

Chinese Language Day at the United Nations
20 April 2018, 7 p.m.
UN Headquarters, neck area

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

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Colleagues,
各位来宾, 晚上好 (good evening ladies and gentlemen),

It is an honour for me today to take part in the celebration of Chinese Language Day at the UN, both as Head of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, as well as Coordinator for Multilingualism in the UN Secretariat.

We are particularly pleased to have with us today Deputy Permanent Representative, H.E. Ambassador Wu Haitao, of the Permanent Mission of China to the UN, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, Ms. Alison Smale; and Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Liu Zhenmin.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate all the colleagues from the various departments on taking the initiative in celebrating this very special day, and the Permanent Mission of China for its continuous support and commitment to multilingualism at the United Nations.

Today, 20 April, we celebrate the legendary figure of Cangjie [pronounced Tsang-chieh], who is believed to have invented the Chinese characters more than 5,000 years ago.

The Chinese characters, a complex form of writing comprising more than 100,000 characters, are not just a tool for human communication; they are also the witnesses of Chinese culture and history over these past five millenniums.

Although the Chinese language is often remembered as the most widely spoken language in the world, it would be I believe a mistake to reduce its contribution to mere figures.

In fact, the Chinese language is also one of the most ancient languages, which carries with her pieces of wisdom that are integral parts of our collective humanity. It is no coincidence that the Chinese calligraphy has been inscribed since 2009 on the UNESCO Representative List of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The language days were established by the UN Secretariat in 2010, and I wish to acknowledge here the contribution of the Department of Public Information in launching this initiative.

As Coordinator for Multilingualism, I am very proud to carry on this legacy, and to follow the footprints of my predecessors.

The language days, which have been repeatedly welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolutions on multilingualism, are aimed at raising awareness about the official languages of the UN, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

In so doing, they also celebrate language diversity and multilingualism at large, which is essential to achieving the goals of our Organization.

Multilingualism is a core value of the UN and is increasingly being perceived as a requirement for the Organization to enhance its legitimacy, develop relationships based on trust and mutual respect, and become more transparent, inclusive, agile, and efficient.

Recognizing the value of multilingualism, DGACM and its staff take great pride in working tirelessly to lay the groundwork that enables the proper functioning of the intergovernmental bodies and to ensure the sustainability of the services we provide.

Before I conclude, I would like again to extend my deepest thanks to all who contributed to enriching this programme of activities by making these celebrations possible...

... in particular my colleagues from the Chinese Translation Service, Ms. Ying Zhai of the Chinese Book Club; and Ms. Zhuting Chang of the Chinese Language and Communications Programme of OHRM.

I wish to renew my warmest thanks to Ambassador Wu, USG Smale and USG Liu for their participation and support, as well as all the artists and guest speakers for sharing their talents and knowledge these past two days.

祝大家中文日快乐! (wishing everyone a happy Chinese Language Day)

谢谢 (thank you).