**Strategic Outcome Document
of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages**

2 October 2019

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The preparation of this document benefited greatly from the editorial expertise of members of the Open-ended Drafting Group established by UNESCO and the Steering Committee for the organization of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages. Furthermore, the document reflects the outcomes of the discussions held during the international and regional meetings organized within the context of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.

The analysis, recommendations and statements of this document do not necessarily reflect the views of UNESCO and the Steering Committee for the organization of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages. The document is an independent document commissioned by UNESCO and the Steering Committee when organizing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages on behalf of the international community and for implementing the Action Plan for the organization of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, and other relevant UN documents.

It is the product of a collaborative effort involving many other people, experts, researchers, agencies, institutions, and governments.

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# Rationale for the Strategic Outcome Document

With this Strategic Outcome Document, the rights holders and stakeholders, including duty bearers, involved in the organization of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL2019), aim to:

1. Recognize and acknowledge the range, diversity and global value of languages as well as the critical and endangered status of many individual languages around the world, the vast majority of them being Indigenous languages,
2. Highlight the importance of the application of the full spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms which should involve taking urgent steps to eliminate any discrimination directed at users of Indigenous languages,
3. Highlight an urgent need to promote, strengthen and mainstream Indigenous languages across social, cultural, economic, environmental, political, scientific and technological domains, and to acknowledge their importance for peace-building, sustainable development, biodiversity, the mitigation of climate change, and reconciliation processes in society, and
4. Urge the taking of concrete, long-term and sustainable measures at every level to promote, protect and provide access to Indigenous languages, and especially to support the efforts of all users of Indigenous languages around the world.

Through this Strategic Outcome Document, all stakeholders, including Member States and national governments, the UN-system and other intergovernmental organizations, Indigenous peoples, academia and language communities, library, archival, information and cultural memory organizations, youth organizations, as well as other public and private partners (hereafter referred to as stakeholders), reassert their commitment to:

1. Support the principle of the maintenance and revitalization of languages including Indigenous languages,
2. Promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism, and strengthen access to Indigenous languages in education, science, culture, communication and information, technological, and economic and political development, and other domains,
3. Develop appropriate languages resources and tools, as well as improve service provision in Indigenous languages,
4. Mainstream – within broader socio-cultural, ecological, economic, political, legal and ethical domains – the knowledge systems and values of Indigenous peoples alongside their distinctive worldviews and way of life, as well as the vital role of the languages themselves.

**This Strategic Outcome Document, building on insights from the global consultations, as well as collaborative activities and events during the IYIL2019, and drawing key conclusions, will set out a strategic direction and specific recommendations for future global actions.**

The Strategic Outcome Document accordingly is the product of the wisdom available from a prolonged collective collaboration initiated by UNESCO. In addition to UNESCO itself, contributors have included members of the Steering Committee established for the organization of the IYIL2019, UN-system organizations, members of the Open-ended Drafting Group formed to contribute towards preparing the Strategic Outcome Document, and all stakeholders of the international and regional meetings[[1]](#endnote-1) arranged to facilitate dialogue, alongside all the other partners who have contributed with their comments and recommendations received through extensive online consultations.

# Insights from the IYIL2019

***The critical situation of Indigenous languages carries a special and wider significance for all of us because of their role and relevance in peace building, sustainable development and reconciliation within our societies.***

We live in a society that is comprised of differing languages, cultures, ethnicities, religions, and social systems, rendering it a mutually inclusive community. Language is one of the fundamental preconditions of human development, dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance, and the peaceful existence of human society. People, of course, need language to communicate with one another and also hand on from generation to generation knowledge, ideas, beliefs and traditions, which are essential for their dignity, well-being, evolution and peaceful co-existence.

We are reminded that language is best taught to each generation as children early in their lives. Therefore multilingual education based primarily on the mother tongue (s) in the early years of schooling plays a key role in fostering respect for diversity and a sense of interconnectedness between countries and populations, which are core values at the heart of global citizenship. Language is essentially a means of communication between different people, nations and cultures, through exchange and sharing; language inherently implies mutual respect such that one language is not perceived as dominant vis-a-vis any other. Ideally, languages functioning within a given society should complement each other in a collaborative manner. Language is one main carriers for safeguarding, documenting and passing on the unique culture of a group of people, region or indeed the global community itself. Furthermore, language encodes traditional knowledge gathered over centuries; it amounts to a stored resource underpinning human development and encapsulating humankind’s capacity to modify, adapt and make necessary adjustments to its changing biological environment.

