

June 30, 2010

Ms. Claire Anderson, Chair
21st International Congress on Education of the Deaf
Suite 101 – 1444 Alberni Street
Vancouver, British Columbia V6G 2Z7
(Transmitted electronically)

Dear Ms. Anderson,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), I wish to convey our respectful request that the 21st International Congress on Education of the Deaf (21st Congress) grant official recognition of and declare the acquisition and use of sign language as a civil, human and linguistic right, particularly in educational settings. Specifically, we request that the 21st Congress formally reject resolutions passed at the 2nd International Congress on Education of the Deaf (2nd Congress) in Milan, Italy. These resolutions discouraged the use of sign language in educational programs worldwide that served deaf infants, children and young adults, which also led to the decline of deaf educators, administrators and related professionals within these programs.

We also respectfully request that the 21st Congress issue a declaration calling upon all world nations to endorse and adhere to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), and related resolutions adopted by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) at its 2007 World Congress in Madrid. These resolutions recognize the acquisition and use of sign language as a human right within the global deaf community.

Established in 1880, the mission of the NAD is to preserve, protect and promote the civil, human and linguistic rights of deaf or hard of hearing people in the United States of America. The vision of NAD is that every deaf or hard of hearing individual can and will participate fully in all aspects of society and life, without barriers.

The NAD recognizes that those in attendance at this year's 21st Congress were not involved in the resolutions passed at the 2nd Congress. Still, these resolutions sent a horrific message to educators of the deaf worldwide and caused irreparable damage to the education, advancement and full participation of deaf people in all aspects of what is now a globally interconnected society. We believe that the International Congress on Education of the Deaf as a historical entity bears responsibility for its earlier resolutions, hence our request that the 21st Congress set a new reference point for the future.

In the spirit of reconciliation and collaborative efforts, we ask the 21st Congress to do the right thing by creating a new mark on the world stage calling for the recognition of sign language as a fundamental human and linguistic right. The global deaf community deserves no less. By implementing this action on the world stage the 21st Congress will join individual nations worldwide that have taken a bold and positive step forward to ensure the rights of the global deaf community – in line with the CPRD – and demonstrating that the International Congress on Education of the Deaf places value on the acquisition and use of sign language in all settings, including education.

Respectfully,



Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins
President

cc: Dr. Markku Jokinen, President of the World Federation of the Deaf