

Outcome document

of the Expert Seminar

«Preparation for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages:

Sharing Experiences on Preservation
and Development of Languages»

December 7, 2021

📍 Murmansk



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Murmansk December 7, 2021

**Interregional Public Organization
«The Union of Indigenous Peoples «SOYUZ»
(IPO «KMNSOYUZ»)**

**Gratitude: Charity Foundation of Support of
Indigenous Small-numbered Peoples of
the North, Siberia and the Far East**

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Expert Seminar

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on Preservation and Development
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INTRODUCTION

The expert seminar «Preparation for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages: Sharing Experiences on Preservation and Development of Languages» was held to propose and discuss concrete initiatives to be implemented within action plans for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages at local, regional, national and international levels. The organizers set the task of informing the expert community about the priorities and goals of the International Decade, developing proposals for the implementation of the Decade's goals at local and regional levels in the Russian Federation, exchanging best practices in the field of preservation, revitalization and digitalization of native languages of Indigenous peoples. The experts also developed proposals and recommendations, which are set out in this outcome document and sent to UNESCO, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other interested organizations.

The seminar was attended by representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Perma-

nent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Global Task Force for the Decade on Indigenous Languages, the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN Russia), regional authorities, scientists, experts, activists and representatives of linguistic communities from Murmansk region, Komi Republic, Republic of Karelia, Republic of Mordovia, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, Krasnoyarsk Territory, Khabarovsk Territory, Moscow and St. Petersburg.





INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

In its [Resolution 74/135](#) the UN General Assembly proclaimed the period 2022–2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages «to draw attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages and to take urgent steps at the national and international levels». The General Assembly invited UNESCO to take the lead in preparing and celebrating the decade. The Global Task Force was created with support of UNESCO to ensure cooperation between states, Indigenous peoples and the UN bodies. The Task Force is entrusted with preparing, planning, implementing and monitoring progress of the Global Action Plan. **The Global Action Plan of the International Decade is needed to lay foundations for joint action, to set up a strategic approach, to identify key steps, to provide guidance on implementation and monitoring and to propose actions to be taken by UN bodies, governments, organizations of Indigenous peoples, civil societies, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders in order to achieve the main goals of the Decade.** [The Global Action Plan](#) was considered and taken note of by the 41st General Conference of UNESCO in November 2021. The Global action plan will also be presented at the 21st session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues [stated](#) at its 20th session that «the International Decade provides a unique opportunity to ensure sustainable change in complex social dynamics in order to preserve, revitalize and promote» Indigenous languages. The Permanent Forum made a special accent on «full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples at all levels and the involvement of all relevant government ministries, such as those for educa-

tion, culture and finance in the design, planning, financing and implementation of all activities». In addition to it the forum noted that the private sector should also be invited to contribute «since information and communications companies can play a unique role in the design, development and usage of contemporary language technologies».

Thus, the importance of the global consensus concerning an urgent need to solve the crisis of linguistic diversity through joint efforts of Indigenous peoples, states and other stakeholders was noted at international platforms. The success of the International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019 predetermined further measures and attracted attention to this issue, putting it in the category of the most acute global challenges along with sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity conservation. However, when the International Year of Indigenous Languages was aimed at a broad information campaign on language issues, the International Decade is focusing on introducing additional long-term and specific support measures, including legislation reform, developing bilingualism and multilingualism within the education system and in the public space, developing digital language technologies, developing methodologies and textbooks, training of language teachers and handling unique language content.

Another International Year achievement to be further developed during the Decade is an emphasis on undeniable links between languages and other aspects of human life. The slogan of the International Year was: «**Language matters for development, peace and reconciliation**». There are studies proving close links between linguistic well-being of Indigenous communities and physical and mental health, ability to preserve their cultures, traditional way of life, develop their businesses and self-government systems. Due to persistent work of Indigenous peoples in the field of «language diplomacy», the human rights-based approach formed the backbone of the action plans for the International Year and the International Decade. That is, the preservation and development of Indigenous languages is considered from the human rights point of view.