**All stakeholders involved in the organization of the IYIL2019 and in the open consultative process on the preparation of the Strategic Outcome Document** **acknowledged an urgent need to protect, support, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages around the world and recognized their wider and deeper role in peace building, good governance,** **sustainable development and reconciliation processes in society, based on the following key observations:**

* Languages around the world continue to disappear at alarming rates, and many of those are Indigenous Peoples’ languages. They represent complex systems of knowledge developed and accumulated over thousands of years reflecting characteristically intimate and distinctive worldviews and perspectives.
* A person’s freedom to use his or her chosen language is a prerequisite to freedom of thought, freedom of opinion and expression, as well as access to education, health and information, cultural expression, and other rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
* Indigenous peoples’ languages and their users - in particular women and young girls, children, persons with disabilities, displaced and the elderly - face diverse challenges which require a multifaceted and integrated approach. This will be the way to attribute real value to language in political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, institutional, health-related, educational, communication and information contexts; thereby full advantage will be taken of the latest scientific and technological developments.
* There is a need to refresh the understanding and assessment of Indigenous languages in the context of decolonization, paying particular attention to specific regional or local contexts in order to provide an adequate response to local realities and conditions on the ground. This affects the issue of divergent terminology which various languages’ users may face in their daily lives.
* Crucially policy collaboration and continuity of action are essential for promoting, protecting and strengthening Indigenous languages as well as empowering those who use them. This approach implies capitalizing on the full range of international, regional and national normative instruments and existing tools (See Annex I: List and references to the available normative instruments and tools) as well as on the outcomes of the IYIL2019 itself.

# Key conclusions

After (i) evaluating the current situation, (ii) seeking to build on the existing framework of normative instruments and tools, which can be leveraged to support Indigenous languages, (iii) applying a human rights-based approach, (iv) analyzing available research findings and (v) taking into account international, regional and open online consultations with relevant stakeholders, **the following conclusions are drawn and recommendations made**, as the minimum standards to be achieved in preserving, supporting and providing access to Indigenous languages and their users:

Conclusion I. The protection, support and promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism is crucial for peace, development and reconciliation in our societies, as well as for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of other strategic development frameworks, strategies and programmes (DEVELOPMENT).

Conclusion II. The vitality and sustainability of Indigenous languages is only possible through empowering Indigenous language users themselves with the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms (HUMAN RIGHTS).

Conclusion III. Existing sustainable development mechanisms do not adequately reflect the needs of Indigenous language users, who are at risk of being left behind or even excluded. Additional and urgent actions are required in recognition of the importance of Indigenous languages within the effort to deliver the SDGs and other strategic frameworks[[2]](#endnote-2) (STRATEGIES).

Conclusion IV. It is evident that, historically, intervention measures have tended to leave Indigenous language users behind and that catch-up is now urgently necessary. Time is now pressing and only ten years remain to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In future, successful and effective support for Indigenous languages will require substantially and measurably enhanced involvement of Indigenous peoples themselves, particularly Indigenous youth, through their own governance structures and representative bodies. This approach will mean duly respecting ethical standards and integrating the values of Indigenous peoples into the global response (EMPOWERMENT).

Conclusion V. Digital technologies, in particular language technology, content development and dissemination, play a growing role in influencing societal development and contributing to the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages in today’s world. In this context, policy and decision makers, language technology developers, media and information providers, and other relevant public and private stakeholders should be alert and sensitive to barriers which impede the availability of new technology, content and services to Indigenous language users. Provisions should take account of consent considerations and should, where possible, encourage the application of solutions whose delivery is based on open standards – in particular advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (PROGRESS).

Conclusion VI. Considering that language, as a cross cutting issue, embraces and transcends all spheres of life, it is crucial – in accordance with ethical standards – to guarantee a free and varied flow of information, conveyed in Indigenous languages, across a wide range of disciplines and domains, thereby generating new knowledge, enhancing distribution and ensuring the broadest accessibility of dedicated resources for Indigenous language users (SYNERGY).

Conclusion VII. Any review of the IYIL2019, in terms of evaluating its impact as an international cooperation and awareness-raising mechanism, will also need carefully to assess its potential as a launch-pad for a new longer-term sustainable response designed with specific goals, actions and timelines. This should begin with the proclamation of a Decade of Indigenous Languages (SUSTAINABILITY).

# Future steps for a way ahead

The following set of conclusions, defined goals and suggested recommendations provide a solid basis for an action-oriented response at global, regional and national levels:

**Conclusion I. The protection, support and promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism is crucial for peace, development and reconciliation in our societies, as well as for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of other strategic development frameworks, strategies and programmes (DEVELOPMENT).**

**Goal (I)** By 2030, to acknowledge and recognize Indigenous languages’ role in peace-building, their importance for the attainment of development goals and reconciliation processes in our societies, as well as in contributing overall to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other in line with internationally, regionally and nationally agreed strategic development frameworks.

