



UNESCO Background Paper

Committee: UNESCO

Topic: Preservation of endangered languages

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Letter to delegates

Dear delegates,

Welcome to SPIS MUN 2026 , we are pleased to have you in this committee. We introduce ourselves as, your moderator Romina Villarreal and your director Ivanna Garza . Together we will guide in this experience as your Chair in UNESCO. We will make our best effort so you can have the best experience possible with justice and equality.

As delegates, your goal in this committee is to give the best strategic solutions possible, preserve endangered languages so traditions and culture can be shared over generations, and fully compromise in the investigation so people around the world can have the ability to speak and understand these languages. As your Chair we understand this process can be very demanding , but the experience learning will be totally worthwhile.

We understand that MUN can be very challenging and could take you out of your comfort zone , especially if it's your first experience . But we remind you that all the abilities you will develop will not only give you an advantage in MUN, but also in other aspects of your daily life. We encourage you to make the most of this experience and many others. As your chairs of this committee, we count on your full cooperation in developing an excellent resolution proposing strategic solutions for the preservation of endangered languages.

With all this being said, we wish you the best of luck in this experience.

History of committee

UNESCO was founded on November 16, 1945, in the aftermath of World War II. With the purpose of building peace through international cooperation in education, science and culture. UNESCO's origins can be traced back to the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC), of which figures like Albert Einstein and Marie Curie were members, allowing them to share their scientific and cultural achievements. The constitution was signed by more of 36 countries in London in 1945. Nowadays, UNESCO has implemented initiatives that have radically improved lives around the world

The early goals of UNESCO were to reconstruct war-torn infrastructure and make knowledge accessible and fight misinformation. Nowadays UNESCO works on education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture and art , communication, information and peace around the globe.

UNESCO has made various contributions over the decades, two of which are major: the fight against racism. As early as 1950, it published influential declarations on the issue of race, which led South Africa to withdraw from UNESCO before rejoining in 1994. UNESCO also produced the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights in 1997, the first global contribution against human cloning.

History Of the topic

The past century of globalization has streamlined many traditions and processes around the world that were previously unique. It is a significant reason why, in the last 125 years, English has risen from third to first place among the most spoken languages in the world. But this article is not about English. Rather, it addresses the issue of languages increasingly threatened by growing standardization.

A language is more than just words. It represents the lives of the people who speak and write it. The connotations, linguistic history, and emotions associated with the words are all-important for those who use and identify with the language.

There are many reasons why languages become endangered:

-Globalization: As the world becomes more connected, languages like English, Chinese, and Spanish predominate on certain continents, and less widespread languages become rarer.

-Urbanization: People began to move from smaller and rural areas to big cities where dominant languages are spoken, becoming a need for people to stop using their native languages.

-Education System: In a lot of schools around the world, only a dominant language is being spoken, leading to children from rural areas learning the dominant language instead of their native tongues.

-Media and technology : Television, cinema, social media and the Internet predominantly use dominant languages.

Language preservation is vital for maintaining our cultural diversity, scientific knowledge and human rights. In the words of Professor Megan Davis, Chair of the United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues, saving indigenous languages is crucial to ensure the protection of the cultural identity and dignity of indigenous peoples and safeguard their traditional heritage.

Introduction to the topic

There are more than 6,000 languages spoken around the world, but many ancient languages have already disappeared. For centuries, languages have slowly died out, but in recent times, this process has become much faster. Today, around 3,000 languages are considered endangered, meaning they are at risk of disappearing completely. This is mainly due to the fact that speakers of minority languages join communities that speak different, but more widespread, languages. Over time, they stop using their mother tongue, and new generations never learn it. As a result, those languages fade away. Fortunately, international organizations and governments have started to notice this problem and are trying to protect endangered languages. They are creating programs to teach these languages to children and encourage

people to keep using them. Even though this progress is slow, these actions can help preserve the world's rich cultural and linguistic diversity.

One of these languages loses its last speaker every week, effectively becoming extinct. In 2019, a linguist shared a personal experience with one such example. The language in this case was Naati, an indigenous language spoken by a single speaker on the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu. Its last speaker was fluent in plenty of the local dialects; his fear, however, revolved around the cultural implications of losing his forebearers' language. Because he was the last speaker, much of that knowledge has already been lost. The same linguist studying Naati also recounted Lulamogi, a Ugandan dialect. When the language was lost, it impacted the way local tribes caught and ate white termites. Without the language to describe the various methods their ancestors used, they simply began to lose their effectiveness in the age-old practice.

