

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

9 August 2019

Joint Statement of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is an opportunity to celebrate and reaffirm our support for the rights of indigenous peoples. It acknowledges the socio-cultural, economic and political contributions, history, and sacrifices made by indigenous peoples and can be marked as a way of supporting and connecting with Indigenous cultures.

This year's theme is Indigenous Languages. Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that "indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures". The United Nations General Assembly Resolution has proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages in order to draw attention to the critical situation of indigenous languages around the world and to mobilize necessary action for their protection, support and promotion.

Indigenous peoples number more than 370 million and their languages account for the majority of the approximately 7,000 living languages spoken worldwide.

Indigenous peoples have distinct cultures, identities, languages and traditional ways of life. Indigenous languages are critical in transmitting their cultures, identities, oral histories, spiritual values and traditional knowledge to future generations, and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, strengthening identity, building on existing capacities for resilience, peace building and reconciliation.

Yet, many languages are dying out at an alarming rate. One estimate suggests that at least 50 percent of today's languages will be extinct or seriously endangered by 2100. Another, equally realistic estimate predicts that up to 95 percent of the world's languages are under threat. These languages are central to the identity of indigenous peoples, the preservation of their cultures and they are an expression of self-determination. When indigenous languages are under threat, so are the indigenous peoples themselves. Indigenous peoples also lack security of tenure, live constantly with the threat of forced eviction and are increasingly migrating towards urban areas where they may face discrimination, employment barriers, poor access to services and difficulties sustaining their language and cultural identity.

We encourage all Member States, UN entities, civil society, businesses and other stakeholders to recognize and reinforce the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and regional level by safeguarding, promoting and revitalizing indigenous languages, including

through the promotion of quality intercultural bilingual education that builds on indigenous cultural and linguistic heritage, in close cooperation with indigenous peoples themselves.

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the UN Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, composed of over 50 United Nations system entities and other international organizations, commits to continuing support in partnership with Member States, indigenous peoples' organizations and other relevant partners to accelerate action in preserving, revitalizing and promoting indigenous languages as a key element of defending indigenous peoples' rights.

For more information about the IASG, please see:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us/inter-agency-support-group.html>

For more information about the IYIL2019, please see:

<https://en.iyil2019.org/>

<https://fr.iyil2019.org/>

<https://es.iyil2019.org/>

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