

THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) Recommendations on Indigenous Languages

2nd Session (2003)

98. The Forum recommends that Governments introduce indigenous languages in public administration in indigenous territories where feasible.

3rd Session (2004)

19. Member States should consider the adoption and full implementation of comprehensive national indigenous education policies based on the following goals:

Participation

a) Establishing effective arrangements for the participation of indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of education services for their children, young people and other community members;

b) Increasing the number of indigenous people employed as educational administrators, teachers, coaches, officials, curriculum advisers, teacher's assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community members engaged in teaching indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, and indigenous languages;

c) Developing arrangements for the provision of independent advice from indigenous communities regarding educational decisions at all levels; d) Achieving the participation of indigenous children, young people and adults in education for a period similar to that of other students;

Access

e) Ensuring that indigenous children, young people and adults have access to all levels of education (including adult education) on a basis comparable to that available to other citizens;

Attainment

f) Enabling indigenous students to attain skills and graduation rates up to the same standard as other students throughout the compulsory and non-compulsory schooling years;





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

g) Developing teaching forms and curricula based on mother tongue (additive learning) in primary and secondary education (should be mandatory in order to achieve goal (f) above);

h) Developing curricula for both primary and secondary education which reflect the insights and usefulness of indigenous knowledge systems and are sensitive to indigenous values. Curricula should:

i) Incorporate indigenous histories, traditional knowledge and spiritual values;

ii) Integrate indigenous oral traditions, myths and writings, acknowledging these as unique parts of world heritage;

Indigenous languages, proficiency in the national language, literacy and numeracy

i) Developing programmes based on the child's mother tongue (first language) as a foundation for learning and aiming at the maintenance and continued use of indigenous languages;

j) Enabling the attainment of proficiency in the commonly used national language and at least one international language, and numeracy competencies by all indigenous students, including indigenous adults, giving particular attention to indigenous women based on the framework of the United Nations Decade of Literacy;

Capacity-building

k) Providing community education services which will enable indigenous peoples to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities;

l) Providing education and training services to develop the skills of indigenous people to participate in educational decision-making;

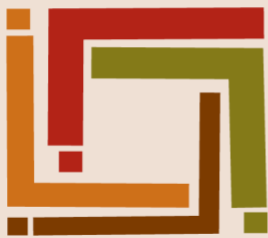
Appreciation, understanding and respect for indigenous cultures

m) Enabling all students, both indigenous and non-indigenous, at all levels of education, to have an appreciation and understanding of and respect for traditional and contemporary indigenous histories, cultures and identities;

Anti-racism strategies

n) Promoting anti-racism education, including strategies to empower young people to deal with racism in the compulsory schooling curriculum;





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

Cultural, social and economic development in education:

o) Indigenous peoples should be resourced and supported to establish their own education systems, including schools, should they so choose. Also, traditional indigenous education and its structures should be respected and supported;

Education for indigenous peoples in custody or detention

p) Given the overrepresentation of indigenous youth and adults in detention, the Forum urges States to consider culturally relevant and appropriate education for indigenous peoples in detention centres;

q) The Forum asks that education plans, programmes and policies be implemented especially for indigenous girls, boys and women.

21. Recognizing that States cannot address indigenous education issues alone or in isolation, indigenous representatives and organizations of indigenous peoples should prepare to engage with Governments to facilitate the indigenous education goals of participation, access, attainment, indigenous languages, proficiency in the national language and at least one international language and numeracy, capacity-building, appreciation, understanding and respect for indigenous cultures, and anti-racism strategies.

27. The Forum recommends that Member States adopts legislation acknowledging that the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples is their inalienable cultural heritage and embodies their cultural identity and that they make available such legislation and information in local indigenous languages.

34. The Forum recommends:

(a) That the appropriate agencies, including those engaged in development activities, consider the protection of sacred species;

(b) That UNESCO focus attention on the ratification of the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage and on its effective implementation at national levels;

(c) That UNESCO explore the links between the protection of tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage and sacred sites and other related UNESCO instruments with a view to broadening, strengthening and streamlining the protection of (indigenous) cultural heritage;

(d) That UNESCO facilitate the participation of both the Forum and indigenous peoples' representatives in all relevant meetings of interest to them;





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

(e) Noting that the current UNESCO endangered languages programme seeks only to record endangered (indigenous) languages, that UNESCO expand its endangered languages programme to record, revive and reintroduce indigenous languages, in cooperation with indigenous peoples. This should include projects that support training in and teaching of indigenous languages at the community level.

43. The Forum recommends that the relevant United Nations entities, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in particular its Division for the Advancement of Women, UNICEF, UNIFEM, the Department of Public Information and ILO:

(a) Encourage the dissemination of information in indigenous languages at the local level, concerning the rights of indigenous peoples, especially indigenous women:

(b) Encourage and support the training of indigenous women in human rights and the rule of law;

(c) Provide technical assistance to governments to establish the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, especially indigenous women.

