Outline of the International Expert Meeting on Improving Access to Multilingual Cyberspace

28 – 29 October 2014

UNESCO’s Headquarters,
1 rue Miollis, 75015 Paris, France
Meeting rooms XIII and XVI

Organizers of the meeting
Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO and
The UNESCO Intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP)

In cooperation with
The Government of Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug-Ugra
(Russian Federation),
The Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme, and
the Permanent Delegation of Russian Federation for UNESCO

21 October 2014
Introduction

From 28 to 29 October 2014 at its Headquarters in Paris, UNESCO in cooperation with the Government of Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug-Ugra (Russian Federation), the Permanent Delegation of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Programme, will organize two-day international expert meeting bringing together leading experts, researchers, and policymakers to discuss the status of linguistic diversity in cyberspace and determine the next concrete step to be taken by UNESCO. This will be conducted in order to ensure continued efforts in the promotion and monitoring of linguistic and cultural diversity in cyberspace through an effective use of open and inclusive technological solutions and involvement of various stakeholders.

More specifically, the focus of the discussions will be two-fold on:

- Next steps for implementation of the UNESCO’s Recommendation Concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace and an examination of the recommendations of the third International Conference, “Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace”, held in Yakutsk, Russian Federation from 28 June to 3 July 2014;
- Elaborating a plan of action and initiation of new partnerships to upscale UNESCO’s UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger to UNESCO’s Atlas of World’s Languages for the monitoring and promotion of world’s languages as well as providing online space for other international, regional and national language institutions to share their e-content on languages using open and inclusive technological solutions.

The event is organized as a part of UNESCO’s efforts to implement its Medium Term Strategy (37/C), Major Programme V, Main Line of Action 2. Enabling Universal Access and Preservation of Information and Knowledge and contribute to the realization of the strategic priority Multilingualism of the Intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP).

The discussions of the expert meeting will be summarized in a meeting report for public consultation.
Background

Language as universal human right

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the importance of an individuals’ personal language and acknowledges it, among other rights, as one of the fundamental human rights and freedoms. Since the adoption of the Declaration in 1948, language issues have been promoted in numerous declarations, conventions and recommendations. In addition, numerous language policies have been introduced, language revitalization and documentation projects have been initiated and language tools have been developed to promote linguistic diversity around the world. Language is a key element in the promotion of freedom of expression and providing access to multilingual information and knowledge, as it allows individuals to express ideas and participate more fully in their social and political lives. In this way, language becomes an enabler for the realization of human rights.

Language as human capacity to communicate ideas, information and knowledge to others

Despite all that, language as universal human capacity to communicate ideas, information and knowledge to others is not guaranteed to all men and women. Many linguistic communities of lesser used languages cannot fully enjoy and exercise their rights, express their views and opinions, and communicate in most meaningful and effective manner. Speakers of languages in danger in particular require for special attention. The situation remains deeply worrying as the users of those languages not only face multiple challenges and discrimination, but also risk losing their languages. Those speakers are not able to ensure a trans-generational transmission of their language to their children; have limited access to education as well their abilities to analyze, create, express and share information and knowledge in own language are not ensured. They also cannot equally contribute and enjoy the richness of their language through arts, science and not the least technological progress.

Language as a mirror of cultural, economic and political discourse

Language has a direct relation on wellbeing of individuals, communities and entire nations as it is inextricably linked to national origin and cultural identity. It is also linked to sustainable development in a number of distinctive ways. While the link that exists between language use and cultural identity has been widely accepted, more and more scientific community members, policy and decision makers as well as public and private sector representatives now also acknowledge the profound implications of language on socio-cultural, economic, and technological progress as well as on the political life of society. It is timely, crucial and relevant discussion, as the rapid technological solutions not only provide new means for communication among people, but also deepen an assumption that individuals construct and reconstruct their cultural identity throughout different experiences in their physical and virtual lives. This is why language is often seen as “product” of cultural, economic and political discourse that changes over time and reflects ideologies, social beliefs and social practices.
Linguistic diversity on cyberspace and challenges

The rapid technological development, in particular of the Internet has brought about multiple opportunities for users to share information and knowledge in various languages. Technology not only affects how language communities communicate with each other, but also how they contribute to language revitalization, documentation, monitoring, learning and teaching in formal and informal educational settings. The issue surrounding the accessibility of these emerging practices, process and structures in specific languages is crucially important. The ongoing influence of globalization, global business practices and tools provided by large corporations directly affect smaller local language communities.

