**Press Release**

**International Mother Language Day observed at the UN**

**New York, 21st February 2022:**

International Mother Language Day (IMLD) 2022 has been celebrated at the UN headquarters today for the 6th consecutive year. The Permanent Missions of Bangladesh, El Salvador, Nigeria, Portugal and Slovakia jointly organized the event in partnership with the UN Secretariat and UNESCO. The President of the General Assembly graced the event. In addition to that, special congratulatory messages were delivered from the Director General of UNESCO and the Mayor of New York City.

For the first time, the IMLD was celebrated with interpretation services in all six official languages of the United Nations, enabling the distinguished speakers deliver their remarks in their mother tongue. The theme song of the IMLD (*amar bhai-er rokte rangano…*) was presented by the students of Asian University for Women in Bangladesh in multiple languages. The event also featured cultural performances from Morocco, El Salvador, Slovakia and Portugal. The UN Secretariat and the Office of the President of General Assembly also shared multi-lingual video messages. The event was live telecast on the UN Web TV.

In her welcome remarks, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN Ambassador Rabab Fatima paid deep homage to the language martyrs for upholding the sanctity of Bangla in 1952, and to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for leading the language movement and the subsequent national movements culminating to our liberation in 1971. She recalled with gratitude the role of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in securing UNESCO’s recognition of 21st February as the international mother language day at the initiative of expatriate Bangladeshis and also in establishing the International Mother language Institute in Dhaka.

Referring to the devastating impact of COVID on education, Ambassador Fatima thanked UNESCO for choosing this year’s theme, *Using technology for multilingual learning: challenges and opportunities*. “Technology can play an instrumental role in advancing multilingual education. We need to mobilize all stakeholders to work together to restore the vitality of all languages, and invest in developing low-cost, user-friendly technologies that can support multilingual learning everywhere,” said the Ambassador.

The Permanent Representative of Costa Rica in his capacity of the Chair of the Group of Friends on Spanish language and Vice-Chair of the NGO Committee on Language and Languages also spoke at the event.

The President of the General Assembly and all the other speakers thanked Bangladesh for its leadership in promoting multilingualism and mother tongues in the UN. They all recognized the potential role technology can play in advancing education in mother languages and in this regard called for bridging the digital divide. Speaking in their respective mother tongues, the speakers highlighted the importance of preservation of languages that are at the verge of extinction.

Earlier in the morning the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh observed the Martyrs Day and the International Mother Language Day with due solemnity in the Mission’s premises with the participation of Mr. Md. Tazul Islam, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development and Secretary Mr. Helal Uddin Ahmed. The Permanent Representative and the mission officials led by the Minister laid floral wreath in the Shaheed Minar established in the mission. The Minister in his remarks thanked Bangladesh mission for organizing the event. Referring to the remarkable and inclusive socio-economic progress achieved by Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he encouraged the mission officials to uphold Bangladesh image and protect its national interest in the international fora.

During the event the messages of the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and State Minister for Foreign Affairs were delivered.

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