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منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة | 联合国粮食及农业组织 | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture | Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación

COUNCIL

Hundred and Twenty-fifth Session

Rome, 26-28 November 2003

Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System (JIU/REP/2002/11)

The attached Report of the Joint Inspection Unit is preceded by the Comments of the Director-General and the comments of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

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J0012E

JIU REPORT 2002/11

"Implementation of Multilingualism in the United Nations System"

Comments of the Director-General of FAO

General Comments

1. It is particularly worthy of note that the report covers extensively and favourably FAO's current efforts to ensure language balance in its work, particularly in terms of clear policies and effective actions, including the use of languages by the Secretariat for recruitment and a firm commitment to language training. The initiative of including a special provision in the Programme of Work and Budget for the improvement of language coverage (entity 222P5) is also singled out.

Comments on the recommendations

Addressee of Recommendation:	Executive Head	☐
	Legislative Body	☒
	Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 1 (*quote from JIU Report*):

2. **On the basis of data to be submitted by Secretariats indicating for each language the level of language services being currently provided in relation with meetings and for the dissemination of information, legislative bodies may wish to review and clarify the status of the different languages used in their Organization so as to provide further guidance on Member States expectations thereof, along the following principles.**

a) **Within the framework of applicable rules governing the use of languages, the prime objective of language arrangements for any meeting should be to provide to all participants an equal opportunity to contribute to the legislative process or to the formulation of the meeting's outputs as the case may be,**

b) **For meetings of governing bodies and other intergovernmental meetings, language arrangements as called for in the rules of procedure should be strictly adhered to, unless otherwise decided by the membership; when Secretariats are unable to provide pre-session documents in all prescribed languages for reasons beyond their control, they should exceptionally submit such documents temporarily in abridged format or executive summary in the concerned languages within the established deadlines;**

c) **Other categories of meetings such as expert group meetings or seminars should be organized taking into account the language proficiency of those called upon to attend;**

d) **While languages used for the dissemination of information should aim at outreaching to the largest extent possible targeted audiences in the framework of the mandate of each Organization, their scope should include all languages normally used by each Organization, due regard being given to those applicable at field level.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Decision and/or Proposed Action:

Endorsed	☒
Endorsed as modified	☐
Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

3. FAO's Governing Bodies have most recently reaffirmed the main features of language use policy in the Organization, which are in line with the principles outlined in this recommendation. Therefore, endorsement is suggested.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☐ No: ☒

Addressee of Recommendation:

Executive Head	☒
Legislative Body	☐
Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 2 (*quote from JIU Report*):

4. **As part of their reporting on the use of languages, executive heads should submit to their governing bodies information on the status of languages used for work within the Secretariat and in that connection, they should indicate:**

a) **The requirements for establishing an enabling environment to foster the strict application of rules concerning the use of mandated working languages, including the availability of databases and research tools;**

b) **The implications of using or not being proficient in a de facto working language in terms of recruitment policies and career development;**

c) **The extent to which other languages are used by staff from all duty stations to perform their official functions and incentives which may be provided to that effect.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Decision and/or Proposed Action:	Endorsed	☒
	Endorsed as modified	☐
	Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

5. The Director-General sees no impediment to addressing the particular aspects listed in this recommendation, when and where warranted.

6. It may be noted that staff members are recruited to FAO Headquarters and Regional Office posts only when they have language skills or the possibility of immediately acquiring such skills, which match the requirements of the posts, as determined in the post description or vacancy announcement.

7. In the case of General Service staff, there is close interaction between all concerned units to ensure the Organization's commitment to hire new staff with the required language ability. In the case of Professional staff, recruiting divisions are asked to assess language skills at the time of interview.

8. It is also planned to develop a computerised database that will capture information on staff member's language skills and proficiencies, through various stages of recruitment, on-the-job training and periodic assessment of capabilities.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Addressee of Recommendation:	Executive Head	☒
	Legislative Body	☐
	Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 3 (*quote from JIU Report*):

9. **For the sake of transparency and to give every candidate as fair a chance as possible of winning a post, heads of secretariats should ensure:**

a) **That the rules as to the languages which it will be considered essential or advantageous for candidates to know are uniform and take into account the linguistic requirements of the post in question;**

b) **That the mother-tongue requirement is, where appropriate, replaced by a principal-language-of-education requirement;**

c) **That posts in the Professional category and above are classified by the language requirements they entail and that the classification is reflected in the periodic reports on human resources management or the composition of their Secretariat that they submit to their governing bodies;**

d) **That, in accordance with the rules on the use of languages within the Secretariats, the possibility of early access to vacancy announcements via the Internet does not give any language group an unfair advantage; to that end, and save in exceptional**

circumstances to be justified by the recruitment unit, all vacancy announcements should be issued simultaneously in, as appropriate, at least two of the Secretariat's working languages or two of the organization's languages;

e) **That candidates who do not have access to the Internet are able to consult vacancy announcements and submit job applications online at the organization's local office or the office of the United Nations system's Resident Coordinator.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Decision and/or Proposed Action:

Endorsed	☐
Endorsed as modified	☒
Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

10. This recommendation is for the most part already in effect in FAO, particularly in terms of language requirements at times of recruitment and vacancy announcements. However, some aspects are not applicable to FAO's situation. Therefore, in respect of each item:

11. 3(a): FAO is already following this approach. Deviations from the corporate standard: "working knowledge of English, French or Spanish and limited knowledge of one of the other two" can be considered in the case of specific requirements for a given position.

12. 3(b): this is consistent with FAO practice.

13. 3(c): if this recommendation is tantamount to suggesting more balance among languages used by staff within individual departments or offices, it would pose problems given the fact that the Organization has five official languages and makes no distinction between official and working languages.

14. 3(d): this is in line with FAO practice.

15. 3(e): this cannot be supported as applications can be submitted to FAO by letter or by fax and all vacancy announcements provide a mailing address as well as a fax number.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☐ No: ☒

Addressee of Recommendation:

Executive Head	☒
Legislative Body	☐
Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 4 (*quote from JIU Report*):

16. **Heads of secretariats are invited to ask evaluation and/or internal monitoring bodies to include in their programmes of work for 2004:**

a) **A comprehensive inventory of staff's language skills, an evaluation of language-training programmes in terms of their contribution towards their stated aims and a report in the most appropriate form to governing bodies on those activities;**

b) **A survey both internally and among the beneficiary countries most directly concerned in order to check, particularly when a beneficiary country's official language is not the secretariat's usual working language or a language known to project implementation officers, that the level of language skills in relevant departments does not delay the approval and efficient implementation of projects.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Decision and/or Proposed Action:

Endorsed	☐
Endorsed as modified	☒
Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

17. Although the timing remains open at this stage, the Office of the Inspector-General is keenly aware of the importance of carrying out such a review in the future. In fact, staff in that office can include adequacy in local language proficiency as a subsidiary check during audits of field offices or projects. In any event, it is not believed that there should be major problems in this area, as staff assigned to countries or projects should necessarily have the required language skills and there are sufficiently diverse language skills at Headquarters not to delay processing of requests.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Addressee of Recommendation:

Executive Head	☒
Legislative Body	☐
Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 5 (*quote from JIU Report*):

18. **As appropriate, executive heads should undertake a survey to better assess user satisfaction with the services provided in different languages in the context of meetings and for the dissemination of information; targeted groups for such a survey should include not only linguistic groups of Member States, but also representative groups of NGOs and accredited representatives of news media.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Decision and/or Proposed Action:

Endorsed	☒
Endorsed as modified	☐
Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

19. Such user satisfaction surveys (which extend beyond the language dimension) are routinely carried out in FAO, and will be pursued.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Addressee of Recommendation:	Executive Head	☒
	Legislative Body	☒
	Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 6 (*quote from JIU Report*):

20. **In order to maintain or improve the quality and multilingual content of outputs provided in the different languages of the Organizations:**

a) **Executive heads should keep under constant review the workloads and other working conditions of language units and take required corrective measures within their prerogative while submitting to their governing bodies other issues requiring their consideration, guidance or decision;**

b) **Governing bodies may wish to reassess their needs for recurring documentation and to reconsider current provisions related to the submission of documents originating from Member States in order to supplement efforts made by Secretariats towards the overall reduction of documentation and their timely submission.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?:		Yes: ☒ No: ☐
Decision and/or Proposed Action:	Endorsed	☒
	Endorsed as modified	☐
	Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

21. As regards (a), this type of assessment is normally part of the PWB formulation process and the recommendation can, therefore, be endorsed.

22. As regards (b), endorsement by Governing Bodies is suggested, as they share with the Secretariat concerns about excessive volumes of documentation.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Addressee of Recommendation:	Executive Head	☐
	Legislative Body	☒
	Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 7 (*quote from JIU Report*):

23. **Legislative bodies may wish to:**

a) **Decide that, as a matter of policy, the regular budget should be the prime source of funding to support efforts aimed at reducing current imbalances in the use of languages, in conformity with approved resolutions and decisions;**

b) **Request that, for future budget cycles and through appropriate consultations with Member States, executive heads should submit in the Proposed programme budget predefined objectives for improved multilingualism and expected results derived from phased priorities, due regard being paid to all opportunities for partnerships and from extra-budgetary sources of funding;**

c) **Request executive heads to indicate in particular in their budget proposals the languages in which planned publications will be issued as well as languages in which information materials will be posted on the different websites; in that connection, they should demonstrate that languages and related resources used for these outputs are linked to the attainment of expected accomplishments;**

d) **To monitor progress made when considering either specific reports on multilingualism, or reports on programme performance in which pertinent indicators should be included.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?:		Yes: ☒ No: ☐
Decision and/or Proposed Action:	Endorsed	☐
	Endorsed as modified	☒
	Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

24. (a) is already approved policy in FAO.

25. (b), (c) and (d) are routinely addressed in the documentation submitted to Governing Bodies, both in terms of forward-looking documents such as the Programme of Work and Budget or ex post facto reports on achievements such as the Programme Implementation Report. However, it may not always be possible to be so specific regarding "pre-defined" objectives and expected results.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Addressee of Recommendation:

Executive Head	☒
Legislative Body	☐
Other (*specify*)_____	☐

Recommendation 8 (*quote from JIU Report*):

26. **Executive heads should encourage or continue to encourage their staff and particularly their senior staff to foster a cultural change within Secretariats by making fuller use of their linguistic capabilities which should be translated into more visible indicators in the workplace.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Decision and/or Proposed Action:

Endorsed	☒
Endorsed as modified	☐
Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

27. This is consistent with current efforts in FAO, including targeted language training opportunities for senior staff.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Addressee of Recommendation:

Executive Head	☐
Legislative Body	☐
Other (*specify*) CEB	☒

Recommendation 9 (*quote from JIU Report*):

28. **In his capacity as chairman of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and in the framework of the Annual reports of CEB to ECOSOC, the Secretary-General of the United Nations should indicate the extent to which CEB machinery is contributing to enhance the multilingual content of its own websites and to foster for all its stakeholders an improved access to information on global issues from the websites of its members.**

Is Recommendation of potential relevance to FAO?: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Decision and/or Proposed Action:	Endorsed	☒
	Endorsed as modified	☐
	Rejected	☐

Explanation and/or Proposed Action

29. While addressed to the CEB machinery in general, this is a worthwhile recommendation also from the perspective of individual UN System Organizations and Programmes.

Include recommendation and action in annual monitoring report: Yes: ☒ No: ☐

United Nations A/58/93/Add.1

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Fifty-eighth session
Item 131 of the preliminary list*
Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the implementation of multilingualism in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit for the consideration of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Implementation of multilingualism in the United Nations system" (JIU/Rep/2002/11).

* A/58/50/Rev.1 and Corr.1.

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Summary

The present note contains the comments of the Secretary-General and of the members of CEB on the JIU report "Implementation of multilingualism in the United Nations system".

The JIU report deals with the challenges facing the organizations of the United Nations system of maintaining and improving the multilingual content of services required by the universal character of the United Nations system. It also dwells on the impact of the language policies of the United Nations system organizations on their interaction with member States and other stakeholders, such as civil society and the private sector.

CEB members appreciate the analysis and findings of the report and generally agree with its conclusions. In considering the recommendations of the report, CEB members took into account the need to strike a proper balance between improving multilingualism, given its well-known positive impact on the overall performance of the organizations of the system and the satisfaction it brings to its Member States and clientele groups, and the considerable investment and operating costs needed to achieve it. That balance is determined not only by the priorities decided by the Member States themselves but also by the effectiveness of policies, strategies and practices of the organizations of the system in the implementation of multilingualism, and the sense of shared responsibility that exists between Member States and the secretariats.

I. Introduction

1. The preparation of the JIU report entitled "Implementation of multilingualism in the United Nations system" (JIU/Rep/2002/11) was prompted by the reiterated requests of legislative bodies to adhere strictly to the principle of equal treatment of languages, which has been a recurring issue on the agendas of many governing bodies, including the General Assembly. In its resolution 50/11 on multilingualism, the General Assembly recalled that the universality of the United Nations and its corollary, multilingualism, entail for each Member State of the Organization, irrespective of the official language in which it expresses itself, the right and the duty to make itself understood and to understand others. The Assembly also emphasized the importance of providing access for all Governments and all sectors of civil society to the organization's documentation, archives and data banks in all official languages, and it requested the Secretary-General to ensure the strict implementation of the resolutions establishing language arrangements for both the official and working languages of the Secretariat.

2. The present report reviews the use of languages in organizations of the United Nations system to provide interpretation and translation services for various types of meetings and for general communication and dissemination of information. According to the JIU report, many meetings attended by representatives of Member States continue to be held without interpretation or without documents available in all prescribed languages. Such a situation may contribute to the marginalization of some linguistic groups, particularly from developing countries, to the extent that it prevents them from contributing on an equal footing to the outcomes of these meetings.

II. General comments

3. CEB members generally concur with the findings and conclusions of the report and find the report's recommendations acceptable, in principle. They appreciate the useful guidelines provided in the report for reviewing the status of multilingualism in their respective organizations as well as on possible courses for action, including the roles played by Member States and the secretariat in a shared responsibility approach to improve multilingualism.

4. As regards the capabilities of the organizations of the system to provide language services, some CEB members take the view that organizations of the system are not quite as competitive as they could be in view of the prevailing salary conditions. They observe that considerable difficulty is still being encountered in the recruitment and retention of staff with the necessary linguistic skills.

III. Comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1

On the basis of data to be submitted by secretariats indicating for each language the level of language services being currently provided in relation with meetings and for the dissemination of information, legislative bodies may wish to review and clarify the status of the different languages used in their

organization so as to provide further guidance on Member States expectations thereof, along the following principles:

(a) Within the framework of applicable rules governing the use of languages, the prime objective of language arrangements for any meeting should be to provide to all participants an equal opportunity to contribute to the legislative process or to the formulation of the meeting's outputs as the case may be;

(b) For meetings of governing bodies and other intergovernmental meetings, language arrangements as called for in the rules of procedure should be strictly adhered to, unless otherwise decided by the membership; when secretariats are unable to provide pre-session documents in all prescribed languages for reasons beyond their control, they should exceptionally submit such documents temporarily in abridged format or executive summary in the concerned languages within the established deadlines;

(c) Other categories of meetings such as expert group meetings or seminars should be organized taking into account the language proficiency of those called upon to attend;

(d) While languages used for the dissemination of information should aim at outreaching to the largest extent possible targeted audiences in the framework of the mandate of each organization, their scope should include all languages normally used by each organization, due regard being given to those applicable at field level.

5. While CEB members support the principle underlying this recommendation, i.e., language requirements should be a reflection of the needs of the target audience, a degree of flexibility should nevertheless be allowed in the choice of languages for certain types of meetings so as to ease the burden on the services concerned. They also suggest that the language requirements mandated in their organizations' rules of procedures, and the rules themselves, should be reviewed from time to time to ascertain whether they reflect actual needs.

Recommendation 2

As part of their reporting on the use of languages, executive heads should submit to their governing bodies information on the status of languages used for work within the Secretariat and in that connection, they should indicate:

(a) The requirements for establishing an enabling environment to foster the strict application of rules concerning the use of mandated working languages, including the availability of databases and research tools;

(b) The implications of using or not being proficient in a de facto working language in terms of recruitment policies and career development;

(c) The extent to which other languages are used by staff from all duty stations to perform their official functions and incentives which may be provided to that effect.

6. This recommendation is acceptable in principle. With respect to recommendation 2 (a), CEB members recognize that the central question here is reporting the capacity of the organizations of the system to satisfactorily fulfil

translation and interpretation needs, which more often than not entails balancing the availability of capacity and work load at any given period of time. As regards recommendation 2 (c), the reference to "incentives" is unclear.

Recommendation 3

For the sake of transparency and to give every candidate as fair a chance as possible of winning a post, heads of secretariats should ensure:

(a) That the rules as to the languages which it will be considered essential or advantageous for candidates to know are uniform and take into account the linguistic requirements of the post in question;

(b) That the mother-tongue requirement is, where appropriate, replaced by a principal-language-of-education requirement;

(c) That posts in the Professional category and above are classified by the language requirements they entail and that the classification is reflected in the periodic reports on human resources management or the composition of their secretariat that they submit to their governing bodies;

(d) That, in accordance with the rules on the use of languages within the secretariats, the possibility of early access to vacancy announcements via the Internet does not give any language group an unfair advantage; to that end, and save in exceptional circumstances to be justified by the recruitment unit, all vacancy announcements should be issued simultaneously in, as appropriate, at least two of the secretariat's working languages or two of the organization's languages;

(e) That candidates who do not have access to the Internet are able to consult vacancy announcements and submit job applications online at the organization's local office or the office of the United Nations system's Resident Coordinator.

7. This recommendation falls within the sphere of the human resources management policies and practices of each organization of the system, and as such its implications vary from one organization to another. Generally speaking, however, subject to specific considerations by each organization of the system, the recommendation is acceptable in principle.

Recommendation 4

Heads of secretariats are invited to ask evaluation and/or internal monitoring bodies to include in their programmes of work for 2004:

(a) A comprehensive inventory of staff's language skills, an evaluation of language-training programmes in terms of their contribution towards their stated aims and a report in the most appropriate form to governing bodies on those activities.

(b) A survey both internally and among the beneficiary countries most directly concerned in order to check, particularly when a beneficiary country's official language is not the secretariat's usual working language or a language known to project implementation officers, that the level of language skills in

relevant departments does not delay the approval and efficient implementation of projects.

Multilingualism to better serve Member States and other stakeholders (chapter III)

8. This recommendation is generally acceptable. CEB members underscore the fundamental importance of ensuring that the concerned staff of the organizations of the system possess the necessary linguistic skills required by their respective clientele countries/Member States and/or target populations with whom they have to interact frequently in the course of their work.

Recommendation 5

As appropriate, executive heads should undertake a survey to better assess user satisfaction with the services provided in different languages in the context of meetings and for the dissemination of information; targeted groups for such a survey should include not only linguistic groups of Member States, but also representative groups of NGOs and accredited representatives of news media.

