



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE COMMISSIONERS

**INAUGURAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL
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BARCELONA, SPAIN

INAUGURAL CONFERENCE REPORT
AUGUST 2014



REPORT ON THE INAUGURAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE COMMISSIONERS

Background

On March 21, 2014, language commissioners from various parts of the world gathered in Barcelona, Spain, for the inaugural conference of the newly established International Association of Language Commissioners (IALC). Created in May 2013 in Dublin, Ireland, the IALC supports and advances language rights, equality and diversity and helps language commissioners work according to the highest professional standards. Current membership includes representatives from regions and countries with language commissioners, including Catalonia, Wales, Ireland, Kosovo, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Canada (including Ontario, New Brunswick and Nunavut).

It was with great enthusiasm that Catalan Ombudsman Rafael Ribó hosted this inaugural event. Ombudsman Ribó and the other IALC commissioners were welcomed to the city by Catalanian President Artur Mas. President Mas met the commissioners in the old royal palace, a 14th century building in Barcelona's Gothic Quarter. "Catalonia is not only a region of Spain," he said. "It is an 800-year-old European nation with its own language, its own culture and its own identity. We have struggled to maintain our culture and our language."

Ombudsman Ribó also organized a language symposium that took place just before the IALC conference. He and his staff generously welcomed a cosmopolitan array of participants to exchange ideas on the theme of "Language Rights and Social Cohesion in Plurilingual Societies." The IALC's one-day inaugural conference followed the symposium and featured three thematic panels and a discussion workshop.

The first panel introduced the topic of language rights in an era of globalization and spotlighted the role of language commissioners. The second panel focused on the issue of minority language education, and the third dealt with lessons learned from investigations into complaints conducted by the different member offices. The day wrapped up with a discussion workshop in which participants had an opportunity to exchange ideas on relevant research and best practices within the complex field of linguistic accommodation.

First Panel: Language Rights and Challenges in an Era of Globalization

Ombudsman Ribó introduced the day's activities by noting that the conference would not have been possible if it had not been for the Dublin conference held the year before, which was hosted by former Irish language commissioner Seán Ó Cuirreáin. Mr. Ó Cuirreáin resigned from his post in February 2014, citing government inaction in protecting the Irish language.

The first speaker of this panel, Canada’s commissioner of official languages, Graham Fraser, also took the opportunity to thank Mr. Ó Cuirreáin for his important role in founding the IALC, and to pay tribute to his courage and lucidity in stepping down as Ireland’s language commissioner, as well as to his dramatic explanation of why he felt obliged to do so.

Commissioner Fraser, who is also the chair of the IALC until May 2015, went on to note that Mr. Ó Cuirreáin’s resignation touched on the primary obligation of any state that makes a commitment to protect language rights, which is to offer services in the official language of the citizen’s choice, and not to require the citizen to learn another official language in order to deal with the state. A core part of the IALC’s mandate, he continued, is to offer support to countries struggling to secure this obligation as well as other obligations related to linguistic equality and diversity.

Commissioner Fraser noted that while the IALC is still in the developmental stages as an organization, its members are powerfully united by the mandates they share. All of the commissioners have responsibilities as independent officials reporting to their parliaments or legislatures on how their governments are meeting their responsibilities on language rights. “We are ombudsmen, he said. “We receive complaints, we investigate them and we report on them in a fair and objective fashion.”

THE CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE — The inaugural conference of the IALC consisted of three panels focusing on language rights in an era of globalization, minority language education and language commissioners’ investigations into complaints. The challenge of holding governments to account in the protection of human rights is well known to ombudsmen internationally, yet the language dimension of these rights is less well understood. One of the IALC’s aims is to bring greater clarity to the meaning of language rights and to the multifaceted practice of upholding them. The presentation by former Irish language commissioner Seán Ó Cuirreáin focused on the reasons for his recent resignation: language cannot be treated as a second-rate concern, but rather must be proudly and deftly integrated into the workings of government. On the question of minority language education, the panelists highlighted the dangers of what on the surface might seem to be a good idea—integrated bilingual schools—but what in fact typically turns out to be a recipe for assimilation. As for investigations into complaints, Ontario’s French language services commissioner, François Boileau, recounted the feat of convincing the government to reprint half a million flyers warning citizens of the deadly H1N1 virus (the flyers were originally printed solely in the language of the majority). Looking forward to future IALC activities, including the next conference in Ottawa, Canada, in May 2015, Finland’s former minister of foreign affairs, Pär Stenbäck, spoke of the need to establish contact with language defenders and advocates in continents such as Asia, Africa and South America, with their hundreds of languages and cultures.