4th Session (2005)

48. States should:

(a) Endorse intercultural education as national policy priority to ensure equal access for indigenous children to quality and culturally appropriate primary education, as stipulated in the Convention on the Right of the Child;

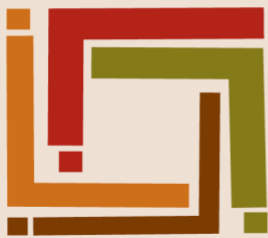
(b) Increase substantially State budgetary allocations in order to meet Millennium Development Goal 2 for indigenous children;

(c) Increase funding for Goal 2 for indigenous children through bilateral and multilateral cooperation;

(d) Review current national curricula and textbooks to erase culturally discriminatory materials and enhance knowledge of indigenous cultures;

(e) Establish effective arrangements for the participation of indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of education services for their children, including in the designing and implementation





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

of their own education at all levels, including developing appropriate teaching materials and methods;

(f) Ensure an increase in the number of indigenous persons in the educational sectors, including in policy, administration, teaching indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, indigenous languages and production of educational materials;

(g) Ensure that indigenous children have access to free primary quality education;

(h) Eliminate national policies and practices that create further difficulties for indigenous children to enjoy their right to education, such as the request for birth certificates for the enrolment of children and the refusal to accept indigenous names and traditional dress in schools;

(i) Develop bilingual and culturally appropriate primary education for indigenous children to reduce dropout rates. The mother tongue must be the first learning language and the national language the second language; curricula should reflect indigenous peoples' holistic worldviews, knowledge systems, histories, spiritual values and physical activities, physical education and sports;

(j) Recognize that isolation is a major obstacle that prevents indigenous peoples from fully enjoying their right to education. States should establish best practices, such as residential or boarding schools, where they have worked positively, and mobile and seasonal schools or the use of technologies, such as remote teaching and the Internet, to reach the most isolated and remote indigenous communities;

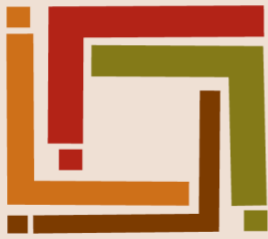
(k) support enrolment of indigenous persons in teacher-training programs, colleges and relevant higher educational institutions;

(l) Develop school curricula for indigenous peoples in cooperation with other Governments at the regional level in order to maximize the sustainable use of resources in this area;

(m) Develop monitoring guidelines and indicators for achieving Goal 2 regarding indigenous children and set benchmarks in that regard;

(n) In the context of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the achievement of primary universal education, the Forum recommends that States, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations pay attention to





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

intercultural bilingual education for indigenous peoples at the preschool, primary and tertiary levels.

70. The Forum recommends that United Nations country officers make the effort to disseminate their activities in publications in indigenous languages.

87. Promote and support the utilization of local indigenous languages and, where no written languages exist, employ local indigenous people (as translators/interpreters as well as advisers) to assist in the collection process.

5th Session (2006)

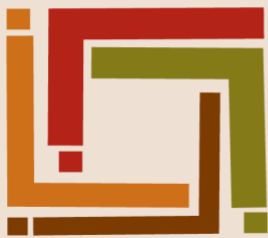
108. The Permanent Forum urges African States, in coordination with the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to support/organize two regional conferences/seminars in Africa, one for French-speaking States and the other for English-speaking States, to enhance the capacity of indigenous organizations to engage in dialogues with Governments at the country level and to promote and improved understanding of indigenous issues, including through the teaching of indigenous languages at schools with the special adaptation of education to the way of life of nomadic peoples: recognizing and sustaining indigenous knowledge systems and partnerships between States and indigenous peoples on the protection of conservation areas; and inter-agency consultation on poverty reduction strategies and on designing a regional strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

6th Session (2007)

71. The Permanent Forum welcomes resolution 176 EX/59 of the UNESCO Executive Council relating to indigenous languages and encourages member States, experts and UNESCO to conduct a preliminary study on the technical and judicial aspects of a possible international normative instrument for the protection of indigenous languages and languages under threat of extinction, including an analysis of the programmes UNESCO has carried out in this area, articulating linkages with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2006, to be submitted to the Executive Council of UNESCO at its 179th session.