Unfortunately, ICTs are not evenly spread and made available around the world – there are vast inequalities in terms of access and use. At the same time, the growing digital divide is even more reinforced by existing linguistic divide, as many languages are not present on the Internet and supported by ICTs. Even where the Internet and ICTs are available, it does not automatically mean that it will bring about the desired development and facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge among people. There is a growing linguistic divide, which exists in cyberspace today and this will only exacerbate the digital divide. Nations, communities and individuals without access to the Internet and its multilingual resources will certainly be marginalized through limited access to information and knowledge, which are critical elements of sustainable development.

UNESCO’s role

UNESCO is convinced that cultural and linguistic diversity, including multilingualism on the Internet, have a key role to play in fostering pluralistic, equitable, open and inclusive knowledge societies. UNESCO encourages its Member States to develop comprehensive language-related policies, safeguard language resources and develop appropriate tools in order to promote linguistic diversity, including on the Internet and media. In this regard, the Organization supports the inclusion of new languages in the digital world, the creation and dissemination of content in local languages on the Internet and mass communication channels, and encourages multilingual access to digital resources in cyberspace.

The Recommendation Concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 32nd session in 2003. It is a normative instrument, at the international level, focused on the promotion of linguistic diversity in cyberspace, which covers a range of important societal issues. Since 2003, UNESCO has promoted its instrument, implemented a number of projects, and together with research communities, contributed to the development of language tools and important initiatives.

During last decade, UNESCO has also developed an interactive, collaborative and open online platform entitled UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger. The existing Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger is intended to raise awareness about language endangerment and the need to safeguard the world’s linguistic diversity among policy-makers, speaker communities and
the general public. It is a tool monitoring the status and to be a tool to monitor the status of endangered languages and the trends in linguistic diversity at the global level. The 3rd printed edition was published in 2010 and provided information on about 2500 languages that are in danger, of which 199 have fewer than ten speakers, or are actually extinct since 1950. The interactive online edition came to life in 2009. This free and easily accessible resource includes: number of speakers and degree of endangerment, relevant policies, projects, sources, ISO codes and geographic coordinates.

UNESCO is willing to upscale and develop a new version of the digital Atlas for all languages of the world which could come with newly added technical functionalities and content levels. The first meeting, led by the Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO on 13 March 2014 in The Hague (The Netherlands), brought together leading experts working in the fields of languages and ICTs to discuss the future of the Atlas.

**Major objectives and expected outcomes of the expert meeting**

The major objective of this expert meeting is to discuss the status of linguistic diversity in cyberspace and determine the next concrete steps to be taken by UNESCO in order to ensure continued efforts for the promotion and monitoring of linguistic and cultural diversity in cyberspace through effective use of open and inclusive technological solutions.

In the long term, UNESCO aims to develop a UNESCO’s Atlas of World Languages based on the UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger. It is done to increase and monitor linguistic diversity on the Internet by reinforcing the “Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace as well as to provide various stakeholders with a platform for sharing content on language issues. Monitoring the status of languages, in particular on the Internet and languages in danger is essential for formulation of evidence-based policies, strategies, planning of interventions and development concrete language tools and resources.

By providing access, encouraging the preservation, utilization and creation of multilingual content as well as by establishing new structures, tools, resources and mechanisms among UNESCO’s Member States and relevant national institutional stakeholders, UNESCO will contribute to the creation of a truly multilingual Internet.

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Major objectives are to:

1. Review progress made since the adoption of UNESCO’s Recommendation Concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace in 2003 and examine further application of the recommendations provided by the participants of the third International Conference, “Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace”, held in Yakutsk, Russian Federation from 28 June to 3 July 2014.

   • Discussion on the status of linguistic diversity in cyberspace, help determine next steps to be taken by UNESCO and other partners;
   • Briefing from other international events and exchange of experience and best practices contributing to the elaboration of a list of activities, identify key partners and resources required;
   • Identification of joint actions at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).