**Recommendations:**

* 1. ***Measures to protect and promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism should be focused towards Sustainable Development. “Leaving no one behind”*** should be a bywordfor the approach, encompassingequal opportunities for quality education, employment, health care, safe environment, justice, media and information, amounting to the full inclusion and participation of Indigenous language users in society. Measures should be targeted at eliminating such injustices as illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and discrimination as well as at mitigating the negative effects of climate change and contributing to achieving specific SDGs such as No Poverty, Zero Hunger, and Good Health and Well-Being.
	2. ***Measures should be also directed, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, towards empowering Indigenous languages users;*** this includes building confidence in early life in the use of their mother tongues, along with ensuring access to language learning and training resources, and providing quality and inclusive education in Indigenous languages, including via the internet, thereby reducing the disadvantages and inequality experiencedbypersons with disabilities including those using signlanguages and braille. These actions will support the broader thrust of the SDGs towards, for example, Quality Education, Gender Equality and Reduction of Inequalities overall.
	3. ***Proposed actions should also take into account the connection between linguistic diversity and multilingualism on one hand and biodiversity and the natural ecological environment on the other. This will have an increasingly beneficial impact on Indigenous language users’ way of life among rural and urban populations.*** The actions will contribute to the achievement of SDGs related to Clean Water and Climate Action. Planned initiatives should have regard also to the specific relevance of multi-faceted, multilingual education to economic growth, innovation and the future of Sustainable Cities and Communities, helping to make high quality jobs available to the entire workforce regardless of language, race, abilities or gender.

* 1. ***The protection and promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism help to intensify economic development.*** Linguistic diversity favours equal rights being enjoyed by different language users in their educational background, social life and the work place; it improves the prospects for equal employment rights as well as for decent working conditions for Indigenous language users. All these measures together should contribute to long-term economic progress and the attainment of SDGs related to Decent Work, Economic Growth, Innovation and Sustainable Cities and Communities.
	2. ***Plans should, furthermore, encompass the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms while promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism with the wider aim of improving social inclusion and partnerships.*** Measures to safeguard Indigenous languages should have an empowering effect on the decision-making ability of Indigenous language users and greatly facilitate their social inclusion, fair treatment in court, access toeducation, gender equality as well as enriching their cultural life. All this will benefit the preservation of their intangible cultural heritage - oral traditions, the performing arts, and other collective festival activities. This approach contributes in the widest sense to the creation of a more peaceful, fairer and inclusive society reflecting the attainment of SDGs related to Justice, Peace and Sustainable Institutions.

**Suggested actions (I):**

1. ***Raise awareness about the critical situation of many Indigenous languages, stimulate dialogue on the topic, support reconciliation processes, commit adequate resources and strengthen international cooperation******through******establishment of networks*** among rights holders, duty-bearers and other stakeholders through coordinated and cross-sector advocacy and awareness-raising programmes, along with the formulation of language policies focused on Indigenous languages support, access and promotion; all actions targeted towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. ***Acknowledge the circumstances and profound trauma caused among many Indigenous Peoples from the loss or severe of their languages****,* as well as ***the consequent impact*** on peace-building, sustainable development, and reconciliation processes within societies.
3. ***Adopt normative instruments, language action plans and policies******at international, regional and national levels,*** which provide protection and access as well as promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism and assist in improving the human potential and local initiatives of Indigenous languages users.
4. ***Develop and deploy sustainable, innovative and inclusive solutions***, making available the necessary human, financial and other resources, as well as protecting the environment, intensifying social inclusion, building constructive partnerships and establishing mechanisms, through national statistics institutions, to gather relevant and robust language data conducive to informed decision making.

**Conclusion II. The vitality and sustainability of Indigenous languages is only possible through empowering Indigenous language users themselves with the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms (HUMAN RIGHTS).**

**Goal (II)** Toencourage and implant an accountable and irreversible commitment of rights holders, duty bearers and other stakeholders to address the pressing need to secure for Indigenous languages users their rights freedom of expression, as well as access to education and information, health care, social welfare and employment, justice, science and technology as well as guaranteeing the right freely to participate in cultural life and enjoyment of the arts. Contribute to the reconciliation processes by adopting human rights-based approach which emphasize non-discrimination, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights with special attention to the Indigenous women and young girls, youth, children, persons with disabilities, displaced and the elderly.

**Recommendations:**

2.1. It is essential to ***adopt a human rights-based approach towards Indigenous language issues*** which applies the principles of gender equality, cultural sensitivity and disability inclusiveness in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other relevant normative instruments.