72. Considering that 2008 is the International Year of Languages, the Permanent Forum recommends holding an expert group meeting on indigenous languages that will call upon States, the United Nations system and indigenous peoples and their organizations to consider the following elements:





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

- (a) Working towards concrete actions and legislative development aimed at eliminating discrimination against the current use of indigenous languages;
- (b) Developing programmes aimed at promoting the empowerment of indigenous languages through all mediums, including radio and television;
- (c) Supporting and increasing the number of centres for the study of indigenous languages;
- (d) Financing and supporting schemes for special projects that are formulated by indigenous peoples and are focused on revitalization and rescue of threatened languages;
- (e) Designing, in consultation with indigenous peoples and the Permanent Forum, the organization of a world conference on linguistic diversity, indigenous languages, identity and education, as a contribution to the programme of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

7th Session (2008)

96. The Permanent Forum invites UNESCO to call jointly for a world conference on linguistic diversity, indigenous languages, identity and education. The United Nations Member States are encouraged to provide political and financial support for such a conference.

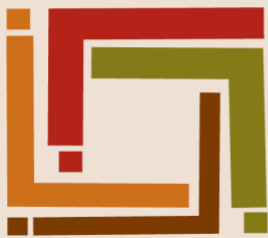
97. The Permanent Forum calls on States to immediately support indigenous peoples' language revitalization efforts. This includes supporting the master apprentice programmes and assessment of language status, and the creation of increased links between formal schools and the family so that there is a continuous use of indigenous languages.

98. The Permanent Forum welcomes the report of the international expert group meeting on indigenous languages, held in New York from 8 to 10 January 2008, and recommends that States and United Nations agencies engage with indigenous peoples to develop strategies to implement the recommendations of the report.

9th Session (2010)

29. The Permanent Forum recommends that UNESCO, the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNICEF and other relevant United Nations agencies convene an expert meeting, in conjunction with the Forum, comprising intercultural and educational experts and United Nations agencies to explore themes and concepts related to bilingual, intercultural and multilingual education in the context of teaching in mother tongue indigenous languages.





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

31. The Permanent Forum recommends that the United Nations system, the World Bank Group, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank and other multilateral development banks formulate policies to ensure that indigenous education projects that are financed take into account the use, protection and intercultural preservation of indigenous languages through supporting bilingual, intercultural and multilingual education in indigenous languages. The International Monetary Fund should respect the rights of indigenous peoples recognized in international law.

101. The Permanent Forum urges the Governments of Canada and the United States to financially support indigenous community education systems and their efforts to protect and perpetuate indigenous languages, on a par with their dominant languages.

12th Session (2013)

20. The Permanent Forum recommends that States, in collaboration with indigenous peoples and United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and UNESCO, prepare a comprehensive report on the number of indigenous languages spoken in each State. It is important to identify the current numbers and ages of fluent speakers of each indigenous language, in addition to measures, including constitutional, legislative, regulatory and policy measures, as well as financial support, whether ongoing or project-based, by States, United Nations agencies and indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous languages continue to be used, survive and thrive and do not become extinct.

47. The Permanent Forum takes notes of the recent publication of the adolescent-friendly version of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by UNICEF, the Forum and the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus. The Forum recommends that UNICEF, Member States and indigenous peoples translate this publication into all languages, in particular indigenous languages. The Forum also recommends that Member States, indigenous peoples and others use this publication in the curricula of studies of indigenous and non-indigenous youth.

15th Session (2016)

9. The Permanent Forum recommends that States recognize the language rights of indigenous peoples and develop language policies to promote and protect indigenous languages, with a focus on high-quality education in indigenous languages, including by supporting full immersion methods such as language nests and innovative methods such as nomadic schools. It is essential that States develop evidence-based legislation and policies to promote and protect indigenous languages and, in that regard, they should collect and disseminate baseline information on the status of indigenous languages. These activities should be conducted in close cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned.





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

10. The Permanent Forum recommends that States and the United Nations system, including United Nations country teams, provide support, including funding, for the efforts of indigenous peoples' institutions to preserve and revitalize their languages, with the particular goal of fluency. Such efforts may include the sharing of positive experiences and the establishment of informal networks or caucuses involved in the promotion and revitalization of indigenous languages, as well as the use of information and communications technology in indigenous languages. It is important that States provide adequate funding for language revitalization and the preservation of cultural heritage as it relates to indigenous languages. In addition, States should facilitate funding for indigenous language projects from external donors, including the private sector, in accordance with law.

11. The Permanent Forum recommends that the General Assembly, by 2020, proclaim an international year of indigenous languages and draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages and to take further urgent steps at the national and international levels.

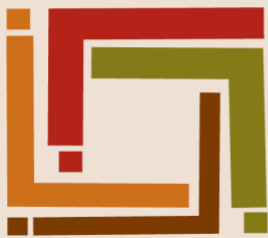
12. The Permanent Forum recommends that UNESCO, with the participation of indigenous peoples, urgently declare as the organization's priority the preservation, revitalization and promotion of indigenous languages. UNESCO is also urged to initiate international processes for the establishment of international standards on the preservation of indigenous languages. In particular, the Forum recommends that UNESCO collaborate with efforts led by indigenous peoples and others to map indigenous languages, such as the Endangered Languages Project.