Financing the events of the International Decade caused a vivid discussion at international fora. In particular, the Permanent Forum urged States, the UN bodies and private philanthropic



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF Indigenous Languages

institutions to fund the activities which implement the global action plan and proposed UNESCO to prioritize projects initiated and led by representatives and organizations of Indigenous peoples. It is proposed to pay special attention to languages that are on the verge of extinction. In turn, UNESCO is working on creation of a multilateral trust fund that could accumulate financial resources for projects preserving native languages of Indigenous peoples. Representatives of Indigenous peoples elected in accordance with their own procedures must enter the management bodies of this fund.

The Permanent Forum also proposed UNESCO in collaboration with academic and Indigenous institutions to create a digital platform for storage of digital resources available to Indigenous peoples and researchers and relevant for preservation of linguistic diversity.

The Global Action Plan considers Indigenous languages as an important element in preserving identities and traditional lifestyles of Indigenous peoples, as well as a factor of social development, integration and participation in international co-operation. Thus, the Global Action Plan assumes that by the end of the Decade Indigenous languages are preserved, revived, promoted and used in all socio-cultural, economic, environmental and political spheres and are a driving force for building peace, justice, development and reconciliation in our societies. To achieve this goal, ten prioritized Decade outputs were agreed:

1. Inclusive, equitable, intercultural, quality education and lifelong learning environments and opportunities in Indigenous languages provided in formal, non-formal and informal settings.
2. Enhanced capacities among Indigenous Peoples for applying their languages and knowledge to the eradication of hunger and maintaining the integrity of Indigenous food systems.
3. Favourable conditions established for digital empowerment, freedom of expression,

media development, access to information and language technology, alongside artistic creation in Indigenous languages.

4. Appropriate Indigenous language frameworks designed to offer better health provision, recognizing traditional systems of medicine, as well as promoting social cohesion and delivering humanitarian responses, especially during health crises, times of conflicts and natural disasters.
5. Access to justice and availability of public services guaranteed to Indigenous language speakers and signers.
6. Indigenous languages are sustained, as a vehicle of living heritage and biodiversity, whilst participation in - and access to - all forms of culture are enhanced for Indigenous Peoples.
7. Enabling environment is created for Indigenous languages, thereby contributing to biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, ecosystems management, land restoration, improving the marine and coastal environment, reducing natural hazards, preventing pollution, and managing water resources.
8. Economic growth is strengthened by enhanced decent job opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and languages users.
9. Gender equality and women's empowerment are achieved through the preservation, revitalization and promotion of Indigenous languages.
10. Public and private partnerships are firmly established to place on the global agenda a long-term commitment to the preservation, revitalization and promotion of Indigenous languages.

Many of the above aspects were discussed at the expert seminar «Preparing for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages: Sharing Experiences on Preservation and Development of Languages». The participants noted the comprehensive nature of the Global Action Plan for the International Decade. At the same time, it was emphasized that significant efforts are still to be aimed at formation of a culturally acceptable system of Indigenous languages' teaching, consistent focus on bilingualism, involvement of Indigenous peoples themselves in the educational process, as well as continuous training of Indigenous teachers. The goal of ef-

forts at the global level should be to bring Indigenous languages back into families and into other areas. The seminar experts also expressed the opinion that the Global Action Plan should be a subject to constant monitoring and adjustment during the Decade. This view is also shared by representatives of the Global Task Force.

The participants of the expert seminar also drew attention to the [evaluation report of UNESCO's action to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages](#) within the framework of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, which contains recommendations for the International Decade approved by UNESCO. In particular, it is recommended to ensure the effective and full participation of Indigenous peoples in all processes related to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of Decade events, use SMART criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-limited) to measure their results, to support language communities and language activists, including through mini-grant programs and other funding mechanisms, to find and promote best practices.



An example that implemented many practices listed in recommendations was the «SANA» project «Civil society network for preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages», which was highly appreciated by UNESCO and included as one of the best projects in Eastern Europe in the [Flagship Report of the International Year of Indigenous Languages](#). The SANA project offered language activists and communities educational and networking activities, methodological recommendations on how to promote languages through national cuisine, cinema, and children's games. Best practices from Russia, Estonia and Finland were described and proposed in the form of an online publication of advanced practices. The project participants were also offered a competitive program of mini-grants and meth-

odological support in the implementation of the supported initiatives. The project fully focused on language users noted in the Global Action Plan for the Decade, and applied an individual approach to each language of the region, since each of the languages has a different degree of vitality and is in a different stage of development.