2.2. All stakeholders, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and other language communities, should ***mainstream linguistic*** ***diversity and multilingualism within strategic national development plans*** and work together in creating favorable conditions which specifically respond to the concerns and needs of Indigenous languages users.

**Suggested actions (II):**

1. Encourage all stakeholders to **take an** **inclusive approach in planning and implementing measures** to realize Indigenous language users’ rights, respecting their entitlement to participation in legislation, administration, and justice with full regard for the principle of free, prior, and informed consent[[3]](#endnote-3).
2. Frame and implement **evidence-based legislation, policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks**, including those related to the recovery and preservation of cultural and ceremonial artifacts.
3. Provide **access to relevant documentary resources**, at sub-regional, national and international levels, in collaboration with those Indigenous peoples concerned, using appropriate sharing protocols and mechanisms.
4. Ensure that concerns about **the truth, the need for apology and for forgiveness** are integrated into reconciliation processes.

**Conclusion III. Existing sustainable development mechanisms do not adequately reflect the needs of Indigenous language users, who are at risk of being left behind or even excluded. Additional and urgent actions are required in recognition of the importance of Indigenous languages within the effort to deliver the SDGs and other strategic frameworks (STRATEGIES).**

**Goal (III).** By 2030, to mainstream Indigenous languages by providing evidence-based data derived from all domains relevant to Indigenous peoples’ issues and needs; to reinforce this goal with appropriate evaluation mechanisms and the organizational capacity required to formulate and implement strategies, policies and programmes, within a range of actions implemented on a UN system-wide basis, as well as by other intergovernmental organizations, national governmental and public institutions, in particular those responsible for indigenous issues.

**Recommendations:**

3.1***.*** Member States should ***formulate inclusive policies resulting in effective measures, which benefit users of all languages****,* thereby assuring to all people the same enjoyment of equal opportunities in every area of life.

3.2. It is essential to support the implementation of existing ***international standards*** and, if required, ***to establish new ones, so as to protect, share and develop language resources***, including technical standards for: (i) cataloguing, annotation and documentation (ii) creation and of utilization of language resources on a shared mutually compatible worldwide basis (iii) agreement among international standards organizations and professional bodies (i.e. universities, relevant specialist institutes etc.), including Indigenous peoples themselves, to collaborate in formulating and abiding by approved international standards.

3.3. ***All stakeholders should recognize and act on the basis that language is an invaluable and irreplaceable socio-cultural resource. They should acknowledge its importance*** in delivering the benefits of scientific and technological advance and that it has a unique status as an instrument of collaboration and cooperation among peoples and communities of various cultures.

**Suggested actions (III):**

1. ***Continue the task of gathering evidence-based data, as an integral part of mapping and monitoring progress made around linguistic diversity and multilingualism*;** doing so in an ethical manner, following relevant guidelines and standards, using the most advanced language technologies, and proactively sharing information to achieve optimally informed policy and decision making.
2. ***Deliver joint strategies, designed through regional consultations and global gatherings,*** which directly involve Indigenous language users themselves.
3. ***Facilitate interdisciplinary research*** on issues relating to Indigenous languages, giving particular attention to the most vulnerable, namely women and young girls, children, youth, persons with disabilities, displaced and the elderly – seek to add to the corpus of knowledge through the systematic elaboration and dissemination of information, through co-production initiatives for knowledge enhancement, and through increased research capacity, all of which will be especially beneficial to Indigenous peoples in Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDC).
4. ***Involve and train Indigenous youth worldwide***, assuring their participation in various institutional structures and mechanisms concerned with Indigenous issues which will give the youth a stronger voice when expressing their opinions and sharing their experiences and ideas with a view to the most appropriate future actions as well as nourishing the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages with their associated world outlook, identities, cultures, religions, spiritual beliefs, traditional knowledge, natural resource-based livelihoods.
5. ***Use*** ***language-sensitive policies to address existing social problems, threats and risks***, thereby acknowledging the severe impact of domestic violence, assaults, rape, gambling, sexually transmitted diseases or infections, teen pregnancies and drug and alcohol abuse for their wellbeing and future at large.

**Conclusion IV. It is evident that, historically, intervention measures have tended to leave Indigenous language users behind and that catch-up is now urgently necessary. Time is now pressing and only ten years remain to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In future, successful and effective support for Indigenous languages will require substantially and measurably enhanced involvement of Indigenous peoples themselves through their own governance structures and representative bodies. This approach will mean duly respecting ethical standards** **and integrating the values of Indigenous peoples into the global response (EMPOWERMENT).**

**Goal (IV)** By a target date of 2030, to have constructed robust support and adequate institutional structures possessing an explicit mandate, especially at regional level, to build human capacity, develop appropriate language resources and tools, including mechanisms for collection and storage of evidence based data, with the aim of formulating and implementing effective language policies as well as, in parallel, of strengthening organizations and community centers which meet the specific needs of Indigenous languages and their users around the world.

