



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
**Indigenous Languages**



GOBIERNO DE  
**MÉXICO**

**CULTURA**  
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

## HIGH-LEVEL EVENT

# “Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages”

## CONCEPT NOTE



**ORGANIZED BY**

UNESCO and the Government of Mexico, Ministry of Culture

27 – 28 February 2020

Los Pinos, Cultural Complex

Mexico City, Mexico

**ON THE MARGINS OF**

the International Congress on Endangered Languages

organized by the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI)

25 – 26 February 2020

Los Pinos, Cultural Complex

Mexico City, Mexico



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
**Indigenous Languages**

## ONLINE REGISTRATION

All participants of the high-level meeting are requested to register online using the following online registration [form](#).

## CONFERENCE WEBSITE

<https://en.iyil2019.org>

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Join the IYIL2019 “**#IndigenousLanguages**” campaign  
**#WeAreIndigenous**

Twitter :

**@IYIL2019**

Follow on Facebook:

[@indigenousslanguages](#)

**@IYIL2019**

Instagram:

**@indigenousslanguages**

Official website:

<https://en.iyil2019.org/>

<https://fr.iyil2019.org/>

<https://es.iyil2019.org/>

High-level event on UNESCO website:

[High-level event](#) (English)

[High-level event](#) (French)

[High-level event](#) (Spanish)

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# BACKGROUND

Languages, with their complex implications for identity, cultural diversity, spirituality, communication, social and political integration, education and development, are of crucial importance for people and the planet. People not only embed in languages their history, traditions, memory, indigenous knowledge, unique modes of thinking, meaning and expression, but they also construct their future through them.

Language is a core component of human rights and fundamental freedoms and is essential to realizing sustainable development, cultural diversity, community well-being and good governance, peace and reconciliation. A person's freedom to use his or her chosen language is a prerequisite to freedom of thought, freedom of opinion and expression, access to education and information, cultural expression, access to employment and other values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also a mean for peoples to continue being peoples. Indigenous peoples' right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit their languages to future generations is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Despite their immense value, languages around the world continue to disappear at alarming rates. This is a cause for serious concern. According to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, no less than 40 per cent of the estimated 6,700 languages spoken as of 2016 were in danger of disappearing.<sup>1</sup> Many of these are indigenous languages<sup>2,3</sup>. Because many speakers of indigenous languages also use one or more other languages, there is a heightened risk that indigenous languages will be lost if other languages are more accessible as a mean to communicate across and between cultures.

# INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA), by its Resolution of 19 December 2016 (Ref.: 71/178), proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of the Indigenous Languages, in order to draw attention to the serious loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote them. It also aimed to raise awareness about the need to adopt urgent measures to protect and promote indigenous languages and provide support to the speakers and learners of these languages at the national and international levels.

For the implementation of the UN General Assembly Resolution above-mentioned, the Action Plan for Organizing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages (Re.: E/C.19/2018/8) was elaborated by UNESCO, UNDESA and a range of stakeholders which laid down the foundation for implementing the resolution and constituted a road map towards its strategic objectives.

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- 1 Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Document entitled "Indigenous languages". Available at [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/2016/Docs-updates/backgroundunderL2.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/2016/Docs-updates/backgroundunderL2.pdf).
  - 2 Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, "International expert group meeting on the theme Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization: articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – 19 to 21 January 2016, New York", concept note. Available at [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/2016/egm/](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/2016/egm/).
  - 3 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Global Monitoring Report 2016: Education for People and Planet – Creating Sustainable Futures for All (Paris, 2016), available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245752e.pdf>.

The 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL2019) constituted a unique opportunity to support indigenous languages users to continue using their languages and transmit to the next generation. In addition, it was to stimulate a constructive dialogue, knowledge sharing and formulation of new socio-cultural, economic and strategic policy frameworks, concrete community and research projects and development of new tools and services to further recognition and importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism. Such activity and the importance of respecting and recognizing indigenous languages as a strategic resource for social, economic and political development, for peaceful coexistence and for reconciliation in our societies must be further realized.

Throughout 2019, a series of international and regional consultations were organized to identify recommendations for future actions and key conclusions on development, human rights, strategies, empowerment, progress, synergy and sustainability were integrated into the Strategic Outcome Document of the IYIL2019 (UNESCO General Conference C40/68), as a product of a collaborative effort involving representatives of Member States and government organizations, indigenous peoples from around the world, experts, researchers, UN-system entities and other partners.

The IYIL2019 represents a historic opportunity to reflect collectively on what we are doing as a humanity that is leading us to the loss of this great wealth that linguistic diversity means; wealth in terms of knowledge, cultural practices and ways of seeing and naming the world, particularly relevant in the context of the current global social and environmental crisis, by constituting the perfect antidote to the risks of unique thinking.

## **TOWARDS THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

The IYIL2019 culminated into a proclamation of an International Decade on Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 2019 based on the recommendation provided by its Third Committee (Ref.: A/74/396 paras 24, 25 and 26; and A/C.3/74/L.19/Rev.1;). An immediate start is needed to initiate the preparatory process for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> January in 2022.

## **MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF THE HIGH-LEVEL EVENT**

Building on the legacy of the IYIL2019 and as follow up to a decision on United Nations General Assembly (Ref.: A/C.3/74/L.19/Rev.1), UNESCO and the Government of Mexico, in cooperation with a range of national, regional and international partners, are organizing a High-level event “Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages” from 27 to 28 February 2020, on the margins of the International Congress on Endangered Languages from 25 to 26 February 2020 in Mexico City, Mexico.