INTERNATIONAL DECADE AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The priorities set at the global level demonstrate the critical importance of Indigenous languages for solving the global challenges and achieving sustainable development goals, including the fight against poverty and climate change, access to justice and quality healthcare. Despite the fact that most of the International Decade priorities are common for the world's Indigenous peoples, the emphasis may vary significantly in different regions of the world. It was emphasized by the expert seminar participants that, for example, the problem of hunger is not typical for the Russian Federation. On the other hand, experts underlined that linguistic diversity is one of key factors of security, peace and harmony in society. The participants drew attention to language planning for each specific language, being another key priority important for the Russian Federation. This priority requires investment in training of Indigenous researchers and specialists, language planners, standardization specialists, translators, computational linguists, native language teachers and media professionals.

With a view to taking into account national and regional specificities, [the UN General Assembly Resolution 74/135](#) recommends the states to «consider establishing national mechanisms with adequate funding for the successful implementation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in partnership with Indigenous peoples, and invites Indigenous peoples, as custodians of their own languages, to initiate and develop appropriate measures for the implementation of the International Decade».

This recommendation assumes several key elements: the leading role of Indigenous peoples in determining priorities of their language development, effective involvement of Indigenous peoples in planning of state language policies at all levels, adequate funding of language programs.

The seminar participants took note of the information from the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN of Russia) on establishing the [National Organizing Committee](#) for preparation and realization of the International Decade in the Russian Federation and for development of a national action plan for the Decade. It was noted that leading experts and organizations of Indigenous peoples were invited to the National Organizing Committee and a mechanism for supplementing and adjusting the action plan during the Decade was provided. Education, culture and digitalization were listed among the Decade priorities in Russia. The seminar participants noted in dialogue with the FADN of Russia that applying a broad, inclusive approach to the Decade activities can cover not only the languages of Indigenous small-numbered peoples, but also other languages facing the same challenges.



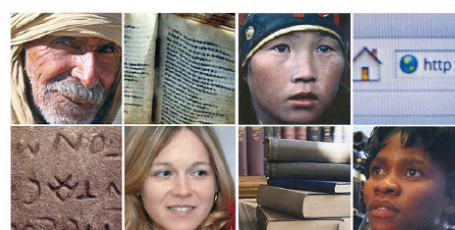
2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF
Indigenous Languages

The experts stressed that the Decade activities should be organized in cooperation with UNESCO and the Global Task Force with proper consideration of national specificities and needs of Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. By doing so, the global context will be taken into account and the practical significance of the Decade activities will not be lost. The seminar participants welcomed cooperation between the FADN of Russia and the UNESCO's Information for All Programme and its Russian Committee, as well as the joint implementation of «My Native Language» program, which managed to mobilize significant intellectual resources of language communities and experts from the republics of Karelia, Altai, Komi, Mari El, Chuvashia, North Ossetia - Alania, Ingushetia, Udmurtia, the Chechen Republic and the Sakhalin region.



Global Expert Meeting

Multilingualism in Cyberspace for Inclusive Sustainable Development



INTERNATIONAL DECADE AT REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

The participants of the expert seminar believe that in addition to national and international action plans, it is necessary to adopt similar plans, strategies and roadmaps at regional and local levels, since they are closer to local language communities. The executive authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation need to adopt regulatory legal acts on Indigenous languages' use in the service sector and commercial activities, as well as by writing the names of geographical objects, designing inscriptions, road and other signs. Experts believe that regional language policies being a part of the state national policy consider local characteristics and bring «added value» through development of regional programs. Thus, the state program «Ethno-social and ethno-cultural development on territories of traditional residence of Indigenous peoples» was adopted in the Republic of Karelia. This program classifies as Indigenous peoples not only the Indigenous small-numbered people of Veps, but also Karelians and three ethnographic groups of Russians – Pomorye, Zaonezhye and Pudozh residents. The Republic of Karelia has formed a regional organizing committee for the International Decade and is developing a regional action plan.

The idea that elaboration of regional programs for preservation and development of Indigenous



languages should be inclusive and effective in terms of Indigenous peoples' participation was expressed at the seminar. The content of such programs should complement and enhance the effects of the national language policy.

