

**Opening Speech**  
**Hugo Setzer, IPA President**  
**9th Turkish Publishing Assembly, 25-26 June 2020**  
**organized in memory of Çetin Tüzüner**

‘HOPE’

Good day, ladies and gentlemen

Thank you to my dear friend Kenan Kocatürk and to the wonderful people at the Turkish Publishers Association for inviting me to be with you today.

It is an honour for me to be able to speak to you at this 9th Turkish Publishing Assembly, although I wish I could be there with you, to see the faces of the many friends among you from my previous visit and the opportunity to make new ones.

But while I could dwell on the negative, it would not be right. This virtual meeting enables me to talk to you all today when I perhaps would not have been able to travel to Istanbul under normal conditions. I have also spoken to so many of our members over the last few months and, like many of us, have discovered that, while no replacement for a face to face meeting, virtual meetings can bring us closer together too.

The impact of the pandemic has been significant. We cannot hide away from the fact that the economic impact on almost every part of our industry will leave many authors, publishers and booksellers struggling to survive.

We will need to work together across the industry to help those most in need. We will need initiatives from within our industry but, in many countries, we will also need government support. IPA has offered its support to many members in recent months and we stand ready to do so for all members who need it in the future.

We also need to remain vigilant that the exceptional circumstances that we have faced, are sometimes used to try to erode core parts of our industry, like copyright law or our freedom to publish.

There are amazing things publishers have done to make contents available for free, which are possible because of copyright law and the flexibility it provides. Those who would use the temporary closure of public libraries or bookshops as a reason to rewrite the very economic foundations of our industry are cynical.

The same goes for our freedom to publish. Our ability to understand the world around us, the progress of the pandemic and how to tackle it, how to analyse the actions of each country and what worked and what didn't, our ability to do this depends on journalists, authors, newspapers, book publishers, and scientific journal publishers to be free to publish whatever they deem important. This is the only way that we can progress within democratic societies, and it is painful to see many regimes around the world crack down on that freedom.

This country is a well of hope when it comes to the freedom to publish. You, our publishing colleagues in Turkey are recognised as an inspiration to publishers around the world.

Earlier this month we announced the laureate of our 2020 Prix Voltaire. A Turkish publisher, Avesta, was also among the shortlist, and I would like to thank them for their remarkable work.

The prize was given to Liberal Publishing House, a Vietnamese publishing house, who are nothing short of inspirational. Samzidat or guerilla publishers, they are the only unlicensed publisher in Vietnam. They publish books about peaceful protest and democracy. They live in hiding and constantly on the run. Yet they continue to publish. To put themselves at risk. It is not in vain. Vietnamese readers also put themselves at risk to buy and read their books. Even in the most difficult of climates, these brave people provide hope that change is possible.

To focus on our business would be to lose perspective. The loss of human life caused by the pandemic has made the last few months a dark time. The fundamental changes to our way of life have left many disoriented. Lockdowns have led to isolation. The inequalities in some societies have been laid bare. The capacity for different governments and the international community to tackle this has been tested like never before. The future looks uncertain and this brings anxiety to many of us.

However, for every dark moment of difficulty, there are also so many beautiful stories that suggest we should be rather hopeful for the future. Stories that encourage us to think positive.

From our own industry, books have been rediscovered as a way of tackling isolation. People have started reading more.

British philosopher Alain de Botton says that: “Books explain us to ourselves and to others, and make us feel less strange, less isolated and less alone. This is the moment to turn to books. They are friends waiting for us any time we want them, and they will always speak honestly to us about what really matters.”

Publishers, bookshops and authors have found new ways to reach readers.

Rights have been waved to enable teachers to read books to pupils remotely.

Book clubs, which have shifted online, have been able to invite authors to join them and talk about their book.

Bookshops have taken to bicycles and skateboards to deliver books as readers have tried to support local bookstores.

Publishers have made scientific research and educational resources available for free.

Every part of the chain, even when struggling economically, has stepped up to contribute to society at a time when it was needed most.

I have always been proud to be in publishing, but the last few months have made me even prouder.

We bring so much value to so many aspects of daily life. Those in the industry knew it already but those on the outside discovered why curated, peer reviewed research is essential, why tested, carefully assembled educational resources and textbooks help take a student on their educational journey. People, confined to their homes, use books to visit new places and discover new people.

Our industry has also been forced to modernise quicker. Digital reading and supply have made many publishers accelerate the adoption of digital, and driven bookshops to provide online storefronts and compete with the big A.

We must seize these positive trends and developments. The future of our beautifully diverse publishing ecosystem depends on it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Even in these dark times our industry's resourcefulness and innovative spirit shines through, our ability to constantly adapt made evident.

People want great stories to read, they want to learn, they want to understand the changing world around them.

Desmond Tutu, the South African bishop and Nobel Peace Prize winner said that  
"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."

I have no doubt that together we will overcome the challenges we face and seize the opportunities this crisis has presented to us.

Thank you