**Recommendations :**

4.1. Member States and relevant stakeholders should ***jointly*** ***develop a coordinated strategy in their respective domains for the*** ***revitalization,* *reclamation and maintenance of distinct languages through various institutions,*** including commissions,research and language technology institutes, libraries,media, information and memory organizations, with a general mandate first to collect, archive and preserve languages and resources; and secondly to support indigenous cultural industries, traditional workshops and festivals, and as well as traditional indigenous sports and leisure activities.

4.2. In pursuit of the above goal, Member States and relevant stakeholders should in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and other language communities should ***develop and deploy most up to date tools and standards, adapted to specific Indigenous language requirements and local conditions***. Within this framework information, memory, library organizations and museums are essential conduits for preserving, protecting, displaying and sharing Indigenous language resources.

4.3. Member States, Indigenous peoples and relevant stakeholders working together should ***encourage******development and sharing of standards, of******good practices, optimal technical tools and languages resources*** - always respecting legal and ethical standards and, when possible, using open, inclusive and free formats developed and deployed through project cooperation, visits, academic exchanges or in other ways.

**4.4. Indigenous peoples themselves through their own governance structures and representative bodies** should take the initiative in strengthening their organizational structures and build the necessary capacity to address the needs of Indigenous language users.

**Suggested actions:**

1. ***Support Indigenous peoples’ initiatives and help******build up relevant institutional capacities,*** which enhance and nourish Indigenous languages, ethically and practically, in such fields as education, arts, sports, culture, sciences, communication and information, employment, health care and social inclusion encompassing indigenous youth, young girls and women, elderly people and persons with disabilities.
2. ***Carry out*** ***comprehensive research on the revitalization of Indigenous peoples’ languages*** (a topic that has traditionally been marginalized in linguistic studies, which usually confine themselves to examining preservation issues); providing funds for studies, especially those led by Indigenous scholars, on methodologies and approaches to Indigenous language revitalization, as well as analyzing the relationship between language revitalization and progress in other social, environmental and cultural spheres.
3. Assist Indigenous communities themselves to take a proactive part in promoting revitalization of their languages by giving them better and more direct ***access to relevant resources and knowledge, in the shape of such technologies*** as speech synthesis and computer-assisted language learning tools which facilitate people’s continuing exposure to language sounds and to accurate pronunciation and articulation of the language.
4. Encourage further ethical ***collaboration while carrying out research activities on an equal basis between academia and Indigenous peoples*** -seeking free, prior, and informed consent from the communities concerned - as well as assuring them adequate access to the scientific results.
5. Establish tailored ***training-of-trainers programmes for teachers***able to promote sustainable development of Indigenous languages, working through public or private institutions or civil society initiatives. A particular need will be to train and supply a sufficient number of interpreters, translators and other professionals equipped with the appropriate range of socio-cultural as well as linguistic skills.

**Conclusion V. Digital technologies, in particular language technology, content development and dissemination, play a growing role in influencing societal development and contributing to the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages in today’s world. In this context, policy and decision makers, language technology developers, media and information providers, and other relevant public and private stakeholders should be alert and sensitive to barriers which impede the availability of new technology, content and services to Indigenous language users. Provisions should take account of consent considerations and should, where possible, encourage the application of solutions whose delivery is based on open standards – in particular advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (PROGRESS).**

Goal (V) All language communities, in particular Indigenous peoples, should have the possibility to benefit from the full range of language technologies which help people to break through the potential barriers of the digital divide, giving them open access to, and production capability in, multilingual knowledge and educational materials, along with benefit of available public services in their own languages.

**Recommendations:**

5.1. Member States, should draw on the best information, know-how and methodology at their disposal when ***formulating and planning how they will implement and evaluate inclusive language policies*** and they should take effective measures to ensure that scientific and technological developments are leveraged for the benefit of users of each language, and that they address the situation of individual national languages and their users, guaranteeing equal rights to be educated, to inherit their traditional culture, and to enjoy the service benefits and convenience of modern technological products, in whose design, development and production they should, so far as possible, be engaged.

