



United Nations Nations Unies

Division for Social Policy and Development DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS Room DC2-1324, 2 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 1001

Seventeenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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United Nations Headquarters, New York

Statement by the Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Africa (IPACC) On the Situation of Indigenous Languages in Africa Point 4

Dear President,

I am speaking on behalf of IPACC (Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Africa), and I congratulate you on your election as Chair of this session.

IPACC, which this year celebrated its twentieth anniversary of working alongside with Indigenous Peoples in Africa, has accumulated invaluable experience on indigenous issues in Africa, particularly on the situation of indigenous languages in the area.

I'm referring to these twenty-year experiences of fieldwork, and references to studies conducted by UNESCO, the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), established in 2005 by the African Union (AU) based in Bamako, as well as Report E / C.19 / 2016/10 of the Expert Group Meeting on "Preservation and Revitalization of Indigenous Languages" (Articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples).

According to all these references, the situation of the languages of indigenous peoples in Africa is very critical and requires urgent assistance from the international community to save these languages from extinction and to avoid an unconventional linguistic and cultural tragedy. There are about 1000 Indigenous languages in Africa in the six African regions (North Africa - West Africa - East Africa - Southern Africa - Great Lakes Region - Central Africa). They represent an exceptional linguistic diversity in the world. In addition to the fact that the continent is the cradle of humanity, it contains one third of the spoken languages listed on our planet. So the non-recognition of the languages of indigenous peoples in Africa by governments and its marginalization may accelerate their disappearance by the end of the century. "The vast majority of endangered languages are indigenous languages. It is estimated that one of these disappears every two weeks" According to the report of the Permanent Forum. This is the reason why UNESCO has taken the initiative to organize 2019 year of indigenous languages.

To save their languages, the indigenous peoples of Africa are determined to maintain their languages by engaging in a peaceful struggle within the framework of the UN conventions, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Several achievements have been made in favor of these languages in Africa, despite the fact that they are insufficient.

In North Africa the Amazigh language was recognized by Morocco and Algeria after a fierce struggle of more than half a century by the Amazighs. Morocco's experience in restoring the Amazigh language can be exemplary for all indigenous languages of Africa. And while expressing our satisfaction for these achievements we ask the governments of this region to respond to the demands of the Amazigh Cultural Movements for the equality of languages.

Recommendations:

• For Indigenous Peoples

1. Consolidate African indigenous networks to exchange about the upkeep experiences and promote indigenous languages
2. Increase Awareness among Indigenous women to maintain their languages at home and transmit them to children.
3. Support & encourage Indigenous youth to study their own languages.

• For governments

1. Constitutionally Recognize the Languages of Indigenous Peoples
2. Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples
3. Introduce the teaching of indigenous languages in the education to children in education in their mother tongue. As well as in the mass-media system in the framework of equality between languages and cultures in their respective countries.

• For the United Nations

1. Welcome the proclamation of 2019 as the World Year of Indigenous Languages.
2. The General Assembly should proclaim an International Decade of Indigenous Languages.
4. Reserve a Global Fund to promote indigenous languages.
5. An international United Nations prize for states that have revitalized and taught indigenous languages in the context of "equality of languages"
6. A UNESCO Prize for indigenous Organizations that have worked for the promotion of indigenous languages.

IPACC

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