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I. Letter from the Secretary-General

Dear Esteemed Delegates, Honorable Chairs and Distinguished Guests,

My name is Zeynep Kayalacin and it is my great honor to serve as the Secretary General of this year's FLZMUN. I am truly delighted to have the opportunity to lead such an inspiring academic gathering.

I firmly believe that diplomacy is not simply about expressing opinions but also about understanding different perspectives. Throughout this conference, I encourage each of you to embrace these values and step outside your comfort zones.

Whether this is your first MUN experience or one of many, I hope this conference will provide you with an environment where you can grow intellectually, strengthen your leadership skills and create unforgettable memories. Do not be afraid to speak up, defend your ideas and most importantly, learn from one another.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this conference possible. I also wish all delegates an inspiring, productive and enjoyable conference

Eat an apple, revise hard and prepare yourself for the conference.

If you have any prior questions about the conference you can contact me anytime.

Welcome to FLZMUN26.

Secretary General

Zeynep Kayalacin

zeynepkayalacin@gmail.com

II. Letter from the Under-Secretary-General

Distinguished Delegates,

First of all, I would like to give you each my warmest welcome to this year's edition of FLZMUN!

My name is Charlotte Ela Akın Le Villain and I will be serving as the Under-Secretary-General for the UNESCO committee.

Along with my chairboard members, Yiğit and Berra, we have prepared the most helpful and thorough study guide we could create for you. We specifically tried to focus on providing you the most essential information, sources and data. That said, study guides are not always enough to get the most comprehensive understanding of a topic since they do not include country-specific policies and may not cover each point you would like to touch on. Therefore, I would advise you to use this study guide as a primary, but not a sole source in your research. So please be sure to research further before you come to the conference.

We will be using the standard General Assembly (GA) procedure for this committee, and I would advise you to go over the procedure before the conference as well.

I hope that you all enjoy your experience, learn new stuff and improve yourselves. I look forward to seeing the energy and passion each of you will bring to the committee!

If you have any questions prior to the conference, please feel free to reach me via the email address below!

Best regards,

Charlotte Ela Akın Le Villain

Under-Secretary-General of UNESCO

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III. Glossary of Terms

- **Heritage:** features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance

- **Preservation:** the act of keeping something the same or of preventing it from being damaged

- **Revitalisation:** the process of making something grow, develop, or become successful again

- **Assimilation:** the process of becoming a part, or making someone become a part, of a group, country, society, etc.

- **Colonialism:** the belief in and support for the system of one country controlling another

- **Indigenous:** used to refer to the people who originally lived in a place, rather than people who moved there from somewhere else, or to things that relate to these people

IV. Introduction to the Committee: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

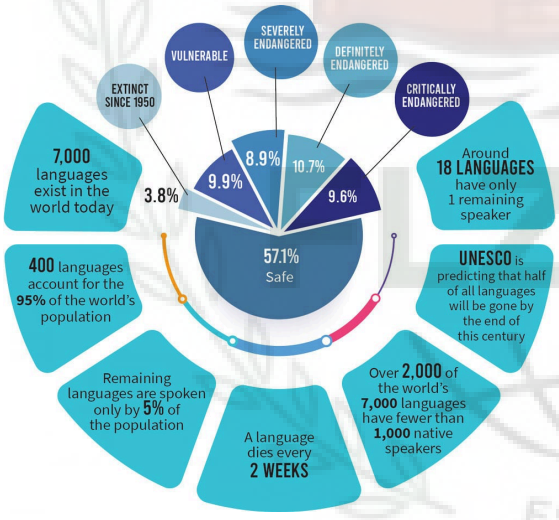


The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established on the 16th of November 1945, just after the end of the Second World War. The Constitution of UNESCO was signed by 37 countries that understood the need for international collaboration in order to avoid future conflicts.

UNESCO came into existence in1946. It is headquartered in Paris, France. Promoting universal respect for justice, the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms without regard to race, gender, language, or religion is the main goal of UNESCO's mandate. UNESCO aims to promote intercultural communication, safeguard cultural and natural heritage, promote universal access to high-quality education, promote scientific cooperation, and guarantee the free exchange of ideas and information through its programs and conventions. The formation of UNESCO rested on the realization that peace could never be guaranteed through political and economic treaties. On the contrary, peace has to be fostered through education, collaboration in science, understanding through culture, as well as the free flow of ideas. During the formative years after the end of WWII, UNESCO dealt largely with repairing war-broken educational infrastructures and promoting literacy and cultural institution-building. Later on, its role widened and came to include the protection of cultural and natural heritage sites, promotion of scientific research and innovation, promotion of freedom of expression and information, and protection and promotion of cultural diversity. From the adoption of the World Heritage Convention in 1972, which instituted the World Heritage List for

the protection of sites of outstanding universal value, to UNESCO's leading role in Education for All, the promotion and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, and the integration of culture and science into the SDGs, the list goes on and on. UNESCO today has 194 Member States and still to be taking up the challenges of digital divide, climate change, threat to cultural heritage, misinformation, and uneven access to education. Its work in multilateral co-operation, dialogue, and sustainable development makes it a suitable diplomatic forum within the United Nations system.

V. Introduction to the Agenda Item: Revitalising and Safeguarding Indigenous Cultures, Languages and Communities Facing Extinction



Indigenous Cultures are one of humanity's greatest treasures. These cultures that have been passed down for hundreds or thousands of years, hold a vast amount of wisdom, traditions and history. Today however, a majority of these cultures are facing extinction and the process has been accelerating at an alarming rate.

Preserving cultures are important both as they may hold the answers to many of our modern challenges and also because everyone deserves the equal opportunity to be able to learn, practice and celebrate their own culture and history. By protecting these communities, languages and

heritages, we not only honour previous generations of humanity, but also promote diversity, individuality and celebrate our differences–strenghtening the structure of our modern day communities.

To ensure that the voices of indigenous people are heard and no knowledge or cultures are left behind, member states must work together to get ahead of and reverse the cultural extinction crisis.

VI. Background Information & Historical Context

A. Colonial Expansion and Forced Assimilation Policies

The destruction of indigenous languages, cultures, and communities is linked to the European colonial expansion, which started in the 15th century. Colonial governments viewed cultural and linguistic differences as a threat to the unity of their empire and they worked on assimilating these people. To achieve this goal, colonial administrations suppressed the languages and culture of the indigenous peoples, adapting them into the imperial system. The colonial governments implemented assimilationist ideologies in residential and boarding schools throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Such policies have led to the destruction of the indigenous American languages and cultures since children were separated from their families and prohibited from speaking their languages or observing their cultural practices. Indian Boarding Schools in Canada existed for about a century and a half and pursued the purpose of eliminating Indian cultural identity through assimilation. Similar institutions in the US were established by the government and churches. In 1909, there were 25 off-reservation boarding schools, 157 on-reservation boarding schools, and 307 day schools. Children were often forced to learn

English as the school language and could be punished for speaking their languages or indigenous names. Education was low quality, and students often received bad grades and outcomes. For instance in 1938, 75 percent of students scored below a third-grade level. Latin American countries had similar boarding schools, where native children were taught to speak Spanish and actively discouraged from using their native languages.

B. Intergenerational Knowledge Loss

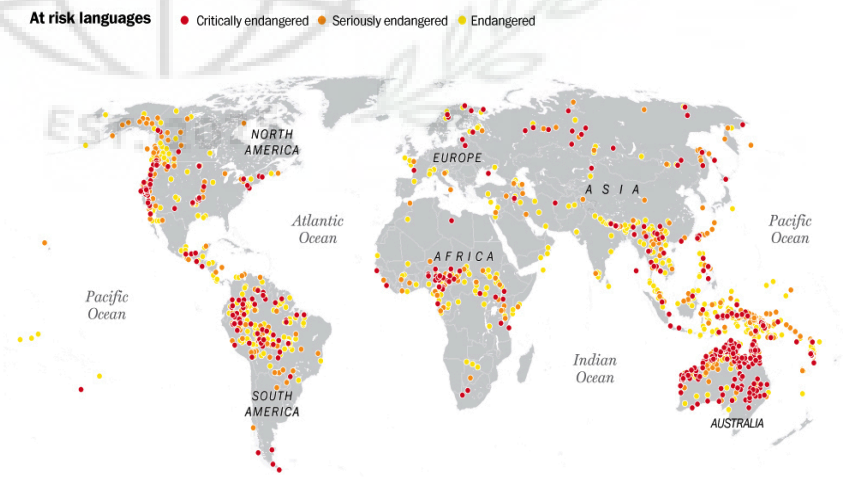
UNESCO has developed criteria that explain how and why indigenous languages become endangered and identify levels of language vitality. According to UNESCO, languages are dying because of increasing intergenerational gaps so younger members of the community do not learn the language. A language is considered safe when it is used and learned by children and is integrated into all aspects of daily life. Another reason is the lack of intergroup transmission, which occurs when the language is only used by certain members of the community. Gradual language shift leads to a situation where younger community members learn the language but do not acquire it fully and do not use it outside the home. Rapid language shift is advanced by external factors such as government policies that suppress the language, discourage its use, or do not recognize it. Such policies severely impact language vitality since learners do not have the language proficiency needed for higher education, and it becomes difficult to integrate the language into places like schools and courts. Finally, endangered languages are only used by the oldest members of the community, and there is little likelihood of transmitting it to future generations.

C. Land Loss and Displacement

Indigenous communities' cultural knowledge, leadership, food systems, governance systems, and oral histories are deeply linked with the land. Traditional lands are not only sources of economic resources but also central to indigenous cultures and identities. The loss of land is, therefore, one of the most devastating and challenging issues that indigenous communities face. The impact of land loss, dispossession, and displacement on indigenous peoples causes lack of the community's food sovereignty, cultural heritage, and spiritual beliefs. The history of indigenous lands is also deeply linked with colonialism and the processes of land expansion and conquest initiated by Europeans in the 15 th century. Colonial governments often disregarded indigenous peoples land tenure systems and relocated native inhabitants to give the land to settlers. The legacy of colonial land alienation persists to date, and indigenous peoples continue to be marginalized. Governments have often failed to address the historical injustice of land dispossession experienced by indigenous peoples. In many cases, the governments have been also ignorant on these issues and accountability is lacking to this day.

VII. Importance of Indigenous Heritage & Cultural Preservation

Cultural heritage is the set of the values, traditions, and the ways of life that societies have developed throughout history. It helps people understand different cultures, encourages



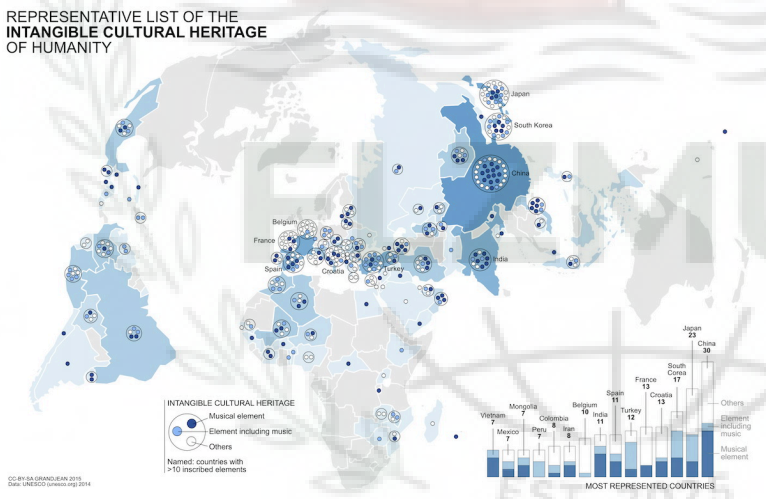
intercultural dialogue, and promotes respect for different ways of life.

Cultural heritage can be divided into the following two categories:

Tangible Heritage: Tangible cultural heritage refers to historical objects, buildings, monuments, and archaeological remains. These items help us learn about the beliefs, social structures, and daily lives of past societies.

Intangible Heritage: Intangible cultural heritage includes languages, proverbs, oral traditions, rituals, music, dance, and traditional knowledge. These cultural elements are passed down from one generation to another and help communities preserve their identities and shared history.

Although physical objects can often be repaired or restored, protecting intangible cultural heritage can be more difficult. For example, bringing back a language that is no longer spoken or reviving a forgotten tradition may take many years, or it could even be impossible. This is because preserving these traditions requires more than simply recording them, they have to be kept practiced and taught to younger generations. Therefore, protecting cultural heritage means preserving historical sites and objects while also supporting living traditions and allowing communities to express their cultures freely. Cultural heritage allows people to stay connected to their past and it plays an important role in protecting cultural diversity around the



world.

Indigenous peoples face many challenges when trying to protect their cultural heritage. Language loss, forced assimilation, colonialism, globalization, and limited access to education respecting their cultures can make it difficult to pass traditions on to younger generations. In the past, some governments introduced assimilation policies that prevented Indigenous communities from speaking their own languages or practicing their traditions. As a result, important cultural knowledge was lost or was no longer passed down within these communities. Today, the growing influence of widely spoken languages and changes in traditional ways of life continue to threaten cultural traditions.

When a language or belief system disappears, the loss goes beyond words or traditions. It can also mean losing historical stories, traditional knowledge, and the unique ways in which a community understands the world. For example, proverbs and oral histories may lose some of their original meaning when translated into other languages. Similarly, if traditional ceremonies are no longer practiced, younger generations may gradually forget their cultural significance. For these reasons, protecting the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples is important not only for preserving their identities but also for maintaining cultural diversity worldwide.

To address these challenges, governments and international organizations should recognize the cultural rights of Indigenous peoples and support their efforts to protect their languages and traditions. Including Indigenous history, languages, and cultures in school curricula can help students understand different communities and reduce prejudice. In addition, Indigenous

communities should be involved in decisions about their own cultural heritage. Their participation helps ensure that preservation projects respect their needs, traditions, and wishes.

VIII. The Current Linguistic and Cultural Extinction Crisis

A. The Growing Threat of Language Extinction

Today, many languages face the threat of extinction. Languages may become endangered either because the population of their speakers dwindles or because those speakers begin using other languages instead. Language loss occurs when a language no longer has any native speakers, rendering it a ‘dead’ or ‘extinct’ language. While a dead language can still be studied through records or written texts, it is nonetheless considered extinct if there are no longer any fluent speakers. Although languages have disappeared throughout history, the current circumstances have significantly accelerated this process.

B. Why Does Language Extinction Occur?

According to the Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages there are two main types of causes of language endangerment:

1. Causes that put the populations that speak the languages in physical danger
2. Causes that prevent or discourage speakers from using a language

The first factor can be considered subcategories such as wars, genocides, famines or epidemics. Examples of this include the languages of the indigenous people of Tasmania who either

perished due to diseases or were killed by European colonizers, as well as many languages in the Americas that have gone extinct or are now endangered following genocidal violence inflicted upon the indigenous populations there.

To illustrate the second point: cultural, political, or economic exclusion creates a strong incentive for individuals to abandon their own language and adopt a more prestigious or practical one; education focused on assimilation or political repression are two of such examples.

Political repression often happens when nation-states limit the opportunities for using minority languages in the public sphere, schools, the media, and elsewhere; sometimes even prohibiting them altogether as they try to promote a single national culture. Sometimes ethnic groups may be forcibly resettled, or children may be removed to be schooled away from home and have the chances of their cultural and linguistic continuity disrupted. This has happened in the case of many Native American and Australian languages as well as several European and Asian minority languages such as Breton, Occitan, or Alsatian and Kurdish.

IX. Cultural Transmission and Continuity

Culture is an essential part of language. Besides its use in daily communication, language also stores rituals, food, heritage, and customary laws left behind from the ancestors of those people. These are all passed down through generations and they are fundamental to a community as they are one of, if not, the most valued part of their culture. Language, culture and identity are all connected together and they cannot be separated. If any part of these three begin to decline, it

most definitely will bring the other two with it. However, the opposite can also be true as, if one part begins to improve it can help the whole community grow.

Previous studies have shown that cultural continuity in indigenous communities depends on the dynamic interconnection of language, tradition, and identity. Preservation is not just about resisting external pressures but about enabling adaptation with integrity, ensuring that heritage remains vibrant and relevant in contemporary contexts.

As mentioned before in the ‘Background Information and Historical Context’ section, there are many risks to the passing on knowledge. In the past, factors such as colonialism and punishments for speaking their native language have caused the indigenous languages to become seen as primitive compared to other widely spoken languages and caused huge losses in intergenerational cultural transmission and continuity. Now globalization, urbanization, poverty and climate change are causing traditional practices to be pushed aside. However, communities and institutions have made great progress in preventing language loss. Projects such as the Achumawi Language Database use digital archives to help with cultural revival.

To ensure cultures remain alive strong policies need to be put in place to ensure active and adaptable systems of governance and education. Such as schools using their native languages and teaching children their indigenous culture on top of modern skills.

X. The Role of Technology in Preservation and Revitalisation

The use of writing to represent speech is not universal, despite various forms of visual communication have always been used by all peoples. A noticeable portion of endangered languages have only developed their writing system recently or have no writing system of their own whatsoever. Linguistic documentation by researchers has produced written documentation of these languages. As a positive result of researchers' efforts, linguistic documentation has increased substantially since the early 1990s. Language endangerment levels have changed as well. New technology and demand from speech communities allows documentation to include such genres of speech as conversation, something that could not be documented at all when the only tools to record it were pen and paper.

Digital Archiving and Internet Access

Digital archiving has become tools to stop knowledge from disappearing between generations and to protect languages. Digital archives can help to collect, store and protect languages when family and community knowledge was lost because of assimilation. To properly build and maintain these digital archives there needs to be training and development in many different jobs. UNESCO has previously given guidelines to train people in media jobs. These include journalists, archivists, librarians, museum workers, translators, language technologists, and the legal system. This leads to indigenous people getting shown and acknowledged. To further understand the current situation, it is useful to examine the already in place archiving initiatives such as the Indigenous Digital Archive (IDA) in South Africa and the Sankofa Digital Archive initiative in Ghana. They all tend to store their oral histories, songs, proverbs, rituals, interviews with community elders, and other cultural artifacts and make them available to all on online

platforms. It is important to note that these kinds of initiatives are impossible without the active help of an institution such as libraries, universities, grassroots non-profits, tribal organizations, global heritage agencies, and tech groups. Finally, the experience on this topic has shown that prioritizing initiatives led by the indigenous community itself and funding infrastructure development and digital literacy training can empower communities to actively participate which will lead to better preservation.

XI. Past UN Actions and Existing Frameworks

A. Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)

UNESCO signed the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage during a meeting held in Paris from September 29 to October 17, 2003. The convention consists of 40 articles and the first article addresses the objective of the convention. The convention primarily aims to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage, ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities groups and individuals concerned, raise awareness at the local national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof, and provide for international cooperation and assistance. Article 2 contains more comprehensive explanations regarding the objectives set out in Article 1. For instance the first paragraph of Article 2 defines what intangible culture is and discusses its impact on communities. The second paragraph provides examples of where we encounter intangible culture. These include performing arts, rituals, festivals and practices concerning nature and the universe.

B. Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954)

The 1954 Hague Convention was established by UNESCO to protect cultural property in the event of conflict with the aim of preventing widespread destruction of cultural heritage caused by war, emphasizing that cultural heritage is of importance to all of humanity.

This convention, consisting of two protocols, created the first comprehensive international framework for the protection of significant cultural assets.The first protocol specifically addresses the protection of cultural property during periods of occupation, prohibiting its export, sale or retention. The second protocol, designed to strengthen the convention, introduces enhanced protection for cultural sites of exceptional importance, defines criminal sanctions for violations and establishes an intergovernmental committee to oversee its implementation.

C. Indigenous Languages Decade (2022-2032)

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the international decade of indigenous languages to draw global attention on the critical situation of many indigenous languages, and to mobilize stakeholders and resources for their preservation, revitalization and promotion. It's one of the most significant outcomes of the 2012 international year of indigenous languages spearheaded by UNESCO.

The Global Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages provides a framework for UN system entities, national governments, indigenous people organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector while offering guidance on the implementation and monitoring of key objections. The global action plan strives to maintain an equitable approach toward all stakeholders aiming to generate a positive impact on indigenous languages and their speakers within society through sustained collaboration. This plan proposes 10 themes focused on expanding the use of indigenous languages across socio-cultural, economic, environmental, political, and legal dimensions.

D. The World Atlas of Languages

UNESCO developed the World Atlas of Languages as an online platform documenting the world's linguistic diversity. It provides information and data about spoken and signed languages. The platform supports research, monitoring and awareness of endangered languages.

E. International Mother Language Day

UNESCO established International Mother Language Day, observed annually on 21 February. The initiative promotes linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. It raises awareness of the importance of preserving and promoting mother tongues.

F. Multilingual Education Initiatives

In 2025, UNESCO published Languages matter; Global Guidance on Multilingual education. The publication provides guidance for governments and education authorities on multilingual education policies. It emphasizes education in languages that learners understand and the importance of mother-tongue-based learning.

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XII. Points a Resolution Should Cover

- How can UNESCO detect languages at risk more efficiently?
- How can the UN raise awareness on the importance of indigenous cultures?
- How can stigma against indigenous cultures be eliminated?
- What tools can be used to reverse the dangers of linguistic extinction?
- By whom would the efforts to safeguard and revitalise indigenous cultures be funded?
- How can UNESCO ensure that revitalisation and safeguarding efforts do not lead to forced assimilation, or the unintentional erasure of traditions through globalisation or dominant culture influences?
- How can UNESCO assist in the transmission of languages to younger or upcoming generations?
- How can UNESCO guarantee that indigenous communities themselves lead and control the revitalisation and safeguarding efforts rather than the process being dictated by external actors?

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