



LE DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

PALAIS DES NATIONS

CH - 1211 GENÈVE 10

15 August 2019

Dear colleagues,

The General Assembly regularly emphasizes the importance of multilingualism, as a fundamental value of the Organization, in achieving the objectives of the United Nations. In his latest report on multilingualism (A/73/761), the Secretary-General of the United Nations reaffirmed his vision of a multilingual Organization, shaped by its universality, its presence on all continents and its unique linguistic regime. He recalled that the Organization's multilingualism must also be reflected in its internal operating procedures in order to support the implementation of its mandates and improve its efficiency, performance and transparency.

The Secretary-General's report also mentioned persistent difficulties in implementing multilingualism in our daily work and stressed the need to raise awareness among staff of its importance. It is in this spirit that I am writing to you today. While we do not always have the necessary financial resources to overcome all these difficulties, I am convinced that we can give multilingualism additional impetus by publicly demonstrating the importance we attach to it.

To this end, I would like to suggest that all heads of United Nations agencies in Geneva commit to become Multilingualism Champions and undertake one action every year to promote multilingualism within their organizations. This action can be modest. For example, you could commit to saying at the start of each internal meeting that your employees can express themselves in the working language of their choice; take language courses or encourage your colleagues to do so; send all your internal communications in both working languages; or celebrate language days. For my part, I plan to take refresher courses in French. The important thing is to highlight the linguistic diversity of the staff and to raise awareness of the need to ensure that the United Nations system is a truly multilingual diverse, and inclusive workplace.

The United Nations Office at Geneva undertakes to develop a "Multilingualism Champions" page on its website, on which all these commitments would appear and to promote them on social networks.

I would be very grateful if you could share with me your views on this proposal, as well as any other suggestions you may have regarding the promotion of multilingualism within our organizations in Geneva.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tatiana'.

Tatiana Valovaya