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ASSEMBLY — 39TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 26: Multilingualism at ICAO

MULTILINGUALISM AT ICAO

(Presented by the Council of ICAO)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recognizing multilingualism as a fundamental principle to achieve the goals of ICAO, this paper reports on the implementation of the policies and decisions adopted to enhance efficiency and effectiveness on language service matters.

Guided by 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 are important for the world-wide dissemination of ICAO documentation, in particular the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), and to the proper functioning of the Organization and its standing bodies” and United Nations Resolution A/RES/69/250, 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 at ICAO; and
- b) urge Member States to actively collaborate with the ICAO Secretariat in the promotion of 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 2017-2018-2019
<i>References:</i>	A39-WP/46 A38-WP/403 Assembly Resolutions in Force (as of 4 October 2013) – Doc 10022 United Nations A/RES/69/250

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In ICAO, language services are provided in the Organization's six working languages to the Assembly, Council, deliberative bodies and other meetings. Efforts are made to ensure that publications and documentation are distributed based on the principle of simultaneous distribution as there "must be 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 strives to implement the principles that the United Nations (UN) General Assembly set out in its resolution 69/250 on "Multilingualism". The equality of languages is a fundamental principle of the Organization and its documentation.

2. CURRENT SITUATION IN THE DELIVERY OF LANGUAGE SERVICES

2.1 The budget for 2008-2010 significantly reduced the funding for Languages and Publications (LP) through the abolition of 24 Professional (P) and 18 General Service (GS) posts. Yearly capacity was set at 9.3 million words for translation and 1,466 sittings for interpretation. The average yearly translation demand was approximately 10.8 million words. The average yearly output was 10.1 million words for translation and 1,485 sittings for interpretation.

2.2 Based on the 2011-2013 budget further reductions led to the elimination of an additional 20 language posts. LP undertook major efforts to restructure its operation to provide commensurate services and to ensure parity among languages. Yearly translation capacity was set at 9.1 million words and 1,500 sittings for interpretation. The average yearly translation demand was approximately 11.4 million words. The average yearly output was 11.1 million words for translation and 1,585 sittings for interpretation.

2.3 A radical restructuring of the language service was thereafter carried out with the aim of ensuring parity among languages. All translation sections, apart from English, now have the same number of translators and the same level of support services. The English Translation Section was dismantled and translation into English handled by the English interpreters and through outsourcing. Reporting lines were streamlined by redeploying staff in such a way as to reinforce upstream activities for the benefit of the translation and interpretation sections. These activities include text processing, editing, referencing and terminology. The restructuring was complemented through staff redeployments and intensive training to promote multitasking and versatility throughout LP and optimize resources. Expanded use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, voice recognition software, staff mobility across sections to meet ad hoc needs, as well as modifications to the workflow have also led to further efficiency gains.

2.4 Pursuant to Assembly Resolution A37-25, extra-budgetary funding was allocated to ensure quality management (QM) of outsourced translations. QM was performed through a combination of spot-checking/revision and reliance on feedback from clients. Administrative Instructions and Procedures on Outsourcing of Translation Services were issued to standardize the outsourcing process.

2.5 Although LP's financial and human resources were considerably reduced, streamlined operations and well-oriented efficiency measures helped raise ICAO translators' daily output from 1350 words in 2011 to 1490 words today. This major achievement aligns ICAO with the current productivity at UN Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York and Geneva (UNOG), which is 1,500 words translated per day.

2.6 Further efforts to expand the roster were made as the availability of freelance translators and interpreters remains a challenge. Montréal is not at the centre of an increasingly competitive multilingual global market for both translation and interpretation services. In particular, ICAO's host city is in constant competition with New York (UNHQ) and Washington DC (IMF, World Bank) for Arabic, Chinese and Russian language translators and interpreters, hence the need for LP to have predictable budget resources to secure competent linguists early enough for its meetings. Despite these ongoing challenges, the official roster has in fact been significantly expanded since 2008.

2.7 The cooperation initiatives established with universities and State institutions to recruit interns and trainees from China (Chinese language), the Russian Federation (Russian language), and France (all languages) have helped expand the roster for outsourcing and off-site assignments. Also added to the roster are the graduates of the successful Junior Translator Project, a key component of LP's succession planning, which requires more stable budget resources in the next triennium.

