



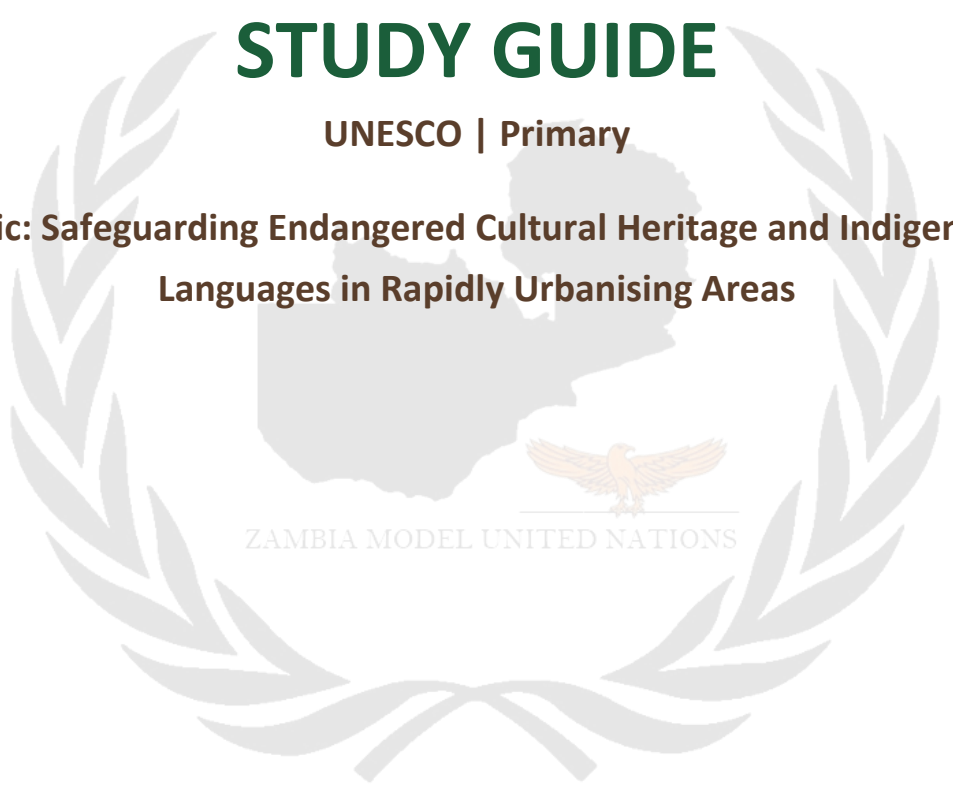
LUSAKA OAKTREE SCHOOL MODEL UNITED NATIONS
LOTSMUN 2026

***Architects of Accountability** • Redefining Power, Peace and Progress*

STUDY GUIDE

UNESCO | Primary

Topic: Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Languages in Rapidly Urbanising Areas



ZAMBIA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Message from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to LOTSMUN 2026.

This year, under the theme “Architects of Accountability: Redefining Power, Peace and Progress,” we invite you to consider not only how decisions are made but who is responsible for them, who is affected by them and how meaningful change can be achieved.

Model United Nations is more than an exercise in public speaking. It is an opportunity to understand complex international problems, challenge assumptions, negotiate with people who may disagree with you and transform competing ideas into meaningful solutions.

