To

**Mrs Sushma Swaraj**

**Hon’ble Minister for External Affairs**

**South Block**

**New Delhi.**

Subject: Request for Official commemoration for the international Day of Sign Language

Dear Madam,

Greetings from the National Association of the Deaf!

National Association of the Deaf is an organization that is working to empower Deaf and Hard of Hearing people across India; one that is of the deaf, by the deaf and for the deaf. There are 18 million and more deaf persons who are a big part of the mainstream society but their sufferings from various societal and other problems go unnoticed.

At the very outset, we would once again like to take this opportunity to personally thank you and congratulate the Government in ensuring that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill became an ACT in 2016 and the establishment of Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre has been approved by you as an Autonomous body on 22nd September, 2015.

We appreciate your support for ensuring the accessible telecast of DD TV for the Swearing in Ceremony on 28th May 2014, the Independence Day on 14th & 15th August 2014, 2015 & 2016, the Teacher Day on 5th September 2014 and the Republic Day on 25th & 26th January 2015, 2016 and NDA’s Second Anniversary on 28th May 2016.

You would be pleased to learn that the United Nations has announced September 23 to be celebrated as International Day of Sign Language every year. This is to promote the use of Sign Language along with spoken languages. More information on this day is attached as an annexure to this letter.

**We would urge the Government of India to recognize and observe the International Day of Sign Languages**. India to be seen as a world leader for commitment in recognizing and promoting the use of sign language. Indian Sign Language is used by millions of Deaf Indians for communication and having access to information. Like many countries around the world, we would like to push forward for Indian Sign Language to be one of the official languages of India. Government has responsibility for promoting and protecting the official languages. Indian Sign Language is vital to the expression of Deaf culture and identity.

Language is so important for opening up a wealth of opportunities to people – social, cultural, educational, employment, communication and accessibility. It is a matter of human rights that we accept ISL to promote equal opportunities for Deaf people.

The day will be a celebration for Deaf people in India, an occasion to feel proud of their language, to promote it within the Deaf blind and Deaf community, and it will also contribute to raising public awareness of all Indians about the importance of sign language.

The International Day of Sign Languages aligns observes the following collective goals:

* Reach out to and influence as many governments as possible to legally fulfill their obligations.
* Promotes deaf people as unique in having both perspectives of disability and linguistic minority and that sign language and deaf culture strengthens multilingualism and are means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally.
* Reflects the principles of the United Nations on Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its recognition of sign languages as equal to spoken languages. Sign languages are fully-fledged natural languages, structurally distinct from spoken languages, alongside which they coexist.
* Emphasizes sign language as a critical prerequisite to the full realization of human rights for deaf people. Early access to sign language and services in sign language, including quality education available in sign language, is vital to the growth and development of the deaf individual and critical to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.
* Stresses that when working with Deaf Blind and Deaf Communities, the principle of “nothing about us without us” must be considered and integrated.

We request you for your kind support and approval to this resolution of the UN. We would be grateful if our country could recognize 23rd September every year as International Day of Sign Language and share this recommendation with the Hon’ble Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, all States Government and UT.

We look forward to hear from you.

Thank you Sir

Yours sincerely,

(Name ---------)

President or General Secretary

Copy to:

1. Shri Thaawar Chand Gehlot, Hon’ble Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi.
2. Ms Dolly Chakraborty, Joint Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 5th Floor Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-3