9. This recommendation is generally acceptable. CEB members note that user satisfaction is particularly critical in the areas of outreach and public information, and is often a determinant of the extent to which the organizations of the system are perceived both by its member States and the general public to be performing their respective mandate.

Recommendation 6

In order to maintain or improve the quality and multilingual content of outputs provided in the different languages of the organizations:

(a) Executive heads should keep under constant review the workloads and other working conditions of language units and take required corrective measures within their prerogative while submitting to their governing bodies other issues requiring their consideration, guidance or decision;

(b) Governing bodies may wish to reassess their needs for recurring documentation and to reconsider current provisions related to the submission of documents originating from Member States in order to supplement efforts made by secretariats towards the overall reduction of documentation and their timely submission.

10. Recommendation 6 (a) is acceptable in principle. Some members of CEB pointed out that the workload of their respective language units are indeed reviewed regularly, alongside with the planning of documentation for meetings and other activities requiring substantial language interpretation and translation services. As also reflected in the comment on recommendation 2 (a) above, the critical issue in this regard is the capacity to respond to the multilingual services requirements of the Organization as a whole. Experience has shown that the provision of effective language services often involves a degree of "crisis management" from one meeting to another to ensure that translation and/or interpretation services are provided as and when needed, in addition to well-advanced document planning.

11. CEB members support recommendation 6 (b) in view of its potential to facilitate significantly the ability of organizations to manage its documentation and language services and keep costs to a minimum without compromising user satisfaction.

Recommendation 7

Legislative bodies may wish to:

(a) Decide that, as a matter of policy, the regular budget should be the prime source of funding to support efforts aimed at reducing current imbalances in the use of languages, in conformity with approved resolutions and decisions;

(b) Request that, for future budget cycles and through appropriate consultations with Member States, executive heads should submit in the proposed programme budget predefined objectives for improved multilingualism and expected results derived from phased priorities, due regard being paid to all opportunities for partnerships and from extrabudgetary sources of funding;

(c) Request executive heads to indicate in particular in their budget proposals the languages in which planned publications will be issued as well as languages in which information materials will be posted on the different web sites; in that connection, they should demonstrate that languages and related resources used for these outputs are linked to the attainment of expected accomplishments;

(d) To monitor progress made when considering either specific reports on multilingualism, or reports on programme performance in which pertinent indicators should be included.

12. While recommendation 7 (a) is acceptable in principle, some CEB members suggest that a distinction be made between core secretariat services, for which funding should come from regular budgetary sources, and special projects which could be funded from partnerships and extrabudgetary resources, to meet pressing demands for the use of languages. However, it is not clear how "current imbalances in the use of languages" are to be determined and by whom.

13. CEB members take the view that the aim of "improved multilingualism", as called for in recommendation 7 (b), laudable as it may be, should be balanced with the willingness to devote often substantial investments to build the enabling environment so necessary to achieve it.

Recommendation 8

Executive heads should encourage or continue to encourage their staff and particularly their senior staff to foster a cultural change within secretariats by making fuller use of their linguistic capabilities which should be translated into more visible indicators in the workplace.

14. This recommendation is acceptable.

Recommendation 9

In his capacity as chairman of CEB and in the framework of the annual reports of CEB to the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations should indicate the extent to which CEB machinery is contributing to enhance the multilingual content of its own web sites and to foster for all its stakeholders an improved access to information on global issues from the web sites of its members.

15. This recommendation is acceptable in principle.

JIU/REP/2002/11

ENGLISH
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IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILINGUALISM IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Prepared by

Eduard Kudryavtsev
Louis-Dominique Ouedraogo

Joint Inspection Unit

United Nations, Geneva
2003

JIU/REP/2002/11

IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILINGUALISM IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Prepared by

Eduard Kudryavtsev
Louis-Dominique Ouedraogo

Joint Inspection Unit

Geneva
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ACRONYMS

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination (now CEB)
AFRO	Regional Office for Africa (WHO)
AMRO	Regional Office for the Americas (WHO)
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
DGAACS	Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (now DGACM)
DGACM	Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management
DPI	Department of Public Information
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EMRO	Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO)
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
EURO	Regional Office for Europe (WHO)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAMLADP	Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications
IAPSO	Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
ICSID	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
IDA	International Development Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IOF	International Organization of la Francophonie
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
JIAMCATT	Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Assisted Translation and Terminology
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODCCP	United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention
ODS	Official Document System (formerly Optical disk system)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
PCT	Patent Corporation Treaty (WIPO)
SEARO	Regional Office for South East Asia (WHO)
UNAT	United Nations Administrative Tribunal
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WPRO	Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WHO)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: OBJECTIVE, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVE: To assist legislative bodies and secretariats in their efforts to address the challenges of maintaining and improving the multilingual content of services required by the universal character of United Nations system organizations

Status of languages used in the United Nations system (chapter I)

A. Irrespective of the applicable terminology concerning their status, languages are used in organizations of the United Nations system to provide interpretation and translation services for different types of meetings as well as for communication and the dissemination of information. Most organizations consider multilingualism as a corollary to their universal character and their governing bodies have repeatedly insisted on the need to ensure the strict application of rules establishing language parity. However, many meetings attended by representatives of Member States continue to be held without interpretation or without documents available in all prescribed languages. The resulting situation may contribute to marginalize some linguistic groups, particularly from developing countries, to the extent that it does not allow them to contribute on an equal basis to the outcomes of these meetings. Improvements sought by secretariats would be facilitated by further clarifications on the objectives of services expected from the use of different languages to serve the needs of specific audiences (paras. 11 to 34).

RECOMMENDATION 1

On the basis of data to be submitted by secretariats indicating for each language the level of language services being currently provided in relation to meetings and for the dissemination of information, legislative bodies may wish to review and clarify the status of the different languages used in their organization so as to provide further guidance on Member States' expectations thereof, along the following principles.

(*a*) Within the framework of applicable rules governing the use of languages, the prime objective of language arrangements for any meeting should be to provide to all participants an equal opportunity to contribute to the legislative process or to the formulation of the meeting's outputs as the case may be;

(*b*) For meetings of governing bodies and other intergovernmental meetings, language arrangements as called for in the rules of procedure should be strictly adhered to, unless otherwise decided by the membership; when secretariats are unable to provide pre-session documents in all prescribed languages for reasons beyond their control, they should exceptionally submit such documents temporarily in abridged format or executive summary in the languages concerned within the established deadlines;

(*c*) Other categories of meetings such as expert group meetings or seminars should be organized taking into account the language proficiency of those called upon to attend;

(*d*) While languages used for the dissemination of information should aim at outreaching, to the largest extent possible, targeted audiences in the framework of the mandate of each organization, their scope should include all languages normally used by each organization, due regard being given to those applicable at field level.

B. Some organizations have designated one or several languages as the working language(s) of the secretariat while others have not. In many organizations, for convenience of in-house communication or otherwise, there is in practice a de facto working language. Besides the mandated or de facto working languages, some staff members actually use or are encouraged to use other languages to perform their duties. The borderline between recognized working languages and other languages used for work deserves further review particularly where executive heads have been called upon by their governing bodies to ensure the strict application of rules establishing linguistic practice in relation to the use of languages within secretariats (paras. 35 to 37).

RECOMMENDATION 2

As part of their reporting on the use of languages, executive heads should submit to their governing bodies information on the status of languages used for work within the secretariat and in that connection, they should indicate:

(*a*) The requirements for establishing an enabling environment to foster the strict application of rules concerning the use of mandated working languages, including the availability of databases and research tools;

(*b*) The implications of using or not being proficient in a de facto working language in terms of recruitment policies and career development;

(*c*) The extent to which other languages are used by staff from all duty stations to perform their official functions and incentives which may be provided to that effect.

Multilingualism and the secretariats' working environment (chapter II)

C. On initial recruitment, perfect command of one or more languages is a sine qua non. Apart from these required languages, at least one of which will be a working language, knowledge of one or more additional languages is sometimes mentioned as desirable. In vacancy announcements, the question which languages it is a requirement or an advantage to know basically depends on the functions of the post to be filled. However, the criteria for deciding which those languages should be sometimes vary within an organization or even within the same administrative unit (paras. 50-58).

D. In addition to what have so far been the usual means of posting or publicizing them, vacancy announcements are increasingly being posted electronically. Moreover, with a view to rationalizing and accelerating recruitment processes, some organizations, while not barring candidates from applying by letter or fax, recommend online application and provide an electronic version of the application form for the purpose. Since the deadline for the submission of applications is the same in each case, the language and method of posting may give some candidates an advantage because of their language group or the ease with which they can access the Internet (paras. 59-61).

RECOMMENDATION 3

For the sake of transparency and to give every candidate as fair a chance as possible of winning a post, heads of secretariats should ensure:

(*a*) That the rules as to the languages which it will be considered essential or advantageous for candidates to know are uniform and take into account the linguistic requirements of the post in question;

(*b*) That the mother-tongue requirement is, where appropriate, replaced by a principal-language-of-education requirement;

(*c*) That posts in the Professional category and above are classified by the language requirements they entail and that the classification is reflected in the periodic reports on human resources management or the composition of their Secretariat that they submit to their governing bodies;

(*d*) That, in accordance with the rules on the use of languages within the Secretariats, the possibility of early access to vacancy announcements via the Internet does not give any language group an unfair advantage; to that end, and save in exceptional circumstances to be justified by the recruitment unit, all vacancy announcements should be issued simultaneously in, as appropriate, at least two of the Secretariat's working languages or two of the organization's languages;

(*e*) That candidates who do not have access to the Internet are able to consult vacancy announcements and submit job applications online at the organization's local office or the office of the United Nations system's Resident Coordinator.

E. Many organizations offer their staff language-training opportunities with the aim of promoting multilingualism by encouraging proficiency in and use of a variety of languages in

the working environment. Although organizations sometimes invest substantial sums to this end, there are few performance indicators for use in improving the training programmes so as to facilitate achievement of that aim without overlooking the language skills already available within secretariats (paras. 65-70).

F. For the implementation of technical cooperation projects, project teams need staff with language skills appropriate to the country or region in question. While it is known that the absence of such skills may cause problems for some receiving countries, the impact on the efficiency of project execution has yet to be evaluated (paras. 76-78).

RECOMMENDATION 4

Heads of secretariats are invited to ask evaluation and/or internal monitoring bodies to include in their programmes of work for 2004:

(*a*) A comprehensive inventory of staff's language skills, an evaluation of language-training programmes in terms of their contribution towards their stated aims and a report in the most appropriate form to governing bodies on those activities;

(*b*) A survey both internally and among the beneficiary countries most directly concerned in order to check, particularly when a beneficiary country's official language is not the secretariat's usual working language or a language known to project implementation officers, that the level of language skills in relevant departments does not delay the approval and efficient implementation of projects.

Multilingualism to better serve Member States and other stakeholders (chapter III)

G. The overall purpose of multilingualism is not only to facilitate the full participation of all Member States in the legislative process, but also to outreach the public at large in order to help build broad-based global support and create opportunities for partnerships. A reliable assessment of user satisfaction could therefore guide efforts made in response to calls for improvements as well as to address better the needs of targeted audiences (paras. 79-84).

RECOMMENDATION 5

As appropriate, executive heads should undertake a survey to better assess user satisfaction with the services provided in different languages in the context of meetings and for the dissemination of information; targeted groups for such a survey should include not only linguistic groups of Member States, but also representative groups of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and accredited representatives of news media.

H. While user satisfaction may be an important performance indicator, language services often face constraints impairing their capacity to improve on the level and quality of outputs, irrespective of the dedication of staff concerned. Such constraints need to be more adequately addressed in order to continue to attract, recruit or retain qualified language staff in a very competitive market. In particular, some organizations have been flooded by reports to a point where it has become almost impossible to provide high quality documents in all language versions and within prescribed deadlines (paras. 85-88 and 104-109).

RECOMMENDATION 6

In order to maintain or improve the quality and multilingual content of outputs provided in the different languages of the organizations:

(*a*) Executive heads should keep under constant review the workloads and other working conditions of language units and take required corrective measures within their prerogative, while submitting to their governing bodies other issues requiring their consideration, guidance or decision;

(*b*) Governing bodies may wish to reassess their needs for recurring documentation and to reconsider current provisions related to the submission of documents originating from Member States in order to supplement efforts made by secretariats towards the overall reduction of documentation and their timely submission.

Member States and secretariats share responsibility for further improvements (chapter IV)

I. Where governing bodies have called on secretariats to adhere strictly to language parity, seldom have they recognized that this entailed either additional resources or a reallocation of resources. Quite often, managers had therefore to implement new programmes or satisfy unplanned demands "within existing resources" and they encountered difficulties by stretching resources to the limit. Besides the regular budget, there are other opportunities for partnerships and extrabudgetary sources of funding which should be seen as complementary efforts and not as substitutes for the collective commitments of Member States for improved multilingualism. With the introduction of results-based budgeting in most organizations, Member States have at their disposal an ideal tool to make secretariats more accountable for expected accomplishments (paras. 127-136).

RECOMMENDATION 7

Legislative bodies may wish to:

(*a*) Decide that, as a matter of policy, the regular budget should be the prime source of funding to support efforts aimed at reducing current imbalances in the use of languages, in conformity with approved resolutions and decisions;

(*b*) Request that, for future budget cycles and through appropriate consultations with Member States, executive heads should submit in the proposed programme budget predefined objectives for improved multilingualism and expected results derived from phased priorities, due regard being paid to all opportunities for partnerships and extrabudgetary sources of funding;

(*c*) Request executive heads to indicate in particular in their budget proposals the languages in which planned publications will be issued as well as languages in which information materials will be posted on the different web sites; in that connection, they should demonstrate that languages and related resources used for these outputs are linked to the attainment of expected accomplishments;

(*d*) To monitor progress made when considering either specific reports on multilingualism, or reports on programme performance in which pertinent indicators should be included.

J. Secretariats have yet to take full advantage of internal arrangements and enhanced inter-agency cooperation particularly in relation to the dissemination of information on multidisciplinary or global issues. A change of culture is needed for language skills within departments or units to be better reflected in the multilingual content of secretariats' outputs, and in that connection the importance of the linguistic capabilities of senior staff and their effective use cannot be overemphasized. Being the symbol of the unity of the system, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) can play a leadership role in better projecting the fact that multilingualism is indeed a corollary of the universal character of their respective organizations (paras. 137-146).

RECOMMENDATION 8

Executive heads should encourage or continue to encourage their staff and particularly their senior staff to foster a cultural change within secretariats by making fuller use of their linguistic capabilities which should be translated into more visible indicators in the workplace.

RECOMMENDATION 9

In his capacity as chairman of CEB and in the framework of the annual reports of CEB to the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations should indicate the extent to which CEB machinery is contributing to enhance the multilingual content of its own web sites and to foster for all its stakeholders improved access to information on global issues from the web sites of its members.

INTRODUCTION

1. The question of multilingualism has been a recurring issue on the agendas of many governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations including the General Assembly of the United Nations where it has been considered on a biennial basis since 1995. In that connection, and on the occasion of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Charter, the General Assembly approved on 2 November 1995 resolution 50/11 on multilingualism, whereby it recalled that "the universality of the United Nations and its corollary, multilingualism, entail for each State Member of the Organization, irrespective of the official language in which it expresses itself, the right and the duty to make itself understood and to understand others". The Assembly also emphasized "the importance of providing access for all Governments and all sectors of civil society to the Organization's documentation, archives and data banks in all the official languages". It requested the Secretary-General "to ensure the strict implementation of the resolutions establishing language arrangements for both the official languages and the working languages of the Secretariat", and invited "Member States to do likewise".

2. Overall, governing bodies consider that the diversity of prescribed languages is not only a source of general enrichment and of better understanding among their Member States but also an asset for the organizations in the discharge of their mandate to disseminate information. Despite countless resolutions stressing the importance attached by Member States to the strict observance of rules establishing language arrangements for the different organs, several reasons have not always enabled secretariats to provide multilingual services at levels meeting the expectations of all their stakeholders.

3. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) issued a report in 1977 in which some of the issues related to the implementation of multilingualism were dealt with.[1] The current review by the Unit has been conducted upon the suggestion of the secretariats of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (Dag Hammarskjöld Library) which were mainly concerned that reiterated requests made by governing bodies to adhere strictly to the principle of equal treatment of languages could hardly be met without additional financial resources. Besides taking into account these particular concerns, the Inspectors felt that their report should also focus on the impact of language policies on other stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector whose involvement and interaction with United Nations system organizations have been at the forefront of important initiatives by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other executive heads.

4. Specific reports and resolutions dealing with language services or issues, reports on programme implementation or programme performance, pertinent reports by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) as well as some internal oversight reports have provided useful information which has been complemented by replies to a detailed questionnaire sent to all secretariats of the participating organizations concerned. In addition, field missions were undertaken to a selected number of headquarters and to two regional commissions. The experience of two non-United Nations system institutions - the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Commission of the European Union (EU) - was looked into and the Inspectors attended two meetings of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) and the Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Assisted Terminology and Translation (JIAMCATT) held in Geneva. They would like to express their sincere gratitude to all those who made a valuable contribution to their queries.

5. After a review of the status of languages drawn mainly from rules of procedure of different governing bodies and other legislation (chapter II) and an analysis of the extent to which the work environment of secretariats has a bearing on the implementation of multilingualism (chapter III), the report makes an assessment of how multilingualism can best serve Member States and other stakeholders (chapter IV). The last chapter examines the respective roles Member States and secretariats can play in a shared responsibility approach for

[1] JIU/REP/77/5, "The implications of additional languages in the United Nations system." General Assembly document A/32/237.

further improvements. Besides common issues which are covered from a system-wide perspective in the current report, addenda on case studies will be issued later for a selected number of organizations, so as to address more specific issues and concerns while drawing from best practices elsewhere.

I. STATUS OF LANGUAGES USED IN UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

6. Since the nineteenth century the official status of languages used in international diplomacy has changed in direct relation to the changes in how diplomacy itself is conducted. Before the 1919 Peace Conference and the League of Nations where English and French were first used for interpretation and translation, international conferences at the governmental level were conducted exclusively in French, the language par excellence among diplomats. Although Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations recognizes that "The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members", the status given to languages by the signatories is indicative of their effort to strike a delicate balance between the geopolitical reality resulting from the Second World War, their determination to change nineteenth century diplomatic practice and their pragmatism imposed partly by cost factors. Other post-war organizations have acted in the same manner.

7. Despite the fact that most organizations of the United Nations system have more or less the same membership and adhere to the principle that multilingualism is an expression of their universal character, the status given to languages varies not only from one organization to another but even between separate bodies of the same organization. From the terminology used, reference has been made to languages for "authentic texts" and for "official texts", "official languages", "working languages", "languages of deliberation", "languages of documentation", and languages which are none of the above.

