

Recommendations related to languages adopted by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

SECOND SESSION (E/C.19/2003/22)

Paragraph 98

The Forum recommends that Governments introduce indigenous languages in public administration in indigenous territories where feasible.

THIRD SESSION 9E/C.19/2004/23)

Paragraph 19

Member States should consider the adoption and full implementation of comprehensive national indigenous education policies based on the following goals:

Participation:

- a) Establishing effective arrangements for the participation of indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of education services for their children, young people and other community members;
- b) Increasing the number of indigenous people employed as educational administrators, teachers, coaches, officials, curriculum advisers, teacher's assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community members engaged in teaching indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, and indigenous languages;
- c) Developing arrangements for the provision of independent advice from indigenous communities regarding educational decisions at all levels;
- d) Achieving the participation of indigenous children, young people and adults in education for a period similar to that of other students;

Access:

- e) Ensuring that indigenous children, young people and adults have access to all levels of education (including adult education) on a basis comparable to that available to other citizens;

Attainment:

- f) Enabling indigenous students to attain skills and graduation rates up to the same standard as other students throughout the compulsory and non-compulsory schooling years;
- g) Developing teaching forms and curricula based on mother tongue (additive learning) in primary and secondary education (should be mandatory in order to achieve goal (f) above);

h) Developing curricula for both primary and secondary education which reflect the insights and usefulness of indigenous knowledge systems and are sensitive to indigenous values. Curricula should:

- i) Incorporate indigenous histories, traditional knowledge and spiritual values;
- ii) Integrate indigenous oral traditions, myths and writings, acknowledging these as unique parts of world heritage;

Indigenous languages, proficiency in the national language, literacy and numeracy :

- i) Developing programmes based on the child's mother tongue (first language) as a foundation for learning and aiming at the maintenance and continued use of indigenous languages;
- j) Enabling the attainment of proficiency in the commonly used national language and at least one international language, and numeracy competencies by all indigenous students, including indigenous adults, giving particular attention to indigenous women based on the framework of the United Nations Decade of Literacy;

Capacity-building:

- k) Providing community education services which will enable indigenous peoples to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities;
- l) Providing education and training services to develop the skills of indigenous people to participate in educational decision-making;

Appreciation, understanding and respect for indigenous cultures:

- m) Enabling all students, both indigenous and non-indigenous, at all levels of education, to have an appreciation and understanding of and respect for traditional and contemporary indigenous histories, cultures and identities;

Anti-racism strategies:

- n) Promoting anti-racism education, including strategies to empower young people to deal with racism in the compulsory schooling curriculum;

Cultural, social and economic development in education:

- o) Indigenous peoples should be resourced and supported to establish their own education systems, including schools, should they so choose. Also, traditional indigenous education and its structures should be respected and supported;

Education for indigenous peoples in custody or detention:

- p) Given the overrepresentation of indigenous youth and adults in detention, the Forum urges States to consider culturally relevant and appropriate education for indigenous peoples in detention centres;
- q) The Forum asks that education plans, programmes and policies be implemented especially for indigenous girls, boys and women.

Paragraph 20

The Forum recommends that the United Nations system consider the following recommendations:

