



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织



2018 CHINA

CONCEPT NOTE

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, CHINA

Organizers:

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China

National Commission of the People's Republic of China for
UNESCO

National Language Commission of the People's Republic of China

People's Government of Hunan Province of the People's Republic
of China

Introduction

In today's world, we live in a society that is comprised of differing languages, cultures, ethnicities, skin colors, religions, and social systems, rendering it a mutually inclusive community where the peoples of different countries co-exist. Language is one of the fundamental preconditions to human life, human development and the existence of human society.

Language, as a complex phenomenon, has many entry points for a discussion.

People need language to communicate with one another and pass along from one generation to the next generation knowledge, ideas, beliefs and traditions which are essential for survival, evolution and peaceful coexistence. This means that a systematic form of communication helps people to have proper ways to communicate with others and share their experience. It is also a set of rules for an efficient language acquisition and important for achievement of educational and occupational goals. Moreover, language is one of the essential characteristics of culture enabling people to socialize and form a joint future through shared patterns of behaviors, interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding. Furthermore, language encodes human traditional knowledge built over centuries of development and application; and stored as a repository to further exploitation as well as seen as human ability to modify, adapt and make necessary adjustment to the environment.

Therefore, language is one of the essential contributors to dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance and peace in the world. As importantly, language matters for sustainable development as future cannot be envisioned in the absence of languages.

Languages are diverse as people are different, lived and created those languages in different historical periods, geographical locations, and acted differently. Diversity of languages appears from human ability to express freely and opening own feelings and ideas, imagination and creativity to describe different realities around them, and share in various forms and tools with others. Freedom to express in own language is closely linked to the linguistic diversity and contribute to the realization of individual rights - use own language with other members of their linguistic group, regardless of the status of their language.

Throughout the course of history, language played a vital role in maintaining stability among a group of people, regions and countries. Directives, rules, legislation and policies involving languages have been in effect in many countries, however there were often cases where some languages were being imposed upon people while other languages were neglected, discouraged or even forbidden.

A notion of language being a part of nationhood has evolved during the last decades. The paradigm shift is reflected in the national languages policies and integrated into the international normative instruments which emphasizes linguistic rights in the context of education settings, social inclusion, political participation and economic development. Moreover, the tremendous importance of language in society, in general, gained new momentum with the advent of the Internet. The technological connectivity at a global scale provided new opportunities for sharing and preservation of traditional knowledge and languages resources, facilitated communication among community members and raised new employment and business opportunities.

Yet the world's languages are disappearing at an alarming rate. There is evidence ascertaining that global linguistic diversity has long been in decline. The implications of language loss are

profound at all levels and have an evidently negative effect on societal development and individual empowerment. These knowledge which have been fostered through hundreds of thousands of years will never be retrieved once the languages disappeared.

According to the UNESCO's Atlas of Languages in Danger (2018), 40% of approximately 6,700 languages in the world are endangered. Every two weeks, one of the world's languages disappears, and with it goes part of our human history and cultural heritage. This considerable number of endangered languages not only embodies a threat to the preservation of people's cultural identity and tradition, but also limits equal opportunities to quality education, employment, social inclusion and participation in society and therefore, perpetuates illiteracy, inequality and poverty. Moreover, it is important to point out that the extinction of languages has direct impacts on realization of human rights and sustainable development. Endangerment of languages will lead to the denial of other rights.

Discussing aspects of language diversity and the implications of languages goes beyond linguistic theories, as it has a direct and immediate impact at all levels of society. Linguistic diversity has an important role in building global community with shared future.

Therefore, the issues related to language endangerment, vitality and diversity should be addressed at the international, regional, national and local levels. No matter whether these languages are called minority languages, indigenous languages or lesser-used languages, they require the special attention and concrete actions, including protection, access and promotion, of all stakeholders. This challenge should be approached in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders at various levels – community, national, regional and international.

Rationale for the international conference

A notion of language being a part of nationhood and societal development has evolved during the last decades. This has resulted in the development and endorsement of several international normative instruments by UNESCO and other regional and national organizations.

The core stone for ensuring linguistic diversity around the world is grounded in the Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty".

Few other international normative documents recognize the rights of members of national minorities to carry own educational activities, including the use and the teaching of own language, importance of mother tongue for education of children, sign language as the medium of communication among people with disabilities, as well as promotion of frameworks for a range of actions that promote cultural diversity and the preservation of endangered languages,

and safeguarding intangible heritage such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events. One of the international normative instruments, which explicitly focuses on multilingualism, is the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace adopted by UNESCO General Conference in 2003. This Recommendation recognizes the importance and significance of promoting multilingualism and equitable access to information and knowledge in cyberspace, especially in the public domain. It also encourages UNESCO to take a lead in encouraging an equal access to information for all people, regardless of languages, by multilingualism and cultural diversity on the global information networks.

In response to this Recommendation, UNESCO in cooperation with its Member States, national organizations responsible for language policies, researchers, civil society, and private sector partners, has been implementing a large variety of language-related programmes around the world. These programmes were focused on policy formulation, language tools development, capacity building, promotion of creation of multilingual content on the Internet, efforts to measure linguistic diversity on the Internet, supporting international cooperation and special initiatives.

Currently, UNESCO is in the process of creating a new World Atlas of Languages to provide a more accurate overview of linguistic diversity around the world. The innovative and interactive online platform for language-related information is designed in line with the “Roadmap towards UNESCO’s World Atlas of Languages” (199 EX/4.INF).

In his speech at the UNESCO Headquarters in March 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping points out: “It’s impossible to imagine a world with only one life style, one language, one type of music, and one clothing style.” “Civilizations are multi-colored. The value of human civilizations concerning exchange and mutual learning lies in its very diversity.” In 2015, The Ministry of Education of China and the State Language Commission of China launched the China Language Resources Protection Project, which initiated many programs that centered around the evaluation, protection, showcasing, and development of language resources in China, with special attention to the evaluation and preservation of endangered languages and relevant cultures. This project has drawn heightened attention and wide acclaim from the international society.

In her speech on the International Mother Language Day on February 21, 2018, Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO, said: “A language is far more than a means of communication; it is the very condition of our humanity. Our values, our beliefs and our identity are embedded within it. It is through language that we transmit our experiences, our traditions and our knowledge. The diversity of languages reflects the incontestable wealth of our imaginations and ways of life.” She encouraged member nations of UNESCO to promote language diversity and multi-language use through various educational and cultural activities.

Furthermore, a global attention to language related issues was renewed by the United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution (Ref.: A/RES/71/178) on “Rights of Indigenous Peoples” proclaiming 2019 the Year of Indigenous Languages.

Despite the growing interest briefly described above, it is important to state that the global development agenda and frameworks poorly reflect language issues. The Millennium Development Goals put forth in 2000 failed to address language issues, especially concerning communities of people with disadvantaged backgrounds – speakers of lesser-used languages, persons with disabilities, people in displaced situations and those who live in remote areas. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development already include more issues of marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities issues and women which are well mainstreamed across different Goals. However, there is no specific goal focusing on language aspects. The only point in the SDGs when language is mentioned is Article 19 emphasizing the responsibilities of all States, to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language and other. This demonstrate that language and linguistic diversity are not yet recognized to have an impact for development.

International conference

It is to carry on with and deepen this debate that UNESCO, Ministry of Education, State Language Commission and National Commission to UNESCO of People's Republic of China in collaboration with other partners are planning to organize an International conference in September 2018 in China.

The purpose of the International conference entitled “Role of linguistic diversity in building a global community with shared future: protection, access and promotion to global language resources” is to discuss the broad areas of language-related issues, with special attention to the language protection, access to language resources and promotion of emerging initiatives in Asia-Pacific region as well as to contribute to the organization of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages and further development of UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages.

This event will consist of three thematic discussion areas:

- **Policies and Measures on Language and Cultural Diversity.** Language policy is seen as a powerful political instrument for promoting the peaceful for co-existence of different language speaker communities. International normative instruments can be reinforced and relevant tools designed at national level if comprehensive language policies are formulated, concrete measures are introduced, resources are allocated, and effective language tools and resources are provided and shared by all stakeholders concerned.
- **Standards and Talent Cultivation for Language Resource Protection.** In order to strengthen normative framework at national level, it is essential to build institutional capacities to foster the implementation of language policies, produce self-learning and training tools and training manuals, as well as promote sharing of scientific information and research results of academia at national, regional and international levels.
- **Development, Application, and Promotion of Language Resources.** National capacity goes beyond acquisition of information, including on languages, but also it encourage transformation into knowledge and livelihoods which contribute to the social

and economic development of society. It therefore is important to provide opportunities for dissemination and promotion of language resources using Information and Communication Technologies and involve in this work other stakeholders, such as young researchers, media professionals, representatives of library and memory organizations, students, as well as encourage private sector organizations to provide more language related services, tools and resources.

Major objectives of the international conference

The International conference aims to:

- Review the status and situation of language diversity in the Asia-Pacific and other regions;
- Explore new avenues for language resource protection, support, and promotion in the Asia-Pacific and other regions;
- Share knowledge and good practices as well as discuss the new research methods for protection, support and promotion of languages in Asia-Pacific region, especially in the different regions of China;
- Discover the possible ways for language documentation particular those in danger and lesser-used languages;
- Present latest state-of-the-art technological solutions for language documentation, protection, access and promotion;
- Review and discuss the key terminologies related to language-related issues;
- Discuss the existing practices and national policies related to sign languages;
- Discuss the celebration of the International Year 2019 in Asia-Pacific region (including a decade of Asia-Pacific languages – to be confirmed);
- Contribute to the World Atlas of Languages by providing inputs and building institutional partnerships of the on the development of Chinese Language Atlas.

Expected outcomes

The deliverables of this international conference will be as follows:

1. Outcome summary document. The discussion during the international conference will be summarized into a final summary document which explains the key issues concerning the international protection, access, promotion and revitalization of minority languages all over the world (ISBN document).
2. Reach a consensus on language diversity and language resource protection through Yuelu Proclamation.
3. Provide policy recommendations in Asia-Pacific region.
4. Identify potential events and initiatives which could be linked to the organization of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Language.

5. Launch a network/partnership among Chinese language institutions and universities ready to contribute to the development of the Chinese Linguistic Atlas within the context of UNESCO World Atlas of Languages.

Participants

- 60 international participants
- 60 national participants from Chinese universities



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世界语言资源保护大会概念性文件

语言多样性对于构建人类命运共同体的作用：语言资源保护、应用和推广

时间：

2018年9月19日至9月21日

主办：

联合国教科文组织

中华人民共和国教育部

中华人民共和国联合国教科文组织全国委员会

中华人民共和国国家语言文字工作委员会

中华人民共和国湖南省人民政府

前言

当今世界，人类生活在不同语言、文化、种族、肤色、宗教和不同社会制度所组成的世界里，各国人民形成了你中有我、我中有你的命运共同体。语言是人类生活、发展和人类社会存在的基本前提之一。

作为一种复杂的现象，语言有许多值得讨论的切入点。

人们通过语言与他人沟通，并且通过语言把知识、观念、信仰和传统代代相传，这对于人类生存、进化、和平共处是非常必要的。这意味着系统性交流有助于人们选用最适当的方式与他人沟通并共享已有经验。有效的语言习得规则对于人们实现教育目标和职业目标来说是非常重要的。同时，语言还是文化的基本特征之一，它有助于人们通过共享的行为模式、活动方式、认知结构和理解方式来构建共同的未来。此外，语言传承了人类世代相传并使用的传统知识经验，语言还是一个内容丰富的知识库并可用于进一步开发，它也反映了人类改造、适应并改造自然环境的能力。

因此，语言对于全球范围内的对话、和解、包容与和平具有重要贡献。同时，语言对于可持续发展也至关重要，我们无法想象一个语言匮乏的未来。

人与人之间各有不同，因此，人类语言也是丰富多样的。不同的人在不同的历史时期、地理环境、生活模式下创造了不同的语言。语言的多样性源于人类能自由地表达自己的情

感、思想、想象力和创造力，以此为工具来描述周围不同的现实世界，并与他人分享。用自己的语言来表达的自由与语言多样性密切相关，有助于实现个人权利；无论其使用的语言的地位如何，人们都能与自己所在的语言社区的其他成员共同使用自己的语言。

纵观历史，语言在维护一个民族、地区和国家的稳定方面都发挥了至关重要的作用。许多国家颁布实施了关于语言的指令、规则、法律和政策等。然而，人们常常会被强加接受某些语言，而另一些语言则被忽视、压制甚至被禁止。

在过去的几十年里，“语言是国家独立不可或缺的组成部分”的理念已逐渐兴起。这一理念体现在许多国家的语言政策中，并纳入了主张语言权利的国际准则性文件里，它们强调要在教育背景、社会生活、政治活动以及经济发展中的拥有平等的语言使用权利。此外，随着互联网的出现，语言在社会中的重要性得到了新的发展。全球范围内的技术连通常为分享保存传统知识和语言资源提供了新的机会，它促进了社区成员之间的交流，并增加了新的就业机会和商机。

然而，世界语言资源正在以惊人的速度消失。有证据表明，长期以来，全球语言多样性一直呈下降趋势。语言多样性的磨损对各个方面产生了深刻的负面影响，尤其对社会发展和个人权利保障方面更为明显。一种语言一旦消失，由它繁衍并承载的数千年的文明与智慧也将随之消失。

