

Galway, Ireland, June, 16, 2006

CALL TO UNESCO
AND TO MEMBER STATES OF THE UNITED NATIONS
FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

From the participants

of the Galway-AIDL/IALL Tenth International Conference on Language and Law (June 2006)

On October 20, 2005, UNESCO adopted *an International Convention on Cultural Diversity*, The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

The participants of the Galway International Conference on Language and Law and of the 10th International Conference of the International Academy of Linguistic Law (Galway, 14-16 June, 2006) believe that the time has come for the UNESCO and the Member States of the United Nations to start intensive negotiations with a view to adopting an International Convention on Linguistic Diversity. There are already many international legal instruments and documents on issues concerning linguistic rights such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), The Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities (1996), the Oslo Recommendations Regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities (1998), the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life (1999), the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), the American Convention of Human Rights (1969), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). There are also non-governmental international documents, like the Barcelona Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) and the Pacific Charter of Human Rights (1989).

All these Instruments and Documents are important and very useful. It is now time to take the next step. The linguistic diversity of our world must be recognized in a clear and effective way. We consider, therefore, that an International Convention on Linguistic Diversity is necessary if we want linguistic rights to become effective fundamental rights at the beginning of the new Millennium. There are more than 6,000 languages in the world, but many minority languages are under severe pressure from majority languages, from the perspective of speaker networks, speaker ability, and patterns of use. It is now time to act in favor of linguistic diversity. *The world needs an International Convention on Linguistic Diversity*, hence this call to UNESCO. The signatories to this letter are naturally available to UNESCO to provide technical assistance on this matter. We are transmitting this Call to international organizations, both public and private, which focus on issues pertaining to language rights.