

CR-4

## **Item 5: Discussion on the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages**

22/4/19

**OHCHR Statement (P. David, Chief Indigenous and Minorities Section):**

Thank you Madam Chair and warm congratulations with your election,

- The Office of the UN HC for HR greatly welcomes the decision to launch the Year of Indigenous Languages
- The key messages we delivered in Paris at the official launch of the Year were the following:
  - ✓ The protection of indigenous languages is a core human rights matter
  - ✓ Preservation, promotion and revitalization of indigenous languages are essential components of reconciliation
  - ✓ Language is also pivotal in both the areas of human rights protection and good governance and is essential to realizing sustainable development
  - ✓ For decades, policies of assimilation, forced relocation, forced enrollment in boarding schools,

and imposed States laws, policies and measures, have adversely affected the preservation of indigenous languages. When indigenous languages are under threat, so too are indigenous peoples, including their rights to identity, to self-determination and to culture

- ✓ In their efforts, States will also find a wealth of guidance in recommendations adopted by the UN Expert Mechanisms on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (including EMRIP Study on the right to language of 2012) as well as the findings of the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, UN Special Procedures mandate holders and the Universal Periodic Review of the UN HR Council. Indigenous peoples should aim at strengthening their cooperation with these bodies, including through the provision of information on the state of their indigenous languages in their communities and countries, and the threats they encounter so that in turn the United Nations bodies can raise the key issue of the right to language directly with Member States.
- ✓ The annual OHCHR Indigenous Fellowship Programme and the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples provide further tools available to indigenous peoples' representatives to build

their capacity and use UN mechanisms to defend their rights, including to language

- ✓ OHCHR will continue to provide technical assistance and guidance to Member States, indigenous peoples and other key stakeholders to ensure that indigenous peoples are effectively involved in matters that affect their rights.
- ✓ To conclude, OHCHR expresses its support for the launch of an International Decade on Indigenous Languages as such Decade would help to move towards concrete measures and actions at country, regional and international levels to ensure sustainability of all languages worldwide.

Thank you

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- ✓ The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples includes positive measures to support indigenous peoples' cultures. This includes the right to "revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages and oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures" (art. 13). It also cover rights to control their own education systems and institutions as well as providing education in their own languages (arts. 14 and 15). Moreover, the Declaration states that "indigenous peoples have the right to

establish their own media in their own languages” and that States “shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity.”(art.16). In addition, States “should encourage privately owned media to adequately reflect indigenous cultural diversity”.