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| **Council Working Group on the Use of the six official languages of the Union** |  |
| **11th meeting, Virtual meeting, 5 February 2021** |  |
|  |  |
|  | **Document CWG-LANG/11/2-E** |
| **1 December 2020** |
| **English only** |

**Report by the Secretary-General**

PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 154 (REV. DUBAI, 2018)  
AND RESOLUTION 1372 (C15, LAST AMENDED C19)

This report provides an update to the Council on the implementation of Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) regarding the use of ITU’s six official languages on an equal footing in accordance with Council Resolution 1372, as revised in 2019.

The Council Working Group is invited to take note of the information provided in Annex I on the areas of interest defined by the Council in 2019.

The secretariat is pleased to note that steady progress continues to be made on all fronts leading to full, equitable use of ITU’s six official languages, as evidenced below:

1. **Evolution of the budget for translation of documents to the six official languages of the Union since 2010**

As requested by CWG-LANG, budgetary figures are submitted for both interpretation and translation services. Budgetary figures for translation are divided into three categories: cost of translation, cost of associated services, and total cost.

**Table 1: Evolution of language services budget (in ,000 CHF) 2010-2020**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** |
| **Translation budget** | 9 581 | 8 656 | 9 031 | 8 188 | 9 861 | 9 819 | 8 250 | 8 433 | 8 210 | 8 882 | 8 235 |
| **Associated services budget** | 6 733 | 6 633 | 5 901 | 5 546 | 5 841 | 5 841 | 5 646 | 5 716 | 5 258 | 5 605 | 5 582 |
| **Total Translation budget** | 16 314 | 15 289 | 14 932 | 13 734 | 15 702 | 15 660 | 13 895 | 14 149 | 13 468 | 14 488 | 13 818 |
| **Interpretation budget** | 3 011 | 2 117 | 4 396 | 1 944 | 3 242 | 3 744 | 2 027 | 2 228 | 2 435 | 3 457 | 1 728 |
| **Total Language services budget** | 19 326 | 17 406 | 19 328 | 15 678 | 18 944 | 19 404 | 15 923 | 16 378 | 15 903 | 17 944 | 15 543 |

**Figure 1: Evolution of language services budget (in ,000 CHF) 2010-2020**

Translation volumes continue to reflect equality of treatment of all six ITU official languages. Translation output figures between 1 January and 31 October 2020 are as follows:

**Table 2: Translation volumes, per language (until 31 October 2020)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Arabic | Chinese | English | French | Russian | Spanish | | **TOTAL** |
| Output translation | 7548 | 7950 | 1564 | 8030 | 6923 | 7464 | | 39479 |

**Figure 2: Translation volumes, per language**

**2. Procedures adopted by other international organizations inside and outside of the UnitedNations system and benchmark studies on their costs of translation**

Through its active participation in the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) and its working groups and task-forces, plus the Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Aided Translation and Terminology (JIAMCATT), ITU keeps abreast of procedures and IT tools adopted by other international organizations and adapts its business model and procedures to the best practices resulting from such interactions. Specific information on ITU activities related with IAMLADP and JIAMCATT are included in Annex 2 (Report of the Group on Study and Evaluation of the Translation Procedures, and more specifically the COVID-19 Lessons for ITU).

**3.** **Initiatives undertaken by the General Secretariat and the three Bureaux to increase efficiencies and cost savings on the implementation of Res.154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Council Res. 1372 (Rev. 2019)**

***a) Review of the measures and principles for interpretation and translation***:

The Group on Study and Evaluation of the Translation Procedures agreed on the objectives of a review of such measures and principles (document C14/INF/4) and on a proposed action plan with a view to submitting revised measures and principles for interpretation and translation to the 2022 meeting of the CWG-LANG.

***b) Neural Machine Translation, CAT tools*:** To speed up the translation process and to allow for translation of more web pages and documents, various NMT engines have been integrated in translators’ workstations and are currently being tested in real work conditions.

The procurement process for the computer-assisted translation tool eLUNa, developed by the UN Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) , is in its final stages.

***c)* *Remote interpretation:*** To ensure business continuity in times of COVID-19, C&P Interpretation Service, in collaboration with ISD, the three Sectors, AIIC and free-lance interpreters, explored the ways of remote interpretation through trainings and live meeting practice.

