

Fiscal year 2016

The Declaration of the Languages and Dialects in Danger Convention
in Yoron, Amami Islands. (Abstract)

In February 2009, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced the "Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger". Included in this were the following 1 language and 7 dialects of Japanese; the Ainu language, the Hachijo dialect, the Amami dialect, the Kunigami dialect, the Okinawa dialect, the Miyako dialect, the Yaeyama dialect and the Yonaguni dialect.

After this announcement, the Agency for Cultural Affairs carried out a survey of the actual condition of these 1 language and 7 dialects, with the cooperation of a research institute, and confirmed that there is indeed a danger of extinction just as UNESCO announced.

Furthermore, the Agency for Cultural Affairs confirmed that not only the 1 language and 7 dialects which UNESCO pointed out, but also the dialects in areas of natural disasters such as earthquakes, and under-populated areas are in danger as well.

In addition, in order to improve this critical situation, the Languages and Dialects in Danger Convention has been held since 2014 to let people know the value of these languages and dialects through an understanding of the critical conditions and referencing specific cases.

Linguistic diversity is a foundation of cultural diversity and is a source of cultural dynamism. In addition, the language in one's hometown is worth everything and a treasure with an irreplaceable important role.

Yoron-cho have been quick off the mark to notice this, and began a program to promote the preservation of the language of Yoron (YUNNUFUTUBA = the Yoron dialect) before UNESCO's announcement.

Learning from this spirit of innovation and its results, and based on the nationwide situation of those languages and dialects in danger of extinction, we make the following declaration.

For the preservation of languages and dialects in danger of extinction such as YUNNUFUTUBA, by using the connections born from this Convention, it is suggested that each area mount an appropriate effort to create an environment where both older and present generations are able to positively use their own language and dialect at home and in their hometown, and moreover, which allows children to come in contact with those words and spread tolerance so as to not dampen the younger generation's enthusiasm for using their language and dialect.