

Good afternoon everyone

It is great to see you all, and thank you for joining this virtual meeting as part of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages which is going to happen very soon.

My name is Manoch Chummuangpak. I am an Assistant Professor in Communication Arts at Dhurakij Pundit University in Bangkok, Thailand. As one of the member state representative of the Global Task Force, I am delighted to welcome everyone to the Regional Consultation. I believe this would be an excellent opportunity to discuss priorities and action plans for the coming IDIL.

From a communication scholarship perspective, there is a famous concept in communication suggesting that “THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE”. What does it mean? It means that when we communicate a message, the meaning does not only arise from what we say, but how we say it, which includes the language we use. To say the same word by using different languages, there is no way to convey exactly the same meaning. This is because language as the medium of human communication is always tied to the culture and ways of life of its speakers. Obviously, the language itself is the message in that it contains meanings and express identity of the language users and their community.

In the past decade, as a communication scholar, I have been studied the identity construction of indigenous or ethnic communities, and the way in which media and communication are related to ethnic and cultural identity. For example, I did research on the Karen people who has resided in many parts of

the Southeast Asia, particularly Myanmar and Thailand. What I have found is that the Karen have faced many challenges that would cause the loss of their culture, traditions and identity, which I believe it is the situation also faced by a number of indigenous communities around the globe. From my fieldwork, one of the most important things that allow indigenous or ethnic groups to maintain their identities is the preservation of their own languages. Language and identity are inseparable. Language is fundamental to the expression of cultural identity. It is the means by which culture and its traditions and shared values may be expressed and vitalized. Language also fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among community members. So this is the reason why we are here. And that's why the International Decade of Indigenous Languages is needed to be recognized.

Last but not least, the recognition of indigenous languages definitely would be a stepping stone to the promotion of the equality and inclusive society as well as social and cultural wellbeings of indigenous people.

I look forward to learning from your experiences and your insights. I truly believe that great contributions from everyone today and tomorrow would ensure the success of the coming International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Thank you very much.