Mr. Fraser also emphasized the important promotional role that language commissioners can play. Through partnerships and strategic interventions, commissioners not only support the mere survival of minority language communities, but can help them thrive. To be sure, of the many criteria for determining

language vitality (e.g., number of speakers, intergenerational language transmission, availability of materials for language education), language commissioners should first and foremost be concerned with what is referred to as “governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use.”¹ But they should also be concerned with promoting the learning and use of minority languages, and their acceptance by the majority communities.

In a world in which international communication is rapidly increasing, and in which English has become the dominant language of scientific research and international trade, the job of language commissioners has in some ways become more difficult. In many jurisdictions where language commissioners are active, arguments are made that it is more important to learn an international language—usually English, but often Spanish or Russian—instead of the language or languages for which the commissioner is responsible. It is up to the commissioners and the IALC to speak up for the vitality of minority languages as a key element in building a national identity, and for the idea that linguistic diversity is a value and not a burden.

Mr. Fraser’s views were echoed by the next presenter, Sean Ó Cuirreáin. Following the adoption of Ireland’s *Official Languages Act* in 2003, Mr. Ó Cuirreáin was appointed the country’s first language commissioner. Reappointed for a second term in 2010, he stepped down from his post in February 2014, citing government inaction and the continued inability of Irish speakers in the Irish-speaking heartlands to get service in their own language.

In his presentation, “Lessons Learned over Ten Years as Ireland’s First Language Commissioner,” Mr. Ó Cuirreáin spoke of the concrete actions his office had taken during this time. He also spoke of the challenges and obstacles he had faced and which led to his resignation. Mr. Ó Cuirreáin’s actions as commissioner were driven largely by the stream of complaints that were received during his time in office. Of the 6,126 complaints received over 10 years, 23% related to government departments and offices, 32% to local authorities and the rest to a wide range of state organizations.

During this same period, his office received 1,862 requests for advice concerning language obligations from state organizations. In response to the complaints, questions and concerns raised by citizens, Mr. Ó Cuirreáin’s office completed 96 formal investigations, 213 reviews or audits of institutions, 10 annual reports, and 6 special reports for parliament. His office also created a host of communications products (advertisements, educational resources, a one-stop Web site, etc.), presented at university conferences, participated in a great number of awareness-raising events and contributed to national and international research.

In undertaking these activities, Mr. Ó Cuirreáin and his staff learned some invaluable lessons. As a compliance institution, language commissioners should not expect to be popular with everyone. They must build a reputation of being firm but fair. The objective of

¹ UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, working document for the International Expert Meeting on Safeguarding of Endangered Languages, Paris, March 10-12,

recommendations following an investigation should always aim beyond individual cases toward systemic change. Commissioners must be aware that each decision on the merit of a complaint creates a precedent. In the course of their activities, they should use the full range of authority they possess. However, in doing so, they must be able to explain the common values that underpin official language rules. Finally, monitoring and auditing get results—what gets measured gets done!

Despite some progress in the protection of the Irish language over the course of Mr. Ó Cuirreáin’s mandate, the government betrayed what he described as “an utter lack of commitment to the Act.” More specifically, the government failed to implement reforms that would have enabled it to unequivocally guarantee the provision of state services in Irish in the country’s Irish-speaking heartlands, known as the Gaeltacht. There was inadequate attention to Irish language competence in public-sector recruitment and an excessive delay in processing reviews and amendments of language legislation. It is worth recalling a statement Mr. Ó Cuirreáin made to Parliament at the time of his resignation about the future of the Irish language and culture:

As we begin to regain our economic sovereignty, it would be a travesty if we were to lose our linguistic sovereignty—a cornerstone of our cultural identity, heritage and soul as a nation. I believe this to be a clear and present danger.”²

The next presentation was given by Michel Doucet, Professor of Law at the Université de Moncton (in the Canadian province of New Brunswick), whose primary field of research and teaching is language rights. Professor Doucet played a key role in the creation of the International Observatory on Language Rights, of which he has been director since its inception in 2010. He was invited to the conference to talk about the third edition of his book, *Language Rights in Canada*. Released in 2014, the book was co-edited with former Canadian Supreme Court Justice Michel Bastarache.

