IPA, WHO and UNICEF launch Read the World on International Children’s Book Day to support children and young people in isolation

Geronimo Stilton author to kickstart exclusive children’s book reading initiative amid COVID-19 pandemic

NEW YORK/GENEVA, 2 April 2020 – Much-loved children’s authors are joining an initiative to read extracts of their books to millions of children and young people currently living in isolation amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Read the World is a collaboration between the International Publishers Association (IPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. It kicks off today, on International Children’s Book Day, at 15.00 GMT/17.00 CET with Italian author Elisabetta Dami, creator of the popular character Geronimo Stilton.

“These are uncharted waters for us all, and the psycho-social effects of prolonged isolation and social distancing are yet to be seen and understood,” said IPA President Hugo Setzer. “All of us should take particular care of our mental health at the moment, and especially that of young minds. The IPA wanted to do something positive to bring children and their favourite writers closer, to stimulate their interest in books and to create a carefree moment for families to share during this difficult period of confinement.”

“Children’s lives and routines have been turned upside down in just a few short weeks,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “Even when the
outside world is out of bounds for now, reading can remind children and young people that the transportive power of books is unlimited.”

“WHO is committed to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic on all fronts, especially when it comes to protecting young people,” said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. “We understand the fear and anxieties many feel and know how the joy of reading can stimulate young minds, ease tensions and provide hope.”

Elisabetta Dami will read on her personal Instagram account in English from 15.00-15.30 GMT 17.00-17.30 CET. Dami, whose books have sold more than 180 million copies around the world and are published in 50 different languages, will also respond to comments and questions via the platform.

Several other noted children’s authors have agreed to join the Read the World initiative, details of which will be available soon at https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/read-the-world

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About IPA

The IPA is the world’s largest federation of publishers associations. Established in 1896, it is an industry body with a human rights mandate, whose mission is to promote and protect publishing and raise awareness of publishing as a force for economic, cultural and social development. Working in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and other supranational bodies, the IPA champions the interests of book and journal publishing at national and supranational level. Internationally, the IPA actively opposes censorship and promotes copyright, freedom to publish (including through the IPA Prix Voltaire), and literacy.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

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About WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the United Nations’ specialized agency for health. It is an intergovernmental organization and works in collaboration with its Member States usually through the Ministries of Health. The World Health Organization is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options,
providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. Learn more at www.who.int.

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