**Opening Remarks: Report on IDIL for Ana Luiza Massot Thompson-Flores**

 **Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva**

**For Item 7 of the 17th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Excellencies, Dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

* Indigenous Languages represent not only a form of communication but a worldview, carrying traditional knowledge, stories, and unique ways of understanding the world. These languages constitute the fabric of knowledge systems crucial for survival. Despite Indigenous peoples making up less than 6% of the global population, they speak more than 4,000 of the world's approximately 6,700 languages. An urgent need exists to protect, revitalize, and promote Indigenous Languages worldwide.
* For this reason, the period 2022 - 2032 was declared the International Decade for Indigenous Languages. During this time, UN agencies, Member States, and Indigenous Peoples work together towards the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous Languages.
* As we progress through the second year of the Decade, it is essential to review the actions taken so far. These actions result from consistent collaboration among our many partners and stakeholders. Indigenous Languages revitalization is a collective effort, and the progress made demonstrates what can be achieved through joint effort and partnership.

Excellencies,

* A significant milestone for the International Decade for Indigenous Languages is the development of National Action Plans. These plans, adapted from the Global Action Plan, show the commitment of stakeholders in various local contexts to strategize and implement Indigenous language preservation initiatives. As of July 2024, 17 National Action Plans have been completed, with an additional 18 in development. These plans cover various thematic areas, including Education, Biodiversity, Culture, and Digital Empowerment, and come from diverse geographical regions, though increased engagement from Africa, Asia, and the Arab States is desired.
* Alongside the National Action Plans, the recent publication of the Guidance Note on the Development of National Action Plans provides concrete guidelines on localizing the Global Action Plan.
* Additionally, the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages established four Ad-hoc groups. These groups provide forums for expert consultations on various subjects related to the Global Action Plan's implementation. The groups focus on education provision, Indigenous language transmission, policy recognition, and digital equality. The Ad-hoc groups have already had their first official meetings and reported during the Global Task Force meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

* Several events under the International Decade for Indigenous Languages have advocated for preserving and using Indigenous Languages:
* In February 2024, the World Conference on Culture and Arts Education in Abu Dhabi focused on Digital Arts and Cultural Inclusion, highlighting Indigenous knowledge's role in safeguarding cultural and natural heritage.
* In April 2024, a side event on Indigenous Languages and the digital divide was hosted in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO during the 23rd session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).
* In May 2024, a panel discussion on Indigenous Languages and Technology during the World Day for Cultural Diversity shared best practices for inclusivity and diversity in Indigenous Communities.
* Also, an online outreach event engaged UNESCO National Commissions to support their involvement with the Decade, and plans are underway to develop a publication which compiles various best-practices and existing actions taken by National Commissions entitled, “10 recipes to make Indigenous languages an ingredient for sustainable development”.
* We hope these events have provided important platforms for conversation and knowledge-sharing on Indigenous language preservation.

Excellencies,

* Important work has also been done by UNESCO’s Field Offices, who have on the ground access to target certain groups and areas regarding Indigenous Language preservation. UNESCO’s Yaoundé office has produced a questionnaire collecting information on the indigenous languages of Central Africa. Our colleagues in the Kathmandu Office organised a consultation meeting with Indigenous stakeholders in Nepal as part of their development process of the Nepali National Action Plan. The UNESCO Office in Peru supported the revitalization of Indigenous Languages in the Peruvian Amazon including languages in critical situation of extinction.
* UNESCO has partnered with private organizations to develop language technologies empowering Indigenous Languages in the digital space. This includes collaboration with Meta’s “No Language Left Behind” project, which uses AI to enhance online translation capacities, and the Missing Scripts Programme, promoting more scripts for Indigenous Languages online.
* UNESCO has received the recommendations drafted from the 23rd session of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and notes its call for greater focus on Indigenous media, Indigenous knowledge systems and appropriate education systems for Indigenous children and youth.
* UNESCO is committed to continue initiatives of this nature. For example, the World Heritage Centre and the three Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee were invited by the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH) to participate in the international expert workshop on recognizing and respecting Indigenous Peoples’ heritage values in World Heritage sites in January 2024. The main objective of the workshop was to discuss Indigenous Peoples’ concerns about the lack of recognition, respect and protection of Indigenous Peoples’ heritage and values in many World Heritage properties.
* Additionally, important work is being done under the Joint Programme of Work on the links between cultural and biological diversity (JPoW), which is an integral part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted by at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2023. Through a series of dialogues, a draft version of the Joint Programme of Work roadmap will be presented at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, outlining strategic actions to strengthen implementation at global, regional, national and local levels.
* UNESCO is also developing a new Multilingual education guide, set to launch during the Jubilee celebration of International Mother Language Day on February 21, 2025. The guide will address different types of Multilingual Education, including education for refugees and language revitalization.
* In conclusion, significant progress has been made in the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages. However, continued partnership and strategic actions are crucial to achieving the goals set for the International Decade for Indigenous Languages. Thank you