



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



2019 International Year
of Indigenous Languages

**High-level event for the closing of the
2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages**

**“Indigenous languages matter for peace building,
sustainable development and reconciliation”**

17 December 2019

10.00 – 13.00

General Assembly Hall

United Nations Headquarters

New York

Ms. Marie Paule Roudil

Director of Office and UNESCO Representative

to the United Nations in New York

Good morning,

- President of the General Assembly,
- Excellences,
- Distinguished Representatives of the Member States,
- Colleagues,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address you on the occasion of the High-level event closing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.

It is symbolic that we are gathered in the same place in which the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the International Year in December 2016. The Year was launched last February, and I am hopeful the UNGA will proclaim a decade of indigenous languages within the next days.

I would like to welcome all participants present today, and to express our sincere appreciation to the President of the UNGA convening this event, and thank :

- Members States of the Steering Committee from Australia, Ecuador, Estonia, France, The Gambia and Saudi Arabia for their active involvement and guidance; Indigenous peoples, UN mechanisms, and to our colleagues from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs;
- We are also grateful to the Member States which have been involved and have provided generous financial support to International Year, as well as organized regional consultations;

- Finally, I would like to thank all the UN agencies involved, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations around the world, as well as many academic, public and private bodies.

And as this Year draws to a close, I am confident, as a representative of the UN lead agency for the year, that the joint work undertaken will build a path for long and sustainable efforts to support, provide access to and promote indigenous languages worldwide.

[Human rights-based approach to languages]

A human rights-based approach to languages should be fully integrated in all our efforts to safeguard, protect, support and promote them.

We can all learn lessons from indigenous languages and their users, and the critical situation these languages find themselves in therefore carries a special significance for all of us.

[IYIL2019]

Throughout this international year, substantial achievements have been accomplished.

The 900 events have generated an array of social, cultural, educational and political impacts. They provided an opportunity to stimulate dialogue, to build and enhance partnerships, and to inspire new initiatives.

People from all over the world have joined the global online community, as well as the social media campaign.

The international media has widely covered impacts of the Year.

Capacity-building activities promoted the application of technological solutions, creation of training materials to support indigenous languages.

UNESCO also initiated research on the Internet Universality Indicators and invited researchers to submit their academic papers.

The International Days contributed to the realization of objectives of the International Year.

Through its Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003), UNESCO invites Member States to take necessary measures on language issues.

In 2020, UNESCO is planning to launch an online platform for the World Atlas of Languages, a repository for linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

[Strategic Outcome Document of IYIL2019]

A series of regional consultations were carried out in cooperation with Paraguay, China, Canada, Peru, the African Union and the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), to prepare the Strategic Outcome Document.

The Document is the product of a collaborative effort involving many indigenous peoples, researchers, UN agencies, institutions, and governments. It includes 7 major conclusions, a set of recommendations and actions for the years to come.

[Follow up to the IYIL2019]

We are convinced that giving more attention to indigenous languages and their users will be a key factor in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, because languages are critical to peoples' ability to transfer their knowledge to future generations, to protect biodiversity and the environment, and to safeguard their natural and cultural heritage, belief systems, values, and spirituality.

UNESCO welcomes the generous proposal of the Government of Mexico to host a high-level event for the International Year in Mexico City on 27 and 28 February 2020.

Thank you for your attention.