The experts also expressed the need to involve municipalities to the work on development of local action plans for the Decade and to taking special measures to support Indigenous languages. Such measure may include visualizing languages in the landscape of cities and villages, working with local businesses to use Indigenous languages at points of sale, in foodservice, packaging of handicraft and food products and other consumer goods. **The use of Indigenous languages in announcements and signs at stations and in local transport, translations of local government websites also depend on local authorities.** Potential reform of local government should not deprive them of resources and opportunities to support Indigenous languages.

LANGUAGE STRATEGIES: ACTION PLAN FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The proclamation of the International Decade was the result of a global consensus on the need to preserve linguistic diversity. At the same time, there is often no consensus or common understanding of a native language development in the language communities. There is a lot of controversy regarding language planning and methods of language revitalization. This is happening against the backdrop of a lack of awareness among language communities about existing best practices, legislation and language development programs.

Sometimes communities do not agree on linguistic parameters of language revitalization:

which dialect, dialects, or standardized language would unite all speakers. Disagreements and disputes over dialects or terminology can easily distract from the real revitalization work. True dialect wars are fought in some communities and there is a competition for the role of the «main language». The excessive «dialect patriotism» of some activists may become an obstacle to a successful linguistic revival. **Community members should be able to think more broadly and inclusively, strategically about how their language will be used: whether it will simply be the language of the community, or whether it has the potential to become the language of a territory with non-community members.** A narrow approach, a monolingual model of education and isolation will not help in today's globalized world. The integration of minority languages, creation of various types of content in these languages and their inclusion in the regional, national and even global economy, science and politics will serve the best interests of language communities. Such integration will provide access to better knowledge and will give young people the understanding that their mother tongues have a future that can play a role in their lives.

In this regard, one of the important tasks of the Decade is the formation of solidarity and motivation within linguistic communities regarding development strategies for their native languages, such strategies they can associate themselves with and which they can implement.

OVERCOMING INTERGENERATIONAL LANGUAGE DISRUPTION AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

One of the most important mechanisms for the preservation and development of languages is family and educational institutions. Unfortunately, the dynamics of intergenerational continuity of Indigenous languages tends to decrease, and often there is no such continuity at all. The spheres of everyday language use are limited to home communication between older and middle generations. The younger generation does not use or has a very limited use of the native language in home communication. Thus, according to the monitoring of Karelian language proficiency and [sociological research](#), conducted by the Karelian Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, there is an obvious violation of lan-

guage transmission, that is, the loss of language transmission in the family from the older generation to the younger one.



In such cases, hopes are often placed on school teaching. To recreate the language environment, language nest technology and other deep language immersion techniques come to the rescue. A similar experience of language revitalization and increasing the number of its speakers is being implemented in some regions of Russia, including the republics of Karelia and Komi, and a number of regions are striving to adopt this technique. Language activists suggest this technique to be supported at the state level.

In parallel with decrease of Indigenous population and native speakers of Indigenous lan-



The «House of the Karelian language»
in the village of Vedlozero

guages, there is a narrowing in spheres of professional realization for those who speak native languages. The way out of this situation can be the support of creative industries, the service sector, the creation of favourable conditions for small business development and support. These measures should be associated with preservation of environment and traditional way of life

as the main preconditions for native languages' maintenance. Another support measure could be bringing public services closer to the places where Indigenous peoples lead their traditional life styles: for example, development of mobile or nomadic schools, telemedicine and distant educational programs by providing Indigenous peoples with an access to communication channels and Internet.

The Government of Russia approved the Concept for Creative Industries' Development in 2021. The concept includes support for such activities as crafts, music, theater, contemporary media, and design. Many of them cannot exist in isolation from Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples. Among positive examples of supporting linguistic heritage in the context of economic development is the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, which became the first Russian region to adopt a law on support of creative industries. Legislative recognition of traditional activities based on the knowledge of Indigenous peoples and their contribution to the domestic and world economy will gradually solve one of the most difficult problems: to provide languages and cultures with additional resources.

According to the [marketing research](#), capitalization of crafts is currently underestimated by 10 times in the Republic of Karelia alone, that is, with a targeted policy the capitalization of crafts can grow from 90 million to almost a billion rubles yearly. There will be a significant increase in the number of jobs and tax revenues from handicraft activities, which means that places of traditional residence of local communities and Indigenous peoples will become more attractive for life and for tourism. It is important for creative industries to be recognized by all relevant departments at regional and federal levels both as a part of the cultural heritage and as an important part of the economy.

