**SUMMARY OF TALKS TO THE PLENARY SESSIONS**
Isidor Marí

The purpose of these words at the end of our Dialogue is just to briefly gather the chief ideas laid out by the speakers at the plenary sessions. I cannot claim that it reflects conclusions that are valid for all those taking part, so much as a personal summary in keeping with the general objects of the congress.

In this respect, I think we need to begin by stressing that there was broad—and very significant—agreement between the proposals by the seven speakers. Although they were made from very different perspectives, there was considerable affinity to be seen between them and they came to complement one another. This probably shows that we have now reached a series of common ideas on the subjects dealt with that are widespread in the international sociolinguistic community.

As Professor David Crystal said at the opening session, this congress has probably come at the right moment, when it is about ten years since linguists publicly expressed their concern over the widespread destruction of the world's languages and we are faced with the imperious need to relaunch global efforts to make society aware of the situation and act in consequence.

There also seems to be general agreement on the theme of our Dialogue: *Linguistic diversity, sustainability and peace* makes a good trilogy with which to represent our aims, even though it is not often that we see the third element—peace—associated. We shall have to take into account David Crystal's suggestion that we form and practice a new discipline, which he called Applied Peacelinguistics.

At the same time, though, it is obvious that the task is far beyond the abilities of linguists working on the documentation and revitalising of languages. We need to take inspiration from the strategies followed by environmental movements for rousing social awareness: reach the media, schools and homes.

In his brilliant talk, David Crystal suggested ten specific measures for getting the whole of society involved:

1. Put the Internet and the information and communication technologies at the service of linguistic diversity. It would be important to get the international meeting on the information society that the United Nations will be holding next year in Tunisia to include a linguistic agenda.
2. Involve young people in movements for linguistic diversity, on the basis of their interests and respecting their non-academic cultural and linguistic forms, because the future of languages is in their hands.
3. Put linguistic diversity on every screen and in every branch of multimedia.
4. Encourage all forms of artistic creativity on linguistic diversity, since works of art have an extraordinary communicative, emotive and symbolic effectiveness.
5. Establish an annual prize for the best artistic creation on linguistic diversity (perhaps 26 September, world language day) as a way of spreading awareness in these matters.

6. Further the visible and attractive presence of all sorts of objects representing linguistic diversity so that they enter into all aspects of everyday personal life.
7. Include the understanding and love of linguistic diversity in all school syllabuses, from the earliest levels.
8. Promote Information and Documentation Centres on linguistic diversity, providing easy access to all sorts of information on this subject for anyone interested.
9. Even more: set up a Language House, a large international institution where people can visit and get to know the world of languages and the languages of the world in detail.
10. Mobilise the necessary resources for the realisation of these objectives, which are not as much as they might seem compared with expenditure on other more questionable initiatives. Let us not forget that the costs of war are always greater than the costs of peace.

The first day's talks, devoted to *linguistic diversity*, provided two perspectives on this reality, one focusing on the internal organisation of language and the other on multilingual education.

Bernard Comrie's talk combined the *micro* and *macro* viewpoints—intralinguistics and interlinguistics—of linguistic diversity and the universality of language.

Using illustrative examples, he showed how linguistic diversity is present everywhere, even in the local varieties of a small monolingual area, so that respect for linguistic diversity must begin with respect for the internal variations of each language.

We also saw that it is true that each language often uses its own specific resources to resolve a certain discursive need—as happens in the case of reference tracking. But it is also true that, at the same time, by monitoring internal linguistic variation, we can find quite noticeable affinities between the discursive procedures of very distant and typologically very differentiated languages (as we saw is the case in the non-standard relative constructions of European languages and those of Turkish and Japanese).

Other languages, therefore, do not only provide different views of reality, but they also help us understand our own languages better.

Nancy Hornberger, on the basis of her experience teaching children who speak Quechua, Guarani or Maori, posed two important questions:
- What educational approaches are most suited for infant (native or immigrant) speakers of a minority language?
- What programmes contribute most to maintaining and revitalising these minority languages?

In her opinion, the best approach consists in a bilingual education in the framework of multilingual policies providing a favourable social context from the point of view of linguistic ecology. Good linguistic planning should take into account all the languages present in a given context and the dynamic power relations existing between them.

