



Statement delivered by H.E. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh at the High-Level plenary meeting of the General Assembly for global launch of the International Year of Indigenous Languages
01 February 2019, GA Hall

সকলকে শুভেচ্ছা!

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the G77 and China.

Today's event brings us together to share views and best practices as we move along in our efforts for preservation, protection and promotion of languages especially those who are spoken by indigenous peoples and faces the grave risk of extinction. We thank UNESCO for bringing out various activities in observance of the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Bangladesh supports the promotion and protection of the human rights of all its citizens irrespective of race, religion, caste and creed including their right to language and culture. State's responsibility is enshrined in our Constitution to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of ethnic communities.

The spirit of the sacrifice of our sons of the soil to uphold their mother tongue on 21 February 1952 drives us in our unwavering commitment to promoting inalienable right of people across the globe to their mother languages as well as the importance of linguistic and cultural diversities. It was due to Bangladesh's initiative that UNESCO declared 21 February as International Mother language Day.

Language is a vehicle for transmitting culture and knowledge; it is also inextricably linked to sustainable development. Bangladesh in collaboration with Member States, UNESCO and UN Secretariat has been observing 'International Mother Language Day (IMLD)' at the UN. This year we shall also observe the day in a befitting manner.

We are happy to see that this year's IMLD observance is coinciding with this auspicious occasion of observance of "2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages". Both the observances are related to languages and therefore, would complement and contribute to the wider activities planned so far. Languages and cultures are great enablers of promoting

a culture of peace. This year being the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, it is also a great occasion to celebrate our unity of purpose.

Mr. Chair,

Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to build an inclusive society in our strides towards peace and development. We have our own ethnic minorities who form an integral part of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious fabric of our nation. We are working to preserve and promote their identity, languages, culture, land and resources. We have ensured that in our various relevant acts, policies and programmes as well as development planning and endeavours, their rights are protected. For example, we have set up seven specialized cultural institutes including three in the three hill districts that will facilitate promotion and preservation of culture, heritage, languages, and tradition including that of small ethnic communities. We have an 'International Mother Language Institute' which is fostering research and scholarly activities for the preservation of languages. As mentioned by the Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, we have taken steps to introduce primary education in mother tongues of various ethnic groups. Children of five ethnic communities are already receiving text books in their mother tongues. So far 132 schools are providing education in mother tongue. In recognition of these initiatives, our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been awarded the **Cultural Diversity Medal** by UNESCO.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our support for the year-long activities launched here in New York today.

I thank you.
