



## 7<sup>TH</sup> MoU CONFERENCE



Closing of the Seventh Conference of the Universities that signed  
a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations  
on cooperation in preparing candidates for the  
United Nations Competitive Examinations for Language Positions  
(MoU universities)

Wednesday, 19 May 2021

Statement by Ms. Cherith Norman Chalet

Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly  
and Conference Management

Distinguished Deans and university staff,  
Distinguished participants and colleagues,

Having recently joined the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, I am honoured to have been invited to deliver the closing remarks at this seventh MoU Conference with our partner universities. The past three days have allowed me to learn more about your academic institutions and how we team up to train the next generation of language professionals for the challenging – and yet extremely rewarding – task of providing multilingual support to UN proceedings in the years to come.

This MoU Conference has been unique in many respects. It was the first ever held remotely, and I would like to thank our colleagues from ESCWA for their inventiveness and able leadership. I wish to congratulate you in particular for your ingenuity and commitment to supporting the training of language professionals.

It was also the first ever conference hosted by a UN regional commission – a clear testament to ESCWA's long-standing contribution to DGACM's outreach programme.

As underlined by USG Abelian in his opening remarks, this year's conference has also been exceptional due to its high turnout. Never before did an MoU Conference gather representatives from all our partner universities, and we take great pride in ensuring that everyone feels equally included despite the unfavourable circumstances due the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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Beyond its format, its host, and its high number of participants, what makes this year's conference stand out, however, is the emergence of relatively new topics seeking our attention. It deserves to be noted that academic institutions went through dramatic changes over the past year and a half, successfully migrating most if not all their teaching to online platforms, reinventing how they conduct training and assessments, and developing new communication channels between students and faculty members. Our collaboration with universities too, promptly reconfigured to ensure the continued supply of language professionals to the UN, regardless of circumstances.

I wish to commend you and your universities for successfully rising to the challenge to ensure that language professionals' training and our cooperation have remained uninterrupted in these uncertain times.

In concluding I also wish to join previous speakers in congratulating all student interpreters who have been supporting this conference and enabled the participants to address the conference in any of the six official languages of the United Nations which facilitates inclusion and equal participation.

Speaking of inclusion, I am delighted to observe that large numbers of female interpreters, again, took up this rather intimidating challenge. It is our hope that many of today's student interpreters will be applying to join the ranks of the UN in the years to come and help the Organization serve as the "centre for harmonizing the actions of nations" for which it was established.

I thank you for your participation in the conference and look forward to many more opportunities to engaging with the members of the MoU network.

Thank you.