Professor Doucet introduced his book by saying that its various contributors all tended to emphasize the importance of language rights as a pivotal component of the broader set of minority rights. He noted that the general aim of the book was to present both a summary of the current array of language laws in Canada—from the provision of public services to education and the private sector—and a contextual analysis of the evolution of accompanying principles for interpreting and applying these laws. Two chapters were added in this most recent edition: one on language rights in international law and another on the language rights of Aboriginal peoples.

² An Coimisinéir Teanga Seán Ó Cuirreáin, translation of speaking notes for an address to the Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions, December 4, 2013. On-line version (www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/psop/Opening-Statement--An-Coimisinéir-Teanga.docx) accessed May 26, 2014.

Although Canada is often perceived as a leader in the protection of language rights, Professor Doucet observed that the consolidation of language rights in Canada is a relatively recent achievement. While constitutional language rights are found in the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, it was not until the entrenchment of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982 that the Supreme Court established basic principles for the practical protection of language rights. Professor Doucet noted that many outstanding issues still remain regarding how these rights are judicially interpreted and applied in Canada.

Second Panel: The Impact of Minority Language Education on the Preservation and Advancement of Minority Languages

The second panel of the conference focused on minority language education, a topic that generates much interest in Catalonia, as elsewhere. The first presentation of this panel was given by Meri Huws, who began working as the very first Welsh Language Commissioner on April 1, 2012. Commissioner Huws' presentation, "Building on Success: Creating a Bilingual Workforce in Wales?" examined whether the success of Welsh language education over the past 50 years has led to the creation a bilingual workforce, and if not, why not?

There are currently two contrasting statistical trends in Wales. On the one hand, there has been a long-term decline since the beginning of the 20th century in the number of Welsh speakers. On the other hand, there has been a strong turnaround since 1971 in the number of children who can speak Welsh, with an increase in both first- and second-language speakers. The problem that concerns Commissioner Huws is how to ensure that this modest level of growth is sustained over the life cycle and does not get lost as young adults enter the workforce.

Analysis that Commissioner Huws' office has undertaken shows that the age at which slippage in language-use occurs is between 16 and 18, especially in vocation-based educational institutions.

Whereas bold steps have been taken to promote Welsh in universities, this is not the case for most colleges. Consequently, the Welsh language is under-represented as a workplace skill, especially in administrative work, sales and other jobs that require dealing with the public. This is a problem not only for Welsh-speaking families and communities, but also for employers seeking Welsh-speaking workers for positions that require communicating with the public.

Commissioner Meri Huws took up her post as the first Welsh Language Commissioner on April 1, 2012. Her office was created as an independent body through the Welsh Language Measure 2011. As Commissioner, she possesses both promotion/facilitation powers and regulatory powers—the latter of which applies not only to public sector organizations but also to businesses and the private sector. There are two guiding principles that underlie the work of her office: first, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language; and second, persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of Welsh, if they choose to do so.

More research is needed to determine the extent to which specific sectors of the economy are under-represented.

The next presentation, “Supporting Irish-Medium Education in Ireland,” was given by Muireann Ní Mhóráin, Chief Executive of the Department of Education’s Advisory Council on Irish-Medium Education (COGG). Her organization was founded under the provisions of section 31 of the *Education Act* of 1998 to establish a structure to cater to the educational needs of schools in the Gaeltacht and to support the teaching of Irish in the rest of the country where Irish is spoken as a minority language.

In her presentation, Ms. Ní Mhóráin spoke of the successful expansion in recent decades of Irish-medium schools, which are Irish-language immersion schools outside of the Gaeltacht. In 2006, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland, there were nearly 200 Irish-medium schools at both primary and post-primary levels, whereas there were just 16 such schools in 1972. The success of these schools is attributed to organized community involvement and efficient administrative infrastructure.

