

World Poetry Day
21 March 2022, 8 a.m.

**Transcript of the remarks by Cecilia Elizalde
Director, Documentation Division,
on behalf of Movses Abelian, Under-Secretary-General
for General Assembly and Conference Management
and UN Coordinator for Multilingualism**

Madam Assistant-Secretary-General,
Dear colleagues,

I am delighted to participate today in this event, representing the UN Coordinator for Multilingualism, Under-Secretary-General Movses Abelian, the head of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

I wish, from the outset, on behalf of USG Abelian, to thank the organizers for their invitation to this event.

As you may be aware, World Poetry Day, which is celebrated yearly on 21 March, takes place the day after *la Journée de la langue française* – French Language Day.

What is probably a pure coincidence, provides us with an opportunity to highlight how closely related poetry and languages actually are.

Both are forms of cultural expression and identity.

Poetry can come in any language – or, as a matter of fact, in any number of languages –, and once it is in existence, it becomes an integral part of the heritage of the language in which it was first written or pronounced.

Poetry can come in any language, and be translated into any other languages, contributing to setting bridges and enabling convergences, rapprochement, across cultures.

Poetry helps us see the humanity in each human being, and has the potential of sowing the seeds to overcome differences, disputes and conflicts. Multilingualism, which is the use of multiple languages in a given setting – be it a single human being, a whole society or an international organization, to name only a few examples – also serves as an effective instrument to achieve mutual understanding, and beyond, harmony among people and nations.

World Poetry Day was established by UNESCO with the aim of supporting linguistic diversity and increasing the opportunity for endangered languages to be heard. In this context, we are delighted that, this year again, submissions were received by the UN Mental Health Team in a variety of languages. This is a just recognition of the immense linguistic diversity of our Organization's staff, and we look forward to many more initiatives giving space for all languages to express themselves at the UN, including indigenous languages and endangered languages.

I thank you, Madam ASG and all colleagues again, for your invitation. Let me congratulate all the participants in my language, before I hand over [*personal note delivered in Spanish*].

Thank you.