2.8 JIU recommendation 2008/6 advocates language parity on public websites. In this spirit, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) concluded with China and Argentina respectively, for voluntary contributions in the form of support for translation, have made it possible for the ICAO public website to be available in Chinese and Spanish. A similar MoU was signed with Saudi Arabia for Arabic. Although ICAO remains dependent on voluntary contributions in order to advance further in this area, progress is nevertheless being made.

2.9 Despite significant budget cuts over the last two triennia, LP has been able to ensure parity of language services, and to maintain and even enhance the volume and the quality of translation, interpretation, and publication services. New approaches 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 the working languages of the Organization in order to meet its Strategic Objectives. Despite the efficiencies achieved, the level of budgeted resources has had an impact on ICAO's ability to promulgate timely information in all the languages and the provision of full interpretation services for certain meeting categories.

3. LANGUAGE SERVICES DURING THE PRESENT TRIENNIUM

3.1 The provision of language services in the present triennium is based on a translation capacity of 9.1 million words per year and 1,500 sittings for interpretation with a maximum of seven sittings per week.

3.2 *Interpretation* – Due to the reduction of the in-house team of interpreters from 20 to 14, interpretation services have been limited to seven sittings per week during the present triennium. Interpretation for Deliberative Bodies has not been affected by this restriction thanks to forward planning. Staff reduction has impacted Category 3 meetings, as the in-house team of interpreters is not sufficient to service a five-day meeting.

3.3 Further to a Council decision, additional funding was provided to cover full interpretation service for some Category 3 meetings during 2014. Moreover, careful consideration and planning was applied when preparing the programme of meetings for 2015 and 2016 in order to optimize these services. As a result, full interpretation services have been provided for Category 3 meetings. Category 4 meetings are covered on a cost-recovery basis. In such instances, the organizing Bureau is required to cover the interpretation services costs by using revenue generated from the meeting in question.

3.4 *Translation* – Translation capacity for the present triennium was unchanged from the previous triennium at 9.1 million words per year, even though the demand for the 2011-2013 period was 11.4 million words per year. The demand for the 2014-2106 triennium remained at the same annual level, which is 25 per cent above capacity.

3.5 In order to address excess translation demand, additional funds were provided from other sources in ICAO or through efficiencies achieved within LP. While the additional requirements for communications with States was addressed using internal resources, most of the other additional requirements were addressed through outsourcing. This caused both an imbalance in the translation ratio of 60 per cent in-house to 40 per cent outsourcing, and the additional challenge of ensuring the quality of outsourced translations.

3.6 Full translation services were provided for Categories 1 and 2 meetings, where key conditions on paper length of four pages per paper and submission deadlines were respected. As per the previous triennium, limited translation of pre-session documentation was provided for Category 3 meetings. In addition to the conditions applied for Categories 1 and 2, translation was also restricted to SARPs and PANS amendments or limited to one paper per agenda item in other cases. No translation was provided for in-session documentation, and the report was translated after the meeting. This practice will be maintained in the upcoming triennium.

4. IMPACT OF THE BUDGET FOR THE 2017-2019 TRIENNIUM

4.1 The 38th session of the Assembly reconfirmed multilingualism as a core principle of ICAO. The draft budget proposal for the 2017-2019 triennium as presented in A39-WP/46, AD/1 provides the same funding level for language services as for the present triennium. The Organization will implement measures to manage demand to achieve efficiencies through business re-engineering, enhanced planning, increased accountability, a transformation of the end-to-end process starting from document production through translation and final dissemination, and the introduction of technological tools which will be implemented across the Organization in order to optimize resources, both in substantive bureaus and language sections.

4.2 As a result, language services will be enhanced with budgetary funding for the Junior Professional Project (JPP), a succession planning scheme providing a steady pipeline of young aviation linguists to ensure knowledge transfer and service continuity, and Quality Management (QM) will be fully implemented to safeguard quality management of outsourced translations.

5. CONCLUSION

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

5.2 ICAO should prioritize efforts aimed at providing quality language services while addressing the challenge of increased demand. The transformation of processes through business re-engineering and enhanced planning and the implementation of new methods, technological tools and best practices will help to optimize language resources. The Organization should continue to streamline processes and operations in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

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