



International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions

## **Opening Words by Gerald Leitner, Secretary General, IFLA**

Development and Access to Information Webinar

25 September 2017

Thank you all for dialling into this webinar today, or to watch it later. After an inspiring WLIC only a month ago, I am excited to be speaking to you again now.

As you will know, IFLA is building a united library field. We need to work together, drawing on our individual and collective strengths, in order to realise our potential as motors of change.

In doing so, we will also need to ensure that libraries and their missions are recognised and valued by others. For this, we need the knowledge, confidence, tools and skills to go into ministries, parliaments, town halls and institutions and explain why libraries are not only useful but essential for healthy communities and societies.

IFLA has a key role in making the case for libraries globally, and there is no more global organisation than the UN.

We go there, because there is nowhere else where we could reach so many of your governments at once.

And because it is the UN that has set out a roadmap for the next 14 years towards a safer, healthier, fairer and more prosperous society – the Sustainable Development Goals.

As you will hear in this webinar, these are both an affirmation of the essential work of libraries, and an opportunity to make sure others recognise this.

Another fundamental role of IFLA is in making the link between the global, the regional, the national and the local.

Our work internationally can only be a success if it makes our community – our unique network of millions of institutions – stronger. If it gives you that knowledge and confidence, those tools and skills, to make a difference.

IFLA is already delivering this through the International Advocacy Programme, and the Building Strong Library Associations initiatives.

These look to build capacity around the world. The Development and Access to Information report, the subject of today's webinar, is just the latest advocacy tool that IFLA is offering to its members.

Built around the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, it includes innovative analysis of the different factors that allow for access to information, and expert insights into the contribution of access to achieving four different SDGs.

By highlighting the importance of access to information – meaningful access to information – for development, it explains the mission of libraries in terms that policy-makers can understand, from the United Nations to the smallest village.

It makes it clear that Internet access alone, while important, is not enough.

It sets out the argument for a properly supported library system.

It is a tool – a weapon even – for the whole united library field, a powerful statement of why libraries are motors for change.

I hope, after this webinar, that you will feel ready to take up the DA2I report and make it make a difference.