- (a) The United Nations system should fully explore the protection, use and promotion of indigenous (including traditional) knowledge and ensure synergies across the relevant bodies currently investigating the issues (specifically the World Intellectual Property Organization, UNESCO, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and others) and furthermore should invite the Forum to participate;
- (b) UNESCO should continue to investigate indigenous pedagogy and its application to indigenous education in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples and the Forum and other relevant bodies. The study should include the use of such strategies as boarding schools and both their negative and positive effects. To assist with this investigation into indigenous education, UNESCO is urged to facilitate regional conferences and a global forum on indigenous education to identify both barriers to educational equity and good practice;
- (c) The Forum calls upon Governments and UNESCO to give more attention (by increasing their budgets) to developing quality indigenous education policies (with the participation of indigenous peoples) to achieve the Dakar objectives. “Education for all” is one of the fundamental objectives of the World Education Forum that should be achieved by 2015;
- (d) The Forum encourages the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNESCO and other agencies to continue to support, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, intercultural and bilingual education programmes and to promote in particular the right of education for girls;
- (e) The Forum should work with UNITAR to coordinate training for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system;
- (f) UNESCO is requested to facilitate a world indigenous education conference, with appropriate United Nations partners (the Forum, UNESCO, UNITAR etc.), Member States and indigenous peoples. Furthermore, UNESCO activities in the field of education. UNESCO has recently completed and distributed a publication on best practices for indigenous peoples education and this should be promoted throughout the international community;
- (g) UNICEF advocates bilingual and cross-cultural education for indigenous peoples and conducts schools for girls and women’s literacy programmes in Latin America, and this initiative should be further encouraged and expanded;

(h) The Forum recommends that relevant agencies and Governments, on a regional basis, should provide technical services and the political and moral support needed for the creation, recognition and functioning of future international indigenous universities;

(i) Taking into account the importance of UNESCO national commissions, the Forum recommends that the Economic and Social Council and Governments facilitate the participation of indigenous peoples in the regional commissions with the incorporation of indigenous representation;

(j) The Forum, to underscore the crucial role of language skills to sustainable development and in celebration of the United Nations Year on Education for Sustainable Development (2005), recommends that the secretariat of the Forum, together with the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and UNESCO, explore the possibility of organizing a regional workshop in Asia or Africa on the theme “Indigenous children and language education”, to discuss policies, programmes and practical experiences with bilingual education to strengthen additive learning through the use of mother tongue and the “indigenization” of curricula in formal schooling, among members of the Forum, United Nations agencies, Governments (especially departments of education), indigenous and tribal **representatives and indigenous education experts.**

Paragraph 34

...(e) Noting that the current UNESCO endangered languages programme seeks only to record endangered (indigenous) languages, that UNESCO expand its endangered languages programme to record, revive and reintroduce indigenous languages, in cooperation with indigenous peoples. This should include projects that support training in and teaching of indigenous languages at the community level.

FOURTH SESSION (E.C.19/2005/9)

Paragraph 47

The Forum recognizes that: (a) The right to education is a key instrument for achieving equitable development and respect for cultural diversity. Education is an investment in the future, a means to reduce poverty and counter discrimination; (b) Indigenous peoples have the right, including treaty rights (as relevant) to quality primary education that is sensitive to their holistic worldviews, languages, traditional knowledge and other aspects of their cultures, which contribute to human dignity, identity, and intercultural dialogue; (c) Mother-tongue mediated bilingual education is indispensable for effective learning for indigenous children and for the reduction of dropout rates; (d) Any efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 are likely to fail if impartial and effective implementation of culturally sensitive educational programs, curricula and actions addressing the needs of indigenous peoples are not undertaken; (e) indigenous children experience particular difficulties relating to access to education of quality and sociocultural relevance at all levels. Obstacles are numerous and complex and include, among others, distance to schools, differences in lifestyles, for example, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, discrimination, violence, extreme poverty and exclusion; (f) Education can be one of the most important tools for combating prejudice and

discrimination. National curricula frequently ignore the cultures, treaties, histories, and spiritual values of indigenous peoples and reinforce stereotypes; (g) In many cases, current criteria to measure the achievement of Goal 2 regarding indigenous education are absent or are based on insufficient indicators which do not reflect indigenous educational specificities and are culturally inappropriate and insensitive

Paragraph 48

States should:

(a) Endorse intercultural education as national policy priority to ensure equal access for indigenous children to quality and culturally appropriate primary education, as stipulated in the Convention on the Right of the Child;

(b) Increase substantially State budgetary allocations in order to meet Millennium Development Goal 2 for indigenous children;