34. The Permanent Forum urges States to take the measures at the national level necessary for the prevention of self-harm and suicide among indigenous children and youth, in particular by promoting the training experts in the field of psychology who focus on issues specific to indigenous peoples. Such special training should take into account economic, historical, social, ecological and other factors, such as the loss of indigenous languages, cultures and lands.

16th Session (2017)

40. Recalling the article 14 of the Declaration and the recommendation made by the Permanent Forum at its third session, the Forum urges Member States to adopt and fully implement comprehensive national indigenous education policies and bring into practice the education of indigenous languages teachers in accordance with indigenous peoples' initiatives.





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

96. In the light of the proclamation of the International Year, the Permanent Forum invites Member States, in close cooperation with indigenous peoples, UNESCO and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system, to participate actively in the planning of the Year, including by organizing national and international expert meetings to raise awareness of and plan specific activities for the Year, and securing additional and adequate funding for the successful preparation and implementation of the Year, including by providing support for the establishment of an indigenous-led fund dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages.

17th Session (2018)

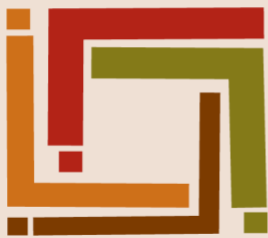
33. The Permanent Forum welcomes the work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in preparation for the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages and welcomes and supports the action plan for the International Year that was developed in cooperation with Member States, the Forum, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as indigenous peoples and a range of different stakeholders. The Forum calls upon Member States to implement the action plan in partnership with indigenous peoples, respecting the principle of “nothing about us without us”, including the establishment of national steering committees and national action plans for the International Year. States should allocate adequate funding for the successful implementation of the International Year.

34. The Permanent Forum recommends that indigenous peoples, as the rightful owners and custodians of their own languages, initiate and develop their own action plans and appropriate measures for the International Year and awareness -raising campaigns to draw attention to the situation of indigenous languages.

36. The Permanent Forum recommends that UNESCO, in active collaboration with other relevant United Nations entities, organize as a major event of the International Year a world conference or high-level event on indigenous languages, which would be preceded by regional conferences, and encourages Member States to support its organization. The Forum emphasizes that all events organized to mark the International Year must include the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples.

37. The Permanent Forum recommends that United Nations entities, including the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues, take effective measures to support the promotion of indigenous languages and the successful implementation of the goals and objectives of the International Year, including in activities related to the implementation of





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the systemwide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples, the celebration of international days and other processes.

38. The Permanent Forum urges the Secretary-General to appoint a special envoy on indigenous languages, in consultation with indigenous peoples.

92. The Permanent Forum appeals to governments in the Arctic, Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia to give financial and political support to their indigenous peoples to play an active role in the implementation of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, including for indigenous peoples and experts to meet at conferences and other relevant regional meetings and events.

18th Session (2019)

16. Indigenous languages are key to ensuring the continuation and transmission of culture, customs and history as part of the heritage and identity of indigenous peoples. The Declaration reflects the importance of indigenous languages and provides for indigenous peoples to have the rights to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their languages (art. 13), to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages (art. 14) and to establish their own media in their own languages (art. 16). In the Declaration, States are requested to take effective measures to ensure that these rights are protected (art. 13).

17. The Permanent Forum expresses concern for the state of the world's indigenous languages. It is estimated that there are between 6,000 and 7,000 oral languages in the world today, most of them spoken by very few individuals. The Forum recommends the adoption of a rights-based approach towards indigenous language issues that considers the full spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Declaration. The Forum also recommends that Member States, the United Nations system, indigenous peoples' organizations and other stakeholders share initiatives and strategies undertaken for, with and by indigenous peoples in order to recover, use and revitalize indigenous languages, including through the use of information and communication technologies.

22. Considering the rapid rate of disappearance of indigenous languages and the fact that their reclamation and revitalization will require a sustained effort by indigenous peoples, Member States and the United Nations system, the Forum recommends that the General Assembly proclaim an "International Decade on Indigenous Languages", to begin in 2021 or as soon as possible.

23. The Permanent Forum recommends that Member States formulate evidence-based policies, long-term strategies and regulatory frameworks, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, to ensure their support and the protection and revitalization of indigenous languages,





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

including adequate, sustained support for bilingual, mother tongue education. The Forum also recommends that States facilitate the mainstreaming of indigenous languages. Allowing indigenous peoples to gain access to health care and other public services in their own languages will help to ensure their overall well-being.

109. The Permanent Forum thanks countries in Asia that have already incorporated indigenous languages into primary education and urges Member States and the United Nations system to provide funding to implement policies related to indigenous languages and ensure the incorporation of indigenous languages into the curricula at all education levels.