A substantial contribution to the knowledge economy development can be creation of collective, regional, umbrella and other brands to be promoted due to regional identity, languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples and consideration of ethnographic features of local communities. Therefore, investments in various regional cultural code studies can be in demand both at regional and municipal levels, since regions and municipalities need to look for opportunities to



Photo: Ilona Olkonen (Northern Crafts ID project)

diversify their economic portfolio. In this regard, the initiatives of Yugra and Yakutia to digitize the cultural heritage of Finno-Ugric peoples and the peoples of the Arctic can serve as an example for other regions. Formation of an electronic database of intangible cultural heritage objects of Russia, held under the auspices of the Russian House of Folk Art, is also a step in the right direction.



Photo: Ilona Olkonen (Northern Crafts ID project)

Another important area is building business capacities of Indigenous peoples and local communities. In particular, it was unanimously noted by experts within the framework of the Creative Economy Forum at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2021: the lack of business education projects in the field of creative industries does not allow developing this economy sector at a faster pace. This situation can be corrected by interregional educational programs for representatives of creative industries, combining online and offline formats, interactive modules, high-quality audiovisual content, and, most importantly, motivating examples of good practice from creative sector itself. Implementing such

programs, it is crucial to adopt an ecosystem approach that takes into account interrelationships between cultural heritage, traditional crafts and knowledge, design and linguistic diversity.

The ecosystem approach is also aimed at creating information and educational systems that would provide access to necessary knowledge and resources in a single source for all age and social groups. Such resources could be multilingual and inclusive for Indigenous languages.



Photo: Alexandra Marchuk

The experts noted that the most positive impact on prestige and prospects for Indigenous languages development can be achieved by creation of unique new language content in these languages. This will give an impetus for higher interest of younger generations of Indigenous peoples and of external audiences. Traditional knowledge is unique; at the same time such new ideas and phenomena as musical, literary, artistic works can also be created in Indigenous languages. Cyberspace will ensure the fastest delivery of this content to consumers through support of podcasts, streaming channels, blogosphere and other online activities of public opinion leaders. This approach will not only increase the prestige of languages, expand the scope of their application, but also make a significant input to development of languages and their vocabulary, which should reflect modern realities and phenomena.

The most vulnerable and small-numbered peoples face a different task: to develop and strengthen their own written languages, create keyboard layouts in order to gain a foothold as modern means of communication. While the alphabet was recently approved for the Enets language for the first time, a full-fledged digital layout was prepared for the Nivkh language, taking

into account the features of its graphics, followed by an introduction to educational and scientific practices.



This is the goal of language planning, which should be held during the International Decade. It is necessary to understand what specific support measures a particular language needs and to develop a package of measures provided both with funding and with necessary specialists. Bridging the digital divide and creating digital content in Indigenous languages is an obvious priority. However, this process should not be taken lightly, as all languages are in a different situation and require different approaches.

In a language shift situation, special conditions should be created for teaching Indigenous languages in educational institutions. An important role in this direction is assigned to language corpora, designed to provide not only the preservation and popularization functions, but also to provide language materials for educational and research purposes.

LANGUAGE SHIFT AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF LANGUAGE ACTIVISTS

In addition to the need to strengthen minor languages in social institutions (family, preschool and school education), an important role is assigned to language and ethnic activists and researchers in the «language shift» context.

Indigenous languages often continue to be viewed by activists as a value orientation. At the same time, the spheres of language use are narrowing: activists are witnessing a transition from bilingualism to Russian monolingualism even in their professional activities. Activists often have a lack of confidence in their linguistic competence, which leads to the formation of inferiority feelings, sometimes accompanied by criticism

from more linguistically competent members of the language community.

The negative effect of this phenomenon is deepened by the fact that the group of people who are ready to take on the leading role is relatively small. Community leaders emphasize workload burnout, disproportionate effort and insignificance of financial and emotional returns, as well as a lack of feedback from authorities. Thus, crisis phenomena in the social well-being of language activists caused by a complex of historical and political reasons, professional burnout, and the small number of activists, are alarming. **At the same time, the work of preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages largely lies on shoulders of language activists.** Collaboration between the education system and language activists, as well as native speakers among writers, translators, musicians and other artists and cultural figures, who can significantly help by language transmission and inspire young people regardless of their level of language competence, should be promoted.

