR EL ACCESO A LAS OBRAS PUBLICADAS A LAS PERSONAS CIEGAS, CON DISCAPACIDAD VISUAL O CON OTRAS DIFICULTADES PARA ACCEDER AL TEXTO IMPRESO (2013), ratifica por el presente dicho Tratado y se compromete a cumplir y aplicar fielmente las disposiciones que en él figuran.

República del Ecuador

INSTRUMENTO DE RATIFICACIÓN

GUILLAUME LONG,

MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES Y  
MOVILIDAD HUMANA DE LA REPÚBLICA DEL ECUADOR

WIPO Director General Francis Gurry (left) receives accession/ratification documents from Ambassador Jonathan Fried (second), Permanent Representative of Canada to the World Trade Organization, Ambassador Eduardo Sperisen-Yurt (fourth), Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the World Trade Organization, Ecuador’s Foreign Minister Guillaume Long (sixth). Below photos: excerpts from accession/ratification documents. (photo: WIPO)

[India was the very first country to ratify on June 30, 2014.](#) “India is pleased that the 20 ratifications have been achieved to allow entry into force of the Marrakesh Treaty,” said Ambassador Ajit Kumar, India’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva. Expressing hope that more countries would join very soon, he added “We will now begin to see tangible benefits to the world’s blind and visually impaired communities.”

[More than 75 WIPO member states have signed the Treaty](#), which was adopted on June 27, 2013 at a [diplomatic conference](#) organized by WIPO and hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco in Marrakesh. For the Treaty to enter into force, twenty ratifications or accessions are required.

The first 20 countries to ratify or accede were: India, El Salvador, United Arab Emirates, Mali, Uruguay, Paraguay, Singapore, Argentina, Mexico, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Australia, Brazil, Peru, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Israel, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala and Canada.

June 30, 2016 also marks the second anniversary of the [Accessible Books Consortium](#) (ABC), which was created to help implement the objectives of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled at a practical level through work in three areas: the sharing of technical skills in developing and least developed countries to produce and distribute books in accessible formats, promoting inclusive publishing, and building an international database and book exchange of accessible books.

## Marrakesh Treaty – Ending the “book famine”

The Marrakesh Treaty addresses the “book famine” by requiring its contracting parties to adopt national law provisions that permit the reproduction, distribution and making available of published works in accessible formats – such as Braille - through limitations and exceptions to the rights of copyright rightholders.

It also provides for the exchange of these accessible format works across borders by organizations that serve the people who are blind, visually impaired, and print disabled. It will harmonize limitations and exceptions so that these organizations can operate across borders.

This sharing of works in accessible formats should increase the overall number of works available because it will eliminate duplication and increase efficiency. For example, instead of five countries producing accessible versions of the same work, the five countries will each be able to produce an accessible version of a different work, which can then be shared with each of the other countries.

The Treaty is also designed to provide assurances to authors and publishers that that system will not expose their published works to misuse or distribution to anyone other than the intended beneficiaries. The Treaty reiterates the requirement that the cross-border sharing of works created based on limitations and exceptions must be limited to certain special cases which do not conflict with the normal exploitation of the work and do not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the rightholder.

## **Background for Editors**

According to the World Health Organization, there are some 285 million blind and visually impaired persons in the world, 90 per cent of whom live in developing countries. A WIPO survey in 2006 found that fewer than 60 countries have limitations and exceptions clauses in their copyright laws that make special provision for visually impaired persons, for example, for Braille, large print or digitized audio versions of copyrighted texts.

According to the World Blind Union, of the million or so books published each year in the world, less than 10 per cent are made available in formats accessible to visually impaired persons.

## **About WIPO**

The [World Intellectual Property Organization \(WIPO\)](#) is the global forum for intellectual property policy, services, information and cooperation. A specialized agency of the United Nations, WIPO assists its [189 member states](#) in developing a balanced [international IP legal framework](#) to meet society's evolving needs. It provides business [services](#) for obtaining IP rights in multiple countries and resolving disputes. It delivers [capacity-building](#) programs to help developing countries benefit from using IP. And it provides free access to unique knowledge banks of [IP information](#).

For further information, please contact the Media Relations Section at WIPO:

- Tel: (+41 22) - 338 81 61 / 338 72 24
- Fax: (+41 22) - 338 81 40
- [E-mail](#)