International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 19: Multilingualism at ICAO

MULTILINGUALISM AT ICAO

(Presented by the Council of ICAO)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Multilingualism remains a fundamental principle to achieve the goals of ICAO, and parity and quality of service in all of the working languages of ICAO are the continuous objectives of the Organization. This working paper provides an overview of progress achieved in the implementation of the Multilingualism Strategy endorsed by the Assembly at its 41st Session, including through the development of an Action Plan. The paper further highlights opportunities for Member States to contribute to multilingualism through active collaboration, partnerships, secondments, and voluntary contributions.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

a) Acknowledge ICAO's efforts in the implementation of the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy and its Action Plan;
b) Request ICAO to continue its implementation of the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy endorsed by the 41st Session of the Assembly subject to available resources; and
c) Encourage Member States to support multilingualism through collaboration, secondments, or voluntary contributions.

Strategic Goals:	This working paper relates to all Strategic Goals, High Priority Enablers and Supporting Enablers.
Financial implications:	The ICAO activities referred to in this paper are expected to be undertaken within the resources available in the 2026-2028 Regular Budget and/or from extra-budgetary contributions as guided by the ICAO Business Plan 2026-2028
References:	A41-WP/44-EX/22 Doc 10183, A41-EX Assembly Resolutions in Force (as of 7 October 2022) – Doc 10184 United Nations A/RES/73/346; JIU Report 2020/6[1]

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[1] https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_rep_2020_6_english.pdf

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Pursuant to Assembly Resolution A37-25 relating to the ICAO policy on language services and Assembly Decision A41 on multilingualism, this working paper reports on the progress made in the implementation of the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy and its Action Plan, while addressing main challenges and mitigation measures.

1.2   The implementation of the strategy is an activity that was not fully funded in the ICAO Business Plan 2023-2025 and progress is limited to activities that could be achieved within the available resources.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MULTILINGUALISM STRATEGY (2023-2025)

2.1 Action Plan for the Implementation of the Multilingualism Strategy

2.1.1   The 41st Assembly, while requesting ICAO to implement fully the Multilingualism Strategy, called for the development of an accompanying Action Plan. Building on the Strategy , and considering available resources and existing mechanisms, an Action Plan was developed in 2023. The plan represents a significant step forward and serves as a key tool for translating the Strategy into action, outlining concrete, time-bound actions aligned with the objectives of the Strategy. Much of the progress reported below has been guided by this Plan.

2.1.2   The Action Plan was updated in 2024, reflecting the status of implementation and identifying additional steps to be taken, as detailed in the Appendix to this working paper.

2.2 Language Services Management System (LSMS) Implementation

2.2.1   In 2024, ICAO completed the implementation of the LSMS initiative, one of the key Digital Transformation projects. Below is an overview of newly implemented UN language service tools (gDoc 2.0, eLuna, eAPG and UNTERM), that are now fully operational at ICAO. The most significant impacts on multilingualism observed so far are highlighted.

