



## News Release

### United Nations Forum calls on governments to immediately support the revitalization of indigenous languages

**May 27, 2008 (Iqaluit, Nunavut)** – The Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth welcomes the recent calls for action from the international community to stop the rapid erosion of indigenous languages.

The *United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* recently asked governments to implement positive measures to recognize and promote indigenous languages including, constitutional and legislative measures; policies and programs to strengthen and support their daily use at all levels in public and private institutions; adequate funding for their preservation, revitalization and promotion; and measures to raise the prestige of indigenous languages such as standardization and their use in public administration and post-secondary education.

“The Permanent Forum has called on governments to immediately support indigenous peoples’ language revitalization efforts,” said Louis Tapardjuk, Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth. “We could not hope for any better outcome at this stage. Action is required now to protect and preserve our Inuit language in this global era, and Inuit must engage and be heard at all levels of that process.”

In its comments about the 2008 *International Expert Group Report on Indigenous Languages*, the Permanent Forum recognizes the alarming situation of indigenous languages and emphasizes the responsibility of governments to take remedial action. This is especially relevant to Canada, where 2006 census data suggest that the Inuit language is one of only three Aboriginal languages likely able to continue in daily use. But it is at risk. Past policies and current pressures continue straining its use in the home, the workplace, and the classroom.

The Permanent Forum highlighted the need for action at the international level. The Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth will continue working with our partners to ensure that Nunavummiut are represented and receive the information they need to understand these international developments.

Upcoming events of importance to the Inuit Language include an Arctic Council symposium of indigenous language experts to be held in October 2008 in Tromsø, Norway. A United Nations world conference on linguistic diversity, indigenous languages, identity and education

has been proposed in the 2008 *Expert Group Report*, and the Permanent Forum has also endorsed recommendations for the development of new international standards, policies, instruments and activities to safeguard indigenous languages and respond to language erosion, discrimination or destruction.

Closer to home, Bill 6, the *Official Languages Act*, and Bill 7, the *Inuit Language Protection Act*, are presently under review by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. These Bills have been developed and designed to support the inter-generational transmission and revitalization of the Inuit language and the use of the Inuit language in education, work and daily life, while also promoting and protecting Nunavut's cultural and linguistic diversity.

- 30 -

**For more information:**

Department of Culture, Language, Elders & Youth

Stéphane Cloutier, Special Advisor

Box 1000, Station 800, Iqaluit, NU, X0A 0H0

☎ (867) 975-5507

📠 (867) 975-5504

✉ languages@gov.nu.ca

7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session\\_seventh.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_seventh.html)

Copies of Bill 6, the Official Languages Act and Bill 7, the Inuit Languages Protection Act are available on the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut website:

<http://www.assembly.nu.ca/english/bills>