Recommendations for overcoming the digital divide and learn Indigenous languages, as well as the practice of involving cultural figures and bringing educational services closer to places of traditional residence of Indigenous peoples were discussed at the [expert seminar «The Rights of the Indigenous Child: the Arctic context»](#), which took place in 2020 with support of the Charity Foundation of Support of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East.

ROLE OF BUSINESSES IN SUPPORT OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Language issues are starting to make headlines at economic fora; and big businesses are seeing investments in Indigenous languages as an investment in the long-term sustainability of businesses, sustainability of communities where they operate. Large companies finance language support, publication of textbooks and digital projects. The «Russian Copper Company» presented its experience of publishing books in languages of Indigenous peoples in the Amur region at the discussion platform «Multilingualism in Cyberspace. The National Vector of Creative Economies» within the Eastern Economic Forum. «Norilsk Nickel Company» supported the creation of the Enets writing system and «Sakhalin Energy»

financed the translation of Nivkh literature into Russian and the translation of UN documents into the Nivkh language.

On the other hand, business can support languages not only financially, but also use languages in their direct activities, for example, using them on product packaging and in visual appearance of their products. Such measures increase prestige of languages and expand the scope of their use. Respect for Indigenous languages can be enshrined in corporate policies of industrial enterprises.



Seminar of the IPO «KMNSOYUZ»,
Dudinka, June 22–23, 2021

Indigenous businesses can play a big role in preserving native languages. The [Study on Indigenous Business and Access to Financial Services](#) by UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples notes the importance of languages for Indigenous peoples' economic activities based on traditional knowledge. There is also an inverse relationship: Indigenous entrepreneurship is a means to enhance enjoyment of the rights to culture, language and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous businesses support and develop crafts and traditional life styles, and in so doing



Seminar of the IPO «KMNSOYUZ»,
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enhance the well-being of Indigenous communities and their connection to the land and native languages. The seminar participants emphasized the interdependence between the preservation of traditional occupations and crafts and entire layers of vocabulary in their native languages. **Therefore, support for entrepreneurial activities of Indigenous peoples is seen as an effective measure for sustainable development of Indigenous peoples.** Possible support mechanisms and successful examples of Indigenous entrepreneurship were discussed at the seminar [«Preservation of crafts and development of entrepreneurial activities of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic zone»](#). The [proposals](#) based on seminar results included subsidies, tax preferences, assistance in the logistics of goods, promotion of local brands and products of Indigenous peoples in foreign markets.

SOME REGIONAL PRACTICES ON PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The participants of the expert seminar discussed a number of good practice examples from the Republic of Komi, Karelia, the Khabarovsk Territory and the Murmansk Region.

In particular, the Resource Language Media Center of Karelian, Vepsian and Finnish peoples, as well as the multilingual information and educational portal «OmaMedia» in Indigenous languages spoken in the republic were created in Karelia. The Center for Innovative Language Technologies successfully operates in the Republic of Komi creating educational and enlightening content in Komi and other Finno-Ugric languages. These activities are helpful by exploring new online spaces and by becoming a popular communication tool for young people. There are also projects striving to translate well-known online resources into Indigenous languages, e.g. the interface of the Russia's most popular social network, VKontakte, has been translated and works in Komi, Mari, Karelian, Udmurt, Tatar, Chuvash and other languages of the peoples of Russia.

Representatives of Saami, the Indigenous people of the Murmansk region informed about a mobile application for learning the Saami language «Samkill». The application will help in learning the Sami language, getting acquainted with its alphabet and correct pronunciation. «Samkill» contains phrases and words in the Kildin dialect

used by reindeer herders in their daily life and trade. The app's voice assistant provides spelling and pronunciation tips for various words and helps building phrases.