A. Languages of authentic texts

8. Similar to Article 111 of the Charter of the United Nations which stipulates that "the Chinese, French, Russian, English, and Spanish texts are equally authentic", the texts of the constitutive acts of treaty-based organizations or the texts of treaties administered by them have been signed in one or a given number of languages and such texts are considered as authentic texts. This legal statute is important as it entails that only the authentic text(s) can serve as a basis for the interpretation of any of its provisions, particularly in case of dispute. In that connection the situation in the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) as shown below in table I.1 is unique.

Table I.1. Languages of "authentic texts" and "official texts" in WIPO

WIPO reference document	*Language(s) of authentic texts*
Convention establishing WIPO (1967), Article 20(1)(a) and (2); in addition to authentic texts, "official texts" established by the Director-General in G, I, P and such other languages as the WIPO Conference may designate.	E F R S
Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, Stockholm Act (1967), Article 29(1)(a) and (b); official texts also established in E, G, I, P, R, S and such other languages as the Paris Union Assembly may designate.	F
Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, Paris Act (1971), Article 37(1)(a) and (b); official texts in A, G, I, P, S and such other languages as the Berne Union Assembly may designate.	E F
Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) (1970), Article 67(1)(a) and (b); official texts in G, J, P, R, S and such other languages as the PCT Union Assembly may designate (to date, those other languages include A, C and I).	E F

A: Arabic // C: Chinese // E: English // F: French // G: German // I: Italian // J: Japanese // P: Portuguese // R: Russian // S: Spanish.

9. Besides "authentic texts" in which the conventions and treaties have been signed, "official texts" of these documents are also established by the Director-General of WIPO after consultation with the interested governments, both in prescribed languages and in such other languages as may be designated by the governing body of each convention or treaty. Upon inquiry, the Assistant Legal Counsel of WIPO indicated that in strict legal terms, "authentic texts" are more authoritative than "official texts", but technically, "official texts" could also be "authenticated" by the States concerned to give them the same official status as authentic texts. However in actual WIPO practice, there seems to be really no difference.

10. Languages of authentic texts do not necessarily coincide with official languages. For instance, the languages of authentic texts of the Charter of the United Nations have remained the initial five official languages of 1945 and Arabic was not added to the list when it became an official language. In the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) where there are nine official languages for the Conference and six for the Executive Board as detailed below in paragraph 16, only the texts of the Convention in two languages - English and French - are designated by Article XIV (1) as being equally authentic. In the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), when Arabic was still categorized as a "limited working language" and on the basis of an initial draft prepared by the League of Arab States, the FAO Conference adopted resolution 10/69 of 24 November 1969 whereby the Arabic version of the Constitution was approved as an authentic text and Article XXII of the Constitution amended accordingly. The addition of new language versions as authentic texts of constitutive acts is not only a question of translating a document into another language for the benefit of the language groups concerned, but it has legal implications for all parties and requires an amendment to the Constitution, a process which governing bodies may be reluctant to undertake.

B. Languages of deliberation and documentation

11. Annexes I(*a*) and I(*b*) provide information on the languages prescribed for different organs of the United Nations and affiliated bodies on the one hand, and the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and IAEA on the other hand. Besides the limited number of languages selected for interpretation and translation services to be normally provided by the secretariats, the general rule is often that other languages may be used if the requesting Member State(s) pay for all or part of the related costs. With the exception of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) which is a special case detailed below, the source of funding regular budget or extrabudgetary resources appears therefore to be an important distinctive feature between prescribed languages and other languages.

(*a*) Official and working languages

12. Some organizations including the United Nations and its affiliated bodies make a distinction between "official languages" and "working languages" but it is not always clear what that status entails per se in terms of language services to be provided by the secretariat. In resolution WHA31.13 of 18 May 1978, the World Health Assembly acknowledged that "the concept of official languages in WHO relates at present to interpretation of speeches made in those languages, whereas the concept of working languages relates essentially to translation and is applied on a pragmatic basis, taking into account the specific requirements of Member States, the Assembly and the Executive Board".

13. In the United Nations, the distinction between "official" and "working" languages of deliberative organs is not necessarily based on whether those languages are used for interpretation vs. translation. The expressions "official languages" and "working languages" can actually be traced back to resolution 2 (I) of the General Assembly which chose Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish to be the official languages in all organs other than the International Court of Justice (ICJ) while English and French were designated as working languages. As simultaneous interpretation was not yet used, speeches made in any of the other three official languages were interpreted into both working languages and all resolutions and other important documents were made available in the official languages. Since then and through an incremental approach, successive resolutions of the General Assembly added Arabic to the initial five official languages of the Assembly in 1973,[2] while the number of working languages moved from two to six with the inclusion of Spanish in 1948,[3] Russian in 1968,[4] Chinese and Arabic in 1973.[5] The above six languages are also the official and working languages of the Security Council as well as the official languages of the Economic and Social Council which has English, French and Spanish as its working languages. From the current rules of procedure of these three main organs, there

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[2] General Assembly resolution 3190 (XXVIII) of 18 December 1973.

[3] General Assembly resolution 262 (III) of 11 December 1948.

[4] General Assembly resolution 2479 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968.

[5] General Assembly resolutions 3189 (XXVIII) and 3190 (XXVIII) of 18 December 1973 respectively.

is no difference of status for official and working languages in terms of interpretation and translation except in the Economic and Social Council where records are kept only in the working languages.

14. The Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also distinguishes between "official" languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and "working" languages (English, French and Spanish) but all official documents of the Board are translated into the six official languages except country programmes and conference room papers which are translated into the working languages only.

15. With the exception of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the rules of procedure in other regional commissions of the United Nations do not make any reference to official languages but only to working languages. In principle, speeches made in any one of the working languages are interpreted into the other working languages and all resolutions, recommendations and other formal decisions as well as annual reports are made available in all the working languages. However in ECLAC, rule 44 of the rules of procedure stipulates that "The final text of the Commission report to the Economic and Social Council and of its resolutions shall be prepared in Spanish, French, English and Portuguese, which shall be the official languages of the Commission. The first three languages mentioned shall be the working languages." Rule 45 provides further that "Speeches made in any of the working languages shall be interpreted into the other working languages." In practice, most interpretation and translation services costs in Portuguese, when required for meetings of the Commission, are borne by the requesting Member State.

16. Since the Plenipotentiary Conference (Nice, 1989), the basic instruments of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) have provided that the Union has Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish as its six official and working languages. However, owing mainly to financial constraints, both the Nice 1989 and Kyoto 1994 Plenipotentiary Conferences imposed "interim limitations" on the use of some languages which affected the translation of documents in Arabic, Chinese and Russian. By resolution 103 (Minneapolis, 1998) and resolution COM6/1 (Marrakech, 2002), the Minneapolis 1998 and Marrakech 2002 Plenipotentiary Conferences requested that those limitations be gradually lifted. Consequently, as from 1 January 2005, all six languages are expected to enjoy equal treatment.

17. In UNESCO, the official languages of the General Conference are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. In addition, any other language may be recognized as an official language of the Conference upon the request of the concerned Member State or Member States, provided that no Member State makes such a request for more than one language. No such request has ever been made until now. The use of official languages is governed by rule 55 which prescribes that (*a*) any amendment to the text of the Constitution, or any decision of the General Conference regarding the Constitution and the legal status of UNESCO, shall be translated into all the official languages; and (*b*) at the request of any delegation, any other important document, including verbatim records, may be translated into any other official language. In the latter case, the delegation concerned shall provide the necessary translators if the occasion arises. Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the working languages of both the General Conference and the Executive Board. When the General Conference is held in a country where the national language is none of the working languages, the Executive Board is authorized to make special arrangements for the use of that language during the Conference.

18. Although the secretariat of WIPO informed the Inspectors that the expression "official languages" does not exist in the Organization, it should be pointed out that when the WIPO General Assembly considered at its session held in September-October 2000 a report on "The use of Portuguese as a working language of WIPO" (WO/GA/26/1), it recalled the decision of the Governing Bodies in 1979 to have Portuguese as a working language of WIPO, and being "cognizant that no claim has been made to transform Portuguese into an official language", the Assembly acted accordingly. It decided (*a*) to have Portuguese used in meetings in development cooperation activities for developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs), as appropriate; (*b*) to have promotional material produced in Portuguese regarding WIPO-administered treaties; (*c*) to develop a Portuguese part of WIPO's web

site for publications in Portuguese; and (*d*) to provide, as necessary, Portuguese interpretation for diplomatic conferences and for the General Assembly, the specific arrangements to be at the discretion of the Director-General who would also be encouraged to seek voluntary contributions in that regard. In practical terms, the status thus enjoyed by Portuguese in WIPO has obviously no common measure with its statute as an official language in ECLAC.

(*b*) The special case of the Universal Postal Union

19. Article 6 of the Constitution of UPU signed in 1876 provides that "The official language of the Union shall be French". This provision has remained unchanged since then and up until the Madrid Congress of 1920, delegations had either to use the official language in their speeches or had to hire, at their own expense, an interpreter who would deliver their speech in French on their behalf. From the 1920 Madrid Congress onwards, the question of adding other languages as official languages or languages for debates and documentation was raised on many occasions, but changes have been introduced very slowly, considering that it was only at the Lausanne Congress in 1974 that English, Arabic and Spanish were admitted as languages for documentation besides French, with Chinese, German, Portuguese and Russian being added at the 1979 Congress in Rio de Janeiro. While maintaining French as the only official language, the Seoul Congress in 1994 decided that English would be the second working language of the International Bureau. Before that decision, all documents issued by the Bureau were in French. Although postal administrations at national level may agree on the language to be used in their relations, only the official language of the Union should be used in the absence of such agreement.

20. For the deliberations of the different organs of UPU, interpretation is provided in English, French, Russian and Spanish and related costs beyond technical installations and maintenance are supported by the users in proportion to their percentage share of the budget of the Union. For documentation, Member States using a language other than the official language constitute a linguistic group which also bears part of the costs. Member States using Arabic, English and Spanish pay only for actual translation costs, all other costs related to reproduction and distribution being charged to the regular budget. Linguistic groups using Chinese, German, Portuguese and Russian receive a contribution of up to 150,000 Swiss francs towards meeting the costs of translation into those languages. Following the introduction of English as a second working language, the 1999 Beijing Congress decided that Member States using the official language would contribute a lump-sum to partially offset the translation costs of non-official documents, with the contributive unit for such lump-sum being equal to the one paid by users of English.

(*c*) The situation in the Bretton Woods institutions and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

21. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) does not have "official" languages but English is the working language in accordance with Rule C-13 of the Rules and Regulations as adopted on 25 September 1946 and amended on 1 April 1978. That Rule also provides that "the discussion, documents, and reports of meetings shall ordinarily be in English" and that "speeches or papers presented in other languages shall be translated into English". Translation into the institution's "standard" languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish) is readily made available by the IMF Language Services but translation into "non-standard" languages is provided only in special circumstances when the service is deemed to be in the interest of the institution and of the member country. In addition, there may be translation on request from any other languages into English. Interpretation is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish and it may also be provided in other languages on an ad hoc basis. This being said, IMF indicated that it does not consider itself an organization statutorily called upon to promote multilingualism.

22. The World Bank Group is composed of five closely associated institutions i.e. the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). The term "World Bank" refers specifically only to IBRD and IDA. ICSID was established by a convention signed in English, French and Spanish with all

three texts being equally authentic. In the first four institutions, no reference is made to language in their Articles of Agreement, except that these constitutive acts have all been signed each in one single copy in English which is also the working language. Loan agreements are signed in the working language and even when translated into the official language of the borrower, only the English version prevails in case of dispute. The World Bank is nonetheless keen to have many of its documents and publications in several other languages, but in the same way as in IMF, multilingualism is not considered a goal per se.

23. IFAD membership is open to any State Member of the United Nations, any of the specialized agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The rules of procedure of the Governing Council (the highest decision-making body composed of representatives of all 162 Member States) and the Executive Board do not make reference to official or working languages but rather to "languages of the Council" and "languages of the Board". The languages used in both organs include Arabic, English, French and Spanish but not Chinese although China is a member (the Russian Federation is not a member).

(*d*) The situation in two non-United Nations organizations (EU and OECD)

24. The EU considers that multilingualism is an integral part of its existence and that it is a reflection of its rich cultural inheritance. For all its institutions, multilingualism is an expression of the democratic foundations of the Union as all citizens have the right to be informed and to be heard in their own official language. Hence the Union has currently 11 official and as many working languages and that number is expected to increase with the prospects of enlargement by 2004.

25. OECD is composed of 30 Member States and the Commission of the EU Commission takes part in its work. The 1960 Paris Convention establishing OECD was signed in English and French. These two languages are also the official languages of the organization according to the rules of procedure. Interpretation and documentation are provided in the two official languages, but in practice and as required during negotiations, other languages are used as well for both interpretation and documentation, including languages such as Russian or Chinese which are not official languages of any Member State.

(*e*) Alternative terms instead of "official" and "working" languages

26. The situation depicted above demonstrates amply that the delineation between official languages and working languages is blurred if not confusing. This explains the position taken long ago by the FAO Conference. Originally, Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish were the official languages of that organization and English, French and Spanish the working languages while Arabic had a status of "working language for limited purposes". In 1977, the FAO Conference concurred with the Council's view that the terms "official", "working" and "working languages for limited purposes" did not have a defined meaning, and that the distinctions made in this regard in the rules of the Organization were both unnecessary and confusing. In its resolution 19/77 adopted on 28 November 1977, the Conference considered that there was no valid reason for preserving these distinctions and it amended the General Rules accordingly. These now state that Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish are the languages of the Organization.

27. As shown in annex I(*b*), a similar approach has been followed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) where reference is made to "languages of deliberations" and "languages of documentation" in the rules of procedure of both the Assembly and the Council, as well as by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) where the rules of procedure refer to "languages of the General Conference" and "languages of the Board".

(*f*) Languages used on request

28. The ongoing general principle is that Member States are charged for the costs of language services they have requested and which imply interpretation or translation from or into languages other than the prescribed languages. Such has been the case for German at the United Nations since 1975 when the General Assembly decided that selected documents from the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should be issued in the German language

as from 1 January 1975, with assurances given then by the requesting Member States (Austria, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany) that they were prepared to contribute collectively to cover the related costs.

29. Other organizations apply similar policies. In FAO, interpretation from and into German is provided for the Conference, the European Regional Conference and the Codex Alimentarius Commission on the basis of agreed cost sharing (two thirds borne by Germany, one third by FAO), and at the expense of Germany for some European workshops. Interpretation into Portuguese and Italian is also used occasionally. Russian (which is not one of the languages of FAO) has also been provided for large international conferences to which all United Nations Members have been invited (e.g. the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development) or those jointly organized with United Nations agencies having Russian as an official language, (WHO in the case of the International Conference on Nutrition). Translation services are provided, on a very limited scale, in Italian, German and (very rarely) in Russian, if and when requested by divisions concerned. Texts translated in Italian are often advocacy material or contracts or correspondence with Italian sponsors.

30. The cases of ECLAC and UNESCO detailed in paragraphs 15 and 17 above show the limits of what the status of a language as an official language may or may not entail. In both cases, languages specified as "official languages" (Portuguese in the case of ECLAC and Italian, Hindi and Portuguese in the case of UNESCO) are not given the same legal status as others. By implication, should requests for interpretation or translation from and into those languages be made by a requesting Member State, the delegation concerned would have to bear the related costs.

31. The implementation of resolutions passed by legislative bodies calling for language parity or for an "equal treatment of official and working languages" may be facilitated by a clearer assessment of the implication of those terms in today's context and practice of the organizations concerned. The issue may not be just a question of semantics. At a time when all secretariats are hard-pressed by their governing bodies to improve on accountability and to have their performance measured against the achievement of expected results, it would be most important to review existing language arrangements and to check whether the level of services being provided for each language is in conformity with expectations and allow all Member States to participate fully in the legislative process.

C. Languages for communication and dissemination of information

32. United Nations system organizations have always considered dissemination of information as an important aspect of their respective mandates. By recognizing "We the peoples of the United Nations" as stakeholders in intergovernmental relations, the Charter of San Francisco contributed to a democratization of diplomacy which has fostered the involvement of civil society in the policies of all post-war international organizations. Traditional media such as publications in hard copy have been progressively supplemented by electronic publishing (CD-ROMs and e-books) and by web sites on the Internet. Data provided in annexes III (a) to III (c) indicate the languages used for some of these media.

(*a*) Languages of publications

33. In general, for publications either in hard copy or in electronic format, languages used are the same as those categorized as "official" or "working" languages, or "languages of the Organization" but depending on funding sources and co-publishing arrangements, some sales publications may not be available in a particular official or working language of the organization concerned while being issued in a language which does not have that status. Some publications are in one language only (usually English) while others are in two or three languages. The flagship publications of some organizations are made available in multiple languages. For instance, *The State of the World's Children* report is produced by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in French, English and Spanish and translated into at least 25 other languages, the 2001 *Human Development Report* by UNDP was published in 13 languages and in FAO, the flagship publications are published in all five languages of the Organization while some publications are available in other languages including German, Italian and Portuguese.

(*b*) Languages of the web

34. A 1999 review of multilingual Internet sites in international organizations undertaken in the framework of IAMLADP came to the conclusion that besides the classification according to official and working languages, languages of the web should be added as a new category of its own. The number and languages used on the Internet appear to be only limited by the resourcefulness of each organization. For instance, from the web site of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (http://www.unhchr.ch), it is possible to access the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in more than 300 languages, a record duly registered by Guinness World Records. While the main United Nations web site is maintained in the six official languages, sites of United Nations information centres, services and offices worldwide have strived, depending on location, to provide information on the activities of the Organization in some 24 other languages such as Armenian, Bangla, Czech, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Malagasy, Urdu or Uzbek to mention a few and that practice was encouraged by the General Assembly in resolution 54/82 of 6 December 1999.

D. Working languages of secretariats

35. Annex II provides information on mandated working languages (from a legislative decision) and de facto working languages as indicated by secretariats, as well as the languages mostly used for databases, Intranets and for the original texts of documents. Whereas some organizations have two mandated working languages (United Nations except three regional commissions, UPU); three (ILO); four (WMO); five (FAO) or even six (ICAO and WIPO); a few have none (WHO, IMO). Quite often, irrespective of whether there are other working languages defined for the secretariats, English is overwhelmingly the language required to access information online.

36. It is worth noting that in WIPO the expression "working languages of the secretariat" is understood as the languages used by staff for interpretation, documents, publications or correspondence. Consequently, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish (plus some Portuguese) have been listed as the working languages of the secretariat. Furthermore, as the major part of the Organization's income derives from fees paid by private-sector applicants using the PCT, the Madrid and Hague systems and the services of the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center, there are significant multilingual aspects to the associated services provided by the secretariat. For instance, international applications under the PCT may be filed in any language which the receiving Office accepts for that purpose. In 2001, a total of 103,947 applications were filed in 20 languages. In recognition of the fact that 14 per cent of PCT international applications are filed in German and 11 per cent in Japanese, those two languages are included among languages for which a language allowance may be paid.