(c) Increase funding for Goal 2 for indigenous children through bilateral and multilateral cooperation;

(d) Review current national curricula and textbooks to erase culturally discriminatory materials and enhance knowledge of indigenous cultures;

(e) Establish effective arrangements for the participation of indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of education services for their children, including in the designing and implementation of their own education at all levels, including developing appropriate teaching materials and methods;

(f) Ensure an increase in the number of indigenous persons in the educational sectors, including in policy, administration, teaching indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, indigenous languages and production of educational materials;

(g) Ensure that indigenous children have access to free primary quality education;

(h) Eliminate national policies and practices that create further difficulties for indigenous children to enjoy their right to education, such as the request for birth certificates for the enrolment of children and the refusal to accept indigenous names and traditional dress in schools;

(i) Develop bilingual and culturally appropriate primary education for indigenous children to reduce dropout rates. The mother tongue must be the first learning language and the national language the second language; curricula should reflect indigenous peoples' holistic worldviews, knowledge systems, histories, spiritual values and physical activities, physical education and sports;

(j) Recognize that isolation is a major obstacle that prevents indigenous peoples from fully enjoying their right to education. States should establish best practices, such as residential or boarding schools, where they have worked positively, and mobile and seasonal schools or the use of technologies, such as remote teaching and the Internet, to reach the most isolated and remote indigenous communities;

(k) support enrolment of indigenous persons in teacher-training programs, colleges and relevant higher educational institutions;

(l) Develop school curricula for indigenous peoples in cooperation with other Governments at the regional level in order to maximize the sustainable use of resources in this area;

(m) Develop monitoring guidelines and indicators for achieving Goal 2 regarding indigenous children and set benchmarks in that regard;

(n) In the context of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the achievement of primary universal education, the Forum recommends that States, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations pay attention to intercultural bilingual education for indigenous peoples at the preschool, primary and tertiary levels.

Paragraph 89

Promote and support the utilization of local indigenous languages and, where no written languages exist, employ local indigenous people (as translators/interpreters as well as advisers) to assist in the collection process.

SIXTH SESSION (E/C.19/2007/12)

Paragraph 71

The Permanent Forum welcomes resolution 176 EX/59 of the UNESCO Executive Council relating to indigenous languages and encourages member States, experts and UNESCO to conduct a preliminary study on the technical and judicial aspects of a possible international normative instrument for the protection of indigenous languages and languages under threat of extinction, including an analysis of the programmes UNESCO has carried out in this area, articulating linkages with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2006, to be submitted to the Executive Council of UNESCO at its 179th session.

Paragraph 72

Considering that 2008 is the International Year of Languages, the Permanent Forum recommends holding an expert group meeting on indigenous languages that will call upon States, the United Nations system and indigenous peoples and their organizations to consider the following elements:

(a) Working towards concrete actions and legislative development aimed at eliminating discrimination against the current use of indigenous languages;

- (b) Developing programmes aimed at promoting the empowerment of indigenous languages through all mediums, including radio and television;
- (c) Supporting and increasing the number of centres for the study of indigenous languages;
- (d) Financing and supporting schemes for special projects that are formulated by indigenous peoples and are focused on revitalization and rescue of threatened languages;
- (e) Designing, in consultation with indigenous peoples and the Permanent Forum, the organization of a world conference on linguistic diversity, indigenous languages, identity and education, as a contribution to the programme of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

SEVENTH SESSION (E/C.19/2008/13)

Paragraph 86

The Permanent Forum recommends that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNESCO reinforce quality education by building indigenous knowledge and culture into education programmes and curricula, including education for sustainable development and for natural disaster preparedness, and promoting the use of indigenous language as the medium of instruction. The important role of indigenous learning methodologies, including experiential learning with community members outside of the classroom, should also be included.

Paragraph 94

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other relevant human rights standards should be utilized as the basis on which to develop policies and laws related to the promotion and strengthening of indigenous languages.

