



AIIC declaration on the preservation of world linguistic heritage

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"When you lose a language, you lose a culture, intellectual wealth, a work of art. It's like dropping a bomb on a museum, the Louvre."

Language is the living expression of human culture and the various languages of our planet give voice to the diversity of human experience. Much as genetic diversity is now considered a common good to be safeguarded, linguistic diversity must be considered a world heritage meriting preservation.

To circumscribe the languages in which we communicate is to impoverish our common heritage of human wisdom and to deprive humankind of the fruits born from a cross-pollination of ways of thinking, feeling, and approaching existence. Any "cost accounting" in relation to languages must take into account the often intangible, but nonetheless very real benefits inherent in cultural diversity, cross-cultural communication and the human language bank.

The use of multiple languages in international discourse is not an impediment to communication, but an essential part of it. It is precisely to promote understanding that our world linguistic heritage must be promoted and preserved.

1) Comment by the late Kenneth Hale cited in The Economist (November 3, 2001). Mr. Hale was Professor of Linguistics at MIT and the author of "The Green Book of Language Revitalisation."



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