Ms. Ní Mhóráin also spoke of the teaching of Irish in schools within the Gaeltacht. Whereas elsewhere in the country parents can choose to send their children to an Irish-medium school, Gaeltacht schools are intended for all children of the community, some of whom have little or no experience of spoken Irish. This linguistic diversity has an impact on the ability of these schools, and of Irish-speaking parents, to foster a strong use of Irish in school, at home and in the community—especially in towns where Irish speakers are a minority within the community.

As there are no entrance criteria or enrollment policies, these schools try to do something for everyone. However, English, as the country’s dominant language, quickly gets the upper hand. There is evidence that pupils use more English than Irish as their normal language of communication. A recent survey found that a quarter of all pupils in Gaeltacht schools completed their primary schooling with only a fair mastery of the Irish language and that approximately 10% of pupils left primary school with little mastery of it. Ms. Ní Mhóráin concluded her presentation by underlining the necessity of developing a clear policy for Gaeltacht schools that focuses on curriculum revision, student assessment and teacher education in order to reverse this trend.

The last presentation of the minority language education panel, “Synergy: The Role of Francophone Schools in the Protection and Development of the Francophone Community,” was given by Katherine d’Entremont, Commissioner of Official Languages for the Canadian province of New Brunswick. As an independent agent of the provincial Legislative Assembly, Commissioner d’Entremont has two responsibilities: to ensure compliance with New Brunswick’s *Official Languages Act* and to promote the advancement and vitality of both of her province’s official languages, English and French.

The Atlantic province of New Brunswick is Canada’s only officially bilingual province. According to the 2011 census, 65.4% of New Brunswickers speak English as their mother tongue. French is

the mother tongue of 32% of the province's residents. Some parts of the province have a high concentration of either Francophones or Anglophones, while others are quite mixed. Both language communities have the right to "distinct educational institutions," yet language relations in mixed communities are such that parents sometimes wonder whether schools should be "dualistic" or whether they should be "integrated." Commissioner d'Entremont's presentation defended the importance of the dualistic approach to education.

The purpose of the dualistic approach, where each language community has its own distinct school boards, is not to separate the two communities, but rather to ensure the continued vitality of each. Ms. d'Entremont remarked that many citizens do not understand this even today, particularly in the Anglophone community. Alongside the family and socio-institutional environments, the school milieu is pivotal in ensuring the vitality of minority language communities. The rationale of the dualistic approach is nicely articulated in an early report on education in Canada from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development:

The relevant principle is that when attempts are made to integrate two systems, one of which is weaker than the other, the lack of symmetry in bilateral relations will cause the integration process to weaken even further the weaker of the two parties. It may eventually become assimilated within a structure—in economic, social and cultural terms—not much different from that of the stronger party.³

Third Panel: Case Studies on the Impact of Investigations Conducted by Commissioners' Offices on Language Rights

The third and final panel of the conference focused on the impact of investigations into complaints received by language commissioners on issues as varied as marine rescue, police services, government "flyers" and hospital language services. Annie Plouffe, Director of Investigations with Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages, opened the afternoon panel with her presentation, "Case Study on the Investigation of a Marine Rescue Centre: From Closure to Changing a Government Decision to Saving Lives."

In 2011, the Canadian government announced the closure of a marine rescue sub-centre in Québec City. Had the decision been implemented, distress calls from vessels in the waters of Eastern Canada would have been handled by the two remaining rescue coordination centres in the area. Their ability to provide services in French was unknown. Commissioner Fraser received several complaints against the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. His office conducted an investigation to evaluate whether the decision contravened sections of the *Official Languages Act* pertaining to communications with and services to the public, and to the promotion of English and French.

³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Canada*, Washington, 1976, p. 113.

The investigation revealed that the two remaining rescue centres did not have the capacity to handle distress calls in English and French equally well at all times. The complaints were therefore considered to be founded. In the final investigation report, Commissioner Fraser made eight recommendations. Given the risk posed to the safety of Canadians, he was prepared to use his full powers to ensure that the closure of the Québec City sub-centre was postponed until all eight recommendations were fully implemented.

Two follow-up site visits were conducted through which it was determined that only three of the recommendations had been implemented. The Commissioner's position on the necessity of postponing the closure was therefore maintained. In December 2013, shortly after the release of the second follow-up report, the Canadian government reversed its decision to close the sub-centre, and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans recognized the impact of the Commissioner's report on the reversal of the decision.