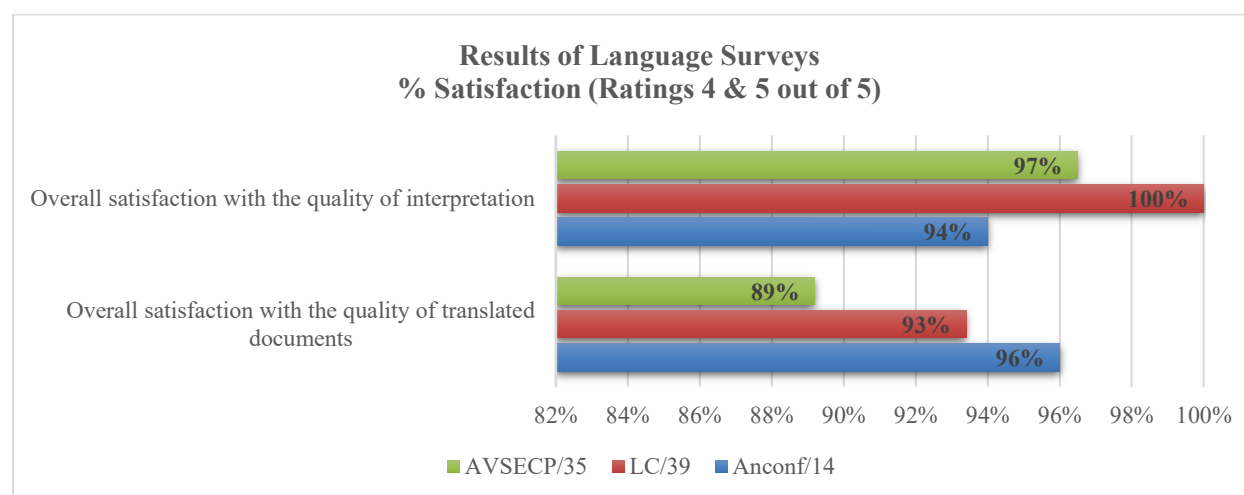| Tool	Scope and Size	Positive Impact on Multilingualism
gDoc 2.0	Over 340 users. Document production workflow and capacity management tool used for the submission of document service requests for translation, editorial, pricing, printing, e-publishing.	gDoc facilitates smooth collaboration with external translators, who have direct access to the tool, enabling them to collaborate seamlessly with internal teams. This integration enhances coordination across languages, leading to more consistent and efficient multilingual outputs.
eLuna	Over 130 users. User-friendly web-based Computer-assisted translation (CAT) and revision tool with two Machine Translation (MT) integrated. It combines automatic identification of previously translated sentences and terminology with optional access to machine translation for new sentences.	eLuna offers direct access and seamless integration with gDoc 2.0, enabling files to be sent easily for more accurate and consistent translations. It provides automated access to up-to-date ICAO reference materials for both internal and external translators. Integrated with machine translation, this tool is projected to boost translation productivity by 20%, helping meet increasing translation demands. Additionally, by incorporating terminology from ICAO and UNTERM, eLuna enhances accuracy and consistent use of specialized multilingual terms.

Tool	Scope and Size	Positive Impact on Multilingualism
eAPG	Dozens of internal and external users. Interpretation assignments and capacity management tool.	Team booth slots are auto populated with language combinations. Session limits are flagged, and team assignments are archived to ensure fair workload distribution. The tool boosts scheduling efficiency and streamlines coordination by keeping freelancer availability updated in the system.
UNTERM	Available online as a free resource for language professionals of the UN organizations, as well as the general public. A comprehensive, dynamic terminology database with ICAO terminology integrated.	UNTERM enhances global multilingual communication by providing standardized terminology in all six UN working languages. Integrated with ICAO terminology, it promotes accuracy and consistency in aviation communication, reducing miscommunication risks and supporting the global implementation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

2.3   Surveys on Language Services to ICAO Meetings

2.3.1   To evaluate the effectiveness and gauge participants' satisfaction with language services, the Secretariat launched a series of targeted language surveys at key events in 2024, namely Fourteenth Air Navigation Conference (ANConf/14), Thirty Nineth Session of the Legal Committee (LC/39) and 35th Meeting of the Aviation Security Panel (AVSECP/35). These surveys recognize the importance of continually evaluating how well language services support multilingual communication, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring that all participants, regardless of their language background, can fully engage with the content. These surveys provide essential feedback to refine and improve ICAO's multilingual approach and ensure it aligns with the goals of effective, accessible communication across multiple languages.

2.3.2   When assessing overall satisfaction with the quality of translated documents or interpretation, detailed data collection focuses on measuring: ease of understanding, clarity, accuracy, completeness, quality of terminology, usefulness and absence of errors.

