Linguistic diversity and multilingualism on Internet

Increasingly, information and knowledge are key determinants of wealth creation, social transformation and human development. Language is a primary vector for communicating information and knowledge, thus the opportunity to use one's language on the Internet will determine the extent to which one can participate in emerging knowledge societies.

The beginning of the Internet has brought about diverse opportunities for sharing information and knowledge in various languages. Today, anyone in principle can produce content, share it with the rest of the world and receive feedback. In principle, the Internet is open to all languages of the world when certain technical conditions are met, and when the necessary human and financial resources are in place.

However, many languages are not present on the Internet. There is a vast linguistic divide, which exists in cyberspace today and this will only exacerbate the digital divide. Everyone therefore should have access to the multilingual Internet. Nations, communities and individuals without access to the Internet and its resources will certainly be marginalized with limited access to information and knowledge, which are critical elements of sustainable development. Speakers of non-dominant languages need to be able to express themselves in culturally meaningful ways, create their own cultural content in local languages and share through cyberspace. The digital divide has two important aspects: firstly, everyone should have access to the Internet, and secondly, access to quality content created not only at international or regional level, but locally and in local languages. The Internet is multilingual and culturally diverse where every culture and language has its own space.

UNESCO is convinced that cultural diversity and multilingualism on the Internet have a key role to play in fostering pluralistic, equitable, open and inclusive knowledge societies. UNESCO encourages its Member States to develop comprehensive language-related policies, to allocate resources and use appropriate tools in order to promote and facilitate linguistic diversity and multilingualism, including the Internet and media. In this regard, the Organization supports the inclusion of new languages in the digital world, the creation and dissemination of content in local languages on the Internet and mass communication channels, and encourages multilingual access to digital resources in the cyberspace.

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/linguistic-diversity-and-multilingualism-on-internet/