

168th Session of the Council
Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members - English version
Item 18 – Progress Report on Multilingualism at FAO

Member Name	Comments
<p style="text-align: center;">Argentina (Wed 17/11/2021 16:21)</p>	<p>Argentina wishes to reiterate, as it stated, for example, at the 130th Session of the Programme Committee, that multilingualism lies at the heart of the FAO Basic Texts. Therefore, we understand multilingualism to be a defining characteristic of the Organization and a core value of the United Nations that enables Members to participate in the governance of FAO on an equal footing.</p> <p>As sponsors and advocates of multilingualism at the UN level, we would like to express our appreciation for the measures introduced by FAO with a view to improving the quality and timeliness of the publication of documents for meetings of the Governing Bodies in the official UN languages, particularly by strengthening processes for preparing documents in the original language in which they are drafted.</p> <p>At the same time, we welcome the initial actions to enhance multilingualism at FAO, especially in view of the increasing quantity and balance of products and services in UN languages. Although there is still some way to go, we believe that FAO is moving in the right direction.</p> <p>In this context, we reiterate the need to ensure that interpretation services are provided for the entire duration of Governing Body meetings: this is written into FAO’s Constitution and is also indispensable for generating robust exchanges in debates among members. We also believe that digital solutions and language technologies could strengthen FAO’s approach in this domain.</p> <p>Lastly, we would like to once again express our appreciation for the work done by the office of Deputy Director-General Laurent Thomas to broaden the scope of multilingualism within FAO.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Russian Federation (Fri 19/11/2021 16:56)</p>	<p>Appreciated the work of FAO to promote the principles of Multilingualism, <i>inter alia</i>, through digital innovations and language technologies, and welcomed initiatives to further support multilingualism as a core value of FAO;</p> <p>continue to secure equal treatment of language service units, in particular, in terms of financing and staffing, taking into consideration their actual workload;</p> <p>encouraged timely implementation of the recommendations of the JIU report “Multilingualism in the United Nations System” (JIU/REP/2020/6);</p> <p>appreciated the efforts to promote on equal terms trainings in all six FAO languages to FAO staff as part of staff capabilities building plan to be financed through Regular Programme resources;</p> <p>welcome the recent establishment of the post of FAO Multilingualism Coordinator as a central focal point on the issue in FAO as well as plans to introduce a corporate strategic policy framework for multilingualism to be accompanied by administrative and operational guidelines for its implementation, following inclusive consultations with Membership thereon; and</p>

	<p>looked forward to receive a comprehensive overview of FAO output on Multilingualism within the context of Programme Implementation Report 2020-2021.</p>
<p>France (Fri 19/11/2021 20:56)</p>	<p>France thanks the Secretariat for the presentation of the <i>Progress Report on Multilingualism at FAO</i> (CL 168/18), in accordance with the request from the Council at its 166th session¹ and as a first step in the implementation of recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit's (JIU) report on multilingualism² examined at the same 166th session and for which FAO has undertaken to apply all recommendations³.</p> <p>We are pleased to note that the progress report qualifies multilingualism as a “core value” of FAO (§27), a formula identical to what is used by the United Nations General Assembly⁴, and invite the Secretariat to harmonize the wording of subsequent documents on this basis in preference to other more imprecise expressions⁵.</p> <p>We also welcome the appointment of the Coordinator for Multilingualism, the Director of the Governing Bodies Servicing Division, Mr. Rakesh Muthoo, to whom we extend our congratulations. We recall that, in accordance with recommendation no. 2 of the JIU report accepted by FAO, it will be necessary that "the responsibilities and authority delegated to him to coordinate the implementation of the strategic policy framework" be precisely defined in FAO's future strategic policy framework for multilingualism.</p> <p>Regarding precisely this future FAO strategic policy framework for multilingualism, we note: that it is intended to be adopted by FAO's governance bodies by the end of 2022 in accordance with recommendation no. 1 of the JIU report accepted by FAO; in this regard, we would be grateful if the Secretariat would specify the modalities and timetable for consideration and adoption by the Council by the end of 2022, and then by the Conference at its 43rd session in 2023; that it should be accompanied by detailed, precise and measurable indicators and provide procedures for periodic review of its implementation by the governing bodies.</p> <p>Regarding the broad lines of the future strategic policy framework, we welcome the fact that it covers all relevant dimensions for communication, including those relating to interpreting and translation, recruitment and human resources management.</p> <p>We also welcome the following two points: On the one hand, the reinstatement on 1 July 2021 of the linguistic knowledge bonus, granted to general service staff members (§9), which had been abolished for FAO on 1 January 2016 and which we called to be reinstated last spring during consideration of the issue of multilingualism by the Council and its subsidiary bodies; On the other hand, the clarification (§§26-27) that the respect and implementation of multilingualism is a matter that pertains to the regular budget as far as the six official languages of the Organization are concerned, as opposed to</p>

¹[CL 166/REP](#), paragraph 45 j.

²[JIU/REP/2020/6](#)

³[CL 166/REP](#), paragraph 45 h.

⁴United Nations General Assembly resolutions [71/328](#) and [73/346](#).

⁵In particular that which appears in §13 (“one of the aspects of identity”).

linguistic products and services in other languages, the provision of which depends on available extra-budgetary resources (§§26-27).

Finally, in response to the Secretariat guidance request (§4), France wishes to make the following observations:

We note positively the encouragement that will be given to FAO staff to speak, at meetings where interpretation services are provided, in any of the six FAO languages in which they are proficient (§26) but believe it would be advisable to add "in particular in their mother tongue if this is one of the six languages of the Organization."

Again we note positively the fact that data on the linguistic profile of FAO staff members will be given in the annual report on human resources presented to the Finance Committee in 2022 (§10) and hope that this data from human resources management is detailed and exhaustive, that is to say, presented at the global level and broken down by region, department, category and grade level and by degree of language proficiency. We would also like this data to be included in future indicators of the strategic policy framework.

We invite FAO, unless this is already the case, to state explicitly in the Human Resources Manual and vacancy announcements that candidates for international professional positions must be fluent in one of the languages of the Organization and have an *intermediate* knowledge of at least one other FAO language, and to require that newly recruited staff at headquarters and in the field offices take a proficiency examination in the languages of which they profess a knowledge in their personal history form, unless one of these languages is their mother tongue (JIU report, §116). Likewise, we ask FAO to consider, if this is not already the case, foreseeing the requirement to retest staff members' language proficiency every five years, as is the case at WFP (JIU report, §129 of the JIU report).

We call on FAO to introduce a rule making any promotion of staff in the Professional and higher categories from their entry grade to the next one up conditional upon the confirmed knowledge of a second language, in line with the provisions of United Nations General Assembly resolution 2480(XXIII) (§118 of the JIU report). In this regard, this rule could be modelled on the one in force at UNHCR, according to which working knowledge of a second official United Nations language is an unconditional requirement for any promotion of Professional category staff to a post of P-4 grade and above (§130 of the JIU report).

In order to facilitate and encourage daily multilingual communication among its staff, FAO could consider drawing inspiration from the "multilingual electronic messaging" system set up within the Conference Division of the United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV). This messaging system makes it possible to link e-mail senders with the languages they master actively or passively and in which they can converse within the framework of their professional activities. In conclusion, France wishes to express to the FAO Director-General and Secretariat its appreciation for their resolute action in favour of multilingualism as a core value of FAO, and assures them of its support in bringing the Organization in line with the best standards in this area within the United Nations system.