

Statement to the 21st Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) 25th, April, 2022, 3pm - 5pm
Agenda Item 5 (f). Thematic dialogues: International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032

Statement on behalf of the Summer Institute of Linguistics

Presented by: Kirk Person

Acknowledging the educational rights enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and elsewhere, in the spirit of the Los Pinos Declaration, with appreciation for Global Action Plan (GAP) of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, in support of UNESCO's Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion--endorsed by 16 Asia-Pacific nations and highlighted in UNESCO's report on the 2019 Year of Indigenous Languages, and inspired by policy reform in countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines—through which nearly 80 indigenous languages are now used as languages of instruction in government primary schools.

The Summer Institute of Linguistics in cooperation with the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, the Salzburg Global Seminar and a panel of expert advisors have taken steps to create a four-year, by-invitation program tentatively titled “The Indigenous Languages and Education Network for Policy and Practice (ILE Network).”

The ILE program will facilitate dialogue between indigenous representatives and high-ranking education officials from 15-20 countries, along with academics and donor agencies, to help realize Global Action Plan Outputs No. 1, 3 and 10, in relation to education, digital empowerment, and public-private partnerships. We draw particular inspiration from GAP Output 1, Activity 1.1, which calls for:

"Development of education policies, plans and programmes alongside legislation in line with international frameworks as part of implementing Sustainable Development Goal 4 to support mother tongue-based and multilingual education..."

The ILE program will feature at least 6 online or in-person meetings annually, to facilitate cooperation and accountability, and create momentum. Additional countries may join ILE later, in consultation with the original cohort. The importance of indigenous voices (“Nothing about us without us”) will be integral to all ILE activities.

ILE will focus on both:

1. Inclusion of indigenous and minority languages in multilingual education (where the language is still vigorously used by the younger generation), and
2. Revitalization of indigenous languages (where intergenerational transmission has been interrupted)

The ILE institutional conveners are actively seeking donor organizations interested in supporting this far-reaching initiative to mitigate language endangerment and enhance the SDG4-related educational outcomes of indigenous children in a way that honors their language and culture.

Most importantly, we request the support and cooperation of this venerable Forum.

Thank you.

Current ILE Network advisors include but are not limited to:

- Mr. Luis Felipe Duchicela, senior advisor for indigenous issues, USAID

- Ms. Rita Lasimbang, Partners of Community Organizations in Sabah (PACOS Trust) (Malaysia) and member, IDIL Global Task Force
- Ms. Suraporn Suriyamonton, country representative, Pestalozzi Children's Fund (Thailand) and advisor, Indigenous Education Network (Thailand)
- Mr. Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

The ILE Network institutional conveners comprise the following organizations:

- Salzburg Global Seminar (Mr. Dominic Register, Ms. Faye Hobson)
- UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (Ms. Margarete Sachs-Israel, Ms. Kyungah Kristy Bang)
- SIL International (Ms. Barbara Trudell, Mr. Kirk Person)