

Chinese Language Day at the United Nations, 20 April 2023

Remarks by Mr. Movses Abelian, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and UN Coordinator for Multilingualism

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Excellency [Zhang Jun],
Distinguished guests and colleagues,

Wan shang hao (Good evening).

It is an honour and a pleasure to be with you here today on the occasion of Chinese Language Day.

This celebration provides us with an opportunity to commemorate the richness and diversity of the Chinese language and culture, and to share this special occasion with our Chinese-speaking colleagues, and all learners of the Chinese language at the UN.

This is also a perfect moment for us to recognize the many contributions which the Chinese language and culture have made to our shared global heritage, and which we can see in the exhibit around us.

As we seek to build a more sustainable world, we can learn from the insights drawn from countless cultures from all parts of the globe, of which language plays a central role, as a vehicle for culture across people and across generations.

Chinese culture has traditionally placed emphasis on harmony with nature, and this is reflected in the language itself. It also recognizes the value of innovation and agility. For instance, the Chinese character for "crisis" combines the characters for "danger" and "opportunity," reminding us that even in the face of adversity, there is always a way forward.

In an international organization seeking to be a centre for connecting nations, the wisdom conveyed through the Chinese language, one of the oldest languages in the world in use, is invaluable.

We must continue to embrace the power of languages to foster collaboration and communication, which is what this Organization continuously strives for. At the UN, this is demonstrated through the linguistic skills and knowledge, and cultural awareness, of its staff, including our translators, interpreters, verbatim reporters, and other language specialists.

By doing our part in facilitating multilingualism, we are ensuring that dialogue among Member States can take place, and that Member States all contribute to making the world more peaceful, just and sustainable.

Multilingualism is a core value of the United Nations and the Chinese language, as one of its six official languages, is a crucial part of our efforts to promote understanding and cooperation among nations.

Let us celebrate, on this day, and every day, the richness and beauty of the Chinese language.

Thank you, and Happy Chinese Language Day!

Zhong wen ri kuai le. (Happy Chinese Language Day)