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HUnited Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Committee

Topic 1:

Protecting Endangered Indigenous Languages in Peru and Bolivia

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Topic Overview

The Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022–2032) aims to prove language as not just a cultural aspect to preserve, but a right of humanity and a system of knowledge, and it is used to promote the usage of indigenous language.

UNESCO aims to make it easier for the indigenous to transmit their language and be able to convey it throughout all aspects of life, including technology, public life, culture and economic activity.

In Bolivia and Peru, language preservation involves education, public services, intergenerational transmission, community control of cultural material and access to digital tools. The goal is not just to record languages but to support communities in using them in everyday life. Indigenous language speakers are declining everyday, which raises concerns about language preservation and cultures over future generations. The continuation of ignoring this issue may result in the eternal extinction of many indigenous languages, particularly in Peru and Bolivia.

Background Information

Before Spanish colonists, indigenous families had a unique way of living; across the Andes Amazon had their own languages, cultural traditions, systems of knowledge and methods of passing information between generations. There are over a hundred indigenous languages that are still spoken in countries like Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. It is evident that languages, even with a few relative speakers, are easily preserved by generations and used throughout daily life. Whereas on the other hand languages similar to Quechua can rapidly spread in most areas and retreat in others. Indigenous languages are severely declining due to many factors that include the death of the speakers, migration, loss of land and contact with dominant societies. These factors contribute greatly to the decline and equally important are attitudes of pride or stigma toward a language.

International frameworks and previous actions:

Previous actions regarding this topic include article 13 and article 14 established in 2007 that address international standards for protecting the rights, cultures and identities of Indigenous Peoples. Article 13 allows indigenous people the right to transmit and pass on their history, language, and oral traditions to future generations, while Article 14 issues the indigenous peoples rights to control and establish their educational systems and institutions and to receive education in their own languages. Other actions include UNESCO's initiative project in 2019 that proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages. The goal of this initiative was to raise awareness about the tremendously declining number of speakers of indigenous languages, and encourage schools, governments, and communities to take action. It was also key in highlighting the importance of indigenous language preservation and cultural heritage, moreover traditional knowledge and biodiversity.

Important International Frameworks worth recognizing include Resolution A/RES/74/135 that was affirmed through The UN General Assembly ,the International Decade of Indigenous Languages aims to protect, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages worldwide.

The initiatives key focus was:

- Encouraging the increase of indigenous languages used in institutions and general education
- Providing support for research and documentation on indigenous languages
- Spreading the expansion of indigenous languages across media, and digital spaces
- Promoting national action plans from governments
- Supporting the leadership and participation of indigenous communities.

Previous Actions taken from Peru and Bolivia include:

- An educational system established by Peru (EIB) that aims to provide education focusing on the protection of students indigenous languages and cultural backgrounds and traditions.
- Bolivia's Law No. 1426 established in (2022); Bolivia's law affirmed 2022-2032 The National Decade of Indigenous languages. The law called for public policies aimed at preventing the loss of Indigenous languages and promoting their conservation, revitalization and active use in public and private settings.

Key Challenges

Despite efforts through international framework and actions, a variety of challenges remain that threaten the protection of indigenous languages.

Although Peru advocates for the preservation of indigenous languages through (EIB), challenges are evident in ensuring that schools have sufficient qualified teachers and resources, particularly in distant remote communities.

The establishment of laws regarding the issue and advocacy for communities and governments to take action does not necessarily mean the objectives are being achieved in local communities. Implementation gaps are a major concern regarding the protection of these languages. In addition, digital inequality is a global issue and remains one of the key challenges faced, indigenous languages remain unrepresented in digital platforms, online educational resources and modern communication technologies. Moreover, indigenous communities are not consistently active in preservation initiatives, which in turn makes them not as effective.

Possible Areas for Resolution

The following are potential resolutions delegates can consider for future reference:

- The support of recruitment for suitable teachers that have obtained fluency in local indigenous languages, and providing proper training for them.
- Developing language learning applications for indigenous languages
- The development of textbooks, educational systems and curricula for indigenous languages
- Encouraging schools to incorporate Indigenous histories, oral traditions and cultural knowledge into their educational programs.

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Guiding Questions

1. How can governments and legals assure that implementations of laws regarding the protection and preservation of indigenous languages are effective?

2. What measures can UNESCO encourage to expand access to quality bilingual and intercultural education in Indigenous communities?

3. How can governments and international organizations support the training and recruitment of teachers fluent in endangered Indigenous languages?

4. What role can digital technology play in documenting, preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages, particularly those with very few remaining speakers?

5. How can Indigenous communities be directly involved in designing, implementing and evaluating language-preservation initiatives?

6. What strategies can encourage younger generations to learn and use their ancestral languages in everyday communication?

8. How can governments address discrimination and social stigmatization that discourage individuals from speaking Indigenous languages?

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Resources

UNESCO UNESCO – International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032)
https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/indigenous-languages/
UNESCO – Global Action Plan

https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/indigenous-languages/about/action-plan/
UNESCO – An Epidemic Is Threatening Indigenous Languages

https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/epidemic-threatening-indigenous-languages/
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples./
UN DESA – Why Indigenous Languages Matter

https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs/un-des%D0%B0-policy-brief-no-151-why-indigenous-languages-matter-international-decade-/
UN – International Year of Indigenous Languages

https://en.iyil2019.org/
Peru Peru Ministry of Culture – Indigenous Peoples Database

https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/
Peru Ministry of Culture – Indigenous Languages

https://www.gob.pe/cultura/
Peru – Ethnolinguistic Map

https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/mapa-interactivo/
Bolivia Bolivia Ministry of Education

Bolivia Official Gazette – National Legislation
https://www.minedu.gob.bo