5.2. Member States and other relevant stakeholders, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, should ***use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) including Artificial Intelligence (AI) to promote the creative transformation, innovative development and effective dissemination of language*** ***resources*** ***and seek new ways to protect and respect the indigenous inheritance.***

5.3. Building where possible on existing work, ***a set of international standards should be developed and agreed to protect essential language resources***; these must cover (i) technical standards for collection, annotation and documentation and (ii) collaboration procedures in the construction, sharing and application of language resource standards globally. It should be the responsibility of international standards organizations and professional bodies (universities, research institutes, individual experts and other stakeholders) engaged in language protection and preservation, to in the first instance formulate and subsequently to uphold the agreed standards.

5.4. Member States and other stakeholders, in close collaboration with Indigenous peoples, should ***develop advanced tools for the collection and analysis of language data as well as for the transliteration and annotation of multi-modal content collections and cultural exhibitions***. This will allow the development of technologies specifically adapted to the characteristics of Indigenous languages, which in turn will strengthen and underpin the status of these languages; such tools could include speech recognition, synthesis systems and machine translation technology.

**Suggested actions (V):**

1. ***Develop******teaching facilities, techniques and devices specifically for the purpose of supporting Indigenous languages,*** of designing educational curricula and of supplying necessary tools for advanced translation, using Artificial Intelligence and machine learning techniques,
2. ***Integrate and share successful language acquisition and learning techniques as well as intergenerational transmission methodologies****,* including language immersion and bilingual education methods, thereby supporting quality learning environments, the principle of equal and inclusive access for all, and the training of new teachers and of those already in service,
3. ***Provide access to funding sources for the research projects of Indigenous peoples****,* seeking to reconcile potentially competing priorities of academia and Indigenous peoples,
4. ***Establish institutional structures for Indigenous languages monitoring, evaluation and impact****,* led by, and developed in collaboration with, Indigenous peoples,
5. ***Encourage collaboration between industry, the research and development sector and Indigenous peoples****,* focusing on the needs and interests of Indigenous languages, extending and refining current language technologies as well as designing new ones, and developing necessary algorithms, applications and systems to support Indigenous peoples in their own use of the internet and social media networks. The new Artificial Intelligence paradigm should be rolled out within an ethical framework.

**Conclusion VI. Considering that language, as a cross cutting issue, embraces and transcends all spheres of life, it is crucial – in accordance with ethical standards – to guarantee a free and varied flow of information, conveyed in Indigenous languages, across a wide range of disciplines and domains, thereby generating new knowledge, enhancing distribution and ensuring the broadest accessibility of dedicated resources for Indigenous language users (SYNERGY).**

Goal (VI) To ensure that, by the end of the decade, a greater volume of knowledge, produced and published in Indigenous languages, is getting wider appreciation, recognition and utilization as part of the global drive towards realizing and achieving holistic sustainable development.

**Recommendations:**

6.1. Advocate and gain public recognition - since ***language is an important resource for economic, scientific and technological development and political stability*** - that the wellbeing of society as whole is served and enhanced when Indigenous peoples enjoy rights to self-expression in their own indigenous languages, both individually and collectively.

6.2. Establish ***a set of international standards, along with legal and policy provisions, which are conducive to the production, utilization and management of knowledge in Indigenous languages****,* alongside creating institutional means for the collection and analysis of knowledge in Indigenous languages, adopting open, ethical and inclusive operational principles.

6.3. Make it an urgent priority – given that the majority of endangered languages are Indigenous languages – to ***encourage the donor community and other stakeholders towards mobilizing additional financial resources and establishing new funding mechanisms and incentives towards activities and projects******on indigenous languages issues***, which can be crucial to their continuing protection and future revitalization.

6.4. ***Collect data and digitize resources***, especially targeting languages with fewer users - involving such users as participants in research, development and implementation of new projects, covering language technology and other relevant fields.

**Suggested actions (VI):**

1. **Undertake awareness-raising efforts through multi-stakeholder gatherings** to highlight the need for developing knowledge production in Indigenous languages, and to assemble an action plan for that purpose.
2. **Launch a global drive for additional resourcing and partnership mechanisms** such as new funds, partnership programmes and/or an international prize, constituting a collaborative effort that brings together UN entities, governments, Indigenous peoples’ organizations and the donor community, including national development agencies, foundations and broader civil society. This could stimulate the supply of funds for the development and implementation of specific projects and reward excellence and innovation in the field of Indigenous languages.

**Conclusion VII. Any review of the IYIL2019, in terms of evaluating its impact as an international cooperation and awareness-raising mechanism, will also need carefully to assess its potential as a launch-pad for a new longer-term sustainable response designed with specific goals, actions and timelines. This should begin with the proclamation of a Decade of Indigenous Languages, which could commence on 1 January 2022.**

**Goal (VII)** By 2022 to ensure that, there are systematic measures in place to carry forward the progress achieved in IYIL2019, to maintain the momentum of enhanced awareness around the needs of Indigenous language users, and to underline the commitment towards building inclusive, open, pluralistic and diverse societies in which no one is left behind.

