

Re: To the respectful António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Your excellency,

I extend my sincere greetings to you and hope this letter finds you well. I am writing this letter from Mongolia to bring to your attention an urgent matter regarding the fate and possibly serious consequence that the Mongolian national language may face. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has a population of four million Mongolians and, in accordance with the article four of the Constitution of PRC which states that 'the people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs', the region has been developing alongside other nationalities and minorities within a relatively equal social environment. The reason why historically the Mongolian written language was legally established as one of the official languages in IMAR of the PRC is due to its extraordinary cultural heritage status - the Mongolian script, in terms of its origins and timescale, is of similar age as ancient Aramaic, Sogdian, Uighur, and as any of these languages it stands as an invaluable monument to the cultural and civilizational achievement of the world.

In the course of their history, since its ancestral language of Hunnu (Xiongnu), the Mongolian nationality has used such phonogram scripts as ke-mu, Hu script, Runic script, Khitan script, Hudam or the Mongolian script, vertical square script, Tod script, Soyombo script and Vagindra scripts, by incessantly developing its intellectual culture. Of these writing systems the Mongolian script deserves its historical merit as it has been used for the longest period, allowing the Mongolians to communicate with world civilizations and to contribute considerably to the eastern and western culture, science, philosophical thought and literature. Judging from the established research, scientific references, and sources written by respected scholars of cultural history, the origin and the development of Mongolian script dates back a thousand years and it is considered as an integral part of the world's heritage of linguistic culture.

Nevertheless, in June of 2020 some administrative institutions of the PRC started implementing orders in the city of Tongliao in the IMAR, which included limiting classroom instructions to Chinese language only in Mongolian schools, banning in August the use of a Mongolian app on the internet, deleting Mongolian posts on Wechat and Dou Yin platforms, and starting from September reaching a decision to teach some subjects in IMAR's Mongolian banners in the Chinese language only. They thus violated the fourth article of the Constitution of the PRC and the United Nations 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 17 (d) which states 'encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous', as well as Article 30, which states that 'in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language'. They also violated the United Nations 1992 Declaration on the

Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted by its General Assembly, which states that ‘Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination’. I am hopeful that the leadership at the United Nations and UNESCO have taken note of these opportunist acts which go against the effective legal and human rights regulations.

The Mongolian nationality’s traditional way of life and culture is one of the oldest lifestyles and cultures in the world that developed and preserved the nomadic culture and civilization, which in turn are closely adapted to nature’s ecological system and which uphold the philosophy of existence that stresses harmony between itself and the transcendent nature of this world. I personally believe that in the near future nomadic culture and civilization, developing alongside the modern and pragmatic cyber civilization, can serve as a preserve of the seeds of reason, ideology, education and enlightenment that shall encompass the most appropriate, the most commonly democratic, the least socio-ecologically harmful, the most compassionate and the most humane ethical developmental orientation. Because of this I am extremely concerned that any political activity which poses a hindrance or proscription to the development of the Mongolian nationality’s ethnic language, written script, culture and education also directly challenge the development of linguistic heritage of the whole of humanity.

If the world does not unanimously realise the grave dangers of the actions of some institutions of the PRC and immediately condemn such acts, many of the world’s nations which have their own scripts and unique culture attached to them, may demonstrate their indignation by protesting that the PRC is close to committing a ‘cultural genocide’ with its chauvinist and nationalist tendencies through its attack on one of the humanity’s sources of intellectual achievements, imagination, culture and enlightenment! Such are the serious consequences that I wish to convey to your excellency and with it I wish to implore the United Nations that in accordance with its obligations and rights to ensure equity and humaneness in international relations, it shall annul the decisions of some of the institutions of the PRC that have recently prevented students in schools for Mongolian nationalities in the IMAR from receiving education; gaining knowledge; learning their own native language and engaging in the development of their own language. They have therefore prevented these schools from providing tangible assistance in ensuring the rights of children in the IMAR to receive education in their native language, and protecting one of the humanity’s ‘living heritages’ – the Mongolian language and culture.

[Translated from the Mongolian by Tuya Shagdar]