



**Speech by Trasvin Jittidecharak, IPA Board Member
Bangkok, Thailand, 23 April 2013, Opening of World Book Capital 2013**

As initiator of the UNESCO World Book Capital program 10 years ago, and as Jury member, the International Publishers Association (IPA) attaches great importance to this international endeavour aimed at promoting books, reading and literacy.

As representative of the IPA leadership here in Bangkok, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the various stakeholders, who presented a winning bid for World Book Capital 2013, in particular the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), and the Publishers and Booksellers Association of Thailand (PUBAT). As a Thai publisher, let me tell you how proud I am to be standing here today on this historic occasion.

Bangkok, the 13th World Book Capital since Madrid in 2001, is only the second Asian World Book Capital after New Delhi in 2003. Bangkok was nominated on account of “its willingness to bring together all the various stakeholders of the book chain and beyond, for its community-focused program, and the high level of its commitment through the proposed activities”.

On this opening day, IPA warmly congratulates the Thai authorities on deciding to implement the decade of reading because reading is fundamental to society. A passion for reading is the single most important indicator for educational achievement and social mobility. If, through books, we can kindle a passion for reading in children, we will lay the foundation for prosperity and happiness in the next generation.

In this historic context, IPA and its Thai member PUBAT respectfully urge the Thai authorities to seize this opportunity to take the following measures:

1. **Reading Promotion:** Set up a national body in charge of supporting and promoting reading nationally;
2. **Fiscal Policy/Taxation of Knowledge:** Apply a zero-rate VAT on books, not only in paper but also in digital format, and declare books to be a tax deductible item;
3. **Education:** Implement a transparent textbook procurement policy (according to World Bank standards);

4. **Freedom of Expression/Freedom to Publish:** Decriminalise defamation to support greater freedom of expression.

Taking the measures above would underline our authorities' commitment to a strong national book policy, itself an essential component of an ambitious national economic and cultural policy.

The IPA staff in Geneva, Switzerland, is very much looking forward to cooperating with BMA and PUBAT, its long time Thai member, on a number of projects this year and the next, in particular its 30th Congress to be held in Bangkok on 25–27 March 2013 with the support of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. For the first time, the IPA Congress will be held in South-East Asia and a World Book Capital. Hundreds of publishers from all over the world are expected to participate, together with some authors, copyright specialists, librarians and officials from close to 50 countries and international organisations.

As chairwoman of the organising committee, I can guarantee that it will be an exciting Congress. To give you one example, the session on digital distribution developments will be chaired by the CEO of HarperCollins, Brian Murray. The speakers will include Tom Turvey, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Google; Charlie Redmayne, CEO of Pottermore; Dane Neller, CEO of On Demand Books; and Michael Serbinis, CEO of Kobo Inc.

Online registration is now open on the Congress website: www.ipa2014bangkok.com. Please go on line and register, and be sure to spread the word!

To conclude, this is a momentous and historic time for publishing in Thailand and throughout ASEAN. The honour bestowed on us not only gives us an opportunity to celebrate. It also gives us an enormous responsibility. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work!