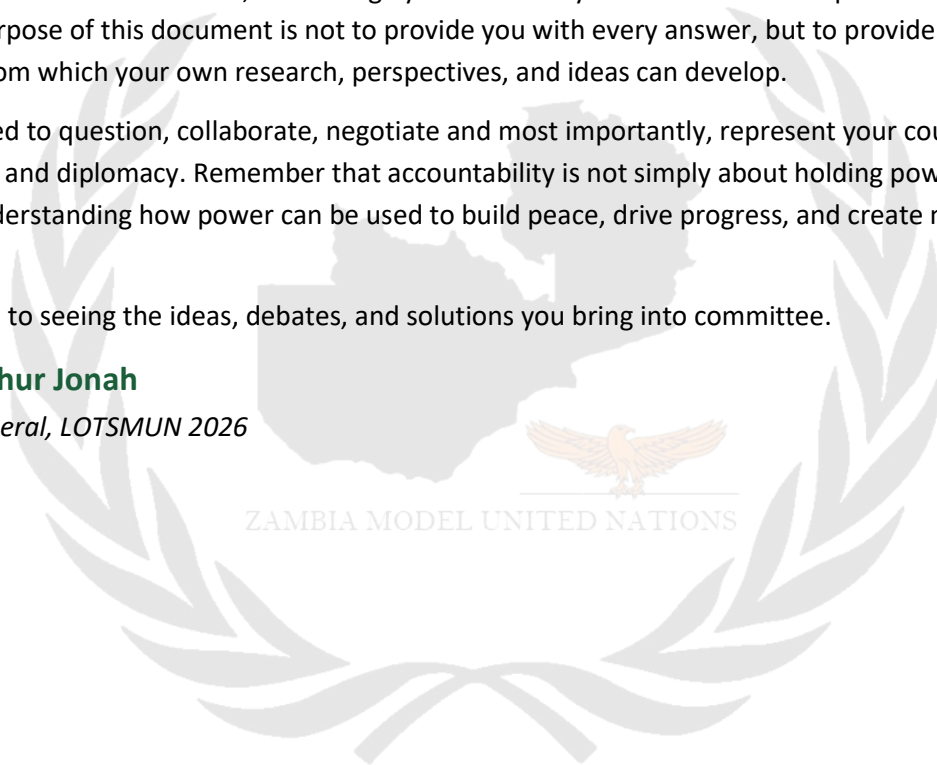
As you prepare for this committee, I encourage you to look beyond the information presented in this study guide. The purpose of this document is not to provide you with every answer, but to provide you with the foundation from which your own research, perspectives, and ideas can develop.

Come prepared to question, collaborate, negotiate and most importantly, represent your country’s position with accuracy and diplomacy. Remember that accountability is not simply about holding power responsible; it is about understanding how power can be used to build peace, drive progress, and create meaningful change.

I look forward to seeing the ideas, debates, and solutions you bring into committee.

Malenji Arthur Jonah

Secretary General, LOTSMUN 2026



ZAMBIA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

1. UNESCO

1.1 What is UNESCO?

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It was created in 1945, has its headquarters in Paris and works on the motto of “building peace through education, science and culture”.¹ It has nearly 200 member states, and it looks after World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves and networks of schools and scientists around the world.^{2,3} Its Director-General is Khaled El-Enany of Egypt, who took office on 15 November 2025.⁴

In this simulation, you are a **member country** at a UNESCO meeting. UNESCO does not order countries what to do. It sets standards, shares knowledge and helps countries work together, so the choices countries make decide whether heritage and languages are protected. Here are some real tools and programmes that matter for this topic:

Tool or programme	What it does
World Heritage List	A list of places of outstanding value to all humanity. Zambia has one site on it, Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls, added in 1989. ⁵
Intangible Cultural Heritage work	Helps countries record and protect living traditions such as music, dance, poetry and stories. In Zambia it has supported work on Kuyabila poetry, Lala proverbs, Lozi and Nkoya music and dance, and the Makishi masquerade. ⁶
Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation	A guide adopted by UNESCO in 2011 that helps cities balance protecting heritage with growth and development. ⁷
International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032)	A UN decade to draw attention to the danger facing many indigenous languages. UNESCO leads it, together with the UN’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs. ⁸
Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger	A UNESCO list of languages at risk of disappearing. ⁹

¹ UNESCO. Building peace through education, science and culture. <https://www.unesco.org/en>

² UNESCO. Khaled El-Enany elected Director-General of UNESCO (November 2025). <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/khaled-el-enany-elected-director-general-unesco>

³ UNESCO. Building peace through education, science and culture... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴ UNESCO. Khaled El-Enany elected Director-General of UNESCO (November 2025)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁵ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Zambia (States Parties). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/zm>

⁶ UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Zambia. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/zambia-ZM>

