

International Mother Language Day, proclaimed by UNESCO in November 1999, is observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

- United Nations International Mother Language Day website: <www.un.org/depts/dhl/language/>

Recognizing the need to improve understanding and communication among peoples, Also recognizing the great importance of safeguarding the linguistic and cultural heritage of humanity and extending the influence of each of the cultures and languages of which that heritage is composed, Considering the current threat to linguistic diversity posed by the globalization of communication and the tendency to use a single language, at the risk of marginalizing the other major languages of the world, or even of causing the lesser-used languages, including regional languages, to disappear....

- Excerpt from the Preamble of the UN General Conference Resolution for a language policy for the world based on multilingualism: <http://webworld.unesco.org/imld/res_en.html>

UNESCO fears disappearance of 3000 languages (April 03, 2000)

"There are more than 6,000 languages in the world and some scholars are preoccupied with the fact that half of them will probably have disappeared in 25 years," stated Koïchiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-General, during a speech at the Japan's National Press Club, Tokyo, last week. "My goal is to preserve the diversity of languages and cultures in an electronic age when differences are growing between industrialised and developing countries."

Mr. Matsuura expressed the wish that UNESCO start to protect intangible heritage, such as languages, traditions and popular songs, along with monuments, natural and cultural sites, which are already considered Human Heritage. Questioned about the role of UNESCO in the Internet Age, Mr. Matsuura said that he thinks about the Internet in global terms, to take advantage of its potential not only in developed countries but also in developing countries. Mr. Matsuura made the point that, even among the developed nations, the United States is a front runner in the Internet and global communications, so that the less developed nations are feeling they should "give up". He stressed that he is not in favour of regulating the Internet, but that UNESCO would like to develop guiding principles for its use. "I would like to keep the cultures in the world from becoming uniform," he concluded.

- UNESCO WebWorld, Communication, Information, *UNESCO fears disappearance of 3000 languages:* <www.unesco.org/webworld/news/000403_languages.shtml>