

NEPAL
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Speaker: Bhagin Dhungana

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Statement by H. E. Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Nepal during the panel discussion on the Role of Languages and Culture in the Protection of Well-being and Identity of Indigenous Peoples at the 18th Session of the Human Rights Council, 20 September 2011, Geneva.

Madam President,

My delegation welcomes the holding of this panel discussion on the important topic of the role of languages and culture in the protection of well-being and identity of indigenous peoples. We thank the distinguished panelists for their comprehensive presentations.

Madam President,

Nepal attaches high importance to the value of the languages and culture of the indigenous peoples and believes that effective preservation and promotion of such rich assets of mankind are essential for the protection of the well-being and identity of the indigenous community. The Government of Nepal has undertaken the programs of protection, conservation and development of languages and dialects spoken by indigenous nationalities in Nepal.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 has guaranteed the rights of all communities to preserve and promote their language, scripts, culture, cultural civilization and heritage. Each community has the fundamental right to receive basic education in their mother tongue, and preparations of curriculum, text books and reference materials in those dialects have been undertaken accordingly. The provisions of the Constitution have been put into implementation through the reforms in the legislation; amendment in the Education Act, Local Self Governance Act and related regulations; and through the formulation of related policy instruments, such as National Curriculum Frameworks, School Reform Programs, Education for All-National Plan of Action and the periodic national development plans.

Despite being a country that is undergoing historic political transition and post-conflict reconstruction, Nepal has worked hard in transforming the State into an inclusive, democratic and participatory polity. Promotion of indigenous language, culture and the empowerment of indigenous peoples and their enhanced participation in decision-making process remains a priority agenda for the Government. The representation of the indigenous people in the Constituent Assembly, mandated to write a new constitution of the State, has marked historic record of 218 members out of 601 members. This is a clear example of one of the most inclusive representative bodies of its kind.

Madam President,

We would like to request the distinguished panelists to share their experiences on the following:

1. How can States, particularly the least developed countries, best be able to cope with the need of enhanced resources to finance the education for the children of the indigenous communities in their mother tongue?
2. How can we strike a balance between the right to impart education in mother tongues of indigenous communities and the need to impart quality education or even learn mainstream international languages to enable them to compete with their national and international counterparts in this competitive global environment?

Thank you.