⁷ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/hul/>

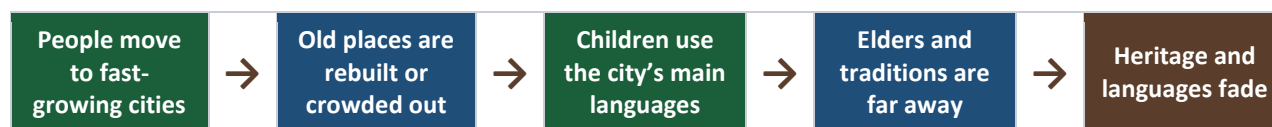
⁸ UNESCO. International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032). <https://www.unesco.org/en/decades/indigenous-languages>

⁹ OHCHR. Many indigenous languages are in danger of extinction (2019, citing the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2019/10/many-indigenous-languages-are-danger-extinction>

2. Introduction to the Topic

This topic is about two kinds of heritage. **Cultural heritage** is the buildings, places, objects, traditions and skills that people inherit from the past. **Indigenous languages** are the languages of the first peoples of a place. Both are under pressure when a place becomes a busy city very quickly, which is what **rapid urbanisation** means: more and more people moving to and living in cities and towns.

Here is one way the problem builds up:



This is a simplified picture. Cities can also **help** heritage: they bring people of many cultures together, and new speakers can join a language in a city. In Brazil, for example, newcomers from villages keep replacing speakers of indigenous languages in one small city.¹⁰ The challenge for this committee is to help heritage **survive and grow** while cities grow.

2.1 The scale of the problem

Languages. About 6,700 languages are spoken in the world, and about 40% of them are at risk of dying out, according to UNESCO's atlas of endangered languages. Linguists estimate that a language goes extinct about every two weeks.¹¹

Cities. About 45% of the world's 8.2 billion people now live in cities, up from 20% in 1950, using the UN's newest way of counting. Two-thirds of the world's population growth is expected to happen in cities by 2050. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where the rural population is still growing.¹²

Zambia. In 2018, 43.5% of Zambians lived in urban areas, and cities were growing by about 4% a year. UN-Habitat estimates that about 70% of the urban population lives in informal settlements.¹³



¹⁰ Cultural Survival. Endangered languages in town: the urbanization of indigenous languages (Cultural Survival Quarterly).

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/endangered-languages-town-urbanization-indigenous>

¹¹ OHCHR. Many indigenous languages are in danger of extinction (2019, citing the UNESCO Atlas of... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

¹² UN News. Cities now home to nearly half of humanity: UN report (World Urbanization Prospects 2025, November 2025).

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166395>

¹³ UN-Habitat. Urbanization in Zambia: building inclusive and sustainable cities. <https://unhabitat.org/zambia>

3. Key Definitions

These definitions are written in simple language and adapted from the UN and UNESCO sources listed in the bibliography. Learn them, because you will use them in speeches and clauses.

Term	Meaning
Culture	The way of life of a group of people, including their language, food, music, clothes, beliefs and customs.
Cultural heritage	The buildings, places, objects, traditions and skills that people inherit from the past and pass on to the future.
Tangible heritage	Heritage you can touch, such as buildings, monuments, tools and artworks.
Intangible heritage	Living heritage that you cannot touch, such as songs, dances, stories, poems, skills and festivals, passed from person to person. ¹⁴
World Heritage Site	A place that UNESCO has listed as having outstanding value to all of humanity. Zambia's is Mosi-oa-Tunya / Victoria Falls. ¹⁵
Tentative List	A country's list of places it plans to put forward for World Heritage status. Zambia's has 14 places. ¹⁶
Indigenous peoples	The first or original peoples of a place, who have their own cultures and often their own languages.
Indigenous language	A language that belongs to the indigenous peoples of a place. ¹⁷
Endangered language	A language that could disappear because fewer and fewer people speak it. ¹⁸
Language extinction	When a language has no speakers left. Linguists estimate one language dies about every two weeks. ¹⁹
Mother tongue	The first language a person learns at home as a child.
Multilingual	Able to use more than one language, or a place where many languages are used.
Lingua franca	A common language that people who speak different languages use to talk to each other. In Lusaka an urban form of Nyanja plays this role. ²⁰
Language shift	When a community slowly stops using its own language and uses another one instead. ²¹

¹⁴ UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Zambia... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

¹⁵ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Zambia (States Parties)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

¹⁶ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Zambia (States Parties)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

¹⁷ OHCHR. Many indigenous languages are in danger of extinction (2019, citing the UNESCO Atlas of... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

¹⁸ OHCHR. Many indigenous languages are in danger of extinction (2019, citing the UNESCO Atlas of... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

¹⁹ OHCHR. Many indigenous languages are in danger of extinction (2019, citing the UNESCO Atlas of... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

²⁰ CLEAR Global. Language data for Zambia. <https://clearglobal.org/language-data-for-zambia/>

²¹ Cultural Survival. Endangered languages in town: the urbanization of indigenous languages... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

Term	Meaning
Language revitalisation	Efforts to bring a threatened language back into everyday use, for example through schools and language nests. ²²
Oral tradition	Stories, songs, proverbs and knowledge passed on by speaking rather than writing.
Elders	Older members of a community who hold knowledge and traditions and teach them to the young.
Urbanisation	The growth of cities and towns as more people move to live in them. ²³
Megacity	A city with 10 million or more people. ²⁴
Migration	When people move from one place to another to live, often to find work, schools or health care. ²⁵
Informal settlement	A neighbourhood built without official planning or permission, often lacking services such as water and toilets. ²⁶
Historic urban landscape	A historic city or district understood as a whole, including its buildings, spaces, traditions and people. ²⁷
Conservation	Looking after heritage so that it lasts, including repairing it, without changing what makes it special.
Authenticity	How genuine and true to its history a heritage place or tradition is. Modern materials can put authenticity at risk. ²⁸
Integrity	How complete and undamaged a heritage place is, including its surroundings. ²⁹
Masquerade	A ceremony or performance where people wear masks and costumes to represent spirits or characters. ³⁰
Initiation	A ceremony marking a young person's move into a new stage of life, such as adulthood. ³¹
Safeguarding	All the actions taken to keep heritage alive, such as recording it, teaching it, funding it and protecting it in law. ³²
Accountability	Making sure that people and institutions answer for what they do, through reports, checks and honest results.

²² The Conversation. Saved from extinction? New modelling suggests a hopeful future for te reo... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

²³ UN News. Cities now home to nearly half of humanity: UN report (World Urbanization Prospects... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

²⁴ UN News. Cities now home to nearly half of humanity: UN report (World Urbanization Prospects... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

²⁵ Cultural Survival. Endangered languages in town: the urbanization of indigenous languages... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

²⁶ UN-Habitat. Urbanization in Zambia: building inclusive and sustainable cities... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

²⁷ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

²⁸ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Stone Town of Zanzibar. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/173/>

²⁹ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Stone Town of Zanzibar... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³⁰ Zed Films. The Makishi Masquerade (documentary by Jérôme Ségur, 2007). <https://www.zed.fr/en/catalog/makishi-masquerade-the-52-hd>

³¹ Zed Films. The Makishi Masquerade (documentary by Jérôme Ségur, 2007)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³² UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Zambia... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

4. Case Studies

These cases show the problems and some solutions in real life. Facts come from the sources in the bibliography. Numbers can change and some are estimates, so check dates and methods. **You must represent your assigned country's view.**

4.1 Lusaka: a city of many languages

Zambia has over 30 major languages, and seven indigenous languages have official regional status: Bemba, Nyanja, Lozi, Tonga, Kaonde, Luvale and Lunda. English is the official language, but only about 2% of people speak it as a first language. The most widely spoken are Bemba (35% of people), Nyanja/Chewa (20%), Tonga (12%) and Lozi (6%).³³ In the capital, an urban form of Nyanja works as a lingua franca, so people from different language groups can talk to each other.³⁴

Zambia's cities are growing fast. In 2018, 43.5% of people lived in urban areas, and about 70% of the urban population lived in informal settlements.³⁵ In 2013 Zambia changed its school policy so that familiar languages are used for early education (pre-school and Grades 1 to 4). Before the change, Grade 5 learners reached only 27.4% basic competency in reading.³⁶ This shows that language and learning are closely linked.

