**World Braille Day, 4th January – Message from the President, ICEVI**

Dear Colleagues,

January 4th 2019 is World Braille Day and this year we celebrate the 210th anniversary of Louis Braille’s birth. In recognition of the significance of Louis Braille’s legacy, the United Nations has passed a resolution designating that January 4th each year will be recognised as World Braille Day by UN Member States and UN bodies.

Louis Braille commenced work on his tactile system of reading and writing at age 12 when he was a student at the Royal Institution for Blind Youth in Paris. At that time, his only means of learning and accessing information was by listening to his teachers or by attempting to read the Institution’s 12 large books that were produced using a system of raised letters. Sadly, Louis Braille died at age 43, two years before his tactile system was introduced as a literacy medium to students at the Paris Institution for Blind Youth.

If alive today, Louis Braille would be proud of the fact that his tactile system has been adopted by more than 142 countries. He would be joining hands with the individuals around the world who are proclaiming the rights of persons with vision impairment or other print disabilities to equity of access to the printed word, and he would be promulgating the importance of ratification by State Parties of the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the 2013 WIPO Marrakesh Treaty, and the 2015 UN Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

As highlighted by Judy Dixon in her Foreword to the third edition of World Braille Usage, “braille continues to develop as a vibrant means of communication that enables people who are blind to participate in society, pursue educational opportunities, attain commensurate employment, and enjoy the many activities of everyday life” (Perkins, ICEB & Library of Congress, 2013, p. viii).

Please join us in celebrating World Braille Day on January 4th, 2019.

With best wishes for 2019,

**Dr. Frances Gentle**
President, International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI)