



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Agenda Item 18: Multilingualism at ICAO**

**MULTILINGUALISM AT ICAO**

(Presented by the Council of ICAO)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Recognizing multilingualism as a fundamental principle to achieve ICAO's objectives, this paper reports on the implementation of the policies and decisions adopted to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in language services matters.

Pursuant to Assembly Resolution A37-25: *ICAO Policy on the language services*, which stated that “the provision of adequate levels of services in the working languages of ICAO is important for the worldwide dissemination of ICAO documentation, in particular the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), and for the proper functioning of the Organization and its standing bodies”; and pursuant to United Nations Resolution A/RES/71/328, this working paper outlines the measures implemented to promote multilingualism in ICAO through parity and quality of services, optimization of available resources, adherence to UN best practices related to language services and through the development and use of enhanced technical tools.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to:

- a) note ICAO activities supporting multilingualism;
- b) request the Secretary General to develop a comprehensive strategy for the promotion of multilingualism in the Organization, with a view to providing quality language services in a timely and efficient manner while strengthening linguistic capabilities both at Headquarters and in Regional Offices; and
- c) urge Member States to actively collaborate with the ICAO Secretariat to promote multilingualism as an integral part of the Organization's programmes and activities.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to all Strategic Objectives and all Supporting Implementation Strategies
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Financial implications have been taken into consideration in the proposed Regular Programme Budget for 2020-2021-2022
<i>References:</i>	A39-WP/524 <i>Assembly Resolutions in Force (as of 4 October 2013)</i> – Doc 10022 United Nations A/RES/71/328 United Nations A/RES/73/270

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO Secretariat provides language services in the six working languages to the Assembly, the Council, deliberative bodies and other meetings. Publications and documentation are issued based on the principle of simultaneous distribution to ensure “a fair and equal opportunity for all user States to consult the documentation produced by the Organization”.

1.2 Assembly resolutions have called upon ICAO: a) to assure the provision of adequate language services for the proper functioning of ICAO and its standing bodies, that language services are an integral part of any ICAO programme, and the parity and quality of service in all working languages (A37-25); and b) to implement the principle of simultaneous distribution (A24-21).

1.3 ICAO is fully committed to the principles set out by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in its resolution 71/328 on “Multilingualism”. The equality of languages is a fundamental principle of the Organization and its documentation.

## 2. LANGUAGE SERVICES DURING THE PRESENT TRIENNIUM

2.1 The current language services budget provides for a yearly capacity of 8.6 million words for translation and 1,344 sittings for interpretation.

2.2 *Interpretation* – Interpretation capacity is limited to seven sittings per week. The programme of meetings for 2017-2019 is planned and prepared carefully to optimize the use of available resources. For exceptions to the rule, additional funding is provided by the organizing office or from efficiencies achieved elsewhere within ICAO. Category 4 meetings continue to be covered on a cost-recovery basis. In such instances, the organizing Bureau is required to cover interpretation services costs by using revenue generated from the relevant meeting.

2.3 *Translation* – Translation capacity is 8.6 million words per year, 0.5 million below the previous triennium. The average demand has remained unchanged as current demand exceeds capacity by 35 per cent.

2.4 In order to address excess translation demand, additional funds are provided from other ICAO sources or through efficiencies achieved within LP. While the translation of additional communications with States is handled by internal resources, most of the other excess requirements are outsourced. This has caused both an imbalance in the translation ratio of 60 per cent in-house to 40 per cent outsourcing and the extra challenge of ensuring the quality of outsourced work. Translation of selected websites continues at a slower pace as funding sources need to be identified for each project. Smaller updates to already translated websites are done by in-house translators.

2.5 As in the previous triennium, full translation services are provided for Categories 1 and 2 meetings, where the key rules on working paper length (four pages per paper) and submission deadlines are respected. The standard practice of providing limited translation of pre-session documentation for Category 3 meetings has continued. In addition to the conditions applied for Categories 1 and 2, translation is restricted to SARPs and PANS amendments or limited to one paper per agenda item in other cases. No translation is provided for in-session documentation, and the report is translated after the meeting. This practice will remain unchanged in the upcoming triennium.

