



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES

On 16 May 2007, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages (IYL). "Languages matter!" is the motto chosen for UNESCO's IYL mobilization campaign, aiming to raise awareness, worldwide, on the strategic value of language for peace and sustainable development.



the promotion and protection of all languages, particularly endangered languages, in all individual and collective contexts.

"Languages matter!", the motto chosen for the IYL, is promoted all over the world through initiatives in the fields of education, cyberspace or the literate environment; through projects to safeguard endangered languages or to promote languages as a tool for social integration; or to explore the relationship between languages and the economy, languages and indigenous knowledge or languages and creation.

The International Year of Languages

On 16 May 2007, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages (IYL) and gave UNESCO the role of lead agency for the coordination of the celebration.

The IYL comes at a time when linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened. Language is fundamental to communication of all kinds, and it is communication that makes change and development possible in human society. Using - or not using – certain languages today can open a door, or close it, for large segments of society in many parts of the world.

As language issues are central to UNESCO's mandate in education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture and communication and information, the Organization has been designated as the lead agency for this celebration.

UNESCO invited governments, United Nations organizations, civil society organizations, educational institutions, professional associations and all other stakeholders to increase their own activities to foster respect for, and for

Language-related activities in all UNESCO Sectors and Services

UNESCO's work on languages takes many forms – formulating policy and guidelines, building capacity, research and analysis, raising awareness, supporting projects, developing networks, disseminating information. As these activities are interdisciplinary in nature, they are spread throughout the UNESCO's five programme areas, each one addressing particular aspects of language issues. These include:

Education – promoting inclusion and quality learning by supporting bi- and multilingual education, especially the use of mother-tongues, at all levels and in formal and non-formal settings, with special attention to teacher training, literacy provision and health education.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES

Main awareness-raising initiatives throughout the International Year of Languages 2008

21 February: (UNESCO Paris) Official Launching of the Year with a Conference on standard-setting instruments promoting multilingualism
5-7 March: (Johannesburg, South-Africa) and 22 to 24 April (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) Conferences of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) on « The role of trans-border languages and of lesser-used languages in Africa »
28 May: (UNESCO Paris) Conference of ACALAN on « African Languages as a factor of integration » ;
9 June: (Paris, France) Launch of the Chirac Foundation and its Programme for the Protection of Endangered Languages ;
13-15 June: (Eisenstadt, Austria) International Conference « Multilingualism in every-day life »;
1-3 July: (Bangkok Thailand) 2nd International Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Ethnolinguistic Communities;
2-4 July: (Yakutsk, Russian Federation) International Conference «Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace» ;
27-28 August: (Tokyo, Japan) UNU-UNESCO Conference « Multilingualism and Globalization »
7 October: (UNESCO, Paris) Executive Board Thematic Debate on "Protecting indigenous and endangered languages and the role of languages in promoting EFA in the context of sustainable development."
9-10 October: (Bilbao, Basque Country, Spain) International Conference "Challenges of Minority Languages at the Globalization Age"
4 November: (UN Association of Spain, Lleida) International Year of Languages Seminar.

Science – enhancing communication and collaboration among scientific researchers and institutions across linguistic divides; translating and disseminating scientific materials to communities to overcome language barriers; promoting vernacular languages as essential vehicles for the safeguarding and transmission of indigenous knowledge.

Social and human sciences – languages and human rights and cultural rights, migrations and urbanization and other social issues (e.g. exclusion and poverty).

Culture – promoting linguistic diversity (e.g. through translations and publications), dialogue and exchange, preserving cultural heritage by safeguarding endangered languages (e.g., through data collection and monitoring and supporting field projects).

Communication and information – building inclusive knowledge societies in which everyone can freely create, share and access to information and knowledge; creating equitable access to information by promoting linguistic diversity on the

Internet and multilingual access to digital resources; and offering possibilities through ICT for a wider use and preservation of endangered languages.

Central services - Interpretation, translation, multilingual document production (ADM), staff language training (HRM) and multilingual information and publications (BPI)

The Intersectoral Platform for Languages and Multilingualism allows a better coordination and synergy of all Sectors' work, by ensuring general monitoring as regards the implementation of UNESCO's activities for the promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity. The Platform involves all five Programme Sectors and relevant central services.

To Find Out More

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Contact : Mauro Rosi, Platform manager
m.rosi@unesco.org