Key players

- **Papua New Guinea:** With over 800 languages, Papua New Guinea is the country with the greatest linguistic diversity in the world. Documenting endangered languages, creating language learning resources such as spoken dictionaries and online study programs, promoting community-based language education, and developing language revitalization policies to ensure future generations can speak their ancestral languages are some of the measures Papua New Guinea has taken to preserve its languages.
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- **Indonesia :** Indonesia has more than 700 linguistic languages . Indonesia is pursuing language preservation through cross sectoral collaboration, government initiatives , and advanced technologies.
- **Nigeria:** Has a diversity of more than 500 languages. Nigeria has been implementing various initiatives to preserve endangered languages by integrating their languages in schools curricula , developing digital tools , promoting programs and cultural events , and establishing governmental institutions like the National Institution for Nigerian Languages.
- **India:** Counts with a diversity of more than 400 languages . The Indian government is actively preserving languages by the Scheme for Protecting and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL).
- **Cameroon:** Cameroon has 286 languages, but only 40 are taught in schools. Cameroon celebrates International Mother Language Day on February 21st.

UN ACTIONS

The revitalisation of indigenous languages is essential for ensuring the continuation and transmission of culture, customs and history, but it is also important to address biodiversity loss and climate change. "Saving indigenous languages is crucial to ensure the protection of the cultural identity and dignity of indigenous peoples and safeguard their traditional heritage.

The United Nations and other stakeholders, a wide range of linguistic experts, gathered at the meeting. They shared numerous examples of good practices to keep languages alive, highlighting the crucial

function of intergenerational transmission, the particular role of indigenous women, and the importance of mother tongue education.

The meeting especially focused on indigenous peoples initiatives to revitalize indigenous languages through information and communication technologies, such as using WhatsApp, online karaoke songs, social media, and web tools in indigenous languages.

In addition, the United Nations has launched several global actions, including the International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019 and the International Decade of Indigenous Languages from 2022 to 2032, led by UNESCO. These initiatives aim to promote awareness, encourage governments to create language-friendly policies, and support communities in preserving their linguistic heritage. The UN also emphasizes the importance of education in Indigenous languages, encouraging countries to include them in school curricula and teacher training programs. Through the Global Action Plan, the UN works closely with Indigenous communities to strengthen digital tools, create language archives, and support youth participation in language learning and documentation.

Current status

The preservation of endangered and minority languages is a moral and cultural imperative. These languages encapsulate unique worldviews, histories, and knowledge systems that benefit all of humanity. By combining documentation, education, technology, policy, community action, and collaboration, we can ensure that these voices continue to resonate for generations to come. Including tools like [Amara.org](https://www.amara.org) in these efforts, adds an effective, scalable solution for preserving linguistic diversity in the digital age.

Whether you're an organization working with minority languages or are a passionate promoter of linguistic diversity in your community, your involvement can help ensure that these languages thrive in the digital world. Partner with Amara.org today and be part of a global movement to support cultural and linguistic diversity

After all that being said, we can ensure that these voices continue to resonate for generations to come. Many global and local initiatives, including those supported by the United Nations and UNESCO, promote mother-tongue education, the creation of digital archives, and the inclusion of Indigenous languages in modern communication systems. New technologies are becoming powerful allies in this mission.

Guiding Questions

How can the world prevent the disappearance of linguistic diversity?

In which aspects the disappearance of endangered questions affect the most ?

What things can help in the preservation of languages?

How the disappearance of endangered languages affects societies?

Why is the preservation of languages important?

Where does the disappearance of linguistic diversity affect the most ?

How can we ensure future generations will know of the existence of these languages?

What are key elements to prevent the disappearance of endangered languages ?

How many endangered languages are in danger of disappearing?

What countries or organizations can help in the preservation of this languages?

Quorum

1. Guatemala
2. Mali
3. South Africa
4. New Zealand
5. Nepal
6. Papua New Guinea
7. Nigeria
8. India
9. Bolivia
10. Australia
11. Perú
12. Rusia
13. China
14. Canadá
15. México
16. Brazil
17. USA
18. Indonesia
19. Cameroon
20. Vietnam
21. France

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Anon

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Anon

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Anon

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