37. Despite its special character, the case of WIPO does raise a valid question about what should be considered as a "working language" in the work environment of secretariats. Not counting language staff, there are staff members in many United Nations system organizations who use, in their daily work, languages other than the mandated working languages. As a matter of fact, besides requesting the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure that, upon recruitment, staff "have a command of and use at least one of the working languages of the Secretariat", General Assembly resolution 50/11 on multilingualism also requested him "to ensure that the use of another of the six official languages is duly encouraged and taken into account, particularly when promotions and incremental steps are under consideration."[6] The borderline between mandated working languages and other languages used for work deserves further review.

E. In search of language parity

38. The governing bodies of several organizations have often made references to the "lack of parity" or the "unequal treatment" of the official/working languages, to the "imbalance" in the use of languages, or to the need to achieve "a truly balanced use" of prescribed languages. Although secretariats concur on the meaning of equal treatment which is based on the principle of statutory parity among languages within existing rules decided by Member States, they also point out that, in practice, they are often caught between requests to "adhere strictly" to applicable rules and a pragmatic approach dictated by many factors including the level of resources allocated by their governing bodies.

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[6] General Assembly resolution 50/11, para. 3.

39. At the United Nations and other organizations, official calendar meetings are conducted in general with simultaneous interpretation in the requested languages and informal meetings are provided with such services on an "as-available" basis. However, for different reasons, full language services are not provided to all meetings attended by representatives of Member States, as shown in table I.2 below. The number of meetings held in one language varies from one organization to another, according to language used or duty station. Information provided by some secretariats indicates that this trend appears to be only partially motivated by cost considerations. It has been argued, for instance, that such informal meetings without interpretation increase the efficiency of the intergovernmental deliberative process. Whatever the reasons, it can also be argued that this trend thwarts the overall aim of a multilingual organization and may seriously limit the effective participation/contribution of some Member States to the legislative process. In that regard, pragmatism can also lead to practices that seriously limit the possibility of Member States and other stakeholders to participate fully in the activities of the organizations concerned.

Table I.2: Calendar meetings held at United Nations with and without interpretation

Duty stations and number of meetings held with and without interpretation (in parenthesis)	*1994-1995 (Actual)*	*1996-1997 (Actual)*	*1998-1999 (Actual)*	*2000-2001 (Estimate)*	*2002-2003 (Estimate)*
A. **Headquarters**	6 470	6 081	5 763	6 300	6 300
	(1 539)	1 583	1 660	1 800	1 800
Subtotal A	**8 009**	**7 664**	**7 423**	**8 100**	**8 100**
Percentage of meetings without interpretation	19.21%	20.65%	22.36%	22.22%	22.22%
B. **UNOG** (including extrabudgetary meetings)	5 482	4 954	4 586	4 850	4 850
	(5 565)	(6 928)	(6 931)	(6 000)	(6 000)
Subtotal B	**11 047**	**11 882**	**11 517**	**10 850**	**10 850**
Percentage of meetings without interpretation	50.37%	58.30%	60.18%	55.59%	55.29%
C. **UNOV**	805	686	837	860	900
	(1 130)	(1 893)	(2 147)	(2 452)	(2 952)
Subtotal C	**1 935**	**2 579**	**2 984**	**3 312**	**3 852**
(% Meetings without interpretation)	58.39%	73.40%	71.95%	74.03%	76.63%

Source: United Nations/Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) (formerly DGAACS).

40. The above data confirm that despite resolution 50/11 and other pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly calling for the respect of language parity, meetings held at the United Nations without interpretation (customarily conducted in English at Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Office at Vienna, and in English or French at the United Nations Office at Geneva) remain important in percentage terms.

41. The secretariat of UNDP admitted that the lack of linguistic parity or equal treatment invariably meant that English was used at the expense of other languages, both in official and unofficial situations, and both in working languages and official languages. Reports to be considered by the Executive Board are submitted overwhelmingly in English, sometimes from regions and countries where the official language is one of the other official languages at the United Nations. Since it is essential to provide the Executive Board with the latest information, reports are also often submitted after the internal deadlines. An advance copy - requested by Executive Board members - is thus usually available in English only. On rare occasions, reports have not been available to the Board in either official or working languages at the time they were considered, except in English. While deploring the situation, the Board nonetheless decided to consider the relevant agenda items.

42. At ECLAC, for reasons of cost and because the Commission does not have French translators, documents are often not published in that language although it is one of the working languages alongside English and Spanish. At many meetings, only English/Spanish interpretation is provided. In addition, for reasons of efficiency and expediency, some working or drafting groups at the ECLAC Conference function in the one language (English or Spanish) and, according to the secretariat, this has been understood and accepted by the member

Governments (which include francophone countries such as Canada, France, and Haiti). At the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the ratio of informal meetings held only in English is said to have increased since 1998 and is currently between 70 to 75 per cent.

43. For its part, the General Conference of UNESCO approved in 1995 resolution 28/C on the "Balance in the use of the six working languages of the General Conference, and use of the other official languages". In that resolution, the Conference, "considering the importance of languages as irreplaceable means of interpersonal communication and cultural experience", expressed its "deep concern at the continuing imbalance in the use in UNESCO of the six working languages of the General Conference". It invited the Director-General "to continue the efforts already initiated so as to achieve a truly balanced use of the six working languages of the General Conference and, at the same time, facilitate the use of the other official languages". According to the Interpretation Section, owing to late submission of requests by Sectors and to limited in-house capacity, it is not always possible to retain the services of highly qualified freelance interpreters at short notice. As a result, there are meetings held without interpretation as detailed in table I.3 below which gives a breakdown of such meetings by language in 1998-2000 and the position of each language expressed as a percentage of the total number. While the figures for English and French have not changed significantly, those for Spanish have fallen slightly and the figures for Chinese and Russian have dropped sharply.

Table I.3: UNESCO: Breakdown by language of meetings held in 1998-2000
(Total number of meetings and percentages per language)

Year	*Arabic*	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*
1998 (219)	29 (13.24%)	17 (7.76%)	216 (98.63%)	207 (94.52%)	24 (10.96%)	69 (31.51%)
1999*(235)	16 (6.81%)	12 (5.11%)	231 (98.30%)	215 (91.49%)	18 (7.66%)	63 (26.81%)
2000 (203)	24 (11.82%)	6 (2.96%)	200 (98.52%)	190 (93.6%)	13 (6.4%)	52 (25.62%)

Source: UNESCO.
* General Conference Year.

44. The fiftieth World Health Assembly approved on 13 May 1997 a resolution on "Respect for equality among the official languages"[7] whereby it stated that "the universality of the World Health Organization is based, inter alia, on multilingualism and on the respect for the parity and plurality of the official languages chosen by the Member States".[8] While regretting that the various official and working languages of the Secretariat are used unequally within WHO, the Assembly requested the Director-General "to ensure the strict application of the rules of the Organization which establish linguistic practice, both as regards the Organization's relations with Member States and as regards the use of languages within the Secretariat".[9]

45. Following an in-depth "Review of FAO Language Policy"[10] undertaken in 1999, the FAO Council "*unanimously reaffirmed* the principle of equality of FAO languages as prescribed in General Rule XLVII and its importance in ensuring the widest possible access to FAO information and the fullest participation of Member Nations in the work of FAO".[11] At the same time, and "while appreciating the efforts made to protect the application of this principle despite the resource constraints experienced in the recent past, the Council expressed concern at the clear signs of imbalance in the use of all FAO languages".[12] Continued efforts have been made thereafter to redress the situation. All sessions of the Governing

[7] World Health Assembly resolution WHA50.32.

[8] Ibid., preambular para. 1.

[9] Ibid., para. (1).

[10] (PC 81/6-FC 92/13). "Review of FAO language policy".

[11] Ibid., para. 105.

[12] Ibid.

Bodies (the Conference, the Council and its Committees) are held in the five FAO languages but beyond such sessions, when determining the language composition of a meeting, attention is given to the language requirements of its members, bearing in mind that the meeting or body concerned may take its own decisions concerning the languages in which it will work. Four categories of meetings are thus recognized in FAO for working purposes and the breakdown in 2000-2001 was as follows: 130 meetings, including 14 in one language for category I (intergovernmental meetings); 30 meetings, including 15 monolingual for category II (technical sessions attended by experts representing member nations); 80 meetings, including 66 in one language for category III (meetings of committees and panels of experts selected by FAO in a personal capacity) and 16 meetings, 15 of which were in one language for category IV (seminars, training courses and workshops).

46. Because of its tripartite composition, ILO has developed a multilingualism reflecting the needs of its constituents for services in the full range of the Organization's working languages (English, French and Spanish) and its other official languages (Arabic, Chinese, German and Russian). According to the secretariat, almost all material including internal communications is published at least in English and French, with a large share also appearing in Spanish. Back in 1993, a proposal to limit the volume of interpretation services provided into the other four languages was firmly rejected by the delegations concerned. At the same time, the organization has endeavoured to match constituents' needs with the most rational use of resources: for instance, Arabic interpretation is provided at tripartite sectoral meetings when they are attended by at least three Arabic-speaking countries and when such meetings include delegates who use Arabic, Chinese, German or Russian, the reports prepared for discussion appear in an abridged form/executive summary in those languages, accompanied by full versions in English, French and Spanish.

47. The effective participation of some Member States in the legislative process may be affected when meetings are held in one language only. There are, however, divergent views in that regard. According to UNDP, there has been no discernable impact on the effective participation or contribution of Member States when language services are not provided at these meetings and this may be due to the fact that pre-session meetings of the Board are organized with full interpretation made available. On the contrary, FAO considers that the impact of having meetings in one language - usually English - is that countries have to send delegates with an adequate knowledge of that language. Otherwise, those delegates may be placed at a disadvantage when discussing with representatives of English-speaking countries or they may be inhibited in interventions because of an imperfect command of the idiom. Furthermore, if the background documents are not translated, this limits the choice of advisers and staff to be consulted in capital cities to define the position of non-English-speaking countries in respect of proposals presented in these papers.

48. Some have expressed the view that, for practical reasons and irrespective of their official language group, representatives of Member States themselves tend to use mostly English during informal negotiations involving more than one linguistic group. It is only when the agreed text is submitted as a formal draft that it is translated into the prescribed languages of the governing body concerned. They admit, however, that while proficiency in more than one language is often part of the requirements to be met by professionals of modern diplomacy, the current situation regarding the use of languages in several organizations needs to be further reviewed as it may contribute to marginalize some linguistic groups and particularly developing countries from these groups. At the same time, they consider that a rational use of limited resources should ensure that, as appropriate, due regard is taken of the actual needs of participants.

II. MULTILINGUALISM AND THE SECRETARIATS' WORKING ENVIRONMENT

49. Part of the questionnaire sent to the secretariats of the participating organizations was aimed at obtaining responses to three categories of question concerning human resources management, the challenges involved in employing a multilingual workforce and the possible impact of staff's knowledge of languages on programme implementation.

A. Human resources management

(*a*) Knowledge of languages and career development

Linguistic requirements on recruitment

50. A random selection of vacancy announcements from a number of UN-system organizations revealed the following range of language requirements: (*a*) a single language required and identified (the most common being English, followed by French and, to a lesser degree, Spanish); (*b*) same requirement as in (*a*), with knowledge of a second official language (not always specified) or of the language of the host country considered an advantage; (*c*) requirement that the language in question (English, French, Russian or Spanish) be the applicant's mother tongue; (*d*) a perfect command of one of the secretariat's working languages (English, French or Spanish, and less frequently Arabic or Russian) and a good knowledge of a second working language; (*e*) perfect command of the secretariat's two working languages (in most cases, English and French; sometimes English and Spanish and occasionally English and Arabic); and (*f*) command of any one of the organization's official languages.

51. Generally speaking, vacancy announcements refer to two categories of language: languages of which a perfect command is expressly required (at least one of which must be a working language of the secretariat) and languages of which knowledge constitutes an advantage (these may be other working or other official languages of the organization or non-official languages). Reference to a "requirement" implies by definition that applications from candidates who do not meet the language requirements will be rejected. Reference to an "advantage" implies that an applicant who knows one or more additional languages considered of use for the post in question will be preferred to other otherwise equally qualified candidates.

52. In many organizations, the factors that determine of which languages knowledge is required or considered an advantage seem to be the duty station and the characteristics of the post to be filled. For example, United Nations vacancy announcements have described as an advantage knowledge of Swahili for a post as deputy chief of security at the Arusha International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, of Italian for a post as director of the Rome Information Centre and of German or Japanese for a post as investment officer with the Joint Staff Pension Fund in New York. In the case of non-official languages, the criteria for deciding that a given language is required or an advantage are not always the same throughout an organization. For example, knowledge of German was a requirement for a post as director of the Bonn Information Centre (whereas knowledge of Italian was an advantage in Rome) and, less understandably, for a secretarial post at UNOG.

53. Cases still arise in which only one language (obligatorily one of the working languages) is required; in the great majority of them, the language in question is English. Single-language requirements are, however, becoming an exception in organizations which have a strong field presence and consider that, added to professional qualifications, knowledge of two or even three or more languages makes for higher-quality work, as the Charter of the United Nations requires for staff recruitment. In this connection, the Director-General of FAO stated in the Programme Implementation Report for the biennium 1998-1999[13] that 10 per cent of vacancy announcements during that period required one language, 87 per cent two languages and 3 per cent three languages.

54. The languages used in the Secretariats are used in zones that extend far beyond their areas of origin and so, when there is a requirement that a particular language be the candidate's mother tongue, there is

[13] C 2001/8, FAO 1998-1999 Programme Implementation Report.

a potential risk of discrimination between candidates if the concept of mother tongue is interpreted literally. It is not just that the concept itself wrongly presupposes that mastery of a language is only matrilineally derived, but also that its restrictive interpretation could lead to the elimination of candidates who, by choice or because of colonization, have had the language in question as their principal language of education without it having been their mother tongue. Rather than of the mother tongue, some organizations speak more and more often of the principal language of education.

55. Organizations such as UNESCO and UPU include in all their vacancy announcements a requirement for a very good knowledge of one of their secretariat's two working languages (French and English) as well as for a good knowledge of the other. Other organizations do this less extensively, depending on the post to be filled. In the case of ILO, where the Secretariat's working languages are English, French and Spanish, staff members whose mother tongue is one of the working languages have to have a perfect command of a second working language and may be required to know a third such language, whereas staff members whose mother tongue is not one of the working languages may be required to know a second working language. The question which working language it is most important for applicants to have depends on which of those languages is used most in the post in question. In the case of UNESCO, however, there are two exceptions to this basic rule: the only obligatory language for General Service technical staff recruited at the headquarters duty station is French and the only obligatory language for locally-recruited non-headquarters staff is the official language of the country of duty. In the case of Professional posts, the requirement for two working languages is sometimes waived when there is a good chance of being able to recruit candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented countries. UPU reported that for some posts involving work with its regions it adds to the above-mentioned basic requirement a requirement for knowledge of the language most widely used in the region in question (for example, Spanish in the case of Latin America and Russian in the case of the CIS countries).

56. English is unquestionably the language most often required, sometimes as the sole language and sometimes as one of a group of two or more languages that are considered essential. WFP describes a basic knowledge of English as essential in all circumstances, whereas UNFPA states that English is a de facto requirement for all Professional posts. On the other hand, while the ICAO Secretariat readily acknowledges that English is the de facto working language, ICAO vacancy announcements systematically require command of any one of the organization's six official languages, with knowledge of another of those languages considered desirable. While such a policy fully respects the principle of mandatory equality between all the organization's official languages, it is open to question whether it is consistent with transparency and equality of opportunity for all candidates: might it not be the case that, other than in exceptional circumstances, a candidate who knew several other official languages would be ruled out if he/she did not know English?

57. Leaving aside language posts, each organization would gain from making its basic rules concerning language requirements in vacancy announcements more uniform and transparent. The communication requirements inherent in the functions of the vacant post should be the only deciding factors in choosing the languages to be mentioned in the vacancy announcement. There should be no room for suspicion that other factors - in particular, the working language in which the appointee's future supervisors are most at home or a job description tailored to a particular candidate - may have prevailed.

58. In point of fact, considerations of sound human resources management and improvement of service should suffice to justify making knowledge of the host country's language an obligatory requirement or an advantage, especially when that language is one of the official languages of the organization concerned. While policies of this kind are vulnerable to the obstacles discussed in paragraphs 66-68 below, they deserve strong encouragement from legislative bodies because of the contribution they can make towards the goals of multilingualism in general and of the organization's activities in the field in particular.

Policy as regards posting of vacancy announcements

59. Depending on the type of post to be filled, many organizations are increasingly disseminating vacancy announcements not only by the traditional

means (physical noticeboards, member States' missions and sometimes the press) but also by posting on their Intranet sites (for posts open to internal candidates) and on the Internet (for posts open to internal and external candidates). In addition, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) issues both in print form and on its Internet site (http://icsc.un.org/vab/index.htm) a monthly English-language vacancy announcement bulletin containing the vacancy announcements communicated to the Commission by the organizations applying the common system of salaries and allowances.

60. The trend in more and more organizations is to allow candidates to apply online by filling in the appropriate form. Although this procedure has the merit of shortening the recruitment process and, technically speaking, the option of submitting an application by ordinary mail remains open, there is undoubtedly a risk that both candidates without Internet access and candidates who do not know the language(s) used for the online display will be put at a disadvantage. FAO seems to be the only organization that issues its vacancy announcements in three languages (English, French and Spanish). A number of organizations, including the United Nations, UNESCO, WIPO and ILO, issue their announcements in two languages. These are generally English and French, although ILO announcements may also be in Spanish if the nature of the post so warrants.

61. In May 2002, with a view to partially automating the production of vacancy announcements and the initial screening of applications through the use of standardized electronic forms, the United Nations began using a new system called Galaxy. In the report on multilingualism that he submitted to the General Assembly in 2001, the Secretary-General said that he hoped the new procedure would, inter alia, "yield ... a higher number of French-speaking staff members and allow greater weight to be given to language skills in recruitment and promotion criteria".[14] When it opened, the Galaxy Internet site (http://jobs.un.org) was only accessible in English. A French version of the site was opened around mid-September 2002, but the vacancy announcements for all posts in the General Services and related categories, including posts requiring a mother tongue other than English (French, Russian or Spanish), were still (and will continue to be) in English alone. In addition, many of the announcements for posts in the Professional category and above were also in English, since no translation into French was available. In some cases, the unavailability persisted until the time limit for applications had expired.