The High-level event will capture the momentum and knowledge based resulting from the IYIL2019. Detailed analysis of the Year’s outcomes will provide a solid basis for the prioritization, identification of future strategies and working modalities, securing the commitment of key stakeholders and necessary assured



**LOS PINOS CULTURAL COMPLEX**, formerly *Official Residence of Los Pinos*.

funding. These parameters could serve for the development of the future Global Action Plan (2022-2032). The High-level event will conclude the IYIL2019 with a comprehensive review of the outcomes, lessons learnt on the impact and provide concrete recommendations for the preparatory and transitional process of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

While constituting a meeting space to gather the diverse experiences and results generated by all the stakeholders involved throughout this International Year, the High-level event will generate a Los Pinos Declaration (Outcome Document) that presents the milestones of the elaboration of the future Global Action Plan for the International Decade of the Indigenous Languages 2022-2032 (GAP4IDIL).

## OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

The High-level event aims to contribute to the:

- **Assessment** of the implementation of the Action Plan for Organizing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages ([E/C.19/2018/8](#)), in particular to the established roadmap towards achieving strategic objectives and expected impacts based on the Strategic Outcome Document (UNESCO General Conference 40 C/68);
- **Exchange of views** on the necessary milestones during a transitional period of 2020 to 2021 and elaboration of a new Global Action Plan, as well organizational structures, thematic priorities, financial mechanisms and other components which would be crucial for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032);
- **Setting a future direction** for the elaboration of first lines of action of future Global Action Plan for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2023-2032).

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the High-level event in Mexico City are to:

- Bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, including representatives of the national governments, indigenous peoples, indigenous organizations, scholars and experts in the field of indigenous languages, and others for a **constructive dialogue** on indigenous languages to assess the impact made towards supporting and promoting indigenous languages worldwide within the context of the IYIL2019 and the upcoming decade; a special attention will be paid to the identification of the common factors that cause endangerment to indigenous languages.
- Reflect on the existing **challenges**, identify practical **solutions** and good practices, and **opportunities** among different stakeholders, working in the field of human rights, language transmission, documentation, safeguarding, policy development, education, research, promotion as well as development of language technology solutions, for the elaboration of the future Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages; and,
- Raise **awareness** on the importance of indigenous languages, linguistic diversity and multilingualism for sustainable development and provide guidance to the stakeholders in the implementation of international, regional and national commitments and standards related to language development and mainstreaming across all promoting oral transmission of indigenous languages.
- Present key **features of linguistic diversity in Mexico** as a part of the development of UNESCO World Atlas of Languages.

## MAJOR OUTCOMES

The expected Outcomes of the High-level event in Mexico City are to:

- Elaborate a **Los Pinos Declaration - Outcome Document**, including concrete recommendations for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages;
- **Identify main milestones of future actions** for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages;
- Provide an opportunity to forge new **partnerships and networks** among various stakeholders to further strengthen the exchange of best practices, information sharing and collaboration.

## FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The High-level event will be held on the margins of the International Congress on Endangered Languages organized by the Ministry of Culture of the Government of Mexico. The agenda of the High-level event will consist of plenary sessions, group discussions and Outcome Document Drafting Group sessions. The Drafting group will be established to prepare the Outcome Document.

This event will propose two days of analysis, discussions and elaboration of concrete proposals around the global perspectives and challenges facing the revitalization and safeguarding of indigenous languages worldwide, through plenary and high-level segments, thematic panels as well as a cultural and artistic program, which includes an exhibition space and artistic and cultural presentations, among others.

The High-level event will be focused on two overarching themes:

- **ASSESSMENT** - the assessment of progress made in following five key areas presented in the Action Plan of the IYIL2019 and recommendations elaboration by the Strategic Outcome Document;
- **FUTURE DIRECTIONS** - the elaboration of future Global Action Plan for the organization of the International Decade on Indigenous Languages.

The working languages of the high-level event are English and Spanish.

## PARTICIPANTS

The high-level event foresees an attendance of national, regional and international participants who represent their national governments, Indigenous leaders and elders, Indigenous peoples' organizations, civil society, members of non-governmental organizations, academics and researchers, international cooperation organizations and youth from different regions.

# PROGRAMME

High-level event “Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages”

TIME	DAY ONE - 27 February 2020
7.00 – 7.30	Registration of participants
7.30 – 11.30	<b>Opening session of the High-level event</b>
11.30 – 12.00	Break
12.00 – 12.15	<b>Keynote speech</b>
12.15 – 13.15	<b>Plenary session no 1:</b> <i>Achievements and lessons learnt from the IYIL2019 (global)</i>
13.15 – 14.45	Break
14.45 – 16.15	<b>Plenary session no 2:</b> <i>Achievements and lessons learnt from the IYIL2019 (regional/research)</i>
16.15 – 16.30	Break
16.30 – 18.00	<b>Plenary session no 3:</b> <i>Achievements and lessons learnt from the IYIL2019 (regional/thematic)</i>
18.00 – 19.00	Thematic presentation
20.00 – 22.00	Evening event

TIME	DAY TWO – 28 February 2020
8.30 – 9.30	Registration of participants
9.30 – 10.00	<b>Keynote speech</b>
10.00 – 11.30	<b>Parallel sessions</b> (regional, thematic and stakeholder approach)
11.30 – 12.00	Break
12.00 – 13.00	<b>Parallel sessions</b> (regional, thematic and stakeholder approach)
13.00 – 14.30	Break
14.30 – 15.45	<b>Parallel sessions</b> (regional, thematic and financial mechanism approach)
15.45 – 16.00	Break
16.00 – 17.30	<b>Plenary session 4:</b> Presentations from the parallel sessions
17.30 – 18.00	<b>Plenary session 5:</b> Presentation of the Los Pinos Declaration - Outcome document
18.00 – 19.00	Closing session



Photos: UNESCO