The next presentation, "Case Study on How Complaints against the Police Service Led to a Language Quota in Recruitment of New Gardaí (police officers) in Ireland," was given by Órla de Búrca, Director of Investigations for Ireland's language commissioner. She was accompanied by Eimear Ní Cheallaigh, a representative from the police department. The issue under investigation was whether there were adequate police services in Irish for Irish-speakers in Gaeltacht communities.

According to legislation, police officers stationed in a district of the Gaeltacht must be sufficiently competent in the Irish language to be able to use it with facility in carrying out their duties. A complaint was received by Commissioner Ó Cuirreáin's office from a resident of the Gaeltacht area of Gaoth Dobhair to the effect that they were rarely, if ever, served in Irish. The investigation revealed that only one out of nine officers at the police station under investigation was Irish-speaking.

In his report, Commissioner Ó Cuirreáin recommended that all officers be fluent in Irish at this station and that an objective system of appraisal be put into place. The deputy commissioner of the police department was receptive to the Commissioner's recommendations. Several positive measures were agreed upon, including inspections of language capabilities by senior management, transfers of fluent speakers from other stations and the creation of an in-service language training program.

In the follow-up investigation, it was determined that systemic change would require moving beyond training to recruitment. As a result, the recruitment policy for the police department was revised to include a specialist Irish-language stream. This led to a much greater number of Irish-speaking applicants, and it is expected that 100% fluency will be attained in the years ahead. Beyond the catalyst for change provided by the complainant, the success factors in this case included 1) public acceptance of the veracity of the findings outlined in the Commissioner's report, 2) mutual respect between all parties and 3) a commitment to finding long-term solutions.

The third presentation of the panel on investigations was given by the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario, Canada, François Boileau. His presentation was entitled “Case Study on English-Only H1N1 Flyer: From Communication Crash to Communication Coup.” In September 2009, the Commissioner launched an investigation into what he considered to be a direct violation of the rights of Francophone citizens in Ontario: the province-wide distribution of an English-only flyer on preventing the spread of the Influenza A (H1N1) virus.

The post of French Language Services Commissioner was established in September 2007 following an amendment to Ontario’s 1986 *French Language Services Act*. New amendments to the Act made the Commissioner an officer of the Assembly as of January 1, 2014. With these amendments, the French Language Services Commissioner reports directly to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. He advises parliamentarians and makes recommendations to them with respect to the application of the Act.

In a press release shortly after the distribution of the English-only flyers, Commissioner Boileau indicated that he would launch an investigation into this grave misstep on the part of the provincial government. The government reacted quickly, however, with the Premier of Ontario issuing a public apology for the affront to Francophone citizens. Coinciding with this important public declaration, and to the Commissioner’s great relief, a new bilingual pamphlet was distributed to every household in the province.

In the meantime, the Commissioner continued his investigation. His team read, processed and analyzed thousands of pages of documents. What they found was a poor integration of French-language services into the ministries’ strategic and operational planning processes, a marginal influence of the Office of Francophone Affairs within the machinery of government and a profound ignorance within the public service of Ontario’s *French Language Services Act* and the province’s Francophone community. On the upside, the Commissioner was invited to take part in several high-level meetings with a very specific purpose: to institute a mandatory directive on French-language communications with the public.

In May 2010, the Ontario government issued a clear directive on communications in French that was mandatory for all ministries and classified agencies. While pleased with the adoption of this directive—clearly, it was an important step forward for the integration of French-language services into the planning of government communications—the Commissioner decided to continue his investigation so as to monitor the implementation of the directive. This process led to four recommendations published in his investigation report: one about the wording of the directive, two about training, and one about the use of social media channels by government representatives.

The last presentation of this panel, “Case Study on Language Services and Communications at the Qikiqtani General Hospital,” was given by the Languages Commissioner for Nunavut, Canada, Sandra Inutiq. In recent decades, the use of English has been increasing at the expense of the Inuit languages (Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun).⁴ In March 2012, based on concerns raised by the public, Commissioner Inutiq and her team decided to initiate a systemic investigation of Inuit and French language services at the Qikiqtani General Hospital. The objectives of this audit were to assess the linguistic context of hospital service delivery and communications with the public, to gain insight into the impact of language barriers on access to quality health care services, and to make recommendations on how to improve the situation.

