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Main line of action 4. Linguistic diversity and multilingual education

Background. Language teaching and particularly multilingual education are a key factor in the development of understanding among peoples and dialogue for peace. Accordingly, during the current biennium, UNESCO has redoubled its activities aimed at promoting linguistic diversity at all levels of education and encouraging the practice of multilingualism. At the same time, it has reinforced its action to protect and enhance the linguistic heritage, especially that of indigenous populations and people belonging to minorities. The LINGUAPAX project has been refocused in such a way as to incorporate these different objectives within a harmonious framework of action.

Strategy. The strategy will consist in supporting action by Member States to formulate and implement language policies designed to: ensure linguistic diversity and multilingual education at all levels of education; strengthen language teaching and its methods; promote the implementation of linguistic rights as an integral part of human rights; protect and revive local and vernacular languages, in particular those which are endangered; promote linguistic diversity within written, audiovisual and electronic communication networks. The activities carried out in this connection – which will benefit from the assistance of the Advisory Committee for Linguistic Pluralism and Multilingual Education – will be designed and implemented in very close coordination with those relating to the protection and promotion of the intangible heritage (Subprogramme III.1.1), encouragement for translation (Programme III.2) and command of the new information and communication technologies (Intersectoral project on the “Ethical and sociocultural challenges of the new information society”).

Results expected at the end of the biennium

- ◆ National capacities to elaborate and implement language policies enhanced through:
 - ◇ expansion and development of the activities within the Linguapax university network on regional and subregional levels, especially with regard to indigenous and endangered languages; setting up of new UNESCO Chairs in the field of linguistics and sociolinguistics;
 - ◇ preparation, translation and distribution of guides for teachers and trainers of trainers, adapted to the linguistic and educational situations prevailing in the school context in Asia and Latin America;
 - ◇ organization of regional seminars (Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa) for the training of teachers specializing in the teaching of mother tongues and foreign languages, in cooperation with the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia and the LINGUAPAX and APLANG university networks;
 - ◇ support provided to African Member States to follow up the recommendations of the Harare Conference in linguistic policies;
- ◆ Encouragement for the introduction of policies for the preservation and revival of local and national languages, following the publication of the UNESCO Report on the World’s Languages, whose content will reflect three lines of approach: description, explanation and measures to promote preservation;
- ◆ Public awareness promoted on the necessity to adopt additional measures to ensure better implementation of linguistic rights through the preparation and dissemination of a “state of the art” concerning existing normative and legislative instruments, both at international and national levels, which deal with linguistic rights;
- ◆ An “International Mother Language Day” launched and to be observed on 21 February.