[A series of textbooks for the Nivkh and Ulch languages has been published](#) in the Ulch District of the Khabarovsk Territory; mobile language apps and a new Ulch keyboard layout have been developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The applications are called «Hesadi»: one of them is an electronic dictionary of the Ulchi language, and the second is a phrasebook. The mobile application facilitates memorizing useful phrases, listening to full texts in Ulch with Russian translation. App users can also add their own phrases and record audio with them. Users have access to translations of words and information about the grammar of Ulch nouns and verbs. There are plans to create similar applications for the Nivkh language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Indigenous peoples and governments with expert support from relevant academic institutions should work together to develop action plans, strategies and roadmaps for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages at regional and local levels. State programs for preservation and development of Indigenous languages can serve as a financial and practical tool for the implementation of these plans, strategies and road maps. The adoption of relevant documents will serve both as a practical tool and as a symbolic signal that the preservation of linguistic diversity is a priority for state policy, and Indigenous languages are prestigious.
2. Indigenous communities, language activists, academia and governments should focus on language planning and elaboration of strategies for each specific language, taking into account the current situation of the language and priorities of relevant language communities.
3. Indigenous organizations should direct their efforts at popularizing Indigenous languages among parents and convince people to learn mother tongues at different levels of education. At the same time, the education system should be ready to offer native languages on a regular basis as subjects of study and, if necessary, as a language of instruction.
4. Indigenous organizations and governments should actively engage businesses to support language development programs. Such cooperation can be developed through public-private partnerships, direct investment by businesses in language projects, sponsorship of Indigenous organizations by companies, and adoption by the private sector of comprehensive support programs for Indigenous languages.
5. State authorities should support Indigenous businesses based on Indigenous languages, cultures, traditional knowledge and creative industries. Regional authorities should improve legislation on creative industries and develop measures to support entrepreneurial activities of Indigenous peoples.
6. State authorities and funding organizations must ensure adequate funding for the International Decade activities and, above all, initiatives of Indigenous language communities. One of the tools can be a competition with mini-grants for language activists, followed by methodological support for language mini-projects and projects on related topics, for example, on creative industries' development.
7. State authorities, international organizations and umbrella organizations of Indigenous peoples should carry out activities to build the methodological, organizational and psychological potential of language communities. Such events may include trainings and methodological seminars on preservation, development and teaching of languages, creation of special learning ecosystems in business education, development of creative industries and experiences exchange.
8. State authorities, funding organizations, businesses and international organizations should support Indigenous peoples' organizations to participate in international cooperation within the framework of the International Decade. These activities may include co-organizing events at international venues, such as UNESCO and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, promoting best practices in the field of preservation and revival of native languages. Particular attention should be paid to the development of cooperation with Indigenous peoples from those socio-cultural regions where a suf-

ficient level of cooperation has not been achieved yet. It is also important to allocate resources for the translation of information materials into the official UN languages.

9. Indigenous organizations, governments and international organizations in collaboration with the scientific community should develop a system for evaluating, monitoring of interim results, and supplementing of action plans of the International Decade at international, national, regional and local levels.
10. State authorities with the participation of Indigenous peoples should organize continuous training of bilingual teaching, research and administrative staff, state and municipal civil servants, specialists in the field of law, economics, medicine and social security in order to expand the scope of Indigenous languages' use.
11. State authorities, funding organizations and businesses should provide sufficient funding to publish modern language textbooks, methodological materials and literature in Indigenous languages in the amount necessary not only to cover current learning needs, but also to stimulate and satisfy the growing interest in native languages.
12. State authorities should promote involving in the educational process of language activists, as well as parents and elders who are native speakers of Indigenous languages and possessors of traditional knowledge. It's also important to promote the most advanced educational technologies and methods, taking into account the specific conditions of language communities, including nomadic schools and language nests. Particular attention should be paid to pre-school education in minority languages.
13. Indigenous organizations and state authorities should direct their efforts at collecting and disseminating information on best practices and projects in the field of preservation, promotion and development of Indigenous languages. Projects on digitalization of linguistic and cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples are of a high relevance and necessity.
14. All interested parties should contribute to building a dialogue between scientific and expert communities and business structures.
15. State authorities, Indigenous peoples' organi-

zations and businesses should provide comprehensive and regular support to those who make daily language revitalization efforts: ethnic and language activists and teachers. A possible mechanism could be support programs for language activists including elements of psychological and methodological support that prevent crises and burnout, as well as help to overcome difficult relationships within a language community.

