

**EU Statement**  
**The International Decade of Indigenous Languages**  
**25 April, General Assembly**

The European Union motto is ‘united in diversity’: which means a diversity of cultures, customs, beliefs and of languages. Besides the 24 official languages of the Union, there are over 60 indigenous, regional or minority languages, spoken by some 40 million people. It is this diversity that makes the European Union what it is: not a ‘melting pot’ in which differences are rendered down, but a common home in which diversity is celebrated, and where our many languages are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding.

Multilingualism and respect for linguistic diversity is a core value of the European Union. Back in 2001, the European Year of Languages celebrated linguistic diversity and promoted language learning in Europe and beyond. It was such a great success that the European Council decided to celebrate the European Day of Languages on 26 September each year.-

Language is the most direct expression of culture; it is what makes us human and part of our identity. Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. Article 21 prohibits discrimination based on a number of grounds, including language.

The European Union shares the concern about the rapid loss of indigenous languages around the world and the danger that many are at risk of being lost forever. This is a truly worrisome trend, which requires attention and action by the international community and at regional and local levels.

This is why the European Union is supporting the International Decade of Indigenous Languages until 2032, building on the important International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019.

We welcome this opportunity to draw attention to the critical status of many indigenous languages across the world. The preservation of indigenous languages not only requires greater awareness but also concrete commitments. Urgent steps are needed at the national and international levels to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages worldwide.

The Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages should guide our joint efforts in this regard. Efforts are needed in terms of education, capacity-building, and creating an enabling environment and favourable conditions for digital empowerment, freedom of expression, media development, access to information and language technology.

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages will provide a crucial framework to draw attention to the critical status of many indigenous languages across the world and spur action and mobilization of stakeholders and resources for their preservation, revitalization and promotion.

For indigenous peoples, languages not only identify their origin, they also carry the core values of their ancestors – the indigenous knowledge systems that make them one with the land and are crucial to their survival and to the aspirations of their young and old. We continue being guided by the same values and principles on which the European Union was founded. This is why we through policy and programming continue to support every effort for the revitalisation of indigenous languages globally.

Thank you