Career and promotion prospects

62. Knowledge of at least two languages is generally an asset as regards staff members' career and promotion prospects and mobility. The United Nations and the other common-system organizations grant staff in the Professional category and above accelerated steps, increments being awarded at intervals of 10 months rather than 12 for ordinary steps and of 20 months rather than 24 for long-service steps. For their first additional language, staff in the General Services and related categories receive a pensionable language allowance equivalent to 5 per cent of the minimum salary at either grade G-5 or grade G-4, depending on the post; for their second additional language, they receive half that allowance.

63. WFP only gives staff in the Professional category and above indefinite contracts if they are competent in two official languages; staff who are recruited knowing only one such language have two years to reach the required level in another. In the case of UNFPA, staff seeking field posts have to meet the language requirements of the post and monolingualism can have an adverse effect on career prospects even though there are posts for which English is the only required language. At UNESCO, perfect command or a good knowledge of both English and French is a condition for recruitment, although in special cases a candidate's technical skills may be considered more important than whether he/she knows a second language.

64. According to the secretariats, their performance appraisal systems do not disadvantage junior staff whose strongest working language is not the same as their supervisor's. These assurances notwithstanding, the inspectors learned that there had been many cases in which, for fear of a poor overall rating, staff had preferred to fill out the appraisal form in English when that was their superior's only language. FAO drew attention to a dispute that had arisen between a staff member and a supervisor because of what the staff member had

[14] A/56/656, Multilingualism, para. 13.

felt was an unreasonable language requirement set by the supervisor. Mention was also made of supervisors' delays in approving mission reports written in working languages that they did not know.

(*b*) Investment in language training

65. Most United Nations-system organizations offer their staff language-training opportunities; the biennial cost to the regular budget varies according to the organization and the size of its staff. In some organizations, language courses are free for the staff, but in others (for example, ILO, UNESCO, ICAO and UPU) a small fee is charged. In ILO, the language-training budget (for English, French and Spanish) accounts for 37 per cent of the total training budget. Table II.1 shows for the United Nations the numbers of participants in language classes and the corresponding expenditures (periods 1998-1999 and 2000-2001, actual figures; 2002-2003, forecast figures). At the end of the training cycle, students' knowledge of the language they have been studying is tested by the language proficiency examinations, success in which opens the entitlement to the allowances mentioned in paragraph 58 above. It is the United Nations which organizes the examinations in the six official languages on behalf of all the other common-system organizations. The results per session and per language are shown in table II.2.

Table II.1: Language training at the United Nations: numbers of participants (P) and related expenditures (E) *(thousands of United States dollars)*

Programme	1998-1999 *(actual figures)*		2000-2001 *(actual figures)*		2002-2003 *(forecasts)*	
	P	*E*	*P*	*E*	*P*	*E*
Arabic	736	213.7	800	204.5	650	202.3
Chinese	430	124.8	400	125.8	400	124.5
English	1 288	373.9	1 200	377.6	1 200	373.4
French	3 048	884.9	2 900	975.4	3 100	964.6
Russian	635	184.3	600	204.5	650	202.3
Spanish	1 941	563.5	1 800	629.2	2 000	622.3
Subtotal	**8 078**	**2 345.1**	**7 700**	**2 517.0**	**8 000**	**2 489.4**
Language Proficiency Examination	3 529	82.5	3 400	70.5	3 000	100.0
Grand total	**11 607**	**2 427.6**	**11 100**	**2 587.5**	**11 000**	**2 589.41**

(Source: United Nations Secretariat, Proposed Programme Budget 2002-2003. A/56/6 (Sect. 27C)).

Table II.2: Numbers of students taking a language proficiency examination*

Examination session	*Arabic*	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*	*Total*
February 1998 (47)	2	2	162	82	40	60	**348**
May 1998 (48)	6	1	247	95	39	48	**436**
January 1999 (49)	6	4	269	131	58	46	**514**
May 1999 (50)	9	1	357	122	61	70	**620**
January 2000 (51)	9	5	381	161	77	56	**689**
May 2000	15	2	426	149	79	56	**727**

(Source: United Nations, Department of Management, Staff Development Service.)

* Aggregated figures for the common-system organizations.

66. The figures in table II.1 show that the United Nations alone spends some $2.5 million per biennium on basic and advanced training for its staff in the Organization's official languages. In the periods 1998-1999 and 2002-2003, expenditure was highest on training in French (37.73 per cent and 38.75 per cent respectively), Spanish (24.02 per cent and 25 per cent) and English (15.94 per cent and 15 per cent). FAO spends about 25 per cent of its total training budget on improving staff members' knowledge of a second or third language: actual spending for this purpose in the periods 1998-1999 and 2000-2001 amounted to $437,000 and $648,000 respectively; the forecast outlay for 2002-2003 is $630,000. While smaller, the amounts spent by other organizations also attest

to a willingness to encourage the learning and mastery of languages by staff members. It would be useful to assess the impact of these efforts and to know, for example, how many students drop out of language courses and why they do so. The latter point is all the more important as the organizations that offer fee-paying courses feel that making courses free is no encouragement to students to persist in their studies.

67. Table II.2, which covers all the common-system organizations, shows that the total number of persons sitting language proficiency examinations doubled between February 1998 and May 2000 (from 348 to 727) and that at each session there were more examinees in English than in all the other languages put together. Of course, not all the examinees were secretariat staff members or students in the language-training programme. Notwithstanding, if the general trend apparent from the table holds true for each individual organization, the implication is that, contrary to the stated objective of improving the language balance within secretariats, the language-training programme is reinforcing the domination of English. If that is indeed the case, the return on the programme is far from commensurate with the organizations' financial investment, which includes the cost not only of the training proper but also of the incentives mentioned above.

68. The International Civil Service Commission, in its report for the year 2000, recommended the discontinuation of the current incentive schemes because "they did not effectively promote the culture of multilingualism".[15] However, that recommendation, which was rejected by the United Nations General Assembly, did not question the justification for language courses. According to United Nations General Assembly resolution 2480 (XXIII) B, award of the language proficiency certificate attests "understanding of the written and the spoken language". That having been said, more concrete evidence that language training makes a significant contribution towards a multilingual environment in the secretariats will not be forthcoming unless staff are enabled to apply the knowledge they have acquired. While courses to supplement the language training, particularly drafting courses, are available, they are rarely offered in any language other than English. That is the case, for example, at the United Nations Office at Geneva, where the explanation given for the situation is that there are too few applicants to justify providing training in French. Furthermore, there are, as things stand, no regular language refresher courses. Some organizations require staff to undergo a check of their linguistic knowledge at five-yearly intervals, but that is the exception rather than the rule.

(*c*) Absence of performance indicators

69. FAO observes that the value of its multilingual work should not be judged solely from the number of meetings, publications or other activities involving more than one language but also from the content and quality of the work in question in each of the organization's languages.[16] The inspectors agree that it is only by using it that knowledge of a language can be developed and preserved and they therefore feel that it would be useful to design performance indicators to measure the trends in the actual use of the languages taught or known in secretariats. That could be done as a contribution towards the compilation of an inventory of staff members' knowledge of languages for submission to member States as part of the information regularly provided to them on the composition of their secretariats or the management of human resources. United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/232 of 20 December 1983 requested the Secretary-General to report on the status of the linguistic skills of United Nations staff.[17] That report evaluated the impact of the language incentive programme and provided figures on the numbers of Professional and higher-level staff who had attended language courses and passed the language proficiency examinations. It would be useful if that information was updated and if other organizations provided corresponding figures for their staff. In that connection, UNIDO is now building and putting into operation a staff skills' database that will include information on language skills.

[15] A/55/30, Report of the International Civil Service Commission, para. 55.

[16] PC 81/6 FC 92/13, Review of FAO language policies (summary).

[17] A/C.5/39/6, Status of the linguistic skills of United Nations staff.

70. The United Nations plans, inter alia, to encourage Secretariat officials appearing before intergovernmental or expert bodies for which interpretation services are provided "to use official languages other than English whenever possible"[18] and the Organization's General Assembly noted that first step with satisfaction in its resolution 56/262 of 15 February 2002. Other metrics should be developed in order to ensure that that is not the only performance indicator and that the best possible use is made of staff members' claimed language skills. Staff should continue to be encouraged to write reports for intergovernmental bodies in the working language they know best or to improve the multilingual content of their organizations' Internet sites by contributing towards the posting on them of texts in other official languages, and figures should be kept to show the progress made in those regards. The absence or the unclear presentation of such statistics can give the unjustified impression that the situation has not changed and so lead to repeated requests for action in the resolutions of governing bodies.

B. The challenges involved in employing a multilingual workforce

71. In his bulletin ST/SGB/201 of 8 July 1983, the United Nations Secretary-General restated the rules concerning the Organization's working languages and emphasized that "each staff member should be free to use in his/her written communications either English or French, at his or her option" and that "no impediment is to be placed by anyone to this policy", which was also to be applied to the other working languages of three of the regional economic commissions, namely Russian in the case of ECE, Spanish in the case of ECLAC and Arabic in the case of ESCWA. In another bulletin issued two years later,[19] the Secretary-General, noting that the policy referred to in bulletin ST/SGB/201 was not being fully applied, encouraged "those staff members throughout the Secretariat whose principal language is French, or who prefer to work in that language, to use French in all official communications".

72. While those two bulletins are officially still in force within the United Nations, they are, because of structural factors, as inadequately applied as ever. On the one hand, all staff members, including those with supervisory functions, have a formal entitlement to use any working language, but there is no corresponding obligation to have even a rudimentary knowledge of a second working language or to take courses in it as a matter of priority. On the other hand, because they state, for example, that "English or French" is required, the language requirements for posts do not always allow for the possibility that the appointee may have to work in a team with colleagues who legitimately use a different working language. In the circumstances, it would not be surprising if hierarchical considerations and an understandable concern for career prospects have often prevailed over staff members' desire to exercise their right to use "in all [their] official communications" a language in which their colleagues or, in particular, their direct supervisor are not fluent.

73. The case of the United Nations is far from an isolated one. It reflects the situation in several of the common-system organizations and is symptomatic of the difficulties inherent in the obligation to employ a multilingual workforce in a context where the trend towards the predominance of English as the language of in-house communication is strengthened by, inter alia, the information and communication technology revolution. Consequently, there is a risk that the above two bulletins will continue not to be fully applied unless further measures are taken. Management at Headquarters and in the other main duty stations is partly to blame for the bulletins' imperfect application, insofar as staff members do not all have equal access to research tools and databases that would enable them to use the language of their choice.

74. In interviews with the inspectors, some staff members expressed the view that the language imbalance in recruitment patterns, with preference being given to English-speaking candidates, was partly attributable to the language mix apparent among senior human resources managers. In the absence of firm evidence in that regard, the inspectors can only refer to United Nations General Assembly resolution 2359 (XXII) of 19 December 1967, in which the Secretary-General

[18] A/56/656, para. 29.

[19] ST/SGB/212, 24 September 1985.

was invited to take the necessary steps to ensure "a linguistic balance within the Secretariat and in particular the presence of staff using the different working languages of the United Nations in the services responsible for the recruitment of Secretariat staff, at all levels".[20]

75. Staff in supervisory positions are faced with a real challenge. It is difficult to see how it can be considered sound staff management to give junior staff the right to use the Secretariat working language of their choice while simultaneously accepting that their supervisors have an identical right and therefore cannot be required to be competent in the same language. In a recent case before the United Nations Administrative Tribunal (UNAT),[21] the applicant's complaints included the fact that, while he had requested that the proceedings should be conducted in French, the documents that the Administration had submitted in the case were in English. In its judgement of 26 July 2002, the Tribunal, whose own working languages are English and French, stated that ideally "only one working language should be used in connection with a given case and all proceedings should be conducted in the language chosen by the applicant", as is the practice in the ILO Administrative Tribunal. UNAT further opined that "not only would such an approach ensure better observance of applicants' due process rights, it would also facilitate the work of the Tribunal, which would not be obliged to work in two languages in the same case".

C. Language skills and programme implementation

76. UPU reports that Professionals or staff responsible for sectoral activities and the implementation of technical assistance projects are required to be fluent in at least two languages, which must include the language used in the region in question. FAO offers a range of training modules for programme officers the level of whose knowledge of a relevant language may impede the implementation of their programme. ECLAC, for its part, says that the skills are available within the Commission for the implementation of technical cooperation programmes involving the use of English and Spanish. However, one of its member States is a least developed country and a member of la Francophonie and nothing proves that the programmes of relevance to it are not affected by a shortage of language skills within the Organization.

77. UNFPA recognizes that it is desirable and boosts operational capacity if several languages are known within each unit or division and says that all relevant departments have the necessary language skills. ESCWA is similarly of the opinion that execution of its programmes is not hampered by questions of language skills, since all its regional advisers and project leaders are bilingual and fluent in Arabic and English. UNIDO acknowledges that technical cooperation projects in general, and those to be submitted to multilateral funds such as the Montreal Protocol, the United Nations Industrial Development Fund or the Global Environment Facility in particular, are best submitted in English because that helps to keep down costs and expedite the processing of applications. The UNIDO Secretariat acknowledges that this may cause difficulty for countries from Francophone Africa or from Latin America.

78. According to the United Nations Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, substantive departments sometimes ask for entire reports to be translated into English when the project officer concerned does not know the language in which the report was submitted. That can add needlessly to translators' workload if only parts of the report are directly relevant to the project in question. Furthermore, the time required for translation has to be added to the time required for project implementation. The question merits further study, taking into account the views and experience of States and other beneficiaries and, perhaps, focusing on programmes aimed at least developed countries.

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[20] General Assembly resolution 2359 (XXII), part B, para. 3 (a).

[21] Judgement No. 1072, case of Chuteaux v. the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

III. MULTILINGUALISM TO BETTER SERVE MEMBER STATES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

A. User satisfaction and other performance indicators

79. In a results-based budget approach, the objective of language services could be as defined by WIPO in its Program Performance Report for 2000,[22] i.e. "To facilitate understanding among Member States and with the Secretariat, and to make information widely available, by translating publications, documents and other material into as many languages as possible, with high quality standards in the translation process, aiming for a goal of zero defects." To that end, the selected performance indicators in WIPO have been identified as being inter alia the satisfaction of delegates with the quality of translations, the timely production of translations, the volume of translations produced and the output in translator days.

80. If the assessment of user satisfaction were to be based on the lack of specific complaints in resolutions passed by governing bodies in relation to multilingualism, one would have to conclude that, by and large, member States in most organizations appear to be reasonably well served in terms of language services provided to them in the framework of the legislative process. There have been complaints on and off in some organizations on specific issues but not on a recurring basis. The United Nations stands as the most prominent exception in that context. Under an agenda item on "Pattern of Conferences" considered each year by the General Assembly, some concerns have been aired almost word for word in successive resolutions. In resolution 56/242 of 24 December 2001 for instance, the Assembly:

- "Expresses concern about the quality of interpretation services provided to intergovernmental meetings, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure the highest standards of quality for interpretation services provided to those meetings;"[23]
- "Notes with deep concern that some official documents are not translated into all the official languages of the Organization;"[24]
- "Reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that translation, in principle, reflects the specificity of each language."[25]

81. In an unprecedented move and in separate letters sent in 2001 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Permanent Representatives of Member States from Spanish-speaking countries and those from the Group of Arab States expressed the concerns of their respective language groups in relation to what they viewed as an unequal treatment of Spanish and Arabic compared to English. Such concerns are also regularly aired by the member States of the International Organization of la Francophonie (IOF) and by other non-English linguistic groups. However, an analysis of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001[26] does not seem to reflect the dissatisfaction expressed by these language groups. The difficulty may stem from the fact that such complaints are better addressed when they are more specific, particularly in an organization where situations may differ from headquarters to other main duty stations.

82. User satisfaction at the level of civil society is not always easy to assess, particularly when the resources required to make a reliable survey are not available. It should be recalled that in February 2002, some 48 representatives of news agencies accredited to the Geneva-based organizations issued a petition complaining about what they viewed as a persistent downward trend in the use of French in the communication and information outputs of United Nations system organizations in Geneva. The signatories were not only representatives of French-speaking news agencies but included journalists from Chinese, Spanish and Japanese newspapers. They stressed in

[22] A/36/4, WIPO Program Performance Report for 2000.

[23] General Assembly resolution 56/242, part IV, para. 12, of 24 December 2001.

[24] Ibid. para. 7.

[25] Ibid. para. 15.

[26] A/57/62, "Programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001".

particular that some organizations have made it a rule to issue their press releases either in English first, with the French translation available a few days later, or, even worse, such releases are in English only. They consider that a significant number of Chinese, African, Arab and Eastern European journalists serving in Geneva are proficient in French but not in English and are thus penalized.

83. Participants to IAMLADP and JIAMCATT meetings have often dealt with issues related to productivity and performance indicators in language services but there appears to be no set of agreed standards on a system-wide basis. In its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to "conduct a comprehensive review of the current norms and standards of productivity in the language services" and the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session a detailed report on the subject. That report has been issued[27] and although it contains an annex on productivity based on current workload standards, no indication is given on how these compare with other organizations.

84. While user satisfaction should be considered as an important indicator of performance, care should also be taken not to sidestep constraints which, either recognized or not, have a bearing on actual performance well beyond the competence of staff concerned. As underlined in the report referred to above, DGAACS, the former Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (now called the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management) may be contributing itself unwittingly to the creation of problems affecting the performance of the Organization to the extent that "As long as it continues to process documents no matter how late they are delivered and regardless of length, there is little incentive for author departments to submit documents on time and within defined page limits." The report also notes that "as long as meetings' facilities are provided in excess of those originally programmed, there are few incentives for intergovernmental bodies to stick to normal meeting time, to manage their work programmes with discipline and foresight, and to conclude their work on time".[28]

B. Interpretation and translation services (language services)

(a) Resources vs. workloads

85. From their vantage point, all secretariats have identified the inadequacy between workloads and resources as the main constraint having a negative bearing on the provision of full multilingual services. DGAACS indicated that, on a per capita basis, the volume of work for interpreters at the United Nations remains well within established standards and that further efforts towards improving the availability of interpretation services and their cost-effectiveness should be based on higher predictability and scheduling of meetings. As for translation, the Department pointed out that the provision of full multilingual services implies the existence of sufficient capacity in each of the six translation services to handle all of the other five official languages, thus involving 30 possible language pairs. The limited number of translators, especially in the smaller services, the serious shortage of translators who can work from certain languages (in particular Arabic but also Russian, Spanish and even French) and the high level of vacancies in some services contribute to render problematic the coverage of all languages at all times.

86. Following an inspection, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) of the United Nations issued in February 2001 a report[29] in which it expressed inter alia the view that "DGAACS has to examine the extent to which the practice of stretching resources to the limit, particularly human resources, may be contributing to frustration on the part of staff. OIOS observes that the staff is currently fatigued as a result of working long hours and that this may impact negatively on the quality and timeliness of the services that the Department provides to intergovernmental bodies and other

[27] A/57/289, "Improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services".

[28] Ibid. para. 7.

