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ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON AGENDA ITEM 18

(Presented by the Chairman of the Executive Committee)

The attached report on Agenda Item 18 has been approved by the Executive Committee

Note.— After removal of this covering sheet, this paper should be inserted in the appropriate place in the report folder.

(4 pages)

Agenda Item 18: Multilingualism at ICAO

18.1 At its second meeting, the Executive Committee considered three working papers (A40-WP/62, 451, 464) under the agenda item “Multilingualism at ICAO”.

18.2 A40-WP/62 contained the report of the Council recognizing multilingualism as a fundamental principle to achieve ICAO’s objectives. It reports on the implementation of the policies and decisions adopted to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of language services. In particular, the paper states that measures implemented in the past two triennia have enabled the Secretariat to cope with a high demand for translation and interpretation services. These measures include: designing a new Language Services Management System, training Junior Language Officers, reorganizing support services, increasing versatility of the work force, and allocating additional funds from other ICAO sources, or from efficiencies achieved within Languages and Publications.

18.3 A40-WP/451, presented by Paraguay supported by the Member States of the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission (LACAC)¹ and by the Community of Civil Aviation Authorities of Portuguese-Speaking Countries² (CAACL³), underscored that the unavailability of some ICAO publications and documents, specifically Manuals and Circulars, in all official languages hinders Member States’ access to information and knowledge, and that the Organization should strive to enable a dynamic response to the need for translation and interpretation. The paper also emphasizes the importance of multilingualism as the Organization deals with regulatory frameworks and civil aviation rules. It concludes that it is essential for ICAO to provide high-quality services to Member States in all official languages, irrespective of the means of communication and/or dissemination of information established by the Organization to achieve its objectives, considering that adequate service will no doubt contribute primarily to achieving those objectives, as well as providing support for translation and interpretation activities to lusophone countries.

18.4 A40-WP/464, presented by the Russian Federation, recalls that the 37th Session of the Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution A37 25: “ICAO Policy on language services”. It states that language services are an integral part of every ICAO programme and are essential to the fulfilment of the Strategic Objectives of the Organization and to the implementation of SARPs and PANS. Hence the need for the Organization to secure sufficient staff with the right technical skills and to ensure the consistency of its knowledge base. It deplores the fact that some documents are not available in all languages and some meetings are held in English only. Multilingualism should therefore be viewed as a significant factor in harmonious communication among nations and as an investment in the development of a safe, secure and reliable civil aviation system.

18.5 The Committee noted the Council working paper as well as those submitted by States.

18.6 The Committee emphasized that multilingualism is a fundamental principle to achieve the goals of ICAO in accordance with Assembly Resolution A37-25. Language services are an integral part of every ICAO programme and are essential to the fulfilment of the Strategic Objectives of the

¹ Aruba, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

² Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Bissau Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal, Saint Tomé and Prince and East Timor

³ Comunidade das Autoridades de Aviação Civil Lusófonas (CAACL)

Organization and to the implementation of SARPs and PANS. Furthermore, language services are a key requirement of the No Country Left Behind (NCLB) initiative and of ICAO's communications with Member States.

18.7 It also noted that the ICAO Secretariat has fully endorsed multilingualism as a principal objective of the Organization, and that a number of initiatives have been implemented to improve efficiency in the delivery of language services. New initiatives foreseen in the next triennium include the development of 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.

18.8 The Committee noted that, to ensure multilingualism, the draft budget proposal provides for the same level of language services as in the current triennium, provided that the established capacity is respected, and that the efficiency measures endorsed by Council during its 208th session for the current budget (C-DEC 208/5, May 2016) continue to be applied in 2020-2022. However, some States indicated that the emphasis in future budget discussions should not be on reducing language services, but on striking a better balance for a more efficient utilization of the resources allocated for language services.

18.9 Many Member States took the floor to support multilingualism as a fundamental principle to achieve ICAO goals. They emphasized that multilingualism is a cross-cutting imperative for efficiency and transparency in the work of the Organization, both politically and operationally, and also a fundamental pillar of multilateralism. It is crucial in communications with and between States to achieve progress under the NCLB initiative. Other States highlighted the need for making quality ICAO documentation available on a timely basis in all working languages, not only those related to SARPS, PANS, safety and security, but also guidance material required for the implementation of SARPS. To that end, consideration was given to the importance of prioritising this item in the 2023-2025 triennium budget. It was also noted that multilingualism should not just be considered as a cost to the Organization, but as an investment into the development of a safe and secure civil aviation worldwide.

18.10 Several States requested the addition of Portuguese as a working language to support ICAO's work and communications with lusophone countries. The Secretariat acknowledged the request, but pointed out the difficulty of addressing it in a context of budgetary restraint. Stressing the constant efforts to optimize human, material and financial resources, the Secretariat added that other cooperation mechanisms can be explored to sponsor the translation of ICAO publications and the interpretation of ICAO meetings on a cost-recovery basis. Voluntary contributions from Member States in the form of secondments of language specialists and support for special projects are also welcome.

18.11 Having considered A40-WP/62, 451 and 464, and in light of the discussions, the Committee recommends that the Assembly, recognizing multilingualism as a fundamental principle to achieve the goals of ICAO:

- a) request the Council to closely monitor the implementation of the policies and decisions it has adopted to enhance efficiency and effectiveness on language service matters;

- 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.

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