



ASSEMBLY — 39TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 26: Multilingualism at ICAO

ICAO POLICY ON LANGUAGE SERVICES

(Presented by Colombia on behalf of the Member States of the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission - LACAC[†])

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The provision of all ICAO documentation is essential to the safety and security of international civil aviation as well as to work in other important fields. It is therefore of vital importance that an adequate level of services be provided in the working languages of the Organization for the global distribution of ICAO documentation.

In this respect, the Spanish-speaking region with its 400 million inhabitants is crucial to the achievement of the objectives of ICAO.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) Reaffirm the need to uphold multilingualism in the work of ICAO of concern to the Spanish-speaking region;
- b) Further explore new methods and procedures to enhance efficiency and ensure that ICAO can continue to provide quality services to its Member States;
- c) Request the Assembly to empower the Regional Offices to develop cost-recovery mechanisms enabling them to produce official ICAO translations.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the following Strategic Objectives: <i>Safety, Aviation Security and Facilitation and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	N/A
<i>References:</i>	Doc 7300, <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i> Doc 7231, <i>ICAO Publications Regulations</i> A38-WP/403 Doc 10022, <i>Assembly Resolutions in Force as of 4 October 2013</i> Resolution A37-25: <i>ICAO Policy on the language services</i>

* Spanish version provided by Colombia.

[†] Argentina, Aruba, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since the founding of ICAO in 1944, its main goal has been to ensure the safety and security of aviation as well as its economic and environmental sustainability to the benefit of all Member States of the Organization.

1.2 During the 37th Assembly of ICAO held in Montréal from 28 September to 8 October 2010, a discussion took place regarding the importance of providing adequate services in the working languages of ICAO which gave rise to **Resolution A37-25 - ICAO Policy on the language services**.

1.3 Said Resolution stipulates the following:

“A37-25 ICAO Policy on the language services

The Assembly:

1. *Reaffirms that multilingualism is one of the fundamental principles to achieve goals of ICAO as the specialized UN agency;*
2. *Reaffirms its previous resolutions regarding the strengthening of the working languages of ICAO;*
3. *Recognizes that language services are an integral part of any ICAO programme;*
4. *Resolves that parity and quality of service in all of the working languages of ICAO be the continuous objective of the Organization;*
5. *Resolves that the introduction of a new language should not affect the quality of service in the other working languages of the Organization;*
6. *Resolves that the Council continue to monitor language services, which will be a subject of review;*
7. *Requests the Secretary General to develop and implement a quality management system in the field of language services;*
8. *Requests the Secretary General of ICAO to adhere to UN best practices related to the language Services, including temporary recruitment of staff at peak periods and the level of outsourcing translations and interpretation;*
9. *Requests the Council to consider the need for amendment of Doc 7231/11 “ICAO Publications Regulations” to provide dissemination of ICAO publications in all working languages of ICAO;*
10. *Invites those Member States who represent ICAO’s working languages, if they so desire, to support ICAO through the establishment of officially recognized centres for translation of ICAO publications and by the secondment of competent staff to the ICAO Secretariat, including the Regional Offices, in order to reduce backlogs and support special events; and*

11. Declares that this Resolution supersedes Assembly Resolution A31-17.”

1.4 The report of the Executive Committee of the 38th Assembly of ICAO (A38-WP/403), under Item 24 of the Order of Business, requests Council to closely monitor implementation of the policies and decisions adopted to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the language services, **recognizing that the principle of multilingualism is fundamental to achieving the objectives of ICAO.**

1.5 Bearing in mind the principle of multilingualism, the 38th Assembly of ICAO also approved *Resolution A38-11* which stipulates the following:

“4. Reiterates that SARPs and PANS shall be drafted in clear, simple and concise language. SARPs shall consist of broad, mature and stable provisions specifying functional and performance requirements that provide for the requisite levels of safety, regularity and efficiency. Supporting technical specifications, when developed by ICAO, should be translated in all working languages of ICAO in a timely manner and shall be placed in separate documents to the extent possible.”

1.6 Although multilingualism has been identified as a fundamental principle, an observed practice in technical meetings is to choose a main working language, usually English, for the meeting as well as for the supporting documentation, with no time allotted to produce all of the necessary information in the other five languages.

1.7 Furthermore, when setting deadlines for replies to surveys or for positions on technical matters, the supporting documentation is commonly provided in English, which complicates the work of Spanish-speaking States.

1.8 Such situations can impede understanding of and compliance with SARPs for States that rely more heavily on document translation, with negative implications for the levels of implementation assessed in the ICAO universal audit programmes.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 With the help of the SAM Regional Office Secretariat, a review was conducted of ICAO documentation published on ICAO-NET which showed that all of the annexes are available in Spanish, and approximately 67% of the some 400 documents on ICAO-NET are in Spanish.

2.2 The remaining 33% of the documents that are available only in English include, in particular, documents that are important in that they cover technical, operational and planning matters such as Documents 8991, 9683, 9760, 9873, 9880, 9881, 9888, 9966 and 10018.

2.3 Moreover, Document 7231 - *ICAO Publications Regulations* (see **Appendix A**) states that all manuals and circulars shall be issued in the official languages of ICAO (Article VII Languages).

2.4 Although ICAO has endorsed multilingualism as a fundamental principle, the zero nominal growth scenarios emanating from the 2017-2019 budget deliberations are known to incur a potential risk to multilingualism, diminishing the capacity to respond to increased translation demand.

2.5 While it may be possible to elicit greater assistance from States through secondment or direct support programmes for the translation of ICAO documents, it should be noted that the commitment to multilingualism is not solely the responsibility of those States that require translations, but is a fundamental objective of ICAO.

2.6 Consequently, we believe that multilingualism should not be affected by any budget constraints, and that ICAO needs to identify ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the translation services that serve this major objective, preventing lengthy backlogs in the production of documentation in all of the languages of ICAO.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 To fully attain the Strategic Objectives of ICAO, the Member States should have a perfect understanding of the documents issued by the Organization. Therefore, it is essential for all of the documents to be made available in the official ICAO languages, with no exceptions in respect of letters, publications, working papers, information papers, appendices, explanatory tables, web content and other media created to disseminate information.

3.2 The continuing provision of adequate language services should be assured for the proper functioning of ICAO and its standing bodies, and language services should be an integral part of all ICAO programmes on the basis of parity and quality of service in all working languages (A37-25).

3.3 The Assembly should consider a request to empower the Regional Offices to develop cost-recovery mechanisms that enable them to produce official ICAO translations.

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