

CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE

Suzhou, China. 6 June 2014

The International Conference on Language was held on 5-6 June 2014 in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, People's Republic of China. The participants acknowledge the generous contribution of the People's Republic of China in hosting this conference, in partnership with UNESCO. Focusing on the enhancement of language ability for human civilization and social progress, participants deliberated on language ability and sustainable social development, innovation in language education and international exchanges, and reached the following conclusions.

I. Language Ability and Sustainable Social Development

Language is the carrier of human civilization and the key to mutual understanding. It is also a bond cementing exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. As a major historical force, language is critical to the fulfilment of individual potential, as well as the attainment of internationally agreed *development goals beyond 2015*. *Language ability* is essential to cultural vitality, cognitive development, social progress and economic prosperity.

Measures to improve ability in a variety of languages for all citizens will also help meet the needs of an *emerging global society*. Language ability should include the mother tongue, national and regional languages, and languages of world-wide communication, among others.

II. Innovation in Language Education

Innovations in language education, grounded in research, are needed to enhance language ability. Areas for exploration include the brain mechanism of language, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), effective pedagogies, and the use of mother tongue based multilingual education.

As instruction in the learner's *mother tongue* is fundamental to improving educational outcomes and fostering identity, mother tongue-based education needs to continue at least through primary education. *Families and communities* play a crucial role in fostering mother tongue learning. The sign language and braille should be respected and used in education. The efforts of *ethnic and indigenous* populations to transmit their languages across generations are crucial for a more just and productive world. *Teacher education* is a vital investment to enhance language ability.

III. International Exchange and Cooperation

Promoting exchange and learning among peoples, institutions and nations is an important means of enhancing language abilities, and the enhancement of language ability will greatly facilitate the exchange and learning among peoples, institutions and nations. *Cyberspace* should reflect the linguistic diversity of the world, and all language communities should benefit from the potential of ICT.

Language policies and practices responding to the needs of national, indigenous and immigrant communities can enhance effective communication for peaceful co-existence in global society.