4.2 The Makishi masquerade: a living tradition

The Makishi masquerade is a tradition from Zambia in which masked dancers, called makishi, play a part in the Mukanda initiation, a coming-of-age ceremony for boys. A documentary about the village of Kashushu describes a ceremony lasting about four months that has been passed on by word of mouth for generations.³⁷ The film also shows how hard it can be to keep going: the organiser struggled to pay for the costumes, food and four months of initiation.³⁸ UNESCO supported an Action Plan for the Safeguarding of the Makishi Masquerade in Zambia in 2006–2009.³⁹

4.3 Stone Town, Zanzibar: an old city under pressure

Stone Town became a World Heritage Site in 2000. It is a Swahili trading town where the cultures of Africa, the Arab region, India and Europe have mixed over centuries, and it is known for its carved doors, courtyards and mansions.⁴⁰ But UNESCO records worries about old buildings decaying, about badly scaled development along the waterfront, and about modern building materials replacing traditional methods. It says that tourism growth since 1990 has caused traffic and changes in land use, and that without coherent policies, "random development" could damage the town's character.⁴¹

³³ CLEAR Global. Language data for Zambia... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³⁴ CLEAR Global. Language data for Zambia... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³⁵ UN-Habitat. Urbanization in Zambia: building inclusive and sustainable cities... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³⁶ UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa. Country review: Zambia, the impact of language policy... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³⁷ Zed Films. The Makishi Masquerade (documentary by Jérôme Ségur, 2007)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³⁸ Zed Films. The Makishi Masquerade (documentary by Jérôme Ségur, 2007)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

³⁹ UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Zambia... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴⁰ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Stone Town of Zanzibar... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴¹ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Stone Town of Zanzibar... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

4.4 New Zealand: bringing a language back

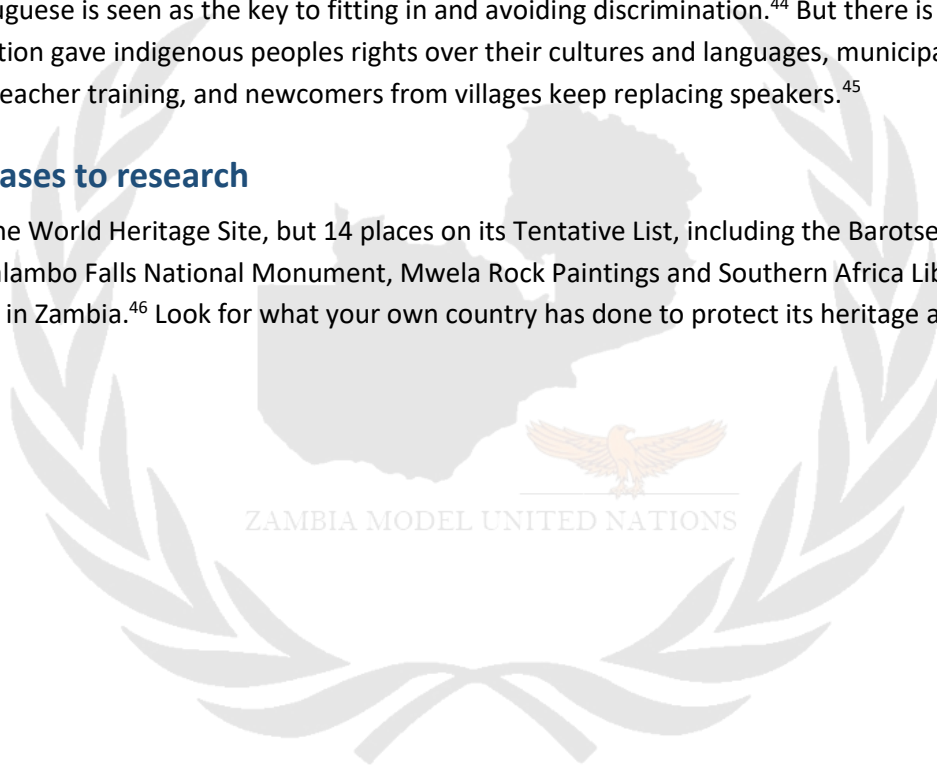
Te reo Māori, the Māori language, was once on a path towards extinction. The first kōhanga reo (language nest) opened in 1982, and in 1987 the Māori Language Act made te reo an official language.⁴² In a 2021 survey, 7.9% of people said they could speak it at least fairly well, up from 6.1% in 2018. Tertiary course enrolments rose 93% over ten years, and the government has set a target of one million speakers by 2040. Modelling suggests the language could be on a path to recovery, but only if government and community keep up their commitment.⁴³