***d) Cooperation with ITU-CCT***: C&P continues to participate in ITU-CCT meetings, where an agreement has been reached as to the workflow for terminology management and to the term validation process.

**4. Alternative translation procedures**

Council-17 decided to establish an internal committee of the Union, the **Group on Study and Evaluation of the Translation Procedures**, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, to consider the implementation of the best and most economically effective solutions to the provision of translation and simultaneous interpretation services at an appropriate cost, while maintaining quality of service, and to study making use of approved external sources to translate Union documents. The Group met in January, October and November 2020, and its report is contained in Annex 2 to this Document.

1. **Progress made on the implementation of measures and principles for translation and interpretation adopted by the Council in its 2014 session**

The measures and principles for translation and interpretation, as adopted by the Council in 2014, are systematically considered by the secretariat as a benchmark in the delivery of translation and interpretation services for ITU conferences, meetings, documents, and publications.

To this end, all preparatory and in-session documents were delivered in the six official languages for the **VCC1** and the **VCC-2** and for **C-20**. Final versions of the outcome documents for **WRC-19** were also published in all six languages. A schedule is being prepared for the delivery of all relevant preparatory documentation in six languages for the **WTSA-21** and **WTDC-21**.

TSB continues to translate **Recommendations approved under the Alternative Approval Procedure (AAP)** within the limits of available translation budget, and in accordance with requests received from the linguistic groups and the ITU-T study groups. The table below reflects the number of Recommendations and English pages whose translation was requested into the various languages in 2020.[[1]](#footnote-1)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| F | | S | | C | | A | | R | |
| Recs | Pgs | Recs | Pgs | Recs | Pgs | Recs | Pgs | Recs | Pgs |
| 11 | 454 | 11 | 454 | 11 | 454 | 11 | 454 | 11 | 454 |

**Annex I**

**Areas of interest for the implementation of Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) over the period 2019-2022**

According to the *instructs the Council* of Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), the Council is required to:

1. consider proposals for the adoption by ITU of alternative translation procedures (*instructs the Council* 1);
2. analyze the application of the updated measures and principles for interpretation and translation adopted by the Council at its 2014 session (*instructs the Council* 2);
3. pursue and monitor specific operational measures (*instructs the Council* 3).

Therefore, as regards implementation of Resolution 154, the areas of interest identified by the Council over the period 2019-2022 are:

**1. Review of ITU documentation and publication services with a view to eliminating any duplication and to creating synergies**

The three Sectors and the General Secretariat collaborate closely among themselves to identify and minimize duplication, gaps and overlaps. Sectors’ Resolutions are modified as needed to avoid duplication and create synergies, particularly through alignment with Plenipotentiary Resolutions and decisions.

An ITU-D publications guide was released in January 2020 and is in the final stages of testing prior to validation. It intends to rationalize the planning, production and publication process, thus also avoiding any duplication and unnecessary translation.

The guide provides an overview on responsibility for content and presents the types of publications produced as part of the ITU-D mandate. It highlights the key phases of publishing, namely: planning, content development, peer review and inter-Sectoral review, editing and layout. It offers tips on how to best ensure that the contents of the publications are of the highest quality, commensurate with the authoritative standing of ITU, that they have a ONE ITU brand, a clearly defined purpose, audience, and intended impact.

The guide also highlights the publications that can be translated and underlines the importance of the measures and principles for translation of publications currently contained in Document C14/INF/4, which needs updating to reflect new publications and abrogate those that are obsolete.

The guide is intended as a “living document” and will be updated regularly.

**2. Explore and implement all possible measures to reduce the size and volume of documents (page-limits, executive summaries, material in** **annexes or hyperlinks), and achieve greener meetings**

***a) Reduction of the size and volume of documents***

With regard to page limits, progress has been made in all areas of reducing the volume and cost of documentation, through the membership’s and secretariat’s diligent implementation of Resolution 154 (Dubai, 2018).

The General Secretariat continues to implement the general length restriction to 4 pages for its documents prepared for the Council, when feasible and appropriate. Exceptions are made for some documents.

The secretariat considers this task as an ongoing operational requirement and is consistently looking to introduce new and better measures.

***b) Efforts to achieve greener meetings***

With regard to greener meetings, providing free online access to ITU Publications has dramatically reduced the use of paper copies in all ITU meetings which, together with the increase in the use of electronic working methods, including correspondence activities, e-meetings, videoconferencing and remote participation are used extensively by ITU to achieve greener meetings, encourage participation from developing countries and enhance the quality of output documents, converges with the overall goal of the United Nations to reduce paper usage and Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

More information about ITU’s efforts to address climate change can be found at the following address:<https://www.greeningtheblue.org/what-the-un-is-doing/international-telecommunication-union-itu>.

**3. Implementation in ITU of the United Nations system objective of multilingualism**

An Intersectoral Group on Multilingualism, reporting to the Inter-Sectoral Coordination Task Force (ISC-TF), has been established, with the mandate of promoting, inspiring and facilitating a coordinated, consistent and coherent approach to multilingualism across ITU.

The Group shall guide and support the mainstreaming of the practice of multilingualism in day to day activities of the Bureaux and the General Secretariat of the Union, as well as the follow-up on governing bodies instructions related to multilingualism, as well as the recommendations in this area by UN coordination bodies such as CEB, IAMLADP, JIU, etc.

**4.** **Necessary measures for equitable use of the six languages on the ITU website in terms of multilingual content and user-friendliness**

On the current itu.int website, press releases, media advisories and Member Communiqués are being published the six languages of the Union. Current work on a new OneITU website (new IT platform, new design, new content) factors in the availability of the level 0, level -1 and potentially level -2 static content in the six languages.

**5. Review, in collaboration with the Sector advisory groups, of the types of material to be included in output documents and translated**

The Group on Study and Evaluation of the Translation Procedures agreed on the objectives and on a proposed action plan for the review of document C14/INF/4, in collaboration with the relevant Advisory Groups, and will submit a consolidated proposal to the 2022 meeting of the CWG-LANG.

1. **Possible measures to reduce, without sacrificing quality, the cost and volume of documentation as a standing item, in particular for conferences and assemblies**

In order to obtain meetings as “paper-smart” as possible and based on past practice, the secretariat focused on improving conference, meeting, and event services by expanding remote participation facilities, providing mobile applications, improving connectivity, and promoting a paper-free environment, thus reducing considerably the cost of documentation.

1. **Statistics on use, download and purchase of the different language versions of ITU documents and publications**

This statics is related to the overall content of documents that ITU is managing within its Enterprise Content Management solution since 2001

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Language | **E** | **F** | **S** | **A** | **C** | **R** |
| Meetings | 394386 | 77078 | 75102 | 60616 | 59126 | 60730 |
| Recommendations | 69794 | 33697 | 33697 | 6212 | 6396 | 7316 |
| Publications | 15331 | 8564 | 8525 | 4412 | 4249 | 4421 |

1. ***Statistics on downloads of ITU Meetings***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Sector*  *Language* | ITU-D | ITU-T | ITU-R | ITU-S | Total by Language |
| Arabic | 4980 | 1970 | 13280 | 13009 | **33239** |
| Chinese | 1558 | 6874 | 3144 | 9351 | **20927** |
| English | 25202 | 277372 | 263801 | 53000 | **619375** |
| French | 3790 | 8284 | 18321 | 13109 | **37363** |
| Spanish | 2024 | 4874 | 18125 | 12340 | **43504** |
| Russian | 1367 | 1834 | 15487 | 8184 | **26872** |
| Total by Sector | **38921** | **332158** | **108993** | **301208** |  |

***b) Statistics on downloads of free ITU publications***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Sector*  *Language* | ITU-D | ITU-T | ITU-R | ITU-S | Total by Language |
| Arabic | 26176 | 14932 | 10692 | 2595 | **54395** |
| Chinese | 12034 | 17682 | 23694 | 2477 | **55887** |
| English | 169053 | 204132 | 263021 | 74683 | **710889** |
| French | 26397 | 38779 | 53654 | 4484 | **123314** |
| Spanish | 37564 | 34088 | 56965 | 4131 | **132748** |
| Russian | 21500 | 12496 | 46247 | 1801 | **69548** |
| Total by Sector | **292724** | **322109** | **454273** | **90171** |  |

These data shows that ITU website clients have consumed **1159277** free publications since the beginning of 2020 (an average of **3380** downloads per day). English takes the lion’s share with **61.39%** of the downloads. Spanish, French follow with approximately **11.4%** each, while Russian **7.08%**, Chinese and Arabic get roughly **4.82%**and **4.69%** respectively.

