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| **Council 2020Geneva, 9-19 June 2020** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 1.6** | **Document C20/12-E** |
| **3 March 2020** |
| **Original: English** |
| Chairman of the Council Working Group on the use of the six official languages of the Union (CWG-LANG) |
| REPORT BY THE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON LANGUAGES |

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| SummaryThis document contains the annual report of the Chairman of the Council Working Group on Languages (CWG-LANG) to the Council, pursuant to Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Council Resolution 1372 (Rev. 2019).Action requiredThe Council is invited **to endorse** the report.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_References[*Report by the Secretary-General*](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-RCLCWGLANG10-C-0002/en)*;* [*Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts/RES-154-E.pdf)*;* [*Council Resolution 1372 (Modified 2019)*](http://web.itu.int/md/S19-CL-C-0138/en) |

1. **Opening of the meeting and approval of the agenda (Document** [**CWG-LANG/10/1**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-RCLCWGLANG10-C-0001/en)**)**

1.1 The meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Council Working Group on Languages for the Arabic language, Ms Sameera Belal Momen Mohammad (Kuwait). She opened the meeting and, after welcoming delegates present and those who were participating remotely, submitted the draft agenda for approval. The agenda was approved as submitted.

1.2 The Chair then gave the floor to the ITU Secretary-General, Mr Houlin Zhao, who reiterated the importance of the Council Working Group on Languages (CWG-LANG) for the Union and its membership, and acknowledged the content of the meeting’s agenda, namely the key issue of multilingualism, the review of alternative translation procedures, including Neural Machine Translation and Artificial Intelligence, and the reflection on how to improve the efficiency of the ITU’s governance processes and better support ITU council sessions.

1. **Report by the Secretary-General (Document** [**CWG-LANG/10/2 and Addendum 1**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-RCLCWGLANG10-C-0002/en)**)**

2.1 Participants received detailed information related to the evolution of the budget for translation of documents into the six official languages of the Union since 2010. Translation volumes continue to reflect equality of treatment of all 6 ITU official languages.

2.2 CWG-LANG expressed satisfaction at the efforts deployed in search of potential savings, efficiency and innovation in order to respond to PP Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Council Resolution 1372. One delegation requested that the budgetary information provided includes the budget for interpretation.

2.3 CWG-LANG proposes that the Council:

* Request the Secretariat to include in future reports the information on the budget for interpretation services.
* Encourage the secretariat to continue the search for improvements in order to respond to PP Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Council Resolution 1372.

2.4 The Secretariat reported on the outcome of ITU’s participation on interinstitutional meetings (IAMLADP and JIAMCATT) as regards the procedures adopted by other international organizations inside and outside of the United Nations system. ITU keeps abreast of procedures and IT tools adopted by other IOs and adapts its business model and procedures to the best practices resulting from such interaction

2.5 CWG-LANG took note of the information provided and commended the secretariat for its efforts for improving working methods and cost-effectiveness of conference services.

2.6 The Secretariat presented the initiatives undertaken by the General Secretariat and the three Bureaux in order to increase efficiencies and cost savings on the implementation of Res.154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) and Council Res. 1372 (Rev. 2019). These include the launching of a process for the update of the measures and principles for interpretation and translation in ITU, in consultation with the three Sectors, with the outcomes to be reflected in a report to be submitted to the Council Working Group on Languages (CWG-LANG) in 2021 for review and adoption. This review would incorporate machine translation and other alternative translation procedures as well as, in accordance with Council Resolution 1372, the measures taken to ensure the ITU website publishes new or modified pages in the six official languages simultaneously and in equal terms of functionality and navigation. Other initiatives include those concerning neural machine translation, computer-assisted translation tools and voice recognition.

2.7 One delegation raised the importance of attaining simultaneