

International Congress of the Deaf (ICED) Closing Ceremony: WFD President Markku Jokinen's Remarks
July 22, 2010 Vancouver, Canada

At the ICED Closing Plenary Session, Joe McLaughlin, member of the ICED Organizing Committee, stated that 600 participants have signed the New Era Principles and Accord during this Congress. He invited the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf to the stage to submit a letter with 356 more signatures. McLaughlin then called World Federation President Markku Jokinen to the stage to receive the New Era document, which will continue to gather signatures, travel to the 16th WFD Congress in South Africa in 2011, and return to the ICED Congress in Greece, 2015, as a continuous beacon of our new understandings and partnerships around the globe. The document represents a new chapter where human right principles will become entrenched in educational practices and become part of the legacy of the 2010 Vancouver ICED Congress.

Markku Jokinen congratulated the ICED Organizing Committee and all participants for being part of this significant movement to repudiate the damaging resolutions set forth by the 1880 Milan ICED Congress and to embrace the New Era guiding principles reinforcing human rights and alliances in education. He shared his reflections on the essence of education and the far-reaching implications of the New Era Accord.

“Education, which is much more than just scores, curriculum, and pedagogies, means nurturing deaf children to become full human beings with rights, knowledge and skills. It means enabling them to reach their maximum potential as individuals in today's society. We must also recognize and value diversity within the Deaf community – Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf-blind -- with full rights to language, culture, community and choices.

“The principles in the New Era Accord are derived from the United Nations Convention on Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which has been ratified by many of the countries represented at this Congress. The CRPD, a statement of our human rights to equality and quality of life, should inform our work with our respective governments in our planning and implementation of educational policies and programs. Education is laden with values, which will vary among individuals. Thus, taking the lead from those individuals, families and professionals need to vary their approaches to incorporate those basic and individual human values and preferences while adhering to the CRPD doctrines.

“The tremendous support for the New Era Accord shown at this Congress is inspiring. However, our work has only just begun. It will take time, patience and wisdom to sustain permeating change. We all have been hurt, excluded, marginalized and angry at hearing people for the damage visited upon us over generations, 130 years since Milan. We need to forgive ourselves and those others, to become spiritually liberated to forge forward with new alliances towards a positive, productive future together.

“I am honored to be here to receive the document stating the principles of human rights and education for all. We welcome you to join us at our 2011 WFD Congress in South Africa, to work alongside us to enable Deaf youngsters to achieve full, enriching lives as self-actualizing human beings. WFD has 130 member countries. To show our great appreciation to the ICED Organizing Committee and to the British Columbia Deaf Community for creating this monumental New Era alliance, I would like to give this reindeer sculpture to each organization. In Finland, from where I hail, reindeer are small but powerful animals which depend on each other in the pack to survive. Like reindeer, we need and value each other.”

There was a group hug and a standing ovation as Claire Anderson (ICED) and Wayne Sinclair (BCDC) received the symbolic gifts from WFD.

“Partners in Education,’ the theme of ICED2010, emphasizes the importance of working together,” said Anderson, Congress Chair, “ It is with respectful partnerships of educators, parents, students, and the Deaf and hard of hearing communities that we will maximize opportunities for meeting the educational needs of our students.”

“History has been made today and the words of the Vancouver Statement can replace the hurt caused by the Milan decision,” stated McLaughlin.

For more information on the New Era Accord, please visit www.nad.org or www.iced2010.com

Roz Rosen