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For immediate release

PUBLISHERS AND LIBRARIANS PROMOTE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

An international group of librarians and book and journal publishers re-asserted the importance of freedom of expression for democracy, creativity and prosperity, expressing its willingness to further promote and work towards ensuring respect of this fundamental human right.

The joint statement on freedom of expression was agreed by the Joint Steering Group, established by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Publishers Association (IPA).

The statement reiterates the need to put into place national legal frameworks in accordance with international instruments guaranteeing the freedom of expression and calls for a full application of the principle in the print and the electronic environments. Both organisations commit themselves to oppose steadfastly any attempts to restrict this fundamental freedom.

Alex Byrne, Chair of the IFLA Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression Committee declared:

"In a world of turmoil, it is vitally important for global understanding that all peoples should be able to express their views and read and see the views of others. Librarians and publishers share a commitment to ensuring the widest possible access to information. IPA and IFLA have jointly pledged to promote freedom of expression and access and to resist attempts to censor or inhibit printed or digital publication."

Lars Grahn, Chair of the IPA Freedom to Publish Committee said:

"It is a core mission for librarians and publishers to guarantee everyone's right to express opinions in written forms without interference. The Internet has led to an accelerated exchange of information throughout the world, but which in turn can give rise to new types of censorship. IFLA and IPA now have to fight on both the print and digital fronts to promote and defend the freedom of expression, and in particular the freedom to publish. "

ENDS

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Notes for editors:

IFLA is the global voice of the library and information profession. Established in 1927, it has celebrated its 75th anniversary at its annual conference in Glasgow, Scotland in August 2002.

IFLA currently has more than 1,750 members in over 150 countries. More information can be found on the IFLA website www.ifla.org.

IPA represents the publishing industry world-wide through 78 national, regional and specialised publishers associations in 65 countries. Established in 1896, IPA was founded to promote the lifeblood of publishing: Copyright protection and freedom to publish, internationally. IPA is an accredited Non-Governmental Organisation enjoying a consultative status to the United Nations. For more about IPA, see: www.ipa-uie.org.