4.5 Brazil: indigenous languages in a small city

About 100,000 indigenous people live in Brazil's cities, roughly a quarter of the country's indigenous population. In São Gabriel da Cachoeira, families moved to town for schools and health care. Only 28% of Nheengatu-speaking mothers and 47% of Tukano-speaking mothers used their language with their children, because Portuguese is seen as the key to fitting in and avoiding discrimination.⁴⁴ But there is hope: Brazil's 1988 constitution gave indigenous peoples rights over their cultures and languages, municipal schools now run bilingual teacher training, and newcomers from villages keep replacing speakers.⁴⁵

4.6 More cases to research

Zambia has one World Heritage Site, but 14 places on its Tentative List, including the Barotse Cultural Landscape, Kalambo Falls National Monument, Mwela Rock Paintings and Southern Africa Liberation Heritage Sites in Zambia.⁴⁶ Look for what your own country has done to protect its heritage and its languages.



⁴² The Conversation. Saved from extinction? New modelling suggests a hopeful future for te reo... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴³ The Conversation. Saved from extinction? New modelling suggests a hopeful future for te reo... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴⁴ Cultural Survival. Endangered languages in town: the urbanization of indigenous languages... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴⁵ Cultural Survival. Endangered languages in town: the urbanization of indigenous languages... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴⁶ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Zambia (States Parties)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

5. Major Actors

5.1 Organisations and networks

- **UNESCO.** Leads the UN's work on heritage, culture and the Decade of Indigenous Languages.^{47,48}
- **UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.** Works with UNESCO on the Decade of Indigenous Languages and produces the urbanisation figures.^{49,50}
- **UN-Habitat.** The UN's agency for cities, which supports Zambia's National Urbanisation Policy.⁵¹
- **UNICEF.** Studies how language affects children's learning, including in Zambia.⁵²
- **Local governments and city councils.** Decide how land is used and what may be built.⁵³
- **Communities and elders.** They hold the songs, stories, languages and traditions. Community groups like Cultural Survival help indigenous peoples speak up.⁵⁴
- **Museums, schools and universities.** Record, teach and study heritage and languages.⁵⁵



⁴⁷ UNESCO. International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴⁸ UNESCO. Building peace through education, science and culture... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁴⁹ UNESCO. International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁵⁰ UN News. Cities now home to nearly half of humanity: UN report (World Urbanization Prospects... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁵¹ UN-Habitat. Urbanization in Zambia: building inclusive and sustainable cities... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

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⁵³ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011)... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁵⁴ Cultural Survival. Endangered languages in town: the urbanization of indigenous languages... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

⁵⁵ UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Zambia... (See earlier note or bibliography.)

6. Preparing for Committee

6.1 Questions a strong resolution answers

1. **What does it protect?** A building, a place, a tradition, a language, or several? In which place, and for whom?
2. **Who will do it?** Name who will run it, such as communities, schools, cities or governments.
3. **How will it be paid for?** Ideas without money or a plan stay ideas.
4. **Does it involve the community?** Have the people who live the heritage been asked what they want?
5. **Does it work with a growing city?** Can heritage and development both succeed?
6. **Does it reach children and young people?** Will the next generation learn the language and the tradition?
7. **How will it be checked?** Add reporting, and a date to review progress.
8. **Can it win support?** Will delegates from different regions and views vote for it?

6.2 Guiding questions for your research

1. How many languages are spoken in your country, and which ones are at risk?
2. Does your country teach children in their home languages? What does its policy say?
3. How fast are your country's cities growing, and what is happening to old neighbourhoods?
4. Which places or traditions in your country are on UNESCO's lists, and which ones are not?
5. Does your country give or receive money for heritage and language projects?
6. What can your country realistically offer: money, experts, training, technology?
7. Which countries share your goals, and which will you need to persuade? Where would you compromise?

6.3 Where to research

- **UNESCO** website, including the World Heritage Centre and the Decade of Indigenous Languages pages.
- **UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger**, for which languages are at risk.
- **UN News** (news.un.org) and **UN-Habitat**, for cities and urbanisation.
- **UNICEF**, for language and learning.
- Your country's statements at the UN, and the websites of its culture, education and local government ministries.

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