[29] A/55/803, "Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the inspection of the consolidation of technical support services in the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services".

client departments".[30] Although the staffing table of the DGAACS was reduced at the end of 1997 by a total of 206 posts, 89 of which were from Headquarters, OIOS noted that "the Department's continuing efforts to cope with the demand for services within existing resources and to ensure the overall functioning of the intergovernmental machinery are commendable".[31] In that connection and in commenting on the proposed 2002-2003 programme budget concerning DGAACS, ACABQ also noted "that the demand for a variety of services is in excess of present capacity and available resources, and this has resulted in some inefficiency and complaints from Member States".[32]

87. Mutatis mutandis, the above diagnosis is valid not only for the United Nations, but for many other organizations of the United Nations system. At meetings of IAMLADP and JIAMCATT, senior managers responsible for interpretation and translation services have often lamented that every day was an exercise in crisis management as they were confronted with the challenge of meeting demands beyond those that could be delivered within existing resources. The situation deserves to be redressed by top management and governing bodies as maintaining the status quo in the workload-to-resources ratio cannot be conducive to any significant improvement despite repeated calls to that effect.

88. Alternative courses of action have to take into account the fact that translation is only part of the overall chain of document production and management involving many players and encompassing three main stages: (*a*) drafting, editing and approval of the text in the original language by author units; (*b*) translation, revision and related processes; and (*c*) printing and distribution within prescribed deadlines. While it is not infrequent that those involved in the second stage are pointed at as being mostly responsible for delays and lack of quality, experience tends to indicate, however, that the first stage is becoming crucial in view of an alarming rise in the number of poorly drafted original texts and the persistence of late submission of texts to the translation units. Another factor is linked to the recourse to so-called relay translation. In DGAACS for instance, "Arabists" are found mainly among translators in the English and French translation services which bear therefore an added responsibility for providing translation from Arabic into French or English which are then "relayed" by other translation services when they have no or limited capacity to handle that language.

(*b*) Self-revision, outsourcing and quality control

89. At the United Nations, when self-revision was endorsed by ACABQ and the General Assembly back in 1980, the consensus was that it should not exceed 45 per cent. By the end of the 1990s, self-revision averaged 48 to 70 per cent depending on duty stations and translation units. That prompted the General Assembly to express in resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997 its "*deep concern* that the limits to self-revision have not been kept at a level that would ensure a high quality of translation". That concern was again expressed in resolutions passed in 1998[33] and 1999.[34] In resolution 56/242 approved on 24 December 2001, the Assembly reiterated "*its concern* at the high rate of self-revision in the translation services, which exceeded the benchmark" and requested the Secretary-General "to accord high priority to the post of reviser and to reduce reliance on self-revision to the maximum extent, and to take these considerations into account when filling vacancies in the translation services".[35]

90. During meetings of IAMLADP, some participants have stressed that self-revision meant no revision, along with its inherent risks in terms of related lack of quality control. However the extent to which self-revision should be used is a matter of debate. Upon inquiry, some organizations said that

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[30] Ibid. para. 55.

[31] Ibid. para. 17.

[32] A/56/7, "Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003", para. I.41.

[33] General Assembly resolution 53/208, part B, para. 25 of 18 December 1998.

[34] General Assembly resolution 54/248, part D, para. 8 of 23 December 1999.

[35] General Assembly resolution 56/242, part IV, para. 6 of 24 December 2001.

they have no benchmarks limiting self-revision. In FAO for instance, due to financial and human resource limitation, 100 per cent of documents translated by staff translators are self-revised, except for the work done by junior staff. WFP even advocates the use of self-revision, considered as a process which does not necessarily entail any difficulties in maintaining quality translation, taking into account the fact that professional translators who take pride in their work normally ensure that the translations produced are of maximum quality. Self-revision is also strongly encouraged in IMF where it is now more the rule than the exception, with no benchmark being set and no adverse impact on quality being reported.

91. While recognizing that self-revision is used as much as possible and that the heavier the workload, the more extensive the use of self-revision, IMO admitted nonetheless that in an ideal world, the number of documents undergoing revision would be higher and the impact on quality would be positive, particularly regarding outsourced translations. With only one English translator post in ESCWA, self-revision is a must for that language, but efforts are made to limit its use for Arabic to a minimum depending on exigencies. Most of the translators contracted to work on UNDP publications are self-revising, but in order to limit any possible negative effects, only experienced translator/revisers familiar with UNDP terminology in their language of expertise are recruited, and, when necessary, recourse is made to independent revisers.

92. Considering that the provision of language services was a permanent function, secretariats were asked whether it was satisfactorily established that outsourcing was more cost-effective than reinforcing the core linguistic staff resources and to what extent outsourcing had implications on the workloads of regular staff in charge of monitoring. At the United Nations, outsourcing of translations is used in a limited number of circumstances such as: (*a*) an "overflow valve" allowing the in-house translation services to divert to outside contractors work that they cannot handle within established deadlines; (*b*) an inescapable necessity for handling languages for which there is no or limited in-house capacity; and (*c*) an arrangement considered as the most efficient for processing publications which are often lengthy, have long deadlines and would otherwise tie up for long periods considerable in-house capacity needed to handle parliamentary or other urgent documents. DGAACS estimates that during the 1998-1999 biennium, approximately 15.7 per cent of the total translation output at Headquarters, UNOG, UNON and UNOV combined were outsourced. The Department cautioned, however, that while outsourcing may appear to be the cheapest way of having translations done, substantial hidden costs that are not reflected in the rates paid to contractors must be taken into account.

93. ILO indicated that the outsourcing ratio is high for interpretation, with four staff interpreters working 50 per cent in interpretation and 50 per cent in translation, whereas some 300 freelance interpreters are required to service the International Labour Conference alone. As for translation, in order to cope with increasing workloads, ILO relies heavily on external collaborators who accounted for 26.5 per cent of all pages translated by the translation department. In UNESCO the number of pages outsourced for translation during 1999 (a General Conference year) ran from less than 2 per cent for Chinese and Arabic up to 30.53 per cent for French and 35.11 per cent for English. Corresponding figures in FAO for the biennium 2000-2001 ran from 21 per cent for Chinese up to 69 per cent for Spanish. In other organizations, outsourcing ratios in translation vary on average from about 25 per cent in ICAO to 40 per cent in ECLAC, 75 per cent in WFP and close to 100 per cent for UNDP publications. In most cases outsourcing is said to reinforce regular staff but could only be used for long jobs with flexible deadlines. Its advantages are less evident for the translation of documents prepared for governing body meetings as such documents require a higher standard of quality and therefore more thorough revision.

94. In IAEA, interpretation used to be handled in-house but it is now outsourced to UNOV. The secretariat indicated that this has resulted in a lowering of quality because the interpreters now have less opportunities for familiarizing themselves properly with the very specific terminology used in the Organization. In addition, issues of confidentiality have also created some constraints for highly sensitive meetings. As for translations, while most of the work is done in-house, outsourcing accounts for some 7 to 10 per cent because of drastic cuts in the translation services and the results are said to be negative on the whole.

The view is therefore that reinforcing core linguistic staff resources is a more viable option than increasing the level of outsourcing if a uniform level of quality is to be achieved and if deadlines have to be met.

95. About 45 per cent of the translations handled by the Language Services of IMF in 2001 were outsourced and some Divisions outsourced a much higher percentage of their workload, owing in part to the rarity of the expertise in the languages concerned, but largely because of demand in excess of in-house capacity. To guarantee the services of freelance translators who are highly experienced in handling the Fund's materials, IMF has the option to offer them a retainer contract whereby the retainees are paid a monthly remuneration in exchange for a given number of words to be translated each month up to an annual total. If they reach the total before the end of the year, they are paid on a case-by-case basis for extra work they undertake on a voluntary basis.

96. Potential "savings" derived from outsourcing are difficult to assess. In a Working Paper prepared for the thirty-third session of the ICAO Assembly, it was estimated that outsourcing in translation in the previous triennia resulted in savings of US$ 3 million by not recruiting regular staff, thus avoiding cost of recruitment, pension, medical insurance, home leave, education grant and related travel.[36] Savings of such magnitude may need to be checked against possible hidden costs as cautioned by DGAACS. In that connection, a management consulting firm made a review of the translation chain at WHO's headquarters in 1997 and found out that the cost per internally translated page averaged US$ 223, ranging from US$ 202 for English, US$ 204 for Spanish, US$ 212 for French, US$ 238 for Arabic, US$ 271 for Russian and US$ 336 for Chinese. In comparison, the average cost per externally translated page was US$ 195 but from that amount, US$ 54 actually went to the external translator, US$ 89 were salary for support and revision by permanent translators and US$ 52 represented WHO overhead and other management costs. Those figures would tend to suggest that in WHO the cost of an externally translated page is about 14.35 per cent lower than the average cost per internally translated page (US$ 195 vs. US$ 223) if all support cost factors are included. When such support costs are unaccounted for or underestimated, outsourcing appears indeed as a very attractive proposition from a budgetary perspective.

97. Although it is generally estimated that outsourcing may add to the workloads of regular staff in charge of monitoring, there appears to be no established indicators in that regard, except in WHO where the review of the translation chain referred to above concluded, inter alia, that an issue to be addressed was the surprisingly high amount of permanent translators' time used to support and revise the work of external translators. The consultant accordingly recommended the definition and enforcement of quality standards, along with a policy of paying higher rates for top performing external translators.

98. In other words, timeliness and quality control should be the determining factors in opting for self-revision and outsourcing. In that regard, ILO is considering introducing a system whereby each document would be tagged to determine whether it has to be (*a*) self-revised with minimal downstream quality verification; (*b*) translated and revised with minimal further quality checks; or (*c*) translated, revised and corrected. Criteria and full working mechanisms are still in development and in due course, the experience gained may be worth sharing with other system agencies.

(*c*) Recruiting and retaining qualified language staff

99. In a report to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly[37] the Secretary-General of the United Nations made an analysis of the vacancy rate situation in language services at all duty stations which showed that despite an overall improvement, vacancy rates remained excessive at some duty stations. Many factors contribute to this situation, including a downward trend in the yield of language examinations especially for some languages or language combinations and an apparently growing number of successful candidates declining an initial offer of appointment

[36] ICAO Assembly 33rd Session, A33-WP/50, "Report of the Council on Implementation of Assembly Resolution on A32-1" concerning increasing the effectiveness of ICAO.

[37] A/56/277, "Excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and issues relating to the recruitment of language staff: report of the Secretary-General".

or no longer interested in working for the Organization. Although the capacity shortfall resulting from high vacancy rates is usually offset by the recruitment of short-term staff against vacant posts or through outsourcing in the case of translators, some duty stations continue to be hard-pressed to deliver in quantity and quality the full set of multilingual services expected from them by their stakeholders. With most freelance translators being former staff members, the situation is partly compounded by the current requirement imposing a ceiling of US$ 40,000 to United Nations earnings by retirees of the Organization (the ceiling, established by General Assembly resolution 51/408 of 4 November 1996, has remained unchanged since then but may be reviewed by the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session).

100. Organizations facing high vacancy rates for language posts should be aware that globalization and the explosive development of Internet have contributed to a tremendous increase in the demand for translation to satisfy the needs of the private sector as well as those of intergovernmental organizations and some national governments. For instance, in Canada where the Government has committed itself to become by 2005 the most electronically-connected Government in the world through an initiative known as GOL (Government On-Line), it is estimated that about 1,000 new qualified translators are needed per year whereas training institutions provide only 300 per year. With a growing market for translation estimated worldwide by industry sources to be moving from US$ 10.4 billion in 1998 to US$ 17.3 billion by 2003, it is obvious that the issue for United Nations system organizations is to ensure that they will continue to attract, recruit and retain enough qualified professionals in a very competitive environment.

101. Salary conditions are considered as still attractive. Despite that, some organizations could face further difficulties in recruiting and maintaining language staff - and in particular those with the skills most in demand - if there continues to be a sense that working conditions are not adequately addressed and that Member States are not satisfied whatever the efforts made by secretariats. FAO indicated that working conditions may be responsible for the fact that three translators or revisers have left the Organization in the past three years to join other organizations or start a freelance career. In addition, it would seem that the change in the job description of posts from "Interpreter" to "Interpreter/translator" has made it more difficult to attract highly qualified candidates since FAO is the only organization still requiring two active languages from these language staff.

(d) Use of new technologies

102. New technologies such as voice recognition, remote interpretation, remote translation, and automatic and computer-assisted translation software can provide opportunities for improving the working conditions and the productivity of those involved in language services. The current state of technology for some of these tools may not allow their immediate use in some organizations, but the potential is there and it is promising. However, it is important to distinguish between tools which aim to replace the human being and those which assist him/her in the delivery of expected outputs. Although the advantages of using new tools are recognized by most professionals in the secretariats, it should be stressed that the acquisition of such tools entails more than a one-time investment for buying the required software. Besides the initial investment, training for the users and readiness to commit funds for upgrades should be part of an overall strategy and in that connection the process should be user-driven and not imposed from the top.

C. Provision of documents in different languages

(a) Applicable rules and related issues

103. Most organizations have rules concerning the provision of parliamentary documents in the languages used by their governing bodies. In general those rules prescribe simultaneous distribution in the applicable language versions within a pre-set deadline before the beginning of the meeting concerned. In addition, there are some cases where simultaneous posting in the different language versions is also required. On that basis, secretariats have devised their own internal guidelines for the management of the documentation process. For instance, in the United Nations where documents should be made available in all language versions 6 weeks before meetings, this has resulted in the 10 week-4 week-6 week formula, meaning that texts from author departments have to be submitted at least 10 weeks before the start of the meeting so that translations and reproduction are completed within 4 weeks in

order to abide by the 6 week rule for distribution. A similar pattern is followed in other organizations depending on the deadline for distribution. For several reasons it has not always been possible to abide by those rules and many complaints from Member States relate to either delays in distribution or non-respect of simultaneous distribution in all language versions. The deadlines themselves may need to be shortened on the basis of experience in scheduling meetings as well as the fact that posting of documents on the Internet makes them available at the same time to all users including capital cities to which hard copies needed to be shipped.

(*b*) Efforts to reduce documentation

104. The volume of documentation has a direct bearing on the workload of translation services and on their capacity to contribute to strict adherence to rules governing the simultaneous distribution of documents in all prescribed languages within the approved deadlines. In most organizations, documents originate both from secretariats (either at their own initiative or upon request from Member States) and from Member States. System-wide, commendable efforts have been made by the secretariats to reduce the page limits of internally generated documents. For instance, the Secretary-General of the United Nations decided in 1997 that, as a rule, such documents should be no longer than 16 pages instead of the previous limit of 24 pages. The limit is usually much lower in the specialized agencies.

105. In a report submitted to the second regular session of the UNDP and UNFPA Executive Board in September 2001, it was emphasized that the total volume of documentation submitted to the Board in 2001 (estimated at some 3,000 pages) "creates a workload for the language services that is quite simply beyond the capacity of the Organization" and that this situation "often results in serious delays that are in violation of General Assembly legislation", thus impeding "the full and efficient functioning of the Board".[38] The Board therefore endorsed the remedial measures proposed by the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNFPA. Those measures included setting a target to reduce the overall volume of documentation in 2002 by 50 per cent by fixing pages limits to 10 pages for non-financial policy documents, 5 pages for support papers, 4 to 6 pages for country outlines, and a maximum of 25 pages for the results-oriented annual reports.

106. It is estimated that in 2001, delegations at the United Nations received an average set of 30 documents or 350 pages per working day, totalling 87,500 pages. For the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly alone, some 451 reports were submitted, out of which 71 per cent were submitted after the six-week deadline of 3 July 2001. The Secretary-General has therefore drawn the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that the chronic documentation problem has worsened to the point where "the Organization is in danger of being overwhelmed by a flood of documents."[39]

107. For documents originating from Member States, the situation is rather mixed. In resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997 the General Assembly took note of a report of the Secretary-General on the control and limitation of documentation[40] and invited "all intergovernmental bodies to consider, where appropriate, the possibility of reducing the length of their reports from the desired limit of 32 pages to 20 pages over a period of time without adversely affecting either the quality of presentation or the content of the reports".[41] On the other hand, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General in resolution 56/242 "to ensure that the Secretariat undertakes to translate all United Nations documents into all the other official languages of the Organization simultaneously, including documents for which circulation is requested under agenda items of the principal deliberative bodies of the United Nations, regardless of their length".[42]

108. In resolution CA 12/1999, the Council of UPU noted efforts made by the International Bureau in reducing the volume and cost of documentation and recognized that Member States should make similar efforts in that regard. The Council decided, inter alia, that (*a*) documents originating from Member States should be brief

[38] DP/2001/CRP.17 DP/FPA/2001/CRP.2, "Rationalization of documentation and streamlining of working methods of the Executive Board", para. 3.

[39] A/57/289, para. 49.

[40] A/52/291.

[41] General Assembly resolution 52/214, part B, para. 7.

[42] General Assembly resolution 56/242, part IV, para. 8.

and not exceed one page, except for long documents which should not be more than four pages; and (*b*) the deadline for submitting documents for translation was 15 days before the beginning of the session. Any document received after that deadline would not be translated but would be distributed in its original language version as a "late document", unless the Director-General decided otherwise.

109. There is no doubt that the overall volume of documentation is part of the problem and part of the solution in ensuring strict adherence by secretariats to rules governing the equitable treatment of all languages as far as the legislative process is concerned. In this context, reduction in the volume of documentation as well as making papers more concise and focused could be established as important goals to be reached, in particular through extensive training in effective writing and drafting skills for authors of governing body documents. As appropriate, Member States may wish to review how they can supplement efforts by secretariats in that regard.

D. Outreaching "We the peoples of the United Nations"

110. In a report to the twentieth session of the Committee on Information, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stressed that "The overall objective of the communications and information function is to inform the public about the work of the United Nations in order to help build broad-based global support for the Organization. This support will depend on how effectively the Organization is perceived to deal with the challenges it faces."[43] This statement could be applied to any other organization of the United Nations system. In that connection, the General Assembly concurred with the view of the Secretary-General "that public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations, and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations".[44]

111. The executive heads themselves had taken the initiative, in the framework of the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), to approve back in April 1997 an ACC statement on universal access to basic communication and information services. In that statement, they recognize inter alia that more than ever, knowledge is power and that "Information about what is occurring becomes a central commodity of international relations, and determines the efficiency and effectiveness of any intervention, which is a particular challenge for multilateral actors."[45] They expressed their deep concern at the increasingly inadequate distribution of access, resources and opportunities in the information and communication field and stressed that "The information and technology gap and related inequities between industrialized and developing nations are widening, so that a new type of poverty, information poverty, is being created."[46]

112. More than ever, the McLuhan vision of a global village where "medium is the message" is given added relevance when the web sites of well-known broadcasting institutions such as the Voice of America (http://www.voa.gov), the BBC (http://www.bbc.co.uk) or Radio France Internationale (http://www.rfi.fr) provide access to information online in multiple languages besides their radio and TV broadcasts which are in a wide range of languages covering all continents. Similar to its better known counterparts, the Australian national radio service offers from its web site (http://www.sbs.com.au) access to radio broadcasts in some 68 languages and it is mandated by its charter to "provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society". For its

[43] A/AC.198/1998/2, "Implementation of the measures regarding information and communications", para. 5.

