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ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON AGENDA ITEM 19

(Presented by the Chairman of the Executive Committee)

The attached report on Agenda Item 19 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 19: Multilingualism at ICAO

19.1 The Committee reviewed A41-WP/44, recognizing multilingualism as a fundamental principle to achieve ICAO's objectives. The paper outlined the measures implemented to promote multilingualism in ICAO, based on parity and quality of services, optimization of available resources, adherence to UN best practices in language services, as well as development and use of enhanced innovative tools. The approval of the ICAO Multilingualism Strategy was listed as a major achievement in this area.

19.2 The Committee also reviewed A41-WP/117, presented by China. The paper highlighted the importance of multilingualism in the achievement of ICAO's Strategic Objectives and the implementation of Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), Procedures for Air Navigation Services (PANS) and the No Country Left Behind initiative. It provided an overview of the effectiveness of the Convention on International Civil Aviation in six languages, calling for the ratification of the Arabic and Chinese texts of the Convention by Member States. The Committee noted that ICAO should continue to support multilingualism as a fundamental principle of the Organization through implementation of the related strategy as well as outreach and promotion, including treaty events. Member States were also urged to cooperate with the Secretariat to support multilingualism.

19.3 Furthermore, the Committee reviewed A41-WP/343, presented by the Russian Federation. The paper provided an overview of ICAO language services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Concern was raised over lower quality interpretation, increased costs for ICAO and the workload of staff interpreters. Language services were essential to avoid discrimination, achieve ICAO's Strategic Objectives and ensure implementation of SARPs, PANS and the No Country Left Behind initiative. In that regard, these services must be adequately staffed with highly qualified professionals familiar with aviation topics and terminology. The Secretary-General should ensure that multilingualism would not be undermined by pandemic-related measures, and ICAO should support it in the context of enhanced productivity and new technologies.

19.4 The Committee also reviewed A41-WP/365, presented by Chile and co-sponsored by the 22 Member States of LACAC and Guyana. The paper highlighted the importance of the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) given its crosscutting nature in relation to ICAO's Strategic Objectives and its impact on the planning and implementation of air navigation solutions. Given the important elements contained in the GANP, the correct, uniform and unambiguous interpretation of its terms was essential.

19.5 Finally, the Committee reviewed A41-WP/426, presented by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and supported by 20 Member States of LACAC. The paper highlighted the critical role of multilingualism in promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, efficiency, transparency and the principles of international law, as well as in achieving ICAO's Strategic Objectives and the No Country Left Behind initiative. Equality among ICAO's six official languages must be safeguarded to maintain seamless communication in all official languages. Concrete initiatives should be proposed to address shortcomings in the timely dissemination of information and the principle of equal opportunity, with a view to improving the provision of language services, events, training, and other initiatives.

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

19.7 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 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.

19.8 The Committee expressed overwhelming support for the new ICAO Multilingualism Strategy, which is based on UN and ICAO resolutions. It thanked the Secretariat for overcoming significant challenges over the years to uphold multilingualism. The Committee also noted that the Secretariat has achieved significant progress since A40 in reinforcing multilingualism. However, more action, staff and resources would be needed in this area to improve ICAO's efficiency and effectiveness, including the use of best practices and innovative technologies.

19.9 It was clarified that the ICAO multilingualism strategy reaches beyond language services to include the development of staff members' capabilities to serve the world of international civil aviation in all its diversity. This calls for a change in mind-set aimed at bolstering ICAO's capacity to deliver. In this regard, language services should be considered as a key asset. The Committee called for an action plan that will be implemented during the next triennium and reported on at the next Assembly.

19.10 The Committee noted ICAO's continued efforts to provide quality language services, while facing the challenge of increased demand and diminishing resources, and noted with appreciation the sustained efforts being made to streamline processes and operations in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

19.11 Clarifications were provided on the translation of the Global Air Navigation Plan. Indeed, the 13th Air Navigation Conference (2019) had recommended that "ICAO make available the GANP global strategic level (printable) in the six ICAO languages", which had been translated and was available on the GANP Portal. The translation of the global technical level or the regional and national levels of the GANP would require enormous resources, not only in terms of translation but also in terms of IT development and maintenance.

19.12 Some States encouraged their counterparts to ratify the Arabic and Chinese texts of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* to promote understanding and implementation of its objectives and principles by users of these two languages and safeguard sound, orderly and efficient development of international civil aviation activities.

19.13 Moreover, some States requested the addition of Portuguese as a working language to support ICAO's work. The Secretariat acknowledged the request, but pointed out that current ICAO policies and budget only cater to the six UN languages. However, voluntary contributions from Member States would be welcome in the form of secondments of language specialists and financial support for special projects.

19.14 To conclude, the Committee was informed that the first Arabic - English aviation Dictionary has been produced by the Arab Civil Aviation Organization.

19.15 Having considered A41-WP/44, 117, 343, 365 and 426, and in light of the discussion, 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 had adopted to enhance efficiency and effectiveness on language service matters;
- b) request ICAO to implement fully the Multilingualism Strategy, which would include an Action Plan for its implementation, and to report the progress achieved to the 42nd Assembly; and
- c) urge Member States to actively collaborate with ICAO, including through partnerships, secondments or voluntary contributions, to promote multilingualism as an integral part of the Organization's programmes and activities.

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