16. International organizations should maintain contact with organizations of Indigenous peoples, create accessible channels of communication and information exchange, including in Russian, take into account their opinions and provide them with a platform to popularize their experience and study experiences of other language communities.

CONCLUSIONS

The expert seminar «Preparing for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages: Sharing Experiences on Preservation and Development of Languages» analyzed various ways to prepare all stakeholders and to contribute to preservation of linguistic diversity in Russia and in the world. These issues were considered from different points of view: theory of change, practice, Indigenous peoples, governments, business and science. The experts emphasized that the main task of the International Decade is to achieve real and tangible changes and overcome the linguistic shift from multilingualism to dominant languages. To achieve these changes, it is necessary to create unique language content, invest in digital language technologies, support working language immersion methodologies, invest in economic activities of language communities and strengthen their capacity. The experts called for making the effectiveness of the Decade activities measurable, and the action plan – changeable, depending on the intermediate results. Another conclusion of the experts is that everything is connected with everything, so one should not underestimate those areas that, at first glance, are not related to the language. On the other hand, attention and resources should not be scattered, taken away from real actions. Change can only be made through activities, that is, different practices that stakeholders implement individually or in cooperation with each other. It was people's activity that led to the cur-

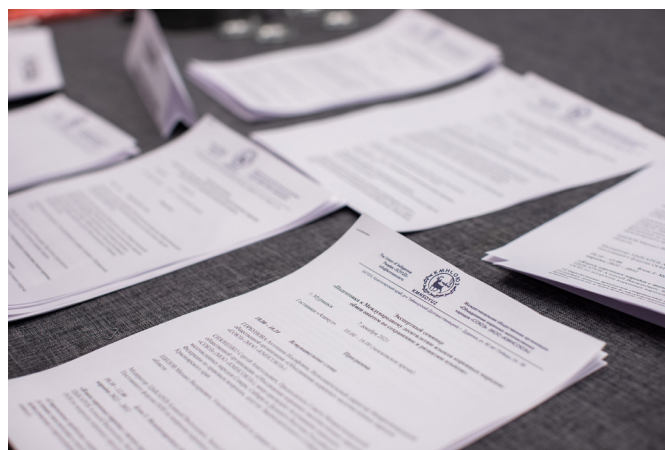
rent language situation, which means that other language activities can improve the language situation.

The year 2021 was declared by the United Nations as the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. That year showed that one of the most powerful tools for strengthening capacities of Indigenous communities is their entrepreneurial, economic activity. There is a number of Indigenous economic models oriented towards activities in industries based on cultural and linguistic heritage of Indigenous peoples. First of all, we are talking about creative industries and the so-called knowledge economy. This refers, among other things, to traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous peoples, which are inextricably linked to the languages of Indigenous peoples. 2022 has been declared as the Year of the Cultural Heritage of the Peoples of Russia. This signal should have a positive impact on the development of those initiatives that were launched within the framework of the International Year of Creative Economy.

2021 also showed the beginning shift in perceptions by big business, industrial enterprises of their relationship with Indigenous peoples. These perceptions are no longer associated with a paternalistic approach, but rather are built on an attempt to develop partnerships. Companies seek to invest in preservation of languages, seeing this as an investment in the sustainability of their business. This paradigm shift is evidenced by language discussions on the sidelines of major economic fora such as the Eastern Economic Forum and the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. Knowledge, values and creativity come to the fore in the modern economy, which means that people, the bearers of this traditional knowledge and creativity, should become the object of investment.

The current development, when attention of the international community will be riveted to the languages of Indigenous peoples for at least ten years, makes native languages more prestigious and significant not only in the eyes of external forces, but also in the eyes of language communities themselves. Indigenous peoples use the term dying or endangered languages less and less. Instead, they speak about under resourced languages, that is, languages whose resources are not sufficient for full-fledged functioning for one reason or another. The goal of

the International Decade of Indigenous Languages is to provide languages with the missing resources.



Interregional Public Organization «KMN-SOYUZ» has opened a special website: <https://lingvo.kmnsoyuz.ru>, a language portal to exchange experiences and widely inform about successful cases of preservation and development of languages spoken by Indigenous peoples of Russia, about digital practices and media content, as well as about priorities and activities of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.