[44] General Assembly resolution 56/64, part B, preambular para. 2 of 24 December 2001.

[45] A/52/354, "Statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on Universal access to basic communication and information services", para. 3.

[46] Ibid, para. 5.

part, IOF has a French web site (http://www.francophonie.org) with access to language versions in Arabic, English, Portuguese and Spanish.

113. The usual delineation between North and South or industrialized and developing nations is not the only dividing line between info-rich and info-poor as language itself has become the "open Sesame" without which no access to the riches of the Information Age is possible. Despite efforts made and relative progress in improving the multilingual content of information they provide to "We the peoples of the United Nations", many system organizations may themselves be contributing to widening the gap between the fortunate few who have unrestricted access to information and the large majority of those left in poverty. While rules governing the use of languages for the dissemination of information are less stringent than those related to documentation for legislative bodies, any sound communication policy should be based on the need to better outreach targeted audiences in the most cost-effective manner.

(*a*) Traditional media

114. Radio, television and publications were traditionally the most visible media for dissemination of information. United Nations Radio is well known throughout the world and the General Assembly, in its resolution 54/82 of 6 December 1999, stressed that "radio is one of the most cost-effective and far reaching media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, such as development and peacekeeping".[47] One of the best examples of how radio can be used to foster multilingualism and disseminate information is the pilot project launched by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) during the Millennium Summit when a 15-minute live daily programme was aired by the United Nations in all six official languages. In addition to the six official languages, United Nations Radio continues to produce news and features programmes in nine non-official languages (Bangla, Dutch, French/Creole, Hindi, Indonesian, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Turkish and Urdu). The programmes in the six official languages and in Portuguese are digitized in Real Media and MP3 format and made available for Internet streaming, downloading and distribution to partner stations.

115. Television is another medium which is being exploited to communicate with people, particularly where literacy levels may be low. For this reason, all video documentaries and *UN in Action* segments produced by DPI are available in the six official languages. New distribution partnerships are being arranged for the wider distribution of such products, including arrangements for their adaptation in local languages.

116. Indeed, new technologies are revolutionizing radio as well as television and United Nations system organizations should progressively take advantage of these added opportunities. According to a report on the "State of the Internet 2000",[48] the number of radio stations broadcasting on the Internet has increased more than 56 per cent and although television on the Internet known as "streaming video" is developing at a slower pace because mainly of the size of the files involved, industry sources predict that watching television or a movie from a PC will become much easier with the improvement of current technology and the proliferation of high-speed broadband access. In the case of United Nations Radio, anyone with a PC and Internet access can listen to the United Nations daily news in the six official languages and Portuguese. A number of other United Nations magazine and feature programmes are also posted on the Internet in seven languages at http://www.un.org/av/radio.

117. Concerning United Nations publications, ACABQ noted the Secretariat's intention to resume its policy of issuing publications in all official languages subject to author departments and the Publications Board deciding on what to publish and in which languages. While trusting that "such decisions will be fully responsive to the language needs of targeted audiences so as to achieve the most effective means of disseminating the various publications",[49] the Advisory Committee expressed the opinion that "there is little evidence in the

[47] General Assembly resolution 54/82, "Questions relating to information", part B, para. 29.

[48] *State of the Internet 2000*. Prepared by the United States Internet Council and International Technology and Trade Associates Inc. (ITTA).

[49] A/56/7 para. 70.

proposed programme budget that the publications programme receives rigorous examination by the intergovernmental machinery"[50] and it requested that information be provided in the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 on which languages each publication will be issued. Better scrutiny from governing bodies on languages in which publications are made available should contribute to enhancing their own understanding of the challenge faced by secretariats. Some organizations already provide information on languages of planned publications and as appropriate, all executive heads should do the same.

118. The DPI network of information centres and services worldwide as well as information components of field offices produce original print products in local languages. In addition, they often translate and adapt the promotional print information materials produced at Headquarters (such as press kits, fact sheets, feature articles, background press releases, posters, brochures and booklets) for use by local audiences in the countries they serve. During the period from 1 September 2001 to 31 August 2002, these field offices produced publications in 36 languages including the 6 official languages of the Organization.

119. Feedback from end-users may also contribute to avoiding some practices which raise serious doubts on whether their needs have been taken enough into account. As part of a series of publications aimed at assisting exporters, producers and government officials to utilize the trade opportunities available under various schemes of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has recently published a *"Handbook on the scheme of Canada"*.[51] The Handbook was issued in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian, but out of a total of some 110 pages of the original English text, only the first 15 pages of introductory notes were translated while all the annexes containing Canadian legislation were left in English in all language versions. Although lack of resources may have played a role, that claim is particularly irrelevant for the French version as most parts of the publication in French which remained in English could have been downloaded in French from the web site of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca). Similar publications related to the schemes of Switzerland and the EU. In both cases the legislation concerned is available from these sources in the relevant official languages.

(*b*) Continued multilingual development of web sites

120. Internet offers United Nations system organizations an unprecedented tool to outreach targeted groups in languages well beyond the recognized few that have an official status. A systematic survey of their web sites has shown that, overall, and except for the main web sites of the United Nations (http://www.un.org), FAO (http://www.fao.org), UNESCO (http://www.unesco.org) and WIPO (http://www.wipo.int) which are in all their respective languages, the web sites of other organizations have a limited number of languages. The combinations mostly found are English, French and Spanish while Arabic, Chinese and Russian are much less covered and there are still many cases where multilingualism, when it exists, is mostly visible only on the home page, as titles in languages other than English actually link to information available only in English.

121. In that connection the quarterly reports on global Internet statistics by language issued by a reputable marketing communications consultancy may be of interest as they have been providing data on English and non-English online populations since 1995. Their main finding is that the non-English online population is growing much faster than expected. While in September 2000, the online English population was 51 per cent, it dropped to 47.5 per cent by March 2001, 43 per cent by September 2001 and 36.5 per cent by September 2002.

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[50] Ibid., para. 71.

[51] UNCTAD/ITCD/TSB/Misc.66.

Table III.1: Online Language Populations
(Total populations in millions and percentages per language thereof)

Language	*March 2001 (391 million)*	*Sept. 2001 (505 million)*	*March 2002 (561 million)*	*Sept. 2002 (619 million)*
English*	47.5	43	40.2	36.5
Chinese*	9.0	9.2	9.8	10.9
Japanese	8.6	9.2	9.2	9.7
Spanish*	4.5	6.7	7.2	7.2
German	6.1	6.7	6.8	6.7
Korean	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.5
Italian	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.8
French*	3.7	3.3	3.9	3.5
Portuguese	2.5	2.5	2.6	3.0
Russian*	2.1	1.8	2.0	2.9
Dutch	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.0
Arabic*	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.9
Combined six United Nations official languages (*)	**67.4%**	**64.9%**	**63.9%**	**61.9%**

Source: Global Internet Statistics (by Language), http://global-reach.biz/globstats/.

122. For the six official languages of the United Nations and assuming that all six languages are fully covered on the United Nations web sites, those figures suggest that the total online population being outreached is on a downward trend, going from 67.4 per cent in March 2001 to 61.9 per cent in September 2002. This is due to other languages becoming more present on the web. Secretariats cannot ignore those trends if the objective of "fully informing the peoples of the world" continues to be relevant for their organizations. In particular those organizations still maintaining web sites in one language need to review their communications and information policies, unless their governing bodies decide that the status quo should be maintained.

123. Another important policy issue that may need to be addressed is whether language services should be involved in the translation (or quality control of translation) of documents posted on web sites maintained by the different departments or units of each organization. IMF appears to be among the very few to enforce a policy whereby all web pages posted on the web including those translated from the original English texts are checked for quality control by the language services. The 2002 JIAMCATT meeting held in Geneva concluded that this should be considered as best practice and should be generalized. While such quality control is very useful in preserving the corporate image of each organization and in avoiding in particular potential errors in terminology, its implications for translation units may be well beyond their capacity to handle additional workloads unless more adequate resources are provided for that purpose.

E. Interaction with the business community

124. In its resolution 55/247 on procurement reform the General Assembly of the United Nations stressed the need for the procurement process "to reflect fully the international character of the Organization"[52] and reaffirmed "the need for the Secretary-General to continue to explore ways to increase procurement opportunities for vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition".[53]

125. According to the *"General Business Guide"*, a publication by the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office (IAPSO), "The total volume procured by the United Nations system in 2000 was over US$ 3.7 billion, out of which about 37 per cent were professional services (subcontracts), the rest being goods. UNDP accounts for about US$ 585 million of the total. Adding the inputs by recipient governments in terms of loans from international lending institutions, the estimated value of business opportunities emanating from the United Nations system and the Development Banks exceeds US$ 30 billion annually." IAPSO also points out on its web site that

[52] General Assembly resolution 55/247, para. 3.

[53] Ibid., para. 6.

although procurement rules and procedures may vary from one organization to another, "the one most significant common denominator for the United Nations system is that it operates with public funds, requiring that equal opportunity to participate be given to potential suppliers from all member countries" (http://www.iapso.org/news/).

126. By and large, most web sites dedicated to procurement are in English only. Besides individual organizations web sites, five have an inter-agency mandate or ambition. In addition to IAPSO already referred to above, they include the web sites of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) (http://www.unops.org), the United Nations Common Supply Database (http://www.uncsd.org/), the United Nations Development Business (http://www.devbusiness.com/) and Doing Business with the United Nations System of Organizations (http://unbiz.un.int), all of which are accessible in English only so far. Equal opportunity for businesses competing for the very lucrative source of procurement represented by United Nations system organizations should entail equal opportunity in getting access to information on contracts and tenders as they become available including when made available online. In addition and as required, secretariats should ensure that basic documents such as procurement guidelines, registration forms and other relevant information about their procurement process is made available online in more than one language. Fees and other revenues from procurement could be considered as a source of funding for that purpose.

IV. MEMBER STATES AND SECRETARIATS SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

A. The issue of resources

(a) The impact of budgetary constraints

127. Almost all organizations have faced budget constraints in recent years that have affected most programmes across the board. It should be recalled, however, that the General Assembly had expressed long ago in 1987 its conviction that "in view of the importance consistently attached by Member States to the respect for equal treatment of official languages of United Nations bodies, the provision of adequate conference services is an essential element in the efficient functioning of the Organization".[54] Consequently, the Assembly had affirmed that "in order to ensure the provision of adequate conference services to the United Nations, the allocation of resources to those services should be sufficient to meet their requirements".[55] In resolution 50/11 on multilingualism, the Assembly stressed not only "the need to ensure, in particular through the training and recruitment of specialists, that the necessary resources are available to guarantee the proper and timely translation of documents into the different official languages of the United Nations" but also "the importance of ensuring the availability of publications and adequate databanks in the different official languages in the libraries and documentation centres of the various bodies".[56] In the same spirit, adequacy of resources should also be addressed with respect to information material, including Internet sites and audio-visual products, so that these may be available in the six official languages, as appropriate, in order to inform the public about the work and aims of the United Nations.

128. Concerning the United Nations, ACABQ noted that "It is thus for the General Assembly to decide on the level and quality of conference services it expects, but it must do so in the knowledge that there may be reductions in both the level and quality of service unless adequate funding is provided."[57] The Committee further recalled its view stated in its report on results-based budgeting whereby it felt that "for programme managers to achieve expected accomplishments, budgetary levels must be commensurate with the level of approved programmes" and that "a tendency to utilize the phrase 'within existing resources' in legislation may lead programme managers to experience difficulties in achieving expected accomplishments".[58] The views expressed by ACABQ are valid not only in the context of the United Nations but they apply to most other system organizations as well.

129. Complaints from Member States are sometimes a reflection of governing bodies not exercising a more, rigorous scrutiny of proposals by secretariats. Whereas in their letter mentioned in paragraph 78 above the Representatives of Spanish-speaking Member States noted with regret the trend to favour the use of one language "in the drafting and circulation of major publications"[59] to the detriment of other official languages including Spanish, the Secretary-General of the United Nations pointed out that "the creation in six languages of public information and other materials that have hitherto been budgeted and staffed for production in one or two languages, whether in print or on the web, is more problematic".[60] He added that "The full availability of these outputs in all official languages would require an infusion of substantial additional resources and/or a substantial reduction in other mandates of the Secretariat, neither of which the General Assembly has authorized."[61]

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[54] General Assembly resolution 42/207, Pattern of conferences, part C of 11 December 1987.

[55] Ibid.

[56] General Assembly resolution 50/11, para. 5 and 8 of 2 November 1995.

[57] A/56/7, "Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003", para. I.50.

[58] A/55/543, "Results-based budgeting: report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions", para. 18.

[59] A/56/93.

[60] A/56/176.

[61] Ibid.

130. FAO stands as one of the rare cases where the membership has officially admitted that budget constraints had a negative impact on the provision of language services and acted accordingly. The Programme Committee "recognized that language services and publications had been significantly reduced as a result of successive cuts in the budget".[62] The FAO Council, while emphasizing that appropriate resources should be allocated in the Programme and Work Budget 2000-2001 in order to reduce the present imbalance in the use of languages of the Organization, also requested the secretariat to submit "supplementary information concerning resource allocations in support of language policy in FAO in previous biennial budgets, in the proposed PWB for 2000-2001 and in the long term to demonstrate the progressive improvement sought by the Council"[63] Consequently, incremental resources of US$ 1.6 million and US$ 2.1 million were included respectively in the PWB 2000-2001 and PWB 2002-2003 under a new programme entity called "Programme for the Improvement of Language Coverage".

131. Although the context of multilingualism in the EU is not entirely comparable to that of the United Nations system organizations, it is worth noting that the different institutions of the EU have some 3,000 translators and 950 interpreters covering the current 11 official languages. Those figures will increase with the expected enlargement of the membership of the Union. The total cost for such a workforce was estimated at 685.9 million euros in the 1999 budget, but EU officials downplay the importance of that figure by observing that it represents only 0.8 per cent of the total budget of the Union and an average of 2 euros per capita per year to enable all European citizens and their Governments to play a part in the building of Europe in their respective official languages. There is, however, a fundamental difference between EU institutions and United Nations system organizations as legislation passed by the former has to be ultimately translated into the legislation of all Member States in their respective official languages.

[62] CL 116/14, "Report of the eighty-first session of the Programme Committee".

[63] CL 116/REP, para. 107. Report of the Council of FAO. Hundred and sixteenth session. (Rome, 14-19 June 1999).

(*b*) Need for a realistic assessment of resource requirements

132. While some legislative bodies may not dispute the need for improved language coverage, they do have understandable concerns when provided with assessments of required resources involving expenditures well beyond even the most optimistic budget growth scenarios. For the United Nations alone, estimates of some US$ 700 million have been flagged in that context. These estimates may not sufficiently take into account other factors such as the life cycle of documents and information material, the need to set up priorities or opportunities from interaction with other stakeholders.

133. Most United Nations system organizations have now embarked on results-based budgeting which the Secretary-General of the United Nations, among others, has defined as "a programme budget process in which: (*a*) programme formulation revolves around a set of predefined objectives and expected results; (*b*) expected results would justify resource requirements which are derived from and linked to the outputs required to achieve such results; and (*c*) actual performance in achieving results is measured by objective performance indicators".[64] The move to results-based-budgeting provides therefore legislative bodies and secretariats with an ideal tool to better match words with deeds in their quest for improved multilingualism, in particular by allowing them to place public information and communications at the heart of the strategic management of their respective organizations as emphasized by the General Assembly in resolution 56/64 quoted above.

134. Besides the regular budget, there are opportunities from interaction with individual Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations as sources of funding or providers of information material in specific languages. In a report on cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie,[65] the Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted, for instance, some of the activities

[64] A/53/500, "Results-based budgeting: report of the Secretary-General", summary.

[65] A/56/390.

funded by IOF which include a contribution to the enhancement of the United Nations web site in French, funding for the recruitment of an expert in communications and public relations in ECA, financial assistance to UNESCO for the translation and publication of the French edition of *The History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind (The History of Mankind)*, etc. DPI has also entered into agreements with the University of Salamanca, Spain and Ein Shams University of Cairo, Egypt for the translation of portions of the United Nations web site into Spanish and Arabic respectively.

135. Translating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into more than 300 languages has been made possible through an open-ended network of goodwill translators from all origins (individual staff members from DPI, UNDP or UNESCO, permanent missions, national and international NGOs). On a bilateral basis, some Governments have also provided funding on occasion to support translations into specific languages. All those opportunities for partnerships to support multilingualism should be encouraged but should also be seen as complementary efforts and not as substitutes for the collective commitments of Member States in the framework of the legislative bodies of each organization.

136. As hard as it may be to define equal treatment of languages in the context of organizations with a universal mandate and worldwide outreach ambitions, equality needs to be better expressed by not leaving the impression that the regular budget is meant to serve one or two languages on a priority basis and only others as a symbolic gesture. As a matter of policy, the regular budget should, therefore, come first in line as the main source of funding for improved language parity, and it is up to legislative bodies to ensure that the budgetary decisions they make reflect better their stated policies.

B. Improved arrangements within secretariats

(*a*) Need for a change of culture

137. While it concurred that improved language coverage required additional resources, the FAO Council "*recognized* that ensuring adequate language balance was also dependent on working arrangements within the Secretariat" and it emphasized "The importance of the linguistic capabilities of senior staff in FAO's languages and their effective use within the Secretariat".[66] There is a need for a change of culture within many secretariats if they are to make more visible progress in the multilingual content of their outputs. Too often translation appears to be an afterthought instead of being considered as part of the work to be done so as to cater to the needs of all stakeholders. Furthermore, relevant information on the implications of language parity in the delivery of outputs is not always submitted to governing bodies for their consideration.

138. In his foreword to the "Annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1996", the Secretary-General of the United Nations argued that a new system of culture must emerge, based among other factors on "a common appreciation of the challenges ahead and of the respective strengths of the various organizations of the system in meeting them". He also felt that "By the way they act and cooperate in ACC, executive heads must set an example that affects the culture of, and encourages genuine teamwork among, the secretariats of the system."[67] One has yet to see how this forward vision has been translated by ACC itself and its successor, CEB, in the field of information dissemination and what has been done at that level to project the image that, as a symbol of the unity of the United Nations system, CEB membership is indeed committed to the promotion of multilingualism to better serve its diverse stakeholders. In a previous report on the review of ACC and its machinery,[68] JIU had recommended inter alia that ACC should promote further efforts by all organizations to apply existing language policies for document distribution to information made available online. Concerning in particular the multilingual content of web sites and although individual organizations have made visible progress in that regard, example did not come from the top as all the web sites of ACC and its subsidiary bodies have been from the beginning in English only. The situation remained unchanged after the transformation of ACC into CEB as its new web site (http://ceb.unsystem.org) is also in English for the time being, and prospects for an improvement appear to be remote.

