

Twelfth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues
Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities

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Australian Statement

Language plays a crucial role in people's daily lives. It is a fundamental human right to speak your own language. It is important to be able to use your own language to communicate with the world, express your identity, and defend your rights. Australia recognizes the importance of language for Indigenous peoples and minority groups in preserving and passing down cultural knowledge history and philosophies.

As such, Australia strongly supports the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Sadly, in Australia, approximately half of the 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are no longer spoken.

In response, Australia is partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in developing policies and services centered on revitalizing Indigenous languages. Australia funds over 20 Indigenous community-led language and arts centres, which support strong cultural identities, and community-driven wellbeing activities.

We are also leading initiatives to expand knowledge and provide infrastructure for language conservation, including the Indigenous Language 'Dictionaries Project', which aims to produce up to 20 Indigenous languages dictionaries.

Australian educational institutions also play a vital role in language revitalization. Australian Indigenous languages are taught at a range of schools and universities. Innovation also plays an important role. For example, the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation is leading a project to build digital literacy using apps in Indigenous languages.

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