

International Day of Native Language-εκδήλωση κοινότητας Μπαγκλαντές/χαιρετισμός (στα αγγλικά)

"International Day of Native Language"

Athens, 24 February 2001

Greeting by ANNA KARAMANOU

Member of the European Parliament

Dear friends,

I wish I was present at your very important gathering and had the chance to address you personally, on the International Day of Native Language. Your communities' initiative is a welcoming step of raising the importance of the native language as a vital human right.

I am aware of your activities and efforts aiming to improve living conditions of the people that set off from their countries to become part of another country and civilization. I would like to express my personal admiration of this valuable and long lasting effort.

The primary or ancestral language of a person is integral part of his/her ethnicity and national origin. Therefore, discrimination against the native language has the same devastating effect as discrimination on the basis of national origin, but in this case what differentiates you from the rest is not your colour or gender, but language.

The development of each culture depends fundamentally on the sheltering wall of

language. Minorities have to be entitled to foster their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion and to use their own language both in private and in public, conforming to the principles embodied in the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Linguistic diversity is a key component in Europe's cultural heritage and in its future. It is for this reason that attention must be given to sustain the existing pool of diversity within the E.U.

This objective must be pursued via the following types of activity and domains:

- • Constitutional protection for ethnic groups to maintain and develop their own identity, with particular reference to their language and culture.
- • Promotion of language learning, through primary schoolteachers training, developing language resources and distribution of learning tools.
- • Respect of the right to disseminate and receive information in their respective language through a variety of newspapers and magazines and television programs.

European Union is a propitious area for bringing forward our demand for respect of native language. Over the years, the European Parliament has adopted a number of resolutions defending the idea of a European Union, which respects its linguistic and cultural diversity.

The new century provides the appropriate framework to launch a series of active initiatives. In this context, we should always keep in mind that our struggle for respect of minorities aims to a fair society and to a more human world.

I wish you success in this important event. Its realisation is a step forward in fostering and bringing forward a new approach of dealing with

the vital problems that immigrants are facing, in order to integrate and evolve to a better 21st century.

Best regards,

Anna Karamanou