The conceptual framework she feels is most suitable for these cases is what she calls the 'continua model of biliteracy', a model based on a set of continuities that avoid dissociation between learning languages and help the transference of contexts, media, contents and development between one another, in a way that is favourable to the language in need of revitalisation.

From this perspective of revitalisation of languages on the basis of the central role of their own speakers, Nancy Hornberger claims that Bakhtin's dialogical approach is especially helpful, as it is essential to activate the voices of each of the learners if the aim is the general revitalisation of their language.

The central theme of the second day's talks was *sustainability* and there were contributions from Suzanne Romaine and Albert Bastardas.

Suzanne Romaine reminded us that the idea of linguistic sustainability must necessarily be dynamic: it is very likely that in the future conditions in which languages are reproduced and transmitted will be very different from in the past. Furthermore, survival has always called for change, compromise and adaptation.

In her talk she singled out three possible responses to the destruction of linguistic diversity:
1. Do nothing—the benign neglect of liberalism.
2. Document languages before they disappear.
3. Promote the revitalisation of languages.

After pointing out that the first two are compatible with each other and the last two as well, she made a sharp critique of the ideas behind each response:
1. As far as benign neglect is concerned: Some people, even linguists (John Edwards), see the extinction of languages as something quite normal because they fail to distinguish between linguistic change and linguistic substitution. There are people who believe in so-called freedom of choice in a competitive and supposedly free market and who attach no more moral significance to the disappearance of languages than to changes in the price of fish, ignoring biased power relations between linguistic communities. Others claim there is a need to separate the scientific work of linguists from the political implications, as though science existed in a social and political vacuum.
2. In the second case, there are arguments in favour of documenting endangered languages as an activity compatible with claims of political neutrality. In fact, many of the organisations who fund it do so on the basis of this principle of political non-involvement in the revitalisation projects. Nevertheless, Suzanne Romaine reminded us that any attitude on the part of linguists is a politically meaningful act, that exhaustive documentation is impossible and that it amounts to putting languages into cold storage when only people's determined action can keep languages alive.
3. Thirdly, as regards the revitalisation of languages, she showed that we must take into account the fact that linguistic diversity is closely linked to biodiversity and that we can only protect them by giving the communities speaking endangered languages the power to manage their own resources in the

ecosystem. Only this ability to decide for themselves how to incorporate the new means of production, transport or communication will allow them to reorganise their cultures and become involved in the future in their own way. Unfortunately, it is still common to find misunderstanding of and contempt for the lifestyle of many indigenous communities, who see their self-esteem severely deteriorated and who are plunged into despair, being considered by some Western mentalities as primitive peoples determined to avoid progress.

In short, as Suzanne Romaine emphasised, we must avoid the reification of languages: when we speak of their revitalisation, we are really talking about the communities who speak them and of their freedom to choose their own future in their ecosystem.

Albert Bastardas, for his part, discussed sustainability as a compromise between opposites (something present in the very term 'sustainable development'). What is needed, he said, is to learn to combine the knowledge and use of widespread languages with the maintenance and promotion of less widespread languages, without relations of domination or subordination between them. We must adopt a paradigm of complexity to overcome the dichotomy between the two extremes.

His point of view coincided with that of Suzanne Romaine's: languages are sustainable—or not—in their context, to the extent that they have a sufficient repertory of functions to allow them to maintain a suitable balance with other languages. In this respect, Bastardas sustained that it is not true that bilingualism necessarily leads to substitution, but it is important to assess the linguistic community's 'carrying capacity' (the degree of linguistic contact it can sustain) in its socio-political conditions.

Bastardas identified two main historical causes of imbalance in linguistic ecosystems: migrations and political and economical integration.

Many states' linguistic policies have promoted assimilation of the national language and denigration of the others. The decisive importance of the political framework and power distribution for the future of languages is obvious. This is why it is necessary to apply principles of political and linguistic subsidiarity in multilingual contexts: self-government of linguistic groups will allow them to decide freely how communicative functions are distributed amongst languages and use external languages only for those functions their own language can not exercise. In situations of political and economic subordination it is very difficult for a community to maintain self-esteem and the functional sustainability of their language. The key to linguistic sustainability lies in states' linguistic policies and in the combination of principles of personality, territoriality, functionality and subsidiarity in the regulation of multilingualism, as propounded by Albert Bastardas in other works.

