



BELFAST ASSEMBLY 2022

SECURITY COMMISSION ADOPTED RESOLUTION

RESOLVED: The Congress of Nations and States shall create collaborations and exchanges between CNS members to increase protection of member languages and cultural practices to further prevent entities seeking to assimilate and displace peoples resulting in direct and indirect threats to linguistic and cultural security.

FURTHER RESOLVED: The Congress of Nations and States shall evaluate existing national and international protection mechanisms to determine where Nations, States, and other entities fail to meet their responsibilities and obligations to safeguard the linguistic and cultural security of Peoples, including but not limited to cultural heritage in media (print, TV), textbooks, public signage, place names, and public institutions (courts, hospitals, schools, etc.).

FURTHER RESOLVED: The Congress of Nations and States shall mandate one of its Commissions to review the effectiveness of current measures, including but not limited to laws, programs, and policies of member nations and states in CNS relating to protecting the right of Peoples to educate their members in their languages and in their cultural practices.



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BACKGROUND REPORT
SECURITY COMMISSION

Following a discussion with our Commissioners, who each have a substantial amount of experience related to security issues, it was determined that one of the chief security concerns is the security to express one's values, knowledge, and futures in one's linguistic and cultural heritage against the oppressive interests of States, development interests, State religions, and other oppressive forces. In establishing this Resolution, all terms are those adopted from the Congress of Nations and States' Charter. Moreover, the Commission has solicited feedback from participants to gauge the importance and risk of this threat.

The 2020-2022 Security Commission sent out one survey where participants could prioritize their concerns, and we received about 20 responses from CNS participating organizations. Their words gave us a glimpse into their lived experiences and helped our Commission formulate this Resolution to reiterate their concerns accurately. Using our members' testimonials as evidence, it is our objective to bear witness to their experiences and represent their realities faithfully. For instance, one CNS participant responded that, *“there is urgent need of supports for maintaining local languages in curricula as well as everyday communication.”*

One common theme among participants to the questionnaire involved banning languages and forced assimilation originating from the government or ruling party. As one participant explained, *“[Our] culture, education and languages are banned in [several countries] ... We have no school textbook in our languages. Children are forced to learn Anti-XXX teaching by the state.”* Another pointed to *“No right to exercise, not working language, not in media (print or TV), forced to learn other languages for day-to-day use.”* Another member wrote *“The government and school administrators stressed the importance of enforcing the use of state language as they recognized the strong link between language and culture. The ban on Indigenous languages created tremendous confusion and tensions among the students. Many of the students did not speak any language other indigenous languages when they entered the schools, and they could not possibly understand what was expected of them. For others, speaking the indigenous tongue was a form of resistance—a way to hide from the school staff their true*

emotions and thoughts. But the schools usually responded to the use of native languages forcefully.”

Regarding threats and violence on the part of States, several participants pointed to occupation: *“Despite [state’s] attempt to eradicate our language and culture, we adhere to it to this day, despite all the circumstances we face from [their] occupation.”* Another indicated, *“Since war in [an adjoining nation] in 2012 [an armed entity] has occupied [our territory] and banned our young girls from going to school and studying our languages and culture.”*

One response pointed to stigma as a source for threats to linguistic and cultural security, *“Yes, our government has harmed our commitment to raising awareness of indigenous peoples’ rights and it is difficult to value our language. When we speak our natural language, we are victims of stigma and discrimination in society.”* Another member pointed out, *“But [the region’s] political discourse, whether nationalist or [religious extremist], has long been hostile to [our] language, perceived as a threat to national cohesion. For decades, giving children [our cultural] names were forbidden in [the country]. Not recognizing the language spoken in the country’s poor rural interior was an effective means of discrimination that shut [us] out from participating politically, socially, and economically in [our] society.”*

One respondent tragically reported, *“Our language has already been victimized and is totally dead.”*

Some responses mentioned some protection in place but asked for greater accountability in structures of power to fulfill the promise of linguistic and cultural protection. For example, *“The [redacted] Law is a good law to protect us, but you need the government to follow up on its implementation.”* Another stated, *“The only protection that protects [our religion] is the [redacted] Law... where it is the government’s duty to strictly follow its implementation.”* Furthermore, 15 out of 21 respondents said there were no protections in place.

Several respondents emphasized resilience against oppressive regimes by sharing strategies for linguistic and cultural security. For example, *“Elders play a role in teaching youth indigenous languages.”* Another states, *“Traditional education is done in secret.”* Similarly, another member expressed, *“[Our] youth are taught our language and culture in secret.”* The elders figure prominently in accounts of resilience, *“Our elders teach youth through traditional texts, songs, poems, and our language.”*

The Commissioners want to note some positive comments from members as an indication that these threats to linguistic and cultural security can be addressed in mutually respectful ways. One member stated, *“since the past 25 years, people there are promoting bilingual campaigns and strategies to revitalize [indigenous languages in host country] as well of other initiatives in [the nation and region].”* Though the threat may not come from States the threats arise from internal groups, *“ There is no threat at the official level to the freedom to practice culture, and language from official authorities, but the threat comes from [religious] extremists, as [they do not] recognize other religions, although we are protected by the Law [redacted], but the government and the ruling parties, compliment the [ruling religious] majority at the expense of minorities, for the sake of elections to ensure their survival in power.”*

Lastly, surveys revealed the necessity of tackling the issues legally as well as institutionally.

For instance, one participant declared, “[There is] only cultural awareness by our elders. We need education for our youth and children to discover more of the world. To succeed, we need education and training a lot in advocacy and political processes to compete and raise our voice.”

We would like to close with the words of one participant who declared: “The first, it necessary to collect data in the community to check who reserve our language. The second is the training to sensitize indigenous peoples how to conserve our language. Finally, to negotiate with government how to incorporate our system of communication in school.”

We hope that our Resolution is one small step in outlining why action is necessary.

Commissioners:

Thoreau Redcrow, Lorraine Bayard de Volo, Tracy Devine Guzman, Elias Offor, Bernard C. Perley