根据联合国教科文组织的《濒危语言地图（2018）》，在世界现存的约 6700 种语言中，有 40% 的语言濒临灭绝，数量可观，随之逝去的是人类历史和我们的文化遗产的一部分。语言濒危不但对人类传统文化的认同与保护产生了威胁，同时也限制了这些语言的使用者在获得高质量教育、就业机会、社会融入感和社会参与度等方面的均等机会，从而导致在这些族群里持续出现永久文盲、不公平和贫穷困顿等现象。此外，必须着重指出，语言消亡直接影响到人权实现和人类社会可持续发展，语言濒危也会导致该族群其他权利的丧失。

对语言多样性和语言所赋有的深远意义的探讨，其价值远远超越了丰富完善语言学理论本身，因为它对社会各个层面都有直接和立竿见影的影响。语言多样性对于构建人类命运共同体发挥着重要作用。

鉴于此，与语言濒危、语言生命力、语言多样性相关的讨论在国际社会、地区、国家和地方各个层面都应有所呈现，无论这些语言是被称为“少数民族语言”“土著语言”“濒危语言”，它们都应获得特别关注并付诸于具体行动，包括语言资源的保护、应用和推广。这是我们当前面临的机遇和挑战，应与来自社区、国家、地方直到国际社会各个层面的所有利益相关者合作。

本届国际会议已有基础

在过去的几十年里，“语言是国家独立不可或缺的组成部分”的理念已逐渐兴起，这促使联合国教科文组织建立并签发了若干国际准则性文件，一些国家、地区和国际组织也纷纷响应，出台有关政策。

在世界范围内推广语言多样性理念的主要依据可参看《世界人权宣言》第二条：“无论种族、肤色、性别、语言、宗教、政治和其他见解、国籍、社会出身、财产、出生或其他身份如何，人人皆平等享受本宣言所赋予一切权利和自由；且无论个人所属的国家或领土的政治、管辖或国际状况（包括独立、受托管、非自治或其他任何主权利限制）如何，都不应区别对待。”

当前，只有少数的国际准则性文件明确了本国（或地区）少数民族用本族语言进行自我教育的权利，包括使用和教授本族语言、使用母语教育对儿童的重要性、使用手语作为残障人士的沟通媒介，以及一系列倡导文化多样性、濒危语言保护、促进非物质文化遗产保护的行动，例如口传文化、表演艺术、社会实践、宗教民俗和节庆活动等。在上述致力于维护语言多样性的国际准则性文件中，其中之一就是《关于推广和使用多语言以及普及互联网的建议》，它于 2003 年在联合国教科文组织大会上通过。这个文件明确了促进语言多样化的重要意义，以及公平地获得网络信息和知识，尤其是在公众领域获得信息和知识的重要性。此外，它还鼓励联

联合国教科文组织带头提倡全球信息网络中的语言文化多样性，这能让各种语言的人们都能通过互联网平等地获得信息和知识。

为响应这项建议，联合国教科文组织与其成员国、负责语言政策的国家机构、研究人员、民间机构和私人合作伙伴进行合作，在世界各地广泛实施了与语言相关的各类项目。这些项目侧重于语言政策制定、语言工具开发、语言能力建设、促进互联网上的多语种建设、测评互联网的语言多样性、支持与此相关的国际合作和特别倡议。

目前，联合国教科文组织正在创建一个新的语言世界地图，以便更准确地概览世界语言多样性。这一语言在线信息创新和互动平台是根据“联合国教科文组织世界语言地图路线图”设计的。

2014年3月，中国国家主席习近平在联合国教科文组织总部发表演讲时强调：“如果只有一种生活方式，只有一种语言，只有一种音乐，只有一种服饰，那是不可想象的。”“文明是多彩的，人类文明因多样才有交流互鉴的价值。”2015年，中国教育部、国家语委启动中国语言资源保护工程，在全国范围内开展语言资源调查、保存、展示和开发利用为核心的各项工作，特别关注对濒危语言及其文化的调查保护。这项工程受到了国际社会的高度关注，得到社会各界的热烈响应。

2018年2月21日，联合国教科文组织总干事奥德蕾·阿祖莱在国际母语日的致辞提到：“语言不仅仅是一种交流工具，语言是人类的基本条件。在语言中，积淀着我们的价值观、信仰及身份认同；通过语言，传递着我们的经验、传统与知识。语言的多样性反映了我们丰富多彩的想象力和生活方式”，并邀请各会员国通过开展各种教育与文化活动，弘扬语言多样性与多语言使用。