In recent decades, the use of English has been increasing at the expense of the Inuit language (Inuktitut). Nunavut has two language acts that fall under Commissioner Sandra Inutiq’s jurisdiction: the *Official Languages Act* and the *Inuit Language Protection Act*. The first sets out service and communication requirements for Inuit, English and French within the Legislative Assembly, the Government of Nunavut and its boards and agencies, as well as courts and municipalities. The second aims to protect and revitalize the Inuit language and requires that the Government of Nunavut take specific measures to safeguard it.

One of the problems that Commissioner Inutiq and her office faced in assessing the linguistic accommodation of patients is that Inuit culture is not accustomed to demanding rights-based service standards and submitting complaints. Therefore, it is not always clear to them that they have a right to communicate and receive services in the official language of their choice. This makes it all the more important for staff to actively offer their services in multiple languages, so that the citizen is given a choice.

The Commissioner and her team conducted interviews with hospital staff and members of the public, as well as with Nunavut non-governmental organizations. They are still in the process of completing the investigation report, partly because of the prolonged length of time needed to obtain key documents from the hospital, such as a list of bilingual staff and budget spending of language dollars.

Among the lessons learned from the investigation is the need to flex more muscle to compel the release of information or to summon witnesses. Language legislation could be strengthened in this regard with the introduction of an “obstruction clause” and clear timelines for the submission of documents. However, even with these changes, a tension would likely remain between traditional Inuit values of informal mediation and consensus building, on the one hand, and the need to follow formal procedures, on the other.

⁴ In her presentation, Commissioner Inutiq noted that there is currently some debate as to whether the proper term for the first of these languages is “Inuktitut” or “Inuktu”.

Looking forward

The concluding remarks of the conference were given by Finland's former minister of foreign affairs and former minister of education, Pär Stenbäck. His comments focused on the approach the IALC could take in organizing future conferences, as well as on outlining the broader challenges of international outreach faced by this young organization. Referring to the various presentations given throughout the day, Mr. Stenbäck began his remarks by commenting on the impressive variety of practices within the spectrum of linguistic accommodation. Fresh and sometimes surprising new perspectives arise when considering the broad array of cultural and legislative contexts alongside one another.

It is precisely this sharing of perspectives and experiences regarding language rights that makes the IALC a unique and important organization among human rights organizations. Mr. Stenbäck also noted that there is a need to manage expectations at these meetings, for there are no magic models or ultimate solutions to be found that will resolve all problems of language equality and diversity. Rather, there is a plurality of alternative yet legitimate models to be discovered, shared and compared.

If the inaugural conference gave participants an appreciation of the rich variety of practices of linguistic accommodation, future conferences should focus on the *comparison* of specific practices across jurisdictions. They should move from the initial showcasing of different country models to drawing parallels between comparable practices—for example, practices of bridge building in post-conflict environments—and the tools used by language ombudsmen to mediate, defend rights, measure progress, etc. The aim should be to develop common views within the IALC and its network on the practices and tools that work best for achieving systemic change, as opposed to short-term remedies.

One way of developing such views in an organized way is to develop a research program that builds on previous findings put forth by academics and researchers. This question was also explored in the discussion workshops. In addition to coordinating the themes to be addressed in future conferences so that they fit into a broader plan of short- and long-term research priorities, there is a need to compare notes with other organizations, such as the International Ombudsman Institute. Mr. Stenbäck also mentioned the importance of establishing ties with organizations dedicated to issues of human rights and good governance more generally, such as the Council of Europe and the various regional human rights bodies.

In looking forward, Mr. Stenbäck noted the importance of making inroads into continents such as Asia, Africa and South America, with their hundreds of languages and cultures. He suggested that language commissioners with clout are rather rare internationally. And he emphasized the need for the IALC to broaden the search for partners by reaching out to larger circles of language defenders and advocates.

The next IALC conference will take place in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, in the spring of 2015 and will focus on issues such as language rights in post-conflict environments, the protection of

Aboriginal languages and other important questions. For more information about the conference, please visit the [IALC Web site](http://www.languagecommissioners.org) at www.languagecommissioners.org.