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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C23/47-E** |
| **25 May 2023** |
| **Original: English** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General |
| REPORT ON THE USE OF THE SIX LANGUAGES OF THE UNION ON AN EQUAL FOOTING |
| **Purpose** This report provides an update to the ITU Council on the implementation of Resolution 154 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on use of the six official languages of the Union on an equal footing, in accordance with Council Resolution 1372 (C15, last amended C19).**Action required by the Council**The Council is invited to **note** the report.**Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**Excellence in human resources and organizational innovation.**Financial implications**None.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**References**[*Resolution 154 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference;*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-154-E.pdf)[*Council Resolution 1372 (C15, last amended 2019)*](http://web.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0138/en) |

1. **Evolution of the budget for translation of documents to the six official languages since the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference**

As requested by the Plenipotentiary Conference, budget figures for translation and interpretation services are hereby submitted (Annex 1, Table 1), divided into three categories: translation and associated-service budget and expenses; interpretation-service budget and expenses and total language-service budget and expenses. As requested by the ITU Council Working Group on languages (CWG-LANG), Annex 1, Table 2, includes information on the translation volumes per language over the same period. Translation volumes reflect the equality of treatment of all six ITU official languages, and the exceptional holding of three world conferences and assemblies in 2022.

1. **Procedures adopted by other international organizations inside and outside the United Nations system**

ITU participates actively in the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) and its working groups and task forces, and also in the Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Aided Translation and Terminology (JIAMCATT). The principal conclusions of IAMLADP and JIAMCATT in 2022 focused on the need to: increase support for fully virtual meetings and physical meetings with remote participation; reflect changing working methods, including remote work and the use of new technologies, in flexible management of staff, adapted contracts and new job profiles; embed machine translation more deeply into translation processes while preserving the role of translation professionals as integral to the effective use of machine tools; develop revision and post-editing skills for translation staff; and increase awareness and suitable technical platforms for remote simultaneous interpretation.

ITU is actively involved in the IAMLADP task force work on creating and analysing a database of job profiles across member organizations to better understand changing requirements for language professionals.

1. **Initiatives undertaken by the General Secretariat and the three Bureaux to increase efficiencies and cost savings in the implementation of Resolution 154 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference and Council Resolution 1372 (C15, last amended C19)**

**3.1 Implementation of measures and principles for translation and interpretation**

The [document](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CL-INF-0007/en) on measures and principles for translation and interpretation in ITU, which was reviewed by Sector advisory groups and the General Secretariat and updated and endorsed by the Council at its 2022 session, has been systematically implemented by the secretariat as a benchmark for the delivery of translation and interpretation services for ITU conferences, assemblies, meetings, documents, webpages and publications. The document will be reviewed and updated as necessary in coordination with the Sector advisory groups to ensure the use of all official languages of the Union in publications, websites and documents.

**3.2 Implementation of the United Nations system objective of multilingualism and the Policy Framework on Multilingualism**

Following the approval of the ITU Policy Framework on Multilingualism by the Council at its 2022 session, the secretariat is developing administrative and operational guidelines on the implementation of the policy in line with the recommendations of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System on multilingualism in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2020/6), to be presented to the next meeting of CWG-LANG. The guidelines comprise an overview of bodies, roles, responsibilities and documents related to multilingualism at ITU; current processes and practices in implementing multilingualism throughout the organization; a roadmap and an implementation time-frame for future initiatives, including new language strategies for interpretation and translation; a proposed matrix on translation methods for webpages and publications according to audience, degree of precision and technical nature of the source text; new proposals on on-site interpretation and remote simultaneous interpretation, as well as on increasing awareness of the importance of multilingualism and its implementation throughout ITU.

**3.3.** **Use of new technologies in translation services**

The General Secretariat is continuing to develop and improve the ITU Translate neural machine translation tool, including exploring additional commercial translation engines, training the engine with ITU data, establishing workflows for different applications, and evaluating quality, costs and user satisfaction. An updated version of the tool has been deployed across selected General Secretariat and Bureaux webpages on both SharePoint and WordPress platforms with a consistent, accessibility-friendly user interface and disclaimer and feedback features. The General Secretariat is working to integrate the ITU Translate tool into the master template of both platforms to enable machine translation as default across all future webpages. Where deemed necessary and within available resources, selected pages will continue to be translated by the professional translation teams.

ITU translators make use of ITU Translate internally for segment, document and website translation, as well as computer-assisted translation tools, including eLUNa and UNTERM, the United Nations system reference terminology database. An automatic post-editing function was introduced in April 2023 within ITU Translate. As of June 2023, the gDoc 2.0 document workflow management application, developed by the United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, will also be implemented as part of ITU’s efforts to align working methods with those of other United Nations agencies and international organizations.