**Recommendations:**

7.1. Carry out a ***detailed assessment of the lessons learned and progress achieved*** during the IYIL2019 – set against the desired outcomes of the Action Plan for the Year.

7.2. Initiate – based on that assessment – ***a global consultation process*** for the design and development of the comprehensive Plan of Action for the Decade embracing contributions from the necessary range of stakeholders, in particular users of Indigenous languages themselves.

7.3. Ensure that conclusions of the assessment and the results of the global consultation are fully integrated into a comprehensive ***Global Plan of Action for the coming Decade*** (2022 – 2032).

**Suggested actions (VII):**

1. Analyze available data and ***prepare an evidence-based report*** on the measurable deliverables and outputs delivered in 2019 on the promotion, preservation and protection of the languages of Indigenous peoples and on the associated objectives of building peace and of promoting reconciliation and sustainable development,
2. ***Promote the outcomes*** of the 2019 International Year and inspire the international community to set out concrete future steps towards supporting, providing access to, and promoting Indigenous languages,
3. ***Encourage multi-stakeholder partnerships*** between Indigenous peoples and governments, academia, research, industry and other stakeholders,
4. ***Carry out consultations*** with relevant stakeholders during the preparation period (2020 - 2021) for the decade, utilizing the data thus collected to ***prepare the Global Plan of Action******for the organization of the Decade.***
5. ***Consider setting up a World Conference on Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism to assess progress,*** serving asa mid-term review within the timeline of the Decade.

# Call for immediate action

After having considered all the conclusions, identified the goals, objectives and recommendations for urgent and targeted action, this current Strategic Outcome Document of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, **proposes the proclamation of a** **Decade on Indigenous Languages** (hereinafter referred to as the Decade), on which preparatory work should start immediately, so as to be ready to be implemented in detail on 1 January 2022, the starting date of the decade which will culminate in 2032. In view of the urgency and gravity of the situation in which many Indigenous languages find themselves, as revealed by the intensive work carried out by many stakeholders, including governments, during the IYIL2019, the United Nations General Assembly is now urged to adopt an adequate and timely resolution in its 2019th session to meet the emergency.

The overarching strategic objective underlying the Decade of Indigenous languages is founded on the following factors:

* Although the IYIL2019 was a unique opportunity to stimulate international cooperation and to raise awareness on the critical state of many Indigenous languages, as well as to mobilize institutional partners and rights holders for joint action, many Indigenous peoples still face complex existential challenges in terms of preserving, protecting and revitalizing their languages, many of which continue to disappear with all the inevitable negative consequences for humanity and society. In particular the world is now focusing its attention on meeting the global challenges of addressing climate change, ensuring sustainable development, bridging the digital divide, and empowering those who are most vulnerable and at risk of being left behind (GLOBAL CHALLENGES).
* Convinced that human rights and fundamental freedoms can be more fully realized when Indigenous peoples are free to speak, think, and live in their own languages, and that the impacts of hundreds of years of language suppression or neglect cannot be reversed in one single year, the United Nations General Assembly is requested, as part of a long-term strategy, to proclaim a Decade of Indigenous Languages (HUMAN RIGHTS).
* During the year, a strong and united global call for precisely such a Decade was heard from a huge range of partners - governments, Indigenous peoples, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Members of the Steering Committee established for the organization of the IYIL2019, the Human Rights Council, and the Voluntary Fund on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, along with many other participants in the international and regional consultations conducted throughout the year (MULTISTAKEHOLDERISM).
* A period of a whole Decade, as envisaged, will provide the necessary scope and detailed roadmap for systematic and strategic efforts in all relevant areas. This extra time is calculated to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the many specific actions launched during the IYIL2019, thereby building on valuable insights and successful initiatives, including identifying the need for sustained attention to the formulation of appropriate language policies and legislative agendas, to furthering academic research and data collection, as well as to developing and disseminating appropriate methodologies, programmes and technological solutions such as language technologies using Artificial Intelligence; all contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for the revitalization of Indigenous languages (SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIONS).
* There is an agreement also on the need to reaffirm and indeed strengthen existing standards, frameworks and instruments based on the lessons learnt during the IYIL2019, in support of Indigenous languages and their users, by way of maintaining their distinct status, rights, identity and contributions to humanity and future generations, all of which will require concerted and carefully planned efforts from all stakeholders over the long term (FRAMEWORK).
* The proclamation of the Decade will contribute to the promotion of a paradigm-shift in the way in which languages overall are approached in society, including at the institutional, governmental and international level. Such a shift will transform the status of Indigenous languages from being reserved for the cultural realm into being seen as an integral part of the human rights framework and a crucial factor in building peace, ensuring sustainable development and achieving reconciliation in our societies (THEORY OF CHANGE).
* Adequate attention to Indigenous languages and their users will be a key factor in implementing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* because languages are critical to peoples’ ability to transfer their knowledge to succeeding generations, protect biodiversity and the environment, safeguard their natural and cultural heritage, belief systems, values, and spirituality as well as to take into account the dimension of Indigenous peoples’ connection with their lands, territories, resources, air, ice, oceans and waters, mountains and forests (GLOBAL AGENDA).
* Considering that technological and scientific development already impacts all spheres of life, and can significantly contribute to safeguarding intergenerational transmission, it is essential to provide ample opportunity for the Indigenous peoples themselves to access language technologies, build new services and content, and develop accessible language resources with the benefit of evidence based data and encompassing Indigenous media. (PROGRESS).
* An immediate start is needed to initiate the preparatory process for the Decade and to capture the momentum and knowledge base resulting from the IYIL2019. Detailed analysis of the Year’s outcomes will facilitate constructing the Global Plan for Action, which will be required to secure the commitment of key stakeholders and the necessary funding (ACTION).