The importance today of migratory movements on a global scale also calls for specific principles and solutions to facilitate the continuity of the receiving linguistic groups, the adaptation of the new citizens to their new surroundings and individual freedom of ascription to one of the linguistic groups.

A large part of the responsibility for achieving this universal framework of linguistic sustainability lies with international cultural and political institutions. Concerted

worldwide action towards agreement on suitable principles of linguistic pluralism for all the planet's peoples depends on them.

Finally, the third day dealt with linguistic peace. Fernand de Varennes, first of all, spoke on linguistic rights as a basis for peace. He identified a flagrant contradiction between stereotyped talk in praise of diversity and the lack of real respect for diversity as the basis for many of the conflicts affecting today's world.

Both the liberal and Marxist traditions share a nationalistic view of minorities and small nationalities, which they see as barbarous relics of the past and obstacles to progress. In fact, it is this endangered view that is a relic of the past, but it is still very influential nowadays.

De Varennes invited us to progress along the lines of the European Charter for regional or minority languages and the Framework convention for the protection of national minorities, adopted by the Council of Europe. He distinguishes two main categories of rights for proper regulation of linguistic pluralism:
1. Individual freedoms—freedom of expression, the right to privacy—are the ones that must preside the private use of language.
2. In public usage, proportionality must be the ruling principle for the use of the different languages present in a society.

We should remember, as Fernand de Varennes said, that the protection of individual rights can act in favour of endangered languages and their collective recovery. In addition, there are forms of discrimination and exclusion which without being specifically linguistic have negative effects for the continuity of languages. Diversity is something that is present in every corner of the world. We must all progress together towards an open society, a genuinely pluralist democracy, in which the future of minorities is not endangered, if we want to guarantee universal peace.

Miquel Siguan then spoke to us about the relationship between language, dialogue and peace. He once again stressed the responsibility of states, who do not respect internal linguistic diversity and give rise to many conflicts. The need for international support is particularly urgent in the extreme case of many unknown or forgotten languages who see their very existence denied and do not have even the basic means for survival. The EU must explicitly spell out a linguistic policy and UNESCO must keep a periodic check of developments in world linguistic diversity, based on a typology of linguistic situations and adopting certain languages as pilot cases or as representative testimonies.

Like Bastardas and De Varennes, Siguan also dealt with the new multilingual situations arising from migrations and international mobility. The time has come, he said, for international bodies to draw up universal principles of linguistic pluralism, to specify the linguistic rights and the linguistic duties of states, peoples and individuals.

After reminding us that for Linguapax language learning goes much further than the functional domain and aims to promote universal fraternity, Siguan argued that only real international dialogue will allow us to carry out the global project of multilingual coexistence. And we must be aware that the conditions for real dialogue—one that goes

beyond the exchange of information or alternative monologues—are extremely difficult and demanding:

- There must be a real wish for dialogue, for progress towards understanding.
- There must be interest in a real understanding of others' positions and willingness to change one's own prejudices.
- There must be a wish to discover that in spite of the differences there are agreements and possibilities for collaboration: in building a common language, it is possible to identify ultimate goals in which interlocutors are in full agreement.

Is it possible, Siguan asked, to draw up proposals that take into account all the existing linguistic situations, with a universal outlook of total generosity, putting solidarity and the common good above one's own interests? Isn't this a utopia? Perhaps so, but the utopias that can be channelled through language are the ones that can move the world. It is also thanks to the creative function of language that we can make the new future realities attractive to everyone become visible.

In conclusion, if I had to sum up in a few words the central proposals of the seven talks, I think I could do so in four points:

- We need to progress through genuine, sincere dialogue.
- Our goal is to identify objectives that can be shared by everyone.
- First of all, we must act soon and with the utmost efficacy on the most critical situations and facilitate the recovery of the most endangered languages.
- Our task must rouse awareness in society as a whole and involve state and international institutions in what Albert Bastardas called the 'International of Sustainability', integrating linguistic and cultural aspects with environmental aspects.

Perhaps, as Miquel Siguan said, this is a utopia, but let me tell you of a concept I read in John Rawls's book *The Law of Peoples* (1999): humanity needs realistic utopias. And the most unreal of utopias is to aspire to a world without diversity.