**3.4 Use of new technologies in interpretation** **services**

Remote simultaneous interpretation has been implemented for certain ITU meetings with remote participation. Cloud-based artificial intelligence (AI) interpretation solutions have also been tested and are being evaluated for quality and suitability for ITU events and meetings. The Interpretation Service continues to evaluate the feasibility of new modes of providing interpretation, identifying cost-effective solutions and the best possible quality of interpretation. A proposed strategy under development includes categorization of events and meetings with different interpretation needs.

**3.5 Work of CCT and UNTERM**

The ITU Coordination Committee for Terminology (CCT) is continuing its work in standardizing terminology and definitions within ITU, based on proposals submitted by ITU study groups in English. A workflow has been put in place to improve efficiency and ensure that terms and definitions discussed during CCT meetings are translated by the General Secretariat and validated by CCT. All terms and definitions approved by CCT are included in the online ITU Terms and Definitions database, as well as in UNTERM, where ITU is responsible for the ICT and telecommunication domains. A new CCT website providing ease of access to all relevant documents has been published. In addition, a proposed procedure on cooperation with interested Member States to refine the translation of terminology and definitions in all six official languages is under discussion.

**3.6 Harmonization of ITU websites in the six official languages, incorporating multilingualism into communications, knowledge exchange and social media**

Harmonization efforts continue with a common information infrastructure and design for all conference and event websites on the WordPress platform, including the ITU Council 2023 website. The events overview page has been developed in the new “One ITU” style on the WordPress platform. Harmonized templates, components and brand elements are available for the migration to WordPress and content creation, as well as the provision of user guidelines to ensure consistency within the “One ITU” style. ITU news, related media pages and speeches are available in all six languages through ITU Translate; press releases and media advisories continue to be human translated. The integration of ITU Translate into the template for all new WordPress pages will enable all content to be available immediately and simultaneously in the six languages by default, with the option to use human translation where necessary.

**4. Additional actions following revision of Resolution 154 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)**

The General Secretariat and Bureaux are working to establish an ITU-wide mechanism to publish any contribution for an ITU event in its original language no later than three days after receipt. Member States are encouraged to make use of the conference proposals interface (CPI) and its guidelines to accelerate the publication of documents in the six languages of the Union and ensure compliance with official templates.

Efforts continue to ensure all ITU policy documents and other documents providing guidance on intellectual property rights in ITU are available in all six languages. The General Secretariat monitors the quality of interpretation and translation services, including by implementing delegate surveys following major ITU conferences and events. Levels of satisfaction with translation and interpretation in all languages remain high.

The secretariat places great importance on achieving greener meetings. Service Order 22/07, on ITU paperless guidelines, has been revised to increase environmental sustainability, enhance efficiency and reduce costs in ITU operations by conducting paperless conferences and meetings and minimize the printing and physical distribution of ITU publications.

A set of optimized templates has been developed to generate publications in accessible and platform-independent formats, including an application programming interface giving access to HTML publications to increase content reach and availability. The secretariat continues to monitor the use of publications via statistics on the downloading and purchase of publications in different languages to inform future decisions on the use of machine translation.

**Annex 1**

**Table 1. Evolution of language-service budget and expenses (in 000 CHF), 2018-2022**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** |
| Translation & associated-service budget | 13 468 | 14 488 | 13 048 | 12 999 | 16 189 |
| Actual translation & associated-service expenses | 12 098 | 13 223 | 12 252 | 12 541 | 14 706 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interpretation budget | 2 435 | 3 457 | 1 408 | 1 392 | 2 910 |
| Actual interpretation expenses | 1 852 | 2 698 | 1 338 | 1 522 | 1 957 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total language-service budget | 15 903 | 17 944 | 14 455 | 14 390 | 19 099 |
| Total actual language-service expenses | 13 950 | 15 922 | 13 589 | 14 063 | 16 663 |
| *Savings* | *1 953* | *2 023* | *866* | *328* | *2 436* |

**Figure 1. Evolution of language-service budget and expenses (in 000 CHF), 2018-2022**

**Table 2. Evolution of translation volumes per language (pages)[[1]](#footnote-1)[1], 2018-2022**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Language** | **Translation volumes/year (pages)** |
| **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** |
| Arabic | 8 083 | 8 892 | 8 400 | 7 843 | 8 962 |
| Chinese | 8 732 | 9 030 | 8 818 | 7 717 | 9 240 |
| English | 1 611 | 2 044 | 1 827 | 1 608 | 1 339 |
| French | 8 586 | 10 173 | 8 811 | 8 531 | 9 800 |
| Russian | 8 050 | 8 706 | 8 463 | 7 501 | 8 202 |
| Spanish | 8 135 | 8 928 | 8 215 | 8 072 | 9 174 |
| **TOTAL** | 43 197 | 47 773 | 44 534 | 41 272 | 46 717 |

**Figure 2. Evolution of translation volumes per language (pages), 2018-2022**

1. [1] One page equals 330 words. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)