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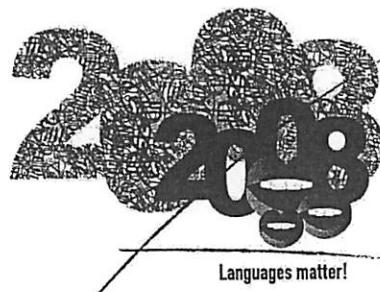
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maaya
world network for linguistic diversity

SYNTHESIS OF THE BAMAKO INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON MULTILINGUALISM

Bamako, Hôtel Salam, 19-21 January 2009



2008 – International Year of Languages

Bundesministerium für
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SYNTHESIS OF THE BAMAKO INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON MULTILINGUALISM

At the initiative of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), a specialized institution of the African Union, and MAAYA – the World Network for Linguistic Diversity, the International Forum on Multilingualism was held in Bamako, Mali, from 19 to 21 January 2009, with the collaboration of the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture of Austria, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, UNESCO, the Union Latine and the Governments of Spain and Mali. The meeting was held in the context of the International Year of Languages (IYL) and following on from other actions covering the same issues (the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...).

The Bamako International Forum on Multilingualism (BIFM) brought together hundreds of experts in disciplines related to language, education and the information society, thus representing the multi-stakeholder partners of international governance.

This Forum, based on the universal values of linguistic diversity, focused on the challenges within our societies raised by inclusive democratic participation of all citizens and access to education, culture and knowledge, with a view to ensuring societal cohesion, peace and economic and social development.

The major challenges identified were those of mother tongue-based multilingual education, and the presence of all languages in the digital world (particularly Internet), in terms of access, content and digital culture. These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that a large number of languages currently spoken risk extinction in the course of this century.

Linguistic diversity must remain a key factor of progress in the societies of tomorrow. It is part and parcel of the survival of our species, which hinges on the diversity of a chain that extends from the biological to the cultural, particularly given the changes threatening our planet's biosphere.

The BIFM stressed both the importance of equitable and mutually rewarding partnerships between all languages, built on mother tongue-based education which guarantees children's self-realisation and on the importance for linguistic communities to be able to develop in their own languages.

The Forum considers that the plurality of languages should be reflected in the digital world so as to ensure equitable sharing of knowledge for human, cultural, scientific, social and economic development.

Multilingualism is a fundamental condition for effective and equitable participation of citizens in the public sphere, both at a local, national, regional and global level. Such participation is a prerequisite for inclusion and therefore for democracy.

The coming societal challenges require a paradigm shift in international cooperation and North-South relations, in particular concerning the relationship in education between local (indigenous?) languages and those inherited from colonization.

The stakes are high and pluri-dimensional. They are related to peace, to linguistic human rights (the rights of people to use their own languages) and to development. Consequently, the Forum considers that the recommendations made must become a priority in defining the ongoing activities of the local, national, regional and international political agenda. Also, all multi-stakeholder partners of global governance must accompany this process through the implementation of concrete actions.

The Bamako International Forum on Multilingualism adopted the Bamako Commitment for Universal Multilingualism together with a political Plan of Action, including an international multi-sectorial programme for mother tongue-based multilingual education and proposals for linguistic diversity in the digital world. It also established a Technical Secretariat for the follow-up of the Forum.

To achieve its objectives, the BIFM recommends the creation of an International Commission to prepare a Report for the General Assembly of the United Nations, with a view to holding a World Summit on the importance of multilingualism in relation to the Global Agenda.

In this context, the Forum also recommends the creation, through the MAAYA Network, of an Observatory of Multilingualism to monitor and document the developments in this field.

Bamako, Mali, 21 January 2009

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