REPORT

about the first trip of Mr. Markku Jokinen, President of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), to DPR of Korea

accompanied by Ms. Liz Gibson, President of the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI), and Mr. Robert R. Grund, Chairman of TOGETHER - Special Educational Centre for Deaf, Blind and Nondisabled Children Hamhung e.V. (TOGETHER-Hamhung)
The impressive enhancement of the WFD-KFPD cooperation

THE FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT OF THE WFD-PRESIDENT, MR. MARKKU JOKINEN, TO THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

From July 6th till July 8th 2010, the President of the World Federation (WFD) of the Deaf, Mr. Markku Jokinen (Finland), the President of the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI), Mrs. Liz Scott Gibson (Scotland/UK) and the WFD-KFPD Liaison Officer, Mr. Robert Remarque Grund (Germany), visited the DPRK and met representative and deaf friends of the Korean Federation for the Protection of the Disabled (KFPD) in order to continue the WFD-KFPD cooperation.

Since the first visit of Mr. Robert R. Grund as envoy of WFD to the DPRK in May 2008, the communication and cooperation between WFD and KFPD has developed steadily and trustfully focusing on the UN-Convention of the Human Rights for the Persons with Disabilities. As a result of this good development KFPD invited Mr. Markku Jokinen to visit DPRK in order to discuss the foundation of the National Deaf Association of the DPRK and other points of mutual interest in their future collaboration, for instance to continue the international deaf meeting “GOOD FELLOWSHIP” in Pyongyang.

The deaf education has developed since 1959 with the establishment of special schools for deaf children. Sign language and the use of sign language as the communicational tool for hearing-impaired people in the DPR of Korea have been officially recognized governmentally since 2003.
The KSLD-Project: Korean Sign Language Database

This idea was developed by Robert R. Grund and Barbara Unterbeck of the German NGO “TOGETHER - Special Education Centre for Deaf, Blind and Nondisabled Children Hamhung”. Mr Markku Jokinen agreed that a nationwide systematic work with KSL is of utmost importance for the foundation of the National Deaf Association: SL is the mother tongue of the deaf, it needs protection and professional interpreting. Mr. Markku Jokinen recommended close cooperation with SL experts of WFD in Pyongyang in order to make use of the rich international experience of SL activities of WFD.

Mr Jokinen emphasized the principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us” for the KSLD project, meaning deaf people themselves playing the most active and important role in the project. This will be a perfect preparation for the National Deaf Association to be founded.

DEAF PERFORMANCE IN PYONGYANG

After the meeting, the Executive Director of KFPD, Mr. Li Kyong Son, introduced extracurricular activities of deaf youths in Pyongyang: e.g. carving and making wooden inlay pictures, dancing, sports. Mr. Jokinen learned about KFPD-activities by seeing photos of the first WFD-Delegation in May 2008 and the 1st GOOD FELLOWSHIP in summer 2009 in Pyongyang at the picture wall. He enjoyed the great dance performance of deaf youths on the occasion of his visit and enjoyed the free and direct exchange and a snack party with all Koreans present.
Handing over of six Braille typewriters “Jot a Dot” Mr. Robert R. Grund expressed his hope that communication and cooperation between the World Blind Union (WBU) and the KFPD would develop in the same friendly and constructive way as the connection to WFD did. Both connections are essential for the realization of the huge project “Special Educational Centre for Deaf, Blind and Non-disabled Children Hamhung”.

After the snack, the farewell was emotional and all deaf Koreans wished Mr. Jokinen a happy return to Finland. He promised to continue his support for the annual international deaf meeting GOOD FELLOWSHIP in Pyongyang.

Improvement of the service for deaf tourists by the Korean International Travel Company in collaboration with the Chollima

On behalf of Korea International Travel Corporation (KITC) Mr. Chae Sung Chol welcomed Mr. Jokinen to the DPRK and introduced KITC to him. Mr Chae Sung Chol mentioned in particular the cooperation of KITC, KFPD, and the German Chollima Tours to improve the service for tourists with disabilities by including a visit to the KFPD Job Convenience where deaf people are working and where they can extend their service also to foreign guests.

THE POTONGGANG DISABLED JOB CONVENIENCE WAS BUILT WITH THE SUPPORT OF KFPD TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEAF AND DISABLED PEOPLE TO INTEGRATE INTO THE SOCIAL MAINSTREAM in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
Meeting of WFD-President Mr. Markku Jokinen and Vice-chairman of KFPD Mr. Kim Mun Chol in Beijing

On the way home to Finland Mr. Markku Jokinen met the Vice President of KFPD, Mr. Kim Mun Chol, in Beijing, the capital of the People’s Republic of China. At the same time, Mr Kim Mun Chol was on his way home to Pyongyang after his first Study Tour to Europe. The atmosphere during the dialogue was friendly and trustful. Mr. Kim Mun Chol was pleased to meet the President of the WFD and thanked him for his interest in the deaf situation in the DPRK. They understand mutual trust as the basis of their relationship. It is an important goal to both sides to work towards establishing a National Deaf Association in the DPRK. The trip of WFD to DPRK was a success for both sides: WFD learns about the development of the deaf situation in the DPRK which is neither touched nor influenced by the World Deaf Community. WFD is impressed by the zealous work of the KFPD for disabled children and also by the respect of Koreans towards sign language as the communication means of deaf people.