### 3. INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY IN THE DELIVERY OF LANGUAGE SERVICES

3.1 The Language Services Management System (LSMS) Project, which seeks to streamline and integrate document management/document production functions across the Organization, was initiated in 2017. The analysis of operational requirements has been completed, and the finalization and validation of the terms of reference is underway. After an extensive process to identify and select or design a new system that is fit for ICAO's purposes, full implementation, testing, and deployment of the new LSMS is envisaged by December 2020. This system will feature improved functionality of automated systems and integration with other systems already implemented in the Organization. It will integrate tasks that were previously segregated, thus providing one platform for workflow management and the overall administration of language services.

3.2 In the last three years, LP has focused its recruitment efforts on increasing the number of staff translators who are also qualified interpreters. This has helped to enhance efficiency and flexibility in addressing short-term fluctuations in the demand for interpretation services. Currently, eight translators out of the 20 in the five translation sections are also interpreters, compared to three in 2016.

3.3 ICAO hosted the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) for the first time in June 2018. IAMLADP is a forum of UN and other international organizations seeking to enhance the efficiency, quality, and cost effectiveness of language, publication, and conference services among members. Hosting this event allowed LP management and staff to benefit directly from discussions on a vast body of relevant knowledge and experience. It also offered a rare opportunity to showcase ICAO best practices and demonstrate our commitment to multilingualism and excellence in the delivery of language and conference services. IAMLADP 2018 was the first "green" meeting ICAO has ever hosted.

3.4 The procedures for identifying and testing new external collaborators for freelance contracts and outsourced translation work has been refined and standardized, in line with the Agreement between the UN Chief Executives Board for coordination (CEB) and the *Association internationale des traducteurs de conférence* (AITC), to which ICAO is a signatory. They also allow for better identification of potential resources for the roster and for a rules-based determination of freelance remuneration levels. The result is a streamlined and more efficient roster management and a reduction in administrative delays. Another initiative is the on-boarding of trained Junior Language Officers (JLOs). Together, these two initiatives have contributed to the maintenance of a dynamic and sustainable roster, with a long-term positive impact on language services productivity and quality.

3.5 Two initiatives were taken as part of an overall drive to reduce the length of publications, for optimum use of editorial and translation resources. The first was to develop a *Style Guide for Originators*, with specifics on how to organize material efficiently and produce a concise draft following ICAO document standards and house style. It also addresses common grammatical errors and gives lists of words and phrases that can be simplified or eliminated. The second project, which is currently under development, is to provide Organization-wide training from an external provider, focusing on concise writing and clarity of expression. While this training will help improve staff writing skills, its main focus will be in-depth theory and techniques on how to trim ICAO's documents.

3.6 Despite significant budget cuts over the last two triennia, LP has managed to ensure parity of language services and to maintain and even enhance the volume and the quality of translation, interpretation, and publication services. New tools and methods are continuously explored to achieve further efficiency gains and ensure that ICAO can continue to provide quality services to its Members States and other stakeholders in all working languages as they strive to meet the Organization's Strategic Objectives.

3.7 In order to promote multilingualism in the Organization, it would be important for the Secretariat to develop a comprehensive strategy for the promotion of multilingualism in the Organization,

with a view to providing quality language services in a timely and efficient manner while strengthening linguistic capabilities both at Headquarters and in Regional Offices. The strategy would also encourage the use of innovative technologies and UN best practices to manage workload and further enhance quality and efficiency.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Language services are an integral part of every ICAO programme. They are essential to the fulfilment of all Strategic Objectives of the Organization and to the implementation of SARPs and PANS at the global level. Furthermore, language services are a key requirement of the No Country Left Behind (NCLB) initiative and of ICAO's communications with Member States.

4.2 ICAO continues to provide quality language services while facing the challenge of increased demand and diminishing resources. The improvement of working arrangements and the introduction of IT tools and UN best practices have helped optimize human, material and budgetary resources, enabling LP to provide crucial support to ICAO's deliberative bodies, Secretariat and other stakeholders as they pursue the Organization's Strategic Objectives. Sustained efforts are being made to streamline processes and operations in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Further measures are being taken to reduce language services demand, to identify alternative sources of funding such as voluntary contributions, to keep improving the quality of services provided and to uphold ICAO's commitment to multilingualism.

— END —