2.3.3   Results were as follows:

Results of Language Surveys
% Satisfaction (Ratings 4 & 5 out of 5)

Overall satisfaction with the quality of interpretation: AVSECP/35 97%, LC/39 100%, Anconf/14 94%

Overall satisfaction with the quality of translated documents: AVSECP/35 89%, LC/39 93%, Anconf/14 96%

■ AVSECP/35   ■ LC/39   ■ Anconf/14

2.3.4   Feedback on language services will be gathered through additional surveys to both the Council and the Assembly in 2025, ensuring that all stakeholders' perspectives are considered in shaping the continued improvement of language services in the coming years.

2.4   **Language Proficiency Survey**

2.4.1   As part of the ICAO multilingualism strategy, language skills mapping exercises were undertaken in 2023 and subsequently updated in 2024 to assess the language proficiency of ICAO staff. English emerged as the predominant language used at ICAO, with 70% of staff at the expert level of proficiency. Following English, an expert level of French was stated by 33% of staff, Spanish by 18%, Arabic by 9%, Russian by 6%, and Chinese by 6%. Staff proficient in two languages at advanced and above level accounts for 48%, and those proficient in three languages accounts for 23%. The inventory of language skills will allow Human Resources to capitalize on personnel's language skills as needed, and to identify gaps for training purposes, in line with organizational requirements.

2.5   **Training on Concise Report and Policy Writing for ICAO Staff**

2.5.1   In 2023, a training course, with sessions to be offered over a three-year period, was launched for staff at Headquarters and Regional Offices with the objective to enhance the policy and report writing skills of staff, streamline ICAO publications, reports, and policy documents for greater manageability, and improve their readability, clarity, and overall effectiveness. This initiative supports the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy by ensuring that ICAO documents are more valuable to end-users, while also improving the quality and timeliness of documents. Additionally, it helps to reduce the demand on translation services, leading to more cost-effective processes. Executive trainings with condensed sessions were offered to ICAO managers. A total of 281 participants have been trained since its launch and additional sessions are being offered in 2025.

2.6   **Use of AI to Enhance Multilingualism**

2.6.1   ICAO has integrated artificial intelligence (AI) in the provision of language services, notably through Microsoft Translator and DeepL, both accessible via the eLuna platform. These tools enhance the efficiency of simple text translations, potentially increasing productivity by 20%. MS Translator is also available on the staff intranet and Council website. While AI can assist with draft translations, human translators remain essential for ensuring accuracy, consistency, and nuance—especially in technical or politically sensitive content.

2.6.2   AI also supports interpretation in preparatory phases, using approved tools that respect ICAO's confidentiality policies. However, given the complexity and diplomatic sensitivity of ICAO meetings, AI is not currently suitable for live interpretation.

2.6.3   Looking ahead, the Secretariat is exploring further applications of AI, such as voice-to-text and web content translation, to improve service speed and visibility. Future adoption will be guided by evolving needs and best practices from across the UN system, ensuring AI use remains efficient, accurate, and aligned with ICAO's standards.

2.7   **Interaction with UN Organizations**

2.7.1   By continuing to engage in the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) and the International Annual Meeting on Computer-Assisted Translation and Terminology (JIAMCATT), ICAO language managers and staff gained insights into the latest technological advancements, tools, and strategies that support efficient and accurate multilingual

communication. This is particularly important as ICAO strives to ensure linguistic accuracy and consistency in its services, documents, and communication with global stakeholders. Furthermore, sharing experiences and lessons learned with counterparts from other international organizations fosters collaboration and promotes the standardization of multilingual services across the international community.

2.7.2   Such exchanges contribute to building a stronger network of multilingual professionals, enhancing our ability to meet the growing demand for multilingual services, and ensuring that ICAO's messaging and content are accessible, accurate, and inclusive for all Member States.