The WFD-KFPD Memorandum of Understanding - promoting a National Deaf Association in DPRK

Since Mr Grund visited the DPRK as the first WFD-delegate in 2008 Koreans better understand the great effect of communication with international organizations like WFD in implementing projects for deaf and blind in DPRK. This also leads to increased respect for the work of KFPD shown by the DPRK government. Thus international communication and exchange of experience are very important issues in KFPD work.

KFPD is working on the Foundation of sub-associations of KFPD, e.g. a National Deaf Association of the DPRK, a National Sport Association for Persons with Disabilities, etc.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE DEAF ASSOCIATION IN THE DPRK OF KOREA NEEDS A STRONG BASIC WORK WITH SIGN LANGUAGE AND BY SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER. THE KSL-DATABASE WILL BECOME THE STRONGEST TOOL IN THIS PROCESS.
POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR WFD

Mr. Markku appreciates the work and engagement of KFPD for the deaf situation and is very satisfied with his trip to the DPRK. He has visited around 60 countries so far and has always shared his impressions with his hosts. He praised his Korean hosts as very good organisers and his trip to DPRK as the smoothest so far and a very friendly one. He added that he is deeply impressed by the written communication of Mr. Grund with his Korean friends. This shows that Koreans in Pyongyang are respectful to the deaf-mute persons and take written communication for granted.

UBIQUITOUS WRITTEN COMMUNICATION RESPECTS DEAF-MUTISM AND OPENS THE COMMUNICATION WORLD FOR THE DEAF

KFPD’s work for the implementation of the UN-CONVENTION on the RIGHTS of PERSONS with DISABILITIES is a model for the third world.

Mr. Markku Jokinen explained that the work of KFPD for the implementation of the UN-Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has reached a higher level than in many other countries with respect to several points of the Convention. As an example he explained that worldwide about 80 to 90% of deaf children have no access to education. In DPRK deaf children have the right on education and the country is running special deaf schools where children are systematically learning KSL and written Korean. To the World Deaf Movement nationwide teaching of Sign Language is a fact is of highest importance. On behalf of KFPD, Mr. Kim Mun Chol thanks Mr. Markku Jokinen for his good comments on the work of KFPD and his understanding of the situation in the DPRK.

Mr. Jokinen agreed to the need to support from WFD for KFPD. Both sides promised to continue communication in order to prepare the next WFD-KFPD meeting in Helsinki.

Deaf People and Human Rights – Farewell presents of WFD-President Mr. Markku Jokinen to the Executive Director of KFPD, Mr. Li Kwang Son
WFD Visits the Potonggang Disabled Job Convenience
to learn about the social activities of the deaf and disabled people in DPRK

The Potonggang Job Convenience offers services in five sections: barber / hairdresser and beauty parlor / tailoring / photo shop / watchmaker and stamp and seal design and cutting. Most of the employees are deaf people since the job conditions of hair-cutting, beauty-parlor and dress-making can favorably be met by deaf people. Physically disabled persons work mainly in the photo shop and in the watch and stamp section.

In DPR Korea, the deaf schools offer two years of vocational training following nine years of general education. Education at all levels is free of charge nationwide. Deaf students can learn professions like hair-cutting, handicraft, drawing, embroidery, dress-designing and dress-making, electrician to repair electrical household appliances. After graduation from the deaf school they are trainees on the job for six months exploring the real life conditions in their employing institutions and to improve their techniques and skills in social live.

Warm talking in International Sign Language with deaf barbers and tailors

Mr. Markku tried to talk in ISL, i.e. in International Sign Language and surprisingly it was possible. The solid foundation of their education in Korean Sign Language enabled the deaf tailors and barbers to directly and freely talk with the WFD President. Later deaf tailors taught him the Korean finger spelling system of numbers. He could see deaf women and deaf men working together in same positions with equal rights and possibilities.

He was also impressed to learn about the tolerant attitude and behaviour of non-disabled Koreans towards the deaf barbers and tailors in this Job convenience which is a good example of the integration of deaf Koreans into the society in a smooth way and in accordance with the modern understanding of human rights and the process of main-streaming the society.
The Visit of the President of the World Federation of the Deaf, Mr Markku Jokinen to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

... contributed to building bridges between the deaf population in the DPR Korea and the world deaf community

in terms of the UN-Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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TOGETHER – SPECIAL TRAINING CENTRE FOR DEAF, BLIND AND NONDISABLED CHILDREN HAMHUNG E.V.

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