ITU website clients show a lot of interest for ITU-R **454273** downloads. ITU-T and ITU-D free publications are with a very close level of attractiveness respectively at **322109** and **292724** downloads. The ITU secretariat closes the loop with **90171** downloads.

***b) Publications***

In 2019[[2]](#footnote-2), the multilingual format in six languages (M6) was the most widely distributed (96%) comprising mostly mandatory Maritime publications.

This was followed by publications in three-language format M3 (English, French, and Spanish) at 2 % and the English-only format at 2%.

All other publication languages, namely French-only, Arabic-only, Russian-only, Chinese-only, and Spanish-only, together constituted less than 1% of total sales.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Language** | **% of sales\*** |
| M6 (Six Lang. on CD/DVD) | 96.22% |
| M3 (Three Lang.:E, F, S on CD/DVD) | 1.95% |
| English | 1.76% |
| Spanish | 0.03% |
| French | 0.03% |
| Arabic | 0.01% |
| Chinese | 0.00% |
| Russian | 0.00% |

*\* Excluding souvenirs, insertion in ITU News, royalties and other income.*

**8. Respect of deadlines for the submission of contributions that require translation to conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union**

In 2020, all provisions related to deadlines for the submission of contributions that require translation to major meetings of the Union have been respected. However, it has been observed that more contributions tend to arrive during last few days before deadline to submit contributions. For instance, for WRC-19, 45% of contributions, representing more than 250 translation pages, were received for translation between Friday, 4 October and Monday, 7 October, being the latter the cutting date for submission of contributions.

This practice has significant financial implications as most of the staff in the document production chain were required to work overtime to process and prepare all documents in a timely fashion. Language Sections also had to work overtime and weekends during the 3 weeks prior to the event in order to have all contributions translated before the opening of the conference.

**Annex II**

**Report of the** **Group on study and evaluation of the translation procedures**

**Introduction**

Council 2017 agreed to request the Deputy Secretary-General to preside over an internal committee, reporting to the Council through the CWG-LANG, on alternative translation arrangements based on the proposal from the United Arab Emirates ([C17/108](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0108/en)).

The group has been established with the following terms of reference:

In collaboration with the Directors of the three Bureaux, and in consultation with the Council Working Group on Languages and the ITU regional offices:

1. Study the most economically effective solutions for the provision of translation and simultaneous interpretation services at an appropriate cost, while maintaining quality of service in general.
2. Investigate the use of approved external bodies and centres to translate ITU documents, in collaboration with Member States and regional offices.
3. Study the practice of other United Nations organizations in this regard.

Remote participation is made available for the Regional Offices to participate.

The group is composed of representatives of each Bureau, the General Secretariat Departments and the Regional Directors. This document provides a status report on the work of the group and invites CWG-LANG to offer its comments. In 2020, the Group held three meetings and dealt with the revision of Doc. C14/INF/4 (measures and principles for interpretation and translation in ITU), the follow up of projects on neural machine translation, web content management, and remote interpretation), the lessons learned with COVID-19 and the practices of other UN organizations.

**1** **Status of projects on automatic translation, web content management and remote interpretation**

**Automatic translation:** A pilot project using neural machine translation with human post-editing to translate ITU web pages is currently taking place. Translators have been trained in the use of SharePoint and informed on post-editing principles. Translation engines tested so far include DeepL, Google Translate and iFlyTek. Additional engines for further testing could be Amazon Translate, Microsoft Translator and Sogou. The workflow of the web page translation has been streamlined and is contributing to a speedier overall process. C&P is currently looking to expand the scope of the project to include other web platforms, such as Sitecore and WordPress. In addition to web pages, post editing of machine translated documents is being tested.

A neural machine translation tool, called ITU-Translate, has been developed and was trained with ITU documents. This tool is currently in its evaluation phase and available to delegates for document translation via the TSB web portal "myWorkspace", it is also available to translators via C&P Translators’ platform. The intention is to continue this development to make the tool available to all ITU sectors and to further integrate it in CAT tools.

An API for on the fly website translation based on external machine translation services has been developed. It is currently being evaluated and is available on selected ITU web pages and is also being used in the C&P web page translation workflow.

**Web content management:** Currently, ITU is developing business requirements of machine learning and human translations to cover all of MyITU content, including ITU daily blogs and articles, publications and events and the members area. The aim is to be operational in time for Council 2021.