   • Development of key elements for methodology;
   • Listing of key technological solutions and specifications which could be adapted to the UNESCO Atlas of World’s Languages;
   • Identification of new multilingual content providers and content elements;
   • Identification of potential members of an international consortium and advisory committee;
   • Legal agreements with potential members of the international consortium and advisory committee;
   • Listing of key funding sources and budget required for upgrading the platform and other.
Working Modalities

For this meeting, UNESCO will organize:

- Plenary sessions, where participants will share experience and best practices on promotion of linguistic diversity in cyberspace;
- Parallel sessions, where participants will engage in thematic roundtable discussions in order to determine next steps and elaborate concrete recommendations for the preparation of the Plan of Action as well as build partnerships.

Working language of the expert meeting is English with simultaneous translation to Russian. All of the above materials will be published in electronic and print form.

Web links

http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/
http://en.unesco.org/themes/access-information

http://ifapcom.ru/en/news/1478/?returnto=0&n=1

# Preliminary Agenda

## International Expert Meeting on Improving Access to Multilingual Cyberspace

28-29 October 2014, UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France Rooms XIII and XVI

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>9.00 – 9.30</td>
<td>Registration of the participants and welcome coffee</td>
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<td>9.30 – 10.45</td>
<td><strong>Opening session</strong> Room XIII&lt;br&gt;Opening Remarks and Introduction to the International Expert Meeting&lt;br&gt;Chair: Mr Getachew Engida, UNESCO Deputy Director-General</td>
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<td>10.45 – 12.30</td>
<td>Status on Linguistic Diversity on Cyberspace within the context of the UNESCO’s Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace&lt;br&gt;Chair: Mr Indrajit Banerjee, Director, Knowledge Societies Division, UNESCO</td>
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<td>12.30 – 14.00</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
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### Plenary session 2

**14.00 – 14.30**  
**Room XVI**

**Introduction to the Thematic Roundtables:**  
**Main objectives, working modalities and expected outcomes**

Chair: Mr Boyan Radoykov, Chief, Universal Access and Preservation Section, Knowledge Societies Division, UNESCO

- Introduction by Mr Boyan Radoykov, Chief, Universal Access and Preservation Section, Knowledge Societies Division, UNESCO
- Presentation by Mr Christopher Mosley, Editor-in-Charge, UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, Australia
- Presentation by Mr Jouriy Lysenko, IT developer of the UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger

### Parallel sessions

**14.30 – 15.30**

**Thematic Roundtables (1-2)**

1. **Conceptual framework for building effective language monitoring tool**  
   (Room XIII)  
   Moderator: Mr Tseard de Graaf, Research associate, Frisian Academy, Mercator European Research Centre; Board member of the Foundation for Endangered, The Netherlands  
   Rapporteur: Ms Nevine Tewfik, Head of Research, Studies and Policies, IR Division, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Egypt

2. **Exploration of open and inclusive technological solutions for building effective language monitoring tool – UNESCO Atlas of World Languages**  
   (Room XVI)  
   Moderator: Mr Alfredo Ronchi, Secretary General, European Commission “MEDICI Framework of Cooperation” and Professor, Polytechnic University of Milan, Italy  
   Rapporteur: Mr Sebastian Drude, General-Coordinator, CLARIN-ERIC, European Research Infrastructure Consortium, Germany

**15.30 – 15.45**  
**Coffee break**

### Parallel sessions

**15.45 – 17.00**

**Thematic Roundtables (Cont.)**

1. **Conceptual framework for building effective language monitoring tool**  
   (Room XIII)

2. **Exploration of open and inclusive technological solutions for building effective language monitoring tool – UNESCO Atlas of World Languages**  
   (Room XVI)

### Plenary session 3

**17.00 – 17.45**  
**Room XVI**

**Presentations from the thematic debates and general discussion**

Chair: Mr Adama Samassekou, President of MAAYA Network, Member of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development and Former President of the PrepCom for the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva (WSIS/2002-2003), Mali

