

**Welcome Greetings by Mr Getachew Engida,
Deputy Director-General
of UNESCO**



Nowadays, information and knowledge are key determinants of wealth creation, social transformation and human development. Language is the primary vehicle for communicating this information and knowledge, thus the opportunity to use one's languages on the Internet will determine the extent to which one can participate in emerging knowledge societies. Furthermore, linguistic diversity is an integral part of cultural diversity, enabling people from a variety of backgrounds to express their emotions, intentions, values and understanding, and providing a tool for achieving

mutual understanding and respect. Ideally, cyberspace should reflect and contribute to world linguistic diversity.

At present, over a decade since the adoption by the UNESCO General Conference of its Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003), technological innovations have led to an increase in the volume, complexity and fluidity of people's interactions within cyberspace. Despite such advances, it is still the case that many of the world's marginalized populations in particular have limited opportunities to engage in the global forum, due to economic, technical and linguistic barriers.

UNESCO considers that technological and scientific progress, cultural diversity and multilingualism in cyberspace have a key role to play in fostering pluralistic, equitable, open and inclusive knowledge societies. To this end, it promotes capacity-building at multiple levels, encouraging its Member States to develop encompassing language-related policies and allocate resources towards localized technological solutions that enable access to these knowledge societies.

I am confident that the Global Expert Meeting on Multilingualism in Cyberspace to be held in the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Ugra, Russian Federation from 4 to 9 July 2015, will be an important milestone in our work to promote linguistic and cultural diversity, and improve access to multilingual information and knowledge around the world.