2.8   **SARPs and PANS and Guidance Material Language Phase In**

2.8.1   As of now, some Standard and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and Procedures for Air Navigation Services (PANS) are still unavailable in all ICAO languages. To address this, the Secretariat is actively working to close this gap. In 2024, based on the draft translation of early editions voluntarily provided by State, the Chinese language version of Annex 10, Volumes I, II, III, IV and V, was phased in, with full publication expected in 2025. Additionally, the Chinese language version of DOC 8168 (PANS-OPS), Volumes I, II, and III, is also being phased in, with publication anticipated by the beginning of 2026. Additional guidance material including DOC 9137 (*Airport Services Manual*, Parts 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9), DOC 9157 (*Aerodrome Design Manual*, Part 6), and DOC 7030 (*Regional Supplementary Procedures*) is also scheduled for publication in Chinese within the same time frame.

2.9   **State Letter on Secondment of Language Professionals**

2.9.1   As outlined in the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy, States are strongly encouraged to consider seconding language specialists to support ICAO's language services and promote multilingualism across the Organization. In line with this, the Secretariat issued State letter A2/1.5 CONF–25/6 on 5 February 2025, detailing secondment opportunities, including the secondment of translators and interpreters in all of the Organization's working languages. As of the drafting of this working paper, no positive responses have been received from Member States.

3.   **CHALLENGES AND MITIGATIONS**

3.1   Key challenges in fully implementing the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy include a gap between available financial resources and the demands of multilingualism, and the perception in some instances of language services as a lower-priority "adjustment variable".

3.2   To address these challenges, resources need to be identified in the regular budget, as well as through voluntary contributions, to support the full implementation of the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy, as it remains not fully funded in the Business Plan 2026-2027-2028. In the interim, efforts will focus on enhancing efficiency by streamlining documentation processes, adopting innovative technologies, improving productivity and optimizing work practices to advance the goals of multilingualism.

3.3   Member States are encouraged to consider seconding language specialists and making voluntary contributions to support key initiatives, such as the translation of essential regulatory documents that are not yet available in all working languages.

3.4   The implementation of the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy requires a coordinated approach, encompassing language services, human resources policy, communications and all Bureaus and Offices. There needs to be an improvement in the perception and culture of languages across ICAO, and multilingualism should be mainstreamed in the daily activities and programmes of work in the Organization.

4.   **CONCLUSION**

4.1   Fully committed to promoting multilingualism, the Secretariat will continue to implement the Multilingualism Strategy and its Action Plan to ensure accountability and sustained progress. As outlined in the Strategy, language services should be allocated the necessary resources to perform their functions, while also considering new ideas and initiatives to optimize resource management. The successful implementation of multilingualism is a shared responsibility among the Secretariat, the Council and Member States.

APPENDIX

ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ICAO MULTILINGUALISM STRATEGY

Reference to Multilingualism Strategy		Action	Action Item No.	Timeline	Status/Remarks
1.3 Provision of quality language services:					
	1.3.4 Streamlining documentation and improving translation turnaround	Review ICAO's business needs with a view to streamlining and improving translation turnaround. A documentation map will be prepared, highlighting translation turnaround times by document type and volume.	1	Q1 2025	Expected completion by Q2 2025
	1.3.5 Better response to interpretation needs	Review the additional need for interpretation for meetings other than those customarily receiving interpretation services and provide such services subject to the provision of adequate financial or in-kind resources.	2	On demand	Subject to availability of adequate resources
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.1 quality monitoring)	Conduct periodic surveys to evaluate language services; Implement recommendations from user evaluations to continuously enhance multilingual services.	3	Ongoing	Completed in 2024: LC/39, AVSECP/35, and ANConf/14 Planned for 2025: Council and 42nd Assembly surveys
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.2 technological innovation)	Provide an AI translation tool (MS Translator) to Delegations and the Secretariat for unofficial translation of text and/or documents.	4	Q1 2024	Completed
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.2 technological innovation)	Explore the provision of unofficial translation for reference purposes of documents which are currently available in English only, by using AI translation with minimum or no post-editing by human translators.	5	Q3 2024	Used during ANConf/14 to classify documentation received in languages other than English. Additional utilizations in exploration.
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.3 LSMS)	Deploy a new Language Service and Management System (LSMS) to enhance the quality and efficiency of language services.	6	Q4 2023	Completed. Additional reporting and capacity modules are scheduled for development and implementation in 2025.
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.3 LSMS)	Full utilization of all components of the newly deployed LSMS (UNTERM, gDoc 2.0, eLuna, eAPG,) with a focus on the review of the LP business model, and adaptation of processes and mechanisms to take full advantage of technological innovation.	7	Q2 2024	Completed
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.4 partnerships with the UN)	Leverage experiences and best practices in the provision of language services in the UN system through active engagement with the UN and other entities such as the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) [2] and its technical arm, the Joint International Annual Meeting on Computer-Assisted Translation and Terminology (JIAMCATT).	8	Ongoing	ICAO shared with, and learned from experiences of, international organizations through active participation in IAMLADP and

