

Wellington  
New Zealand  
11 January 2011

The President  
The Japanese Federation of the Deaf

I wish to commend the efforts of your Federation to achieve the enactment of a "Sign language Act" in Japan.

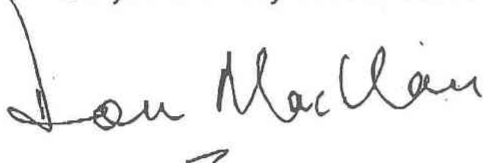
This would legally confirm the recognition of sign language as a language, and would also ensure access to information and communications as provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In the negotiation of the Convention the pivotal importance of sign language, for persons with hearing disabilities, was clearly recognized, as was its unique role as a language. The provisions of the Convention enshrine the importance of sign language, and specifically include it within the definition of a "language".

Your success will not only have a significant impact in Japan, but also internationally, in promoting the use and recognition of sign language as a language, and in strengthening the implementation of the Convention more generally.

Your efforts are also very much in the spirit of the Convention, which recognizes the key role that persons with disabilities, and their representative organizations, have in working with Governments to ensure that the rights enshrined in the Convention are promoted and fully implemented.

I wish you the very best of success in your efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Don MacKay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Don MacKay  
(Chairman of the United Nations Committee that negotiated  
the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)