



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Agenda Item 19: Multilingualism at ICAO**

**PROMOTING RATIFICATION OF THE PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON  
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION IN THE SIX WORKING LANGUAGES AND  
MULTILINGUALISM**

(Presented by China)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This working paper provides an overview of the effectiveness of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* in six languages, calls for ratification of the Arabic and Chinese text of the Convention by Member States, in a bid to better understand and put into practice the aims, objectives and principles of the Convention by users of these two languages, and safeguard sound, orderly and efficient development of international civil aviation activities.

At the same time, multilingualism is a fundamental principle of the United Nations and its specialized agency – ICAO. Assembly Resolution 37-25: ICAO Policy on the language services makes it clear that the global distribution of documents produced by ICAO, in particular the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) in the six ICAO languages, is of great importance to ICAO and its Member States.

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

- a) Call on Member States that have not ratified the Arabic and Chinese texts of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* to do so;
- b) Support continuation of multilingualism as a long-term fundamental principle of ICAO;
- c) Request the Council and the Secretariat to continuously monitor the improvement of language services and the implementation of the Assembly resolutions, Council decisions and policies relating to multilingualism;
- d) Request the Secretariat to include multilingualism in treaty-related events; and
- e) Urge Member States to cooperate with the ICAO Secretariat to better implement multilingualism.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to all strategic objectives and all supporting implementation strategies
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<i>Financial implications:</i>	The activities mentioned in this paper will be carried out in accordance with the 2023-2025 Regular Programme Budget and/or from extra budgetary contributions.
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<i>References:</i>	Doc 7300, <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i> Doc 10140, Assembly Resolutions in Force (as of October 4, 2019), Resolutions A31-29, A32-2, A32-3, A37-25 and A40-28 Doc 7231, ICAO Publications Regulations A40-WP/62 UN Resolution A/RES/73/270
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<sup>1</sup> English and Chinese versions provided by China

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago, 1944 - the Convention) is the constitutional document of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the cornerstone of international civil aviation since 1944, and a series of international treaties on civil aviation developed after World War II are all based on the Convention. To date, there are 193 Contracting States to the Convention, which is in force in English, French, Spanish and Russian texts, but not in Arabic and Chinese texts. It hinders the understanding and implementation of the aims, objectives and principles of the Convention by the users of these two languages.

1.2 Multilingualism is a fundamental principle of ICAO and is of great significance for all of ICAO's Strategic Objectives, as well as for ensuring that Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) are effectively and more widely implemented by Member States and industry players with different language backgrounds. In this respect, multilingualism is an investment in the safety and continued development of the global civil aviation system. In some cases, multilingualism will not yield immediate and tangible benefits, but in the long term, it will gradually emerge in the development of the industry and will play a positive role.

## 2. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION IN SIX LANGUAGES

2.1 There are six official languages in the United Nations system, and the Convention is also available in six working languages, but only English, French, Spanish and Russian versions have come into force. The English version was signed in Chicago on 7 December 1944 and entered into force on 4 April 1947.

2.2 The *Protocol on the Authentic Quinquilingual Text of the Convention on International Civil Aviation*, adopted on 29 September 1995, provides for the authenticity of the Arabic text of the Convention and its amendments. On 1 October 1998, the *Protocol on the Authentic Six-Language Text of the Convention on International Civil Aviation* was adopted, which provides that the Convention and its amendments in Arabic and Chinese texts, together with the English, French, Russian and Spanish texts, constitute the six texts of the *Convention* with equal authenticity.

2.3 The Assembly Resolution A40-28 underscored “the need to accelerate the ratification and entry into force of air law instruments developed and adopted under the auspices of the Organization” and urged all Contracting States that have not yet ratified the amendments to the Convention to do so as soon as possible. At present, the Protocols in Arabic and Chinese languages are not yet in force. According to the provisions of each Protocol, 122 and 124 ratifications, respectively, are required for the Arabic and Chinese texts of the Convention to come into force, and there is still a large gap between the conditions required for its entry into force.

2.4 In 2019, during the 40th Session of the Assembly, the ICAO Secretariat organized the “ICAO Treaty Event 2019” to promote the ratification of multilateral air law treaties by Member States.

### 3. ICAO'S MULTILINGUALISM

3.1 Like the United Nations, ICAO has six working languages. The ICAO Secretariat provides language services, document production and publications distribution to the Assembly, Council, deliberative bodies and other meetings in these six working languages.

3.2 Language services are essential to the global implementation of all ICAO's SARPs, and Procedures for Air Navigation Services (PANS). The Assembly Resolution A37-25 states that language services are an integral part of any ICAO program and that the equal availability and quality of services in all the working languages of ICAO is an ongoing objective of the organization. The Council is requested to continue monitoring the language services as a subject of review.

3.3 In recent years, ICAO's language services budget has been gradually reduced, though there are still technical documents that are not yet available in all languages, which puts the principle of multilingualism at risk. ICAO has taken several measures to improve the efficiency of language services. In addition, ICAO should consider more comprehensively how to continue to uphold the principle of multilingualism in the comprehensive strategy of multilingualism, including through appropriate outreach and promotion events (e.g., events such as the "ICAO Treaty Event 2019" mentioned in paragraph 2.4 above).

### 4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Based on the above discussion, as the most important convention governing international civil aviation, the importance of its Arabic and Chinese texts is evident to the people of Arabic and Chinese languages.

4.2 Language services are an integral part of ICAO's programs. The services are essential to the achievement of all ICAO's Strategic Objectives and the global implementation of SARPs and air navigation service procedures. In addition, language services are a key element of the No Country Left behind (NCLB) initiative. In addition to the provision of language services, ICAO should consider more comprehensively how to continue to uphold the principle of multilingualism in the comprehensive strategy of multilingualism.