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[2]   A forum and network of managers of over 80 international organizations employing conference and language service providers – mainly translators and interpreters. A unique instrument for inter-organizational cooperation.

Reference to Multilingualism Strategy		Action	Action Item No.	Timeline	Status/Remarks
					JIAMCATT in 2024 and will continue to do so in 2025.
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.5 roster)	Enhance roster for translation, editorial, text processing and interpretation services.	9	Ongoing	Rosters in all areas were expanded in 2024 and will continue to be expanded in 2025.
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.5 Junior Language Officer)	Reinstate the Junior Language Officer (JLO) programme as an opportunity to increase capacity while addressing the critical issue of succession planning of language professionals.	10	Q2 2025	Subject to availability of funds
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.5 Partnerships with training schools)	Engage with training schools and higher education institutions for a stagiaire programme, promote career opportunities in the Organization	11	Ongoing	Subject to availability of funds
	1.3.6 Supporting language services (1.3.6.6 Review rules)	Update, consolidate and streamline applicable Administrative Instructions, policies and guidelines for languages and associated language support processes.	12	Q3 2024	Rescheduled completion by Q2 2025
2.5 Mapping the language skills of officials		Conduct survey on language skills of ICAO Staff to determine the personnel's proficiency in the six official UN languages and establish a baseline for the Multilingualism Strategy, allowing ICAO HR to capitalize on personnel's language skills as needed, and to identify gaps for training purposes, in line with organizational requirements.	13	Q2 2023	Completed. Updated survey conducted in 2024.
2.6 Upgrading the language training policy		Provide and reinforce training on language skills in all six ICAO working languages, including Training on Concise Report and Policy Writing. The upgrading of the language training policy will be addressed as part of the ICAO People Strategy.	14	Training & policy – Ongoing	In progress. 191 and 90 staff members participated in the trainings respectively in 2023 and 2024. Additional trainings will be organized in 2025.
2.7 Taking language skills into account in recruitment and career management		Provide guidance to responsible entities on setting language requirements for job openings; review how language skills are to be factored into recruitment and staff selection processes.	15	Ongoing	Completed. Guidance contained in the recently released Recruitment AI – Appendix 11, part A.
3. Enhancing multilingual communication		Increase multilingual content on ICAO websites and social media.	16	Ongoing	Multilingual content provided as requested.
		Enhance awareness of ICAO'S gender-neutral language policy throughout the Secretariat, organizing discussion workshops and other outreach and training activities.	17	Q4 2024	Gender-neutral language guidelines posted on Intranet. Ongoing and subject to availability of resources.
		Move ahead with efforts to adapt the language of existing publications and documents in all ICAO languages by removing gender bias in linguistic choices.	18	Ongoing	In progress and subject to availability of resources
4. Promoting multilingualism as a universal value		Raise awareness on multilingualism organization wide in ICAO	19	Ongoing	Multilingualism was promoted, e.g. on International Translation Day through posting on ICAO Viva Engage
5.3.2 Support by Member States		Issue a State letter to request voluntary support from Member States by seconding language specialists, translating regulatory documents and other material.	20	Q2 2024	Completed in Q1 2025
3. Enhancing multilingual communication		Phase in publications in Arabic and Chinese	21	Ongoing	In progress: see section 2.8 Subject to availability of human and financial resources

— END —