**Remote interpretation**: C&P, in collaboration with ISD, organized trainings by Interprefy of ITU’s regular interpreters on using the RSI platform. Moreover, on occasion of the ITU-D Regional Development Forum for Asia-Pacific, a full remote interpretation on the ZOOM platform was conducted in English and Chinese. A team of 3 interpreters working from their individual residence in China managed to service a total of 4 sessions taking place in Bangkok on 2-5 November 2020, with promising result.

**2 COVID-19 Lessons for ITU[[3]](#footnote-3)**

The ITU has been compelled to adapt overnight to the new reality of COVID-19, with various restrictions. Virtual meetings for delegates and staff working from home had been important components of business continuity and crisis management. ITU virtual meetings have had record high registration and attendance compared to the previous year’s physical meetings. Some virtual meetings had had as many as 700 participants. Zoom, interprefy, Microsoft Teams and Teams Live Event and GoToMeeting/webinar meeting were the tools ITU had used for virtual meetings and conferences.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemics has had a colossal impact on conference management operations around the world. At ITU, emergency measures have been implemented to ensure the safety of personnel and business continuity, and an effective transition from physical to virtual operations had been achieved for the most critical functions. This would not have been possible without the professionalism and resilience of ITU staff.

As to the challenge of preserving the multilingual character of virtual meetings, all mandated documentation has been delivered on time in all six official languages despite the disruption, stress and difficult circumstances. Various obstacles had impeded the same smooth continuation of operations in the provision of conference interpretation services.

Teleworking has proven to be feasible and is now viewed as an attractive option by some staff, as well as by management, owing to the cost and greening benefits it represents. Multilingualism had been easier to ensure in translation than interpretation. Translation services had been the quickest to transition to remote work thanks to all the reliable and robust tools implemented in the past years and the strong motivation of the translation teams.

A change in paradigm was in the making in interpretation, with remote simultaneous interpretation increasingly being provided through co-located or disperse teams using new platforms to service shorter meetings.

**3 Practice of other United Nations organizations**

The forty-sixth International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) was organized by the IAMLADP secretariat with the technical support of the United Nations Office at Geneva from Monday, 22 June, to Friday, 26 June 2020. The Meeting was held entirely online, and approved conclusions and recommendations, among them:

• There is an urgent need to switch to fully remote operations and organize virtual meetings in response to the physical-distancing measures and travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020, which has highlighted the crucial role that language and conference services play in the work of intergovernmental and international organizations

• The translation services continued to provide timely, high quality documentation in all official languages, functioning as the guardians of multilingualism during the early stages of the pandemic. With experienced teams and suitable web-based tools already in place, their transition to teleworking was rapid and relatively seamless.

• The interpretation services worked closely with meetings management, IT departments, clients and suppliers to identify, procure and implement, at extraordinary speed, technical solutions and arrangements that made it possible to hold virtual meetings with remote simultaneous interpretation.

• Teleworking and virtual meetings have proven to be technically feasible, and given the benefits they offer in terms of offering flexible working arrangements, cost savings, reduced carbon emissions and greater accessibility, they will remain an option for IAMLADP organizations when the physical-distancing restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic are lifted.

ITU actively contributed to the creation of the new IAMLADP Task Force on Virtual Meetings as well as to IAMLADP Surveys on teleworking practices, on joint training ventures trainers and on virtual and hybrid meetings, and took part in IAMLADP Joint Training Ventures on eLearning and on Neural Machine Translation.

ITU secretariat also submitted contributions and comments to the draft JIU report on “Multilingualism in the United Nations system”.

The 2020 Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Aided Translation and Terminology (JIAMCATT) was going to be hosted by the International Maritime Organization in London. Due to the Covid-19, the venue was cancelled but the meeting was successfully held virtually on the 15th and 16th of April. The theme was: Building bridges: the connecting power of language technology. During the various sessions, the organizing committee averaged 150 to 200 participants. The sessions have been recorded and are available on JIAMCATT’s website. Due to the specific format of the meeting, there have been no conclusion or recommendations issued this year.

1. At 31 October 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Yearly totals through-October stats will not accurately reflect 2020, since 2 major publications cannot launch before December, and include non-English paper copy sales. An update will be provided when totals for 2020 are available. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . [↑](#footnote-ref-3)