此外，联合国大会在其关于“土著人民权利”的决议中宣布2019年为“土著语言年”，在世界范围内重申对语言问题的关注。

尽管语言问题获得了上述所谈及的种种关注，但必须指出，目前关乎全球发展的各类议程或框架文件却极少涉及语言问题。2000年提出的“千年发展目标”未涉及语言问题，特别是谈到处境不佳的人群，如使用濒危语言的人、残疾人、流离失所者和生活在偏远地区的人们时，未涉及其语言问题。

《2030年可持续发展议程》虽已囊括了更多关于边缘群体的问题，如残障人士问题和妇女问题等，目前，这些问题在不同的领域已成为主流问题。然而，这份议程对于语言问题却依然没有设定具体的目标。该议程中唯一提及语言之处是第十九条，内容是强调所有国家在保护、促进人权和基本自由方面的责任，无论种族、肤色、性别、语言和其他任何方面差别如何，人人平等。这些情况表明，人们还没有充分认识

到语言和语言多样性对人类发展的影响。

国际会议的主题

联合国教科文组织和中华人民共和国教育部、国家语委、联合国教科文组织全国委员会以及其他合作成员拟于 2018 年 9 月在中国举办国际会议，该计划正在推进中，同时讨论日渐深入。

本次国际会议名称为“语言多样性对于构建人类命运共同体的作用：语言资源保护、应用和推广”，旨在广泛讨论与语言相关的各个领域，特别关注语言资源保护和使用，语言资源在亚太地区的推广及其新动向。同时，本会议的召开也将有助于“2019 国际土著语言年”的工作筹备和进一步开发联合国教科文组织的世界语言地图项目。

本次会议拟设三个主题：

一、语言文化多样性政策与措施

语言政策是一种为不同语言使用者在同一社区内和平共处提供政策性保障的重要工具。如果能制订出科学有效的语言政策、推出具体措施、合理分配资源，与所有利益相关者分享有效的语言工具和资源，就能使强化语言政策的国际化标准的权威，并能在国家层面以研制出利于语言多样性的措施。

二、语言资源保护规范标准与人才建设

为了加强国家层面的规范性框架，必须建立有效制度促进语言政策的执行，研制语言自学和语言培训的工具，编写培训手册，促进国家、区域和国际各层面的科技信息交流和学术研究成果共享。

三、语言资源开发应用与推广

国家能力不仅包括获取语言在内的信息采集能力，它还鼓励将信息转化为推动社会和经济发展的知识和生产力。因此，通过信息技术和通讯技术传播和推广语言资源是非常重要的，此外还应让其他的利益相关者参与进来，如青年学者、媒体专业人士、图书馆和其他相关单位的代表、学生等，都可参与到语言资源的保护、使用和推广当中。同时，也应鼓励私营机构提供更多的语言服务、语言工具以及语言资源。

国际会议的主要目标

本次会议旨在：

- 1、了解亚太及其他地区语言多样性的现状与形势；
- 2、为亚太及其他地区语言资源保护、扶持和推广寻求新途径；
- 3、交流知识并分享有益的实践经验，讨论在亚太地区尤其是在中国保护、扶持、推广语言资源的新方法和新理念；
- 4、探索语言资源记录保存的可行性方法，尤其是那些趋于濒危或者消亡的语言；

- 5、将最新的、最先进的科技方法用于语言资源记录、保护、使用和推广；
- 6、根据当下语言热点问题，讨论并定义语言资源的关键术语；
- 7、讨论手语的现状和有关的语言政策；
- 8、讨论在亚太地区实施“2019 国际土著语言年”的方案（含“亚太地区语言十年”）；
- 9、在中国语言地图实施进展的基础上，讨论如何开展机构合作来推广世界语言地图。

预期成果

本次会议的预期成果如下：

- 1、具有总结性的文件。本次会议期间的系列研讨将会被概括为一份具有总结性的文件，其中将形成对全球少数民族语言（濒危语言）的保护、使用、推广、复兴等关键性问题的共识；（此为拥有国际标准书号的文件）
- 2、通过“岳麓宣言”，就语言多样性和语言资源保护等观念上达成国际共识。
- 3、为亚太地区的语言资源问题提供政策和建议；
- 4、探索“2019 国际土著语言年”组织筹划的有关活动与举措；
- 5、在中国的语言研究机构 and 高校中建立专家工作网或

合作伙伴关系，鼓励其参与或推进联合国教科文组织“世界语言地图”下“中国语言地图”版块的建设发展。

参与者

60 名国际代表

60 名中国代表