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للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,**

**Director-General of UNESCO,**

**on the occasion of International Mother Language Day**

**21 February 2009**

As the twelve months devoted to celebrating International Year of Languages have come to an end, this year's International Mother Language Day, marked on 21 February 2009, signals the beginning of a new phase for reflection and assessment.

Ten years after the Day was proclaimed by the General Conference of UNESCO on the proposal of Bangladesh, what conclusions can now be drawn?

One point must be made. After laying emphasis on each community's recognition of its own mother tongue, the Day has increasingly drawn the international community's attention to the foundations of linguistic diversity and multilingualism. It has also become clear that languages, which form part of the identity of individuals and peoples, are key to the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals.

A growing number of increasingly diverse stakeholders in governmental organizations and civil society acknowledge that languages are central to all forms of social, economic and cultural life. Links between multilingual education (involving the mother tongue, national languages and international languages), education for all and the Millennium Development Goals now constitute the pillars of any sustainable-development strategy.

We do indeed hope that tangible results conducive to the use of mother languages and to multilingualism will emerge under the impetus of the communication campaign conducted by UNESCO during International Year of Languages 2008, and that these challenges will continue to be the cornerstone of action taken by governments and development agencies.

In addition to the interest aroused by the Year and the hundreds of language promotion projects launched in 2008, the impact of the International Year of Languages will be assessed in the coming months to gauge the importance of languages to development, peace and social cohesion.

Accordingly, on this the tenth International Mother Language Day, I appeal for action to ensure that the many declarations and initiatives announced in 2008 will be followed up by specific sustainable measures.

I hope, in particular, that governments will introduce, in their formal and non-formal education systems and their own administrations, measures designed to secure the harmonious and fruitful coexistence of the languages of each country. We shall thus succeed in preserving and promoting multilingual environments that show due respect for all expressions of cultural diversity.

Koïchiro Matsuura