- Presentation of the rapporteur and moderator of the thematic roundtable 1
- Presentation of the rapporteur and moderator of the thematic roundtable 2
- Discussion
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<td>8.45 – 9.00</td>
<td>Arrivals of participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.00 – 10.30</td>
<td><strong>Plenary session 4</strong>&lt;br&gt;Room XVI&lt;br&gt;Towards UNESCO Atlas of World Languages: Building International Partnerships for the Creation of Language Monitoring Instrument&lt;br&gt;Chair: Mr Panchanan Mohanty, Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies, Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies, University of Hyderabad, India</td>
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<td>• Presentation of Ms Noha Adly, First Deputy to the Minister, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Egypt</td>
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<td>• Presentation of Ms Mandana Seyfeddinipur, Programme Director, Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, Department of Linguistics, SOAS, University of London, United Kingdom</td>
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<td>• Presentation of Mr Gilvan Müller de Oliveira, Senior Researcher, Institute for Research and Development in Language Policy (IPOL), Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Brazil</td>
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<td>• Presentation of Ms Auður Hauksdóttir, Director, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute, UNESCO category II Center, Iceland</td>
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<td>• Presentation of Mr Andrejs Vasiļjevs, Co-founder and Chairman, Tilde technology company specializing in machine translation and other technologies for smaller languages, Latvia</td>
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<td>• Discussion</td>
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<td>10.30-10.45</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
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<td>10.45 – 11.00</td>
<td><strong>Plenary session 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;Room XVI&lt;br&gt;Introduction to the thematic roundtables: Main objectives, working modalities and expected outcomes&lt;br&gt;Chair: Ms Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO</td>
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<td>11.00 – 12.30</td>
<td><strong>Parallel sessions</strong>&lt;br&gt;Thematic Roundtables (3-4):&lt;br&gt;3. Evaluation of existing initiatives and building synergies (Room XIII)&lt;br&gt;Moderator: Ms Anne Pauwels, Dean, Languages and Cultures Professor of Sociolinguistics Director, London Confucius Institute Faculty of Languages and Cultures SOAS, University of London, UK&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Ms Gabriela Perez-Baez, Curator of Linguistics, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, USA&lt;br&gt;4. Developing implementation strategy (Room XVI)&lt;br&gt;Moderator: Mr Vincent Wintermans, Policy Officer, The Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO, The Netherlands&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Mr Joseph Mariani, Research Director, Institute for Multilingual and Multimedia Information (IMMI), France</td>
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<td>13.00 – 14.00</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
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<td>14.00 – 14.45</td>
<td><strong>Parallel sessions</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Thematic Roundtables (Cont.)</strong>&lt;br&gt;3. Evaluation of existing initiatives and building synergies (Room XIII)&lt;br&gt;4. Developing implementation strategy (Room XVI)</td>
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<td>14.45 – 15.00</td>
<td><strong>Plenary session 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;Presentations from the Thematic Debates and General Discussion&lt;br&gt;Chair: Mr Evgeny Kuzmin, Vice-President, IFAP Russian Committee, Russian Federation&lt;br&gt;• Moderator and rapporteur of the thematic debate 3&lt;br&gt;• Moderator and rapporteur of the thematic debate 4&lt;br&gt;• Discussion</td>
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<td>15.00 – 15.30</td>
<td><strong>Plenary session 7</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafting of the recommendations for the Plan of Action&lt;br&gt;Chair: Mr Boyan Radoykov, Chief, Universal Access and Preservation Section, Knowledge Societies Division, UNESCO&lt;br&gt;• Moderators and rapporteurs of all focus groups and participants</td>
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<td>15.30 – 15.45</td>
<td><strong>Coffee break</strong></td>
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<td>15.45 – 16.15</td>
<td><strong>Plenary session 8</strong>&lt;br&gt;Drafting of the recommendations for the Plan of Action (Cont.)</td>
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<td>16.15 – 17.45</td>
<td><strong>Plenary session 9</strong>&lt;br&gt;Discussion and Adoption of the Plan of Action&lt;br&gt;Chair: Mr Boyan Radoykov, Chief, Universal Access and Preservation Section, Knowledge Societies Division, UNESCO&lt;br&gt;• Drafting of the recommendations by groups and joint discussion&lt;br&gt;• Adoption of the recommendations</td>
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<td>17.45 – 18.00</td>
<td><strong>Plenary session 10</strong>&lt;br&gt;Closing of the meeting&lt;br&gt;Chair: Mr Indrajit Banerjee, Director, Knowledge Societies Division, UNESCO</td>
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