

International Mother Language Day
21 February 2017, 6.30-8.30PM
Conference Room 4

Statement of Ms. Catherine Pollard
Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management
Secretariat-

7. The UN is not immune to such erosion, despite its strong and long-standing commitment to multilingualism, which can be traced back to the Charter of the United Nations itself. In fact, the General Assembly has repeatedly warned against growing disparities in the use of the six official languages of the UN. This is why since 2000, a senior official has been continuously serving as Secretariat-wide Coordinator for Multilingualism, upon the request of the General Assembly, and I hope that, collectively, we can overturn this erosion. Let us not forget that the United Nations is nearly as diverse linguistically as the peoples it serves. Its 193 Member States and its 44,000 staff speak so many languages that we can hardly take stock of them all.

8. I see my job as Coordinator in ensuring that such language diversity in the United Nations is inventoried, valued, supported, and rewarded, and, most importantly, that it benefits the Organization and its noble purposes.

9. I also take great pride in leading the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, which is a fundamental enabler of intercultural dialogue, a bridge-builder among constituents, and a cornerstone of our multilateral system.

10. So please allow me to conclude by expressing my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Masud Bin Momen of Bangladesh for the honour that was bestowed upon me and the language staff of my Department, by inviting us to participate in this event. I am delighted to have this opportunity to demonstrate our Department's many – and sometimes unnoticed – talents.

11. I thank you, Excellency, and I wish us all a happy International Mother Language Day.