

SEGNALAZIONI

2008: International Year of Languages



General Assembly GA/10592

Sixty-first General Assembly
Plenary
96th Meeting (PM)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROCLAIMS 2008 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES, IN EFFORT TO PROMOTE UNITY IN DIVERSITY, GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

The General Assembly this afternoon, recognizing that genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding, proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages.

Acting without a vote, the Assembly, also recognizing that the United Nations pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally, emphasized the paramount importance of the equality of the Organization's six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

In that regard, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that all language services were given equal treatment and were provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources. The Secretary-General was also requested to complete the task of publishing all important older United Nations documents on the Organization's website in all six official languages, on a priority basis.

Further, the Assembly emphasized the importance of making appropriate use of all the official languages in all the activities of the Department of Public Information, with the aim of eliminating the disparity between the use of English and the use of the five other official languages.

Introducing the resolution (contained in document A/61/L.56), France's representative said the text would ensure a "global" approach to multilingualism and would promote a reasonable vision of multilingualism at the United Nations. It would help ensure adherence to the principles of multilingualism in the Organization's daily activities and, for the first time, would underline the importance of providing technical assistance and training in the local languages of beneficiary countries.

Speakers, among them the representatives of Tunisia, Andorra, Russian Federation, Romania and Senegal, stressed that multilingualism in the United Nations served to enrich the work of the Organization. Linguistic diversity was the foundation of cultural diversity. Without appropriate attention to the issue of preserving linguistic diversity, the harmonious integration of a growing number of countries in the practical work of the Organization would hardly be possible.

They welcomed the work of the Department of Public Information regarding multilingualism in electronic resources, as well as that of the United Nations information centres (UNICs) in disseminating information through local languages. Some speakers hoped the next resolution on multilingualism would include an explicit reference to the need for linguistic diversity in peacekeeping operations.

The Assembly was informed that any resource implications resulting from the resolution would be addressed in the Secretary-General's report to the sixty-third session of the Assembly on implementation of the resolution.

Also this afternoon, the Assembly, acting on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), adopted without a vote the resolution entitled "Comprehensive review of a strategy to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations" (contained in document A/61/409/Add.1).

By the terms of the text, the Assembly -- reaffirming the need to implement a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and to assist victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by the Organization's staff or related personnel -- would endorse the proposals, recommendations and conclusions contained in the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations at its second resumed session of 2006, held on 18 December.

In that report, the Special Committee requested the open-ended ad hoc working group of experts to continue its consideration of a revised draft model Memorandum of Understanding with troop-contributing countries at a resumed session before the end of June.

The representative of Uganda, underscoring the importance of the issue, said his delegation supported the "zero-tolerance" concept; after all, peacekeepers should not

be “peace abusers”. Underlying factors, such as poverty, should be considered, as well, to help address that scourge, he stated.

In other action, the Assembly appointed Thomas Thomma (Germany) as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning today and ending on 31 December 2008, in order to fill a vacancy resulting from the resignation of Sujata Ghorai (Germany).

At the outset of the meeting, the Assembly observed a minute of silence and paid tribute to the memory of His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, Head of State of Samoa, who passed away on 11 May. Expressing their condolences were the representatives of Sri Lanka (on behalf of the Asian States), Latvia (on behalf of the Eastern European States), Jamaica (on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States), Portugal (on behalf of the Western European and other States), United States (as host country), United Republic of Tanzania (on behalf of the African States) and Tonga (on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum). The representative of Samoa thanked the speakers for their expressions of sympathy.

The Assembly was also informed that Kyrgyzstan had made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Assembly will meet again at 10 a.m. tomorrow, 17 May, to elect 14 members to the Human Rights Council.

(Source: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ga10592.doc.htm>)