# Endnotes

1. **List of the international and regional meetings which contributed to the preparation of the Strategic Outcome Document of the IYIL2019:**

	* The Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Congress on Indigenous Languages, 25-27 September 2019, Cusco, PeruThe African Regional Meeting on the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, 30-31 July 2019, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Fourth Andean Meeting of Peace. The contribution of Indigenous languages from education to peacebuilding. Conclusions and Recommendations. 3-4 July 2019, Quito, Ecuador

	* The North American and Arctic Regional Meeting on the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, 23-26 June 2019, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada on the margins of the International Conference HELISET TŦE SḰÁL – “Let the Languages Live”The International Conference “Role of linguistic diversity in building a global community with shared future: protection, access and promotion of language resources”, 19-21 September 2018, Changsha, The People’s Republic of China

The International Symposium “Realization of international commitments for the empowerment of local languages speakers, communities and nations”, 3-5 July 2018, Asuncion, Paraguay [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. **Key internationally recognized legal instruments:**

**United Nations**

	* The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNGA) Resolution 217A of 10 December 1948],recognizes the rights and freedoms of all people, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other criterion.
	* United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoplesin UNGA Resolution 61/295 of 13 September 2007 and commitments reached in the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UNGA in resolution 69/2 and the System-wide Plan of Action, relevant studies of the Human Rights Council Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the conclusions and recommendations of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its 2016 session (E/2016/43) on the theme “Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (Articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)”.**UNESCO**

	* Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (1960), Article 5 of the normative instrument specifically recognizes “the right of the members of national minorities to carry own educational activities, including … the use or the teaching of their own language”.
	* Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (1976), Article 22 states that “with regard to ethnic minorities, adult education activities should enable them to express themselves freely, educate themselves and their children in their mother tongues, develop their own cultures and learn languages other than their mother tongues”.
	* Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978) Article 9 specifically recognizes that “steps should be taken to make it possible for their children to be taught their mother tongue”.
	* The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994). The document recognizes the importance of sign language as the medium of communication among people with disabilities (Article 21).
	* Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1995). Article 29 calls to respect the educational rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.
	* Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001). The Declaration provides the framework for a range of actions that promote cultural diversity and the preservation of endangered languages.
	* Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) aims at safeguarding intangible heritage such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, for example.
	* Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003).
	* Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).**Other**

	* United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Document E/C.19/2018/8 of 21 February 2018 on the Action Plan for organizing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages
	* UNGA Resolution 71/178 of 19 December 2016, on the rights of Indigenous peoples
	* UNGA Resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,
	* International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989), The affirms the rights of minorities to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong (Article 28).
	* International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990). Articles 1, 7, 18, 16, 22 and 45 aim to ensure the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families to receive education and information services in language they understand.
	* United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992). The Declaration aims to ensure the rights of people belonging to minorities without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion (Article 4).
	* European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992). The Charter aims to protect and promote minority languages and to maintain and develop Europe’s cultural traditions and heritage. It is supervised by the Council of Europe.
	* Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights – Barcelona Declaration (1996).
	* United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). Articles 21 and 30 recognize and support specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.
	* United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2006)
	* Agenda 2063 (2015). Aspiration 5. “An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics”
	* Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Human Rights Council Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) study on the FPIC: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/245/94/PDF/G1824594.pdf?OpenElement> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)