Paragraph 95

The Permanent Forum notes that the draft Nordic Saami Convention stands out as an example of good practice in empowering indigenous peoples to preserve and revitalize their languages. The Forum therefore encourages the Nordic States to support the process of the Saami Convention with a view to their adoption of it in due course.

Paragraph 96

The Permanent Forum invites UNESCO to call jointly for a world conference on linguistic diversity, indigenous languages, identity and education. The United Nations Member States are encouraged to provide political and financial support for such a conference.

Paragraph 97

The Permanent Forum calls on States to immediately support indigenous peoples' language revitalization efforts. This includes supporting the master apprentice programmes and assessment of language status, and the creation of increased links between formal schools and the family so that there is a continuous use of indigenous languages.

Paragraph 98

The Permanent Forum welcomes the report of the international expert group meeting on indigenous languages, held in New York from 8 to 10 January 2008, and recommends that States and United Nations agencies engage with indigenous peoples to develop strategies to implement the recommendations of the report.

Paragraph 99

In particular, the Forum emphasizes the recommendations from the expert group meeting contained in paragraphs 40 (c), (d), (e), (f) and (n), 42 (a), (b), (c) and (f), 43 (b), 44 (b) and (c) and 45 of its report.¹

EIGHTH SESSION (E/C.19/2009/14)

Paragraph 86

The Permanent Forum recommends that States support the creation of indigenous language and cultural studies centres in universities and encourage universities to provide permanent teaching positions for indigenous peoples in those study centres; urges States to adopt a policy of free university tuition for all indigenous peoples; encourages those universities that have not already done so to establish designated places and scholarships for indigenous students; and encourages UNESCO to support those initiatives where applicable.

NINTH SESSION (E/C.19/2010/215)

Paragraph 29

The Permanent Forum recommends that UNESCO, the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNICEF and other relevant United Nations agencies convene an expert meeting, in conjunction with the Forum, comprising intercultural and educational experts and United Nations agencies to explore themes and concepts related to bilingual, intercultural and multilingual education in the context of teaching in mother tongue indigenous languages.

Paragraph 31

The Permanent Forum recommends that the United Nations system, the World Bank Group, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank and other multilateral development banks formulate policies to ensure that indigenous education projects that are financed take into account the use, protection and intercultural preservation of indigenous languages through supporting bilingual, intercultural and multilingual education in indigenous languages. The International Monetary Fund should respect the rights of indigenous peoples recognized in international law.

¹ E/C.19/2008/3.

Paragraph 101

The Permanent Forum urges the Governments of Canada and the United States to financially support indigenous community education systems and their efforts to protect and perpetuate indigenous languages, on a par with their dominant languages.

Tenth session

TENTH SESSION (E/C.19/2011/14)

Paragraph 105

The Permanent Forum acknowledges the Secretary-General's warning that an indigenous language dies every two weeks, expresses its critical concern about this dire situation and, as a part of its review, has appointed Edward John to follow up with UNESCO and UNICEF, other United Nations agencies and programmes and States, to consider developments that will ensure the ongoing survival and revitalization of indigenous languages.

TWELFTH SESSION (E.C/19/2013/25)

Paragraph 20

The Permanent Forum recommends that States, in collaboration with indigenous peoples and United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and UNESCO, prepare a comprehensive report on the number of indigenous languages spoken in each State. It is important to identify the current numbers and ages of fluent speakers of each indigenous language, in addition to measures, including constitutional, legislative, regulatory and policy measures, as well as financial support, whether ongoing or project-based, by States, United Nations agencies and indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous languages continue to be used, survive and thrive and do not become extinct.

THIRTEENTH SESSION (E/C.19/2014/11)

Paragraph 45

The Permanent Forum urges States to implement articles 11 and 13 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular in relation to the practice and revitalization of indigenous peoples' languages, cultural traditions and customs as a way of building resilience and preventing self-harm, violence and suicide.