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[66] CL 116/REP, para. 110.

[67] E/1997/54.

[68] JIU/REP/1999/1.

139. The main web site of WHO is in English, French and Spanish and has a very useful section on diseases outbreaks (http://www.who.int/csr/don/), but all the monthly outbreak news appears in English only, including that concerning, for instance, influenza in Madagascar, cholera in Burundi or Niger, ebola haemorrhagic fever in Gabon or the Republic of Congo, or dengue haemorrhagic fever in El Salvador. While concern for worldwide travellers justifies that important information on such outbreaks is given in English, similar concerns, if not preferential treatment, should have prevailed in favour of local administrations and the general public of the affected countries by allowing access to the information in French or Spanish.

140. The Information for Development Program (*info*Dev) is managed by the World Bank to address issues and obstacles facing developing countries in an increasingly information-driven world economy. It considers that the dissemination and sharing of information is an important component of its mandate. In its 1998 annual report, *info*Dev emphasized that "there is a growing recognition that telecommunications and Internet access are no longer luxuries for developing countries, but rather strategic factors of development and poverty reduction".[69] Although its donors include countries and institutions such as Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland and the European Union, its web site (http://www.infodev.org) is in English only, even for accessing an important and useful output like the "Economic Internet Toolkit for African Policy Makers" which was developed in collaboration with ECA and the African Internet Forum "to assist African policy and decision makers to better understand" the Internet, its costs and benefits and related policy issues.

141. The need for a change of culture should not be seen as a one-way street. Where the end-users of information posted online are clearly identified as being from a specific language group, or when information has become obsolete for lack of being updated, the appropriateness of requesting translation as a matter of principle may be questionable. It should be possible to strike a balance between the impossible dream of "everything in all languages at all times" and the policy of everything in one language only irrespective of the diversity of targeted audiences.

(*b*) Need for improved access to existing data

142. There is very limited access to information on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) in languages other than English on the web sites of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (http://www.un.org/esa/africa/un-nadaf.htm) or ECA (http://www.uneca.org) despite the fact all pertinent reports and resolutions are otherwise available on the Official Document System (ODS) in all six official languages. Hyperlinks to ODS or to relevant General Assembly sessions could have improved the multilingual content of those two web sites without adding to the workload of translation units. Similarly, although the list of diseases covered by the Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response (CSR) on the web site of WHO (http://www.who.int/emc/diseases/) appears to be accessible in English only, actual documents on some diseases are in two (English/French or English/Spanish) or three languages (English/French/Spanish). Viewers using the French and Spanish versions of the main web site of WHO could have benefited from the related information if they had been guided by appropriate links to the pertinent documents.

(*c*) Need for a better coordinated approach to information dissemination

143. The Third United Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) was held in May 2001. By the end of September 2002, important documents such as the report of the Conference[70] and the Programme of Action[71] were still accessible respectively in three languages (English, French and Spanish) and two languages (English and French) on the UNCTAD web site whereas both documents had been released on ODS in the six United Nations official languages back on

[69] "1998 *info*Dev Annual Report", p. 9; accessible at http://www.infodev.org.

[70] A/CONF.191/11.

[71] A/CONF.191/13.

27 June 2001 for the first document and 1 February 2002 for the second one. Concerning the same Conference, FAO made a presentation on the role of agriculture in the development of the LDCs[72] which is available on its web site in Arabic, English, French and Spanish but can be accessed only in English both on ODS and the UNCTAD web site. Considering that 34 African countries are classified as LDCs out of a total of 49, the ECA web site would have gained both in content and in language coverage if it were to make hyperlinks to important work concerning those countries available in several languages on the web sites of UNCTAD, the World Bank or other organizations.

144. Despite efforts made towards improved coordination both at interdepartmental and inter-agency levels, much remains to be done in the field of information dissemination. In many cases, besides the main home page of the organization, technical departments often have their own page which is maintained and updated without centralized control either content or over languages used. The multilingual content of such web sites is therefore dependent on the linguistic skills available within the departments, unless translation is provided by the language services which are already overburdened by more pressing tasks. As a result, the world at large may underestimate the wealth of information actually generated by the organizations concerned.

145. The Secretary-General of the United Nations noted in his latest reform initiative that the United Nations "must be able to translate the many resolutions, decisions, declarations and debates into meaningful messages that bring to the fore its central role in working for a better world" and, to that end, it "must ensure that its information materials and related activities have the desired impact and constitute an effective means to project the Organization's own distinctive voice to the world at large".[73] To project a corporate image of the United Nations with its diversified missions and structure will require closer attention to languages in which those materials are made available, as well as closer collaboration between DPI, other departments at Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters headed by an official appointed by the Secretary-General. Those offices are part of the overall Secretariat of the United Nations but as shown in annex III(*b*), 9 out of 16 of them have their web sites in English only. Such interaction should be particularly visible on the web sites of the Organization, taking into account the recognition that "the Internet will be an increasingly important vehicle through which the United Nations message is transmitted in the years to come".[74]

146. System-wide, organizations of the United Nations family could all benefit from taking better advantage of, or highlighting, what others have done and thus improve the multilingual content of their own web sites. In that connection DPI has made a listing of global issues on the United Nations agenda (http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/agenda.htm) with links to web sites of other organizations concerned. This commendable initiative could serve as a basis to be enriched in CEB so as to become an official gateway to online information on global issues from all United Nations system organizations, in the same fashion as First Gov (http://www.firstgov.gov), an official United States Government portal which aims at transcending the traditional boundaries of government with a global vision geared at connecting the world to all United States Government information and services.

[72] A/CONF.191/BP/6.

[73] A/57/387, "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change".

[74] Ibid.

Annex I (*a*): Languages used in the United Nations and affiliated bodies
(Governing bodies of main organs, regional commissions and affiliated bodies)

Organ		Official languages	Working languages	Data source/observations (*R.P.: rules of procedure*)
General Assembly (and its main committees)		A C E F R S	A C E F R S	R.P., rule 51 (A/520/Rev.15)
Security Council		A C E F R S	A C E F R S	R.P., rule 41 (S/96/Rev.7)
Economic and Social Council (and its functional commissions)		A C E F R S	E F S	R.P., rule 32 (E/5715/Rev.2) (E/5975/Rev.1 for functional commissions)
Trusteeship Council		C E F R S	E F	R.P., rule 26 (T/1/Rev.7)
International Court of Justice		E F	E F	ICJ Statute 1945 (art. 39.1)
Regional commissions	ECA		A E F	R.P., art. 31 (E/CN.14/111/Rev.8/Corr.2)
	ECE		E F R	R.P., rule 40 (See http://www.unece.org/oes/00uneceterms)
	ECLAC	E F S P	E F S	R.P., art. 42 (LC/G.1403/Rev.3)
	ESCAP		C E F R	R.P., rule 44 (E/2001/39-E/ESCAP/1231)
	ESCWA		A E F	R.P., rule 25
UNDP/UNFPA		A C E F R S	E F S	R.P., rule 4 (DP/1997/32)
UNICEF		C E F S R	E F S	R.P., art. 26 (E/ICEF/177/Rev.4)
UNHCR		A C E F R S	E F	R.P., rule 28 (A/AC.96/187/Rev.5)
UNEP		A C E F S R	A C E F S R	R.P., art. 63 (UNEP/GC/3/Rev.3)
UNCTAD		A C E F S R	A E F S	R.P., rules 69 (TD/63/Rev.2) and 64 (TD/B/740)
UNRWA			A E F	
WFP		A E F S	E F S	R.P. of the Executive Board (rule XIV) (Special arrangements for Chinese)

A: Arabic // C: Chinese // E: English // F: French // P: Portuguese // R: Russian // S: Spanish.

Annex I *(b)*: Languages used in the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and IAEA

Organization		Official languages	Working languages	Data source/observations *(R.P.: rules of procedure G.R.: General Regulations)*
ILO		A C E F G R S	E F S	Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference, art. 24
FAO		A C E F S (Ref. observations)	A C E F S (Ref. observations)	Rule XLVII of the General Rules (Refers to "languages of the Organization")
UNESCO	Conference	A C E F H I P R S	A C E F R S	R.P., Conference (rules 54 and 50)
	Executive Board		A C E F R S	R.P., rule 21 of the Executive Board
ICAO		A C E F R S (Ref. observations)	A C E F R S (Ref. observations)	R.P., Assembly (rules 64 and 65); Council (rule 56) refer to "Languages of deliberations" and "Languages of documentation"
WHO	W. Health Assembly and Executive Board	A C E F R S	A C E F R S	Resolution WHA31.13 (1978) and R.P., rule 22 of the EB
	AFRO	E F P S	E F P	R.P., rule 22 (Regional Committee)
	AMRO/PAHO	E F P S	None	R.P. (Panamerican Sanitary Conference)
	EMRO	A E F	A E F	R.P., rule 21 (Regional Committee)
	EURO	E F G R	None	R.P., rule 20 (Regional Committee)
	SEARO	E	E	R.P., rule 21 (Regional Committee)
	WPRO	C E F	E F	R.P. (Regional Committee)
UPU		F	A E F S + C G P R	Constitution, art. 6; General Regulations, art. 107
ITU*		A C E F R S	A C E F R S	Art. 29, ITU Constitution
WMO		A C E F R S	A C E F R S	G.R. 117-122 (1999). Only relevant languages are used for sessions of the six Regional Associations
IMO		A C E F R S	E F S	R.P., rule 29 (Assembly) and rule 27 (Council); ("Official languages" and "working languages" of the Organization)
WIPO			A C E F R S + Some P	WIPO Convention, art. 6 (2) (vii); WO/GA/26/1, para. 10; WO/GA/26/10, paras. 175, 180
UNIDO		A C E F R S (Ref. observations)	A C E F R S (Ref. observations)	R.P., (rule 61) "languages of the General Conference"; R.P., (rule 65) "languages of the Board"
IAEA		A C E F R S	A C E F R S	R.P., Conference (rule 86); Board (rules 51 and 52)
World Bank			E	
IMF			E	Rule C-13 (Rules and Regulations); translation into the "standard" languages (A C F G P R S)
IFAD		A E F S	A E F S	"Languages of the Council" (R.P., rule 20) "Languages of the Board" (R.P., rule 26)

A: Arabic // C: Chinese // E: English // F: French // G: German // H: Hindi // I: Italian // P: Portuguese // R: Russian // S: Spanish.

* See paragraph 16 for more details concerning official and working languages in ITU.

Annex II: Working languages of secretariats

Organization	Working languages		Languages mostly used for		
	Mandated	De facto	Intranets	Databases	Original texts of documents
United Nations	E F except for: - ECE (E F R) - ECLAC (E F S) - ESCWA (A E F)		E F (Geneva) E (New York and other main duty stations)	E	E (76.5%) / F (12.8%) E/F (4.2%) / Other (6.5%) [UNOG in 2000]
ILO	E F S		E F S	E F S	E (85.2%) F (13.3%) / S (1.5%)
FAO	A C E F S		E	E F S	Out of 13,274,000 words sent for translation in 2002: E (97.34 %) / S (1.47%) F (1.16%) / A (0.02%)
UNESCO	E F (Paris); either E or F or both (other duty stations)*		E F		1998: E (60.86%) / F (39.14%) 1999: E (64.09%) / F (35.91%) 2000: E (74.69%) / F (25.31%)
ICAO	A C E F R S	E	E	E	E (85%) F (6%) / S (4%) A C R (5%)
WHO	None	E F	E	E	
UPU	E F	E F	E F	E F	F (45%) / E (45%) Others (10%)
ITU	E F S	E F	E F	E F	E (93%)
WMO	E F R S	E F	E F	E	E (97.4 %) /A (1.7%) R (0.2%) / Other (0.7%)
IMO	E F S **	E	E	E	
WIPO	A C E F R S + some P	Mainly E F + A C G J R S***	E F	E F	E (57.5%) / E/F (17.8%) S (12.3%) / F (8.2%) Other (4.2%)
UNIDO		E	E	E	n/a
IAEA	None	E	E	E	E (68%) / R (14%) / S (8%) F (4%) / A (3%) / G (2%) C (0.4%) / Other (0.3%)
World Bank		E	E	E	
IMF	E		E	E	
IFAD	A E F S		E	E	A E F S

A: Arabic // C: Chinese // E: English // F: French // G: German // J: Japanese // P: Portuguese // R: Russian // S: Spanish.

* The working languages at UNESCO Headquarters are English and French. Away from Headquarters, either English or French, or both, are used unless one of the other official languages is also used as a working language. (Item 155, UNESCO Manual).

** As per article 11 of the IMO Convention, "the Organization shall consist of an Assembly, a Council, a Marine Safety Committee, a Legal Committee, a Marine Environment Protection Committee, a Technical Co-operation Committee and such subsidiary organs as the Organization may at any time consider necessary; and a Secretariat". The different rules of procedure further indicate that English, French and Spanish are the working languages of the Organization.

*** Plus other languages as required for serving private-sector users of WIPO services.

Annex III (*a*): Languages used for publications, CD-ROMs and e-books

Organization	Publications		Electronic publishing	
	In official/working languages (Percentage per language)	*In other languages*	*CD-ROMs*	*E-books*
United Nations	(Refers to sales items only) E (62%) / F (23%) / S (15%) A C R (less than 1%)		E or E/F	
ILO	E (100%) / F/S (20%) A C G R (10%)	Under licence or to field offices (10%)	E F S	E
FAO (2000)	A (6.7%) / C (6.7%) / E (41.3%) F (17.3%) / S (17.3%) Bilingual (1.9%) / Trilingual (6.7%) Multilingual (1.4%)	(0.5)	E F S (FAOSTAT in A C E F S)	
UNESCO	E (39%) / F (32.7%) / S (17.6%) A (3%) / C (0.6%) / R (1.2%) Multilingual (5.5%)	Under licence		
ICAO	E (60%) / F (15%) / S (12%) R (7%) / A (4%) / C (2%)		E	
WHO	E (83%) / F (11%) / S (6%)	88 publications in 28 languages in 2000		
UPU	E/F (90-95%) / S (50-60%) A (50%) / R (30%) P (20-25%) / G and C (15%)		n/a	
ITU	E (36%) / F (29%) / S (29%) A (2%) / C (2%) / R (2%)		A C E F R S	
WMO	E (31.0%) / F (22.6%) / S (20.0%) R (18.3%) / A (4.5%) / C (3.6%)			
IMO	E (30%) / F (25%) / S (25%) R (10%) / A (5%) / C (5%)		E F S	
WIPO	A (23%) / C (12%) / E (99%) F (88%) / P (11%) / R (23%) / S (48%)	G (20%) / Dt (5%) I (12%) / JP (2%)	E F G R S	E F S
UNIDO				
IAEA	E (68%) / F (20%) S (10%) / R (5%)	G (5%)		
World Bank	E F G S		E	E
IMF	E F G S	A C P R (On ad hoc basis)		
IFAD	E F S	I		

A: Arabic // C: Chinese // E: English // F: French // G: German // P: Portuguese // R: Russian // S: Spanish // Dt: Dutch // I: Italian // JP: Japanese.

Annex III (*b*): Languages on the main web sites of the United Nations and its affiliated bodies

Organization/units (URL)	Languages on home page *(Planned improvements/observations)*
United Nations (Headquarters and main Offices away from Headquarters headed by an official accountable to the Secretary-General)	
United Nations main web site (http://www.un.org)	A C E F R S (21 other languages on local web sites of United Nations Information Centres and services)
UNCTAD (http://www.unctad.org)	E F S
UNEP (http://www.unep.org)	E
UN-Habitat (http://www.unhabitat.org)	E
UNODC (http://unodc.org)*	E
ECA (http://www.uneca.org)	E F (Arabic planned)
ECE (http://www.unece.org)	E
ECLAC (http://www.eclac.cl)	E S
ESCAP (http://www.unescap.org)	E
ESCWA (http://www.escwa.org.lb)	A E
UNHCHR (http://www.unhchr.ch)	E F S
UNHCR (http://www.unhcr.ch)	Main home page in E C F S and 7 other languages but not Arabic and Russian
UNRWA (http://www.un.org/unrwa)	A E
OCHA (http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/)	E
UNOG (http://www.unog.ch)	E F
UNON (http://www.unon.org)	E
UNOV (http://www.unov.org)	E
UNDP (http://www.undp.org)	E F S
UNICEF (http://www.unicef.org)	E F S (some 40 UNICEF country offices web sites developed partially in local languages)
UNFPA (http://www.unfpa.org)	E
WFP (http://www.wfp.org)	E

A: Arabic // C: Chinese // E: English // F: French // G: German // J: Japanese // K: Korean // P: Portuguese // Po: Polish // R: Russian // S: Spanish.

* Web site of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), formerly the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP); replaces http://www.odccp.org which may continue to work for sometime but re-routes to the new URL.

Annex III (*c*): Languages on web sites of the specialized agencies and IAEA and two non-United Nations system organizations (EU and OECD)

Organization (*URL*)	**Languages on home page** *(Planned improvements/observations)*
ILO (http://www.ilo.org)	E F S (access to local web sites in A, G, I, JP, P, R and TK but no C yet). All documents of Governing Body and Conference in the seven official languages.
FAO (http://www.fao.org)	A C E F S (major efforts will be pursued to improve language coverage deeper into the site, in particular for A and C)
UNESCO (http://www.unesco.org)	A C E F R S
ICAO (http://www.icao.int)	E (except press releases)
WHO (http://www.who.int)	E F S
UPU (http://www.upu.int)	E F (also A P S for documents)
ITU (http://www.itu.int)	E F S
WMO (http://www.wmo.ch)	E F S at level 1 (core pages in E F S at level 2 if funds available; long-term goal of all core pages in six languages at levels 1, 2 and 3)
IMO (http://www.imo.org)	E
WIPO (http://www.wipo.int)	A E C F R S
UNIDO (http://www.unido.org)	E
IAEA (http://www.iaea.int)	E
World Bank (http://www.worldbank.org)	E F P R S
IMF (http://www.imf.org)	E F G S
IFAD (http://www.ifad.org)	E (most official material in the four official languages)
EU (http://europe.eu.int)	11 languages (DK, DT, E, FN, F, G, GR, I, P, S, SW)
OECD (http://www.oecd.org)	E F

A: Arabic // C: Chinese // DK: Danish // DT: Dutch // E: English // F: French // FN: Finnish // G: German // GR: Greek // I: Italian // JP: Japanese // K: Korean // P: Portuguese // Po: Polish // R: Russian // S: Spanish // SW: Swedish // TK: Turkish.

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