



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Two hundred and seventh session

207 EX/43

PARIS, 13 September 2019
Original: English/French

Item 43 of the provisional agenda

WORLD PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE DAY

SUMMARY

This item has been included in the provisional agenda of the 207th session of the Executive Board at the request of Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Chile, Czechia, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Luxembourg, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, Timor-Leste and Uruguay.

The corresponding explanatory note and draft decision are included in this document.

Financial implications: none/extrabudgetary.

Decision required: paragraph 12.



Doc. 2019/2019

Introduction

1. The Portuguese language is one of the most widely used languages of the Indo-European family, and one of the most widespread languages in the world, with more than 265 million speakers. It is the most widely spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere. Its users are spread through all continents.
2. Portuguese was the language of the first globalization in the modern era and of a grand cultural-civilizational encounter, becoming the language of the newly created global economy and two-way flow in ideas, philosophies, and cultural products. Portuguese left its mark, directly and indirectly, on many other languages around the world, as was marked by many of them, bringing back new words, meanwhile adopted by other languages, namely European ones.
3. The Portuguese language is taught officially and unofficially in many countries across the world. Portuguese is the official language of nine States – Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste, and is also an official language of Macau Special Administrative Region of China. It is one of the official languages of the continental organizations African Union, Organization of American States, European Union and of multiple regional organizations, as well as official language of UNESCO General Conference.
4. Language is not merely a tool for communication. It is the bearer of a whole nexus of cultural expressions and conveys identity, values and visions of the world. It is a vessel which contains cultural diversity and the dialogue among civilizations. It is a bridge that enables closer relations between societies, a richer diversity of forms of expression and interaction, and the exchange of support and empowerment. The Portuguese language occupies a central place in this approach, in view of its history, its geography, its lexical stock from other languages, and its own terms and expressions that have enriched other languages.
5. Multilingualism, a core value of the United Nations, is an essential factor in harmonious communication between peoples, which promotes unity in diversity and international understanding, tolerance and dialogue. The United Nations General Assembly, through its resolution 71/328 of 11 September 2017 on multilingualism, welcomed the implementation of a day dedicated to each of its official languages in order to inform and raise awareness of their history, culture and use, and encouraged the Secretary-General and institutions such as UNESCO to consider extending this important initiative to other non-official languages spoken throughout the world.
6. Also for UNESCO, linguistic diversity and multilingualism are domains of strategic importance that the Organization promotes in all fields of its mandate, through an interdisciplinary approach involving all programme sectors. There is a growing awareness that languages play a vital role in development, not only in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, but also in attaining quality education for all and strengthening cooperation, in building inclusive knowledge societies, in preserving cultural heritage, and in mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology to sustainable development.
7. The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) was established in 1996 as a privileged multilateral forum for the deepening of mutual friendship, political-diplomatic consultation and cooperation among its members, whose peoples have the Portuguese language as one of the foundations of their specific identities. CPLP Constitutive Declaration reaffirms that the Portuguese language is a privileged means of disseminating cultural creation among the peoples who speak it, and of international projection of their cultural values, in an open and Universalist perspective.
8. A cooperation agreement between CPLP and UNESCO was signed in 2000, aiming to advance common goals, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Constitution of UNESCO and the Constitutive Declaration of CPLP.

9. Since 2005 the CPLP Member States celebrate 5 May as day of the Portuguese language and Lusophone culture, and already in 2006 the first commemoration of the Portuguese language at UNESCO Headquarters took place, at the initiative of those countries. On 20 July 2009 the CPLP Council of Ministers adopted a resolution officially establishing 5 May as the Day of the Portuguese Language and Culture in CPLP.

10. Marking a language day through a range of musical performances, literature readings, competitions, cultural shows, art exhibitions, lectures, plays, and other cultural and popular presentation and events – making the cultural and social treasure of the language in question better known – is an expression of the cultural diversity of the countries that speak the language, as well as an opportunity to raise more awareness about that language and its contribution to human civilization.

11. The proclamation of the World Portuguese Language Day will have no financial impact on UNESCO. The activities connected with the marking of the World Portuguese Language Day at UNESCO will be borne by the CPLP Group at UNESCO.

Proposed draft decision

12. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Aware of the Portuguese language's role in and contribution to the preservation and dissemination of human civilization and culture,
2. Also aware that Portuguese is the language of nine Member States of UNESCO, that it is an official language of three continental organizations and of UNESCO's General Conference, that it is spoken by more than 265 million people and is the most widely-spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere,
3. Understanding the need to implement more wide-ranging cooperation between peoples through multilingualism, cultural rapprochement and dialogue among civilizations, in line with what is set out in the Constitution of UNESCO,
4. Taking note of the 2009 resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) that established 5 May as the Day of the Portuguese Language and Culture in CPLP,
5. Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/328 adopted on 11 September 2017, encouraging the extension of the initiative of a day dedicated to each of the official languages of the Organization to other languages spoken throughout the world,
6. Appreciating the assurances provided by those States with Portuguese as an official language concerning the safeguarding, conservation and celebration of the language, and their active engagement in the promotion and participation of a World Portuguese Language Day,
7. Invites the Director-General to include World Portuguese Language Day on 5 May of each year as one of the international days marked by UNESCO, it being understood that this will have no financial impact on the regular budget of the Organization;
8. Recommends that the General Conference, at its 40th session, proclaim 5 May of each year World Portuguese Language Day.