**Speech for WFDB Side Event**

**Wednesday 14th of June 2023**

**9:45am - 11:00am EST (3:45pm-5:00pm CET)**

Thank you Sanja for these kind words. Good morning and good afternoon to all the attendees at this workshop. It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to share with you some introductory remarks as a Board member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and as president of International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, abbreviated IF.

Similar to WFBD, our mission is ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for persons with Spina Bifida and/or Hydrocephalus without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability. Hereby, key activities include raising awareness, political advocacy, community building, and human rights education.

For the WFBD today’s webinar as part of the COSP16 is an important moment for awareness, especially since it coincides with the National Deafblind Awareness Month.

Congratulations to The World Federation of the Deafblind, with the support of the International Disability Alliance, the Norwegian Association of the Deafblind (FNDB), with the financial support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA), for the publication of this Second Global Report on Good Practices and Recommendations for the Inclusion of Persons with Deafblindness.

Your overview report provides an excellent resource to not only better understand the situation of persons with deaf blindness, but also learn about good practices and measures to increase and improve the inclusion of persons with deafblindness. Its case studies from different regions and specific recommendations to different stakeholders across thematic areas, provides a guidance and clear directions on how to achieve inclusion. We trust this report will serve as an advocacy tool for deafblind community members and their allies to stimulate collaboration and partnerships to advance the rights of persons with deafblindness but also, to inform stakeholders on how to better foster the inclusion of persons with deafblindness.

This is similar to our journey at the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus. The active involvement of the World Federation of the Deafblind as key stakeholder and the representative organization for persons with deafblindness in a your EU funded SHAPES project, is important. In this way, you initiate and co-design key activities ensuring the perspectives and needs important to your community

It is my understanding that one of your key activities is similar to the work within our federation, which is the representation and active participation of older persons with deafblindness.

In short, compliments to the World Federation of the Deafblind for your important work and doing such a fantastic job to advance the rights of persons with deafblindness worldwide, reflected by both your recently published report and your active involvement in the SHAPES Project . From the meetings this week as part of the COSP16, we have work to do to also reach underserved communities within both of our organizations representing persons with SBH and persons with deafblindness. Today’s webinar is therefore important to give further awareness and ensure the recognition and respect of the rights of this distinct disability groupI

wish you an inspiring meeting and successful event.

Back to you Sanja.