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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

# International Conference on “Enhancing Language Ability and Education for the 21st Century”

Suzhou, China – 5 June 2014

Closing Speech

by

**H.E. Dr Hao Ping**

**President of the General Conference  
Vice-Minister of Education  
of the People's Republic of China**

Distinguished Ministers,

Your Excellency Dr. Amr, Chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board,  
Excellences,

Mrs. Li Weihong, Vice Minister for Education,

Mr. Tang Qian, Assistant Director General of UNESCO,

Experts and Professionals,

Ladies and gentlemen, and dear friends,

Under the concerted efforts of all representatives, the International Conference on Language is drawing to an end with its agenda successfully completed. In the past two days, under the theme of Language Ability and Language Education, representatives carried in-depth exchanges, concluded many important consensuses for spoken and written language and language education, and drew the Suzhou Conclusions. The conference realized the anticipated tasks and is a complete success.

Mrs. Liu Yandong, Vice Premier of People's Republic of China Mrs. attended and addressed at the opening ceremony of the conference. She highlighted five proposals, namely, enhancing mutual respect, exchanges and mutual learning, highlighting and strengthening language and culture education, strengthening studies on fundamental theories of language, improving institutional guarantee for spoken and written language and promoting international cooperation. These proposals are of great significance and served as the principles for discussion. Mrs. Irina Bokova and Mr. Amr also made speeches at the opening ceremony. Ministers for Education of various nations and experts in linguistics voiced their opinions on enhancing language ability and language education. And the following five points are particularly impressive to me:

First, the conference raises the concept of language ability under the new circumstances. Language ability should include not only traditional abilities of literacy, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, but also the ability to use various modern language technologies in language activities. It should include not only mother tongue, but also second foreign language and multi-language ability. It should include language ability of normal people, and that of people with language disabilities. And it should include not only man's language ability, but also machine's language capacities. Besides, it should also include professional language ability, social language ability and language ability in arts and etc.

Second, language is critical in human civilization and cognitive development. Enhancing language ability is highly relevant for improving soft power, inheriting civilization and promoting sustainable development. Level of language ability determines the language and culture atmosphere of a nation. Cultivating language ability facilitates children's cognitive development, delays the decay of elders' cognitive ability and influences individual's comprehensive development.

Third, we need to strengthen studies on basic theories on language ability. Due to its complexity and expansibility, language ability requires collaboration among different disciplines, related industries and all walks of life. It is on the fore-front of science development and is an emerging sector of industrial development. Studies on language ability can effectively put an end to inefficient language education. We should strengthen studies on machine's language capacity and promote technological innovation and industries development in man-and-machine dialogue, artificial intelligence and Internet. Besides, we should enhance citizens' ability to conduct communication through use of modern technologies and give special consideration to groups who do not have access to these technologies.

Fourth, we should adapt ourselves to the national language plan and language policies required by new situation. It should be set as a national policy in overall development plan of economy, society, culture and education. We should promote establishment of laws and regulations on spoken and written language and the standard system of it, develop and preserve language resources in a scientific and rational manner, strengthen multilingual education and promote social inclusiveness through language ability enhancement, and actively support science and technological innovation in language ability. All these will promote development of language industry.

Fifth, we should facilitate international exchanges on language and culture. Language ability enhancement should be put at the core of inter-civilization communication so it can serve as an important part of people-to-people exchanges among countries. While reserving and disseminating the language and culture of one's own, countries should encourage and guide international citizens to learn languages, history and cultures of foreign countries. Besides, we should encourage overseas students' exchanges to advance inter-civilization communication, and take various measures to clear passage for language dissemination so that the fruits of culture exchanges and human civilizations can be shared by all.

In the end, on behalf of UNESCO's General Conference and organizers of this conference, I would like to express sincere thanks to representatives, staff and volunteers. Thanks to your efforts, this conference is a great success. Let's work together and make a greater contribution for the language ability enhancement and civilization progress!

Thank you!

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