

World Arabic Language Day  
& Arabic Language Day at the United Nations  
18 December 2018, 1 p.m.  
Permanent Mission of the Sultanate of Oman  
to the United Nations in New York

**Transcript of the remarks by Ms. Catherine Pollard  
Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management  
Secretariat-wide Coordinator for Multilingualism**

Your Excellency Ambassador Al-Harthy  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to have been invited by Ambassador Al-Harthy to speak on World Arabic Language Day. I congratulate Ambassador Al-Harthy for his leadership and for taking the initiative, and that of his team in arranging this event.

I am particularly touched and humbled that many colleagues from the Arabic language services of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management are also in attendance today. It is an excellent opportunity to recognize their daily contribution not only to the proper functioning of the multilateral machinery but also to the dialogue of cultures and civilizations that relies ultimately on their linguistic mediation.

Every year on 18 December, we mark the 1973 decision of the General Assembly, 45 years ago, to include the Arabic language as one of its official languages. Today, with about 300 million native speakers of Arabic spread across several continents, and many more who use Arabic as a second language, for a total overall estimate of some 420 million, it is astounding that it took nearly 30 years to recognize Arabic as an official language of the United Nations Organization.

Beyond the figures, and of course there are no exact figures, the contribution of Arabic to the contemporary world remains as pervasive as ever. Architecture, philosophy, poetry and literature, not to mention sciences, have been deeply and enduringly influenced by the Arabic language and culture. The inclusion of Arabic as an official language of the UN also serves as a recognition of this unmatched contribution to collective knowledge.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

Today, the Arabic language is used at the United Nations on a daily basis by 22 Member States of our Organization, and countless Arabic speakers worldwide who are interested in the work of the UN. I take great pride in the support that my department, through its staff, provides in achieving an inclusive United Nations Organization. This has been made possible also thanks to the constant support received from Permanent Missions to the United Nations as well as the members of the League of Arab States in our collective endeavours to mainstream multilingualism in the work of the UN.

On these words, I would like to conclude by renewing my special thanks to Ambassador Al-Harthi for his kind invitation and wishing every one of you an enjoyable World Arabic Language Day. Let us take time today to reflect on the beauty of the Arabic language and its invaluable history and development as one of the far-reaching modern languages of the world, including as a strong medium for communication and diplomacy, and exemplifying a rich cultural heritage.

شكرا جزيلا

[Thank you very much]