

166th Session of the Council

Multilingualism at FAO

Multilingualism, a defining characteristic of FAO as an international, intergovernmental agency, is essential for the inclusive, effective and efficient exercise of the governance of the Organization by its Members. Multilingualism is firmly rooted in FAO's Basic Texts, results framework and established policy. Rule XLVIII of the General Rules of the Organization establishes that "*Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the languages of the Organization*"; all six languages enjoy equal status within FAO, without the distinction of "official" and "working" languages which exists in other multilateral and United Nations institutions.

The importance of multilingualism at FAO has been significantly enhanced since the election of Director-General QU Dongyu in 2019, by being embedded across a much wider span of the Organization's products and services. This includes interpretation and translation for meetings of Governing Bodies, Statutory Bodies and other meetings; translation of flagship and other corporate publications; translation of communication products; availability of some multilingual products in non-FAO languages; and ensuring multilingualism in the human resources management of the Organization's employees.

The ambition of the Organization is to gear up multilingualism further, through a series of forward-looking approaches and measures covering all of its transversal dimensions, including through improved internal coordination, increased innovation and digitalization, and enhanced alignment with the United Nations system.

In particular, FAO is committed to implementing the recommendations of the relevant 2020 report of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, especially on the strategic policy framework for multilingualism, and appointment of a corporate coordinator for multilingualism. These measures are aimed *inter alia* at increasing the quantum and balance of multilingual goods and services in FAO languages, as well as the provision of products in non-FAO languages on a demand-driven basis.

In addition, measures put in place to improve the timeliness of publication of papers and documents in all languages for meetings of the Governing Bodies will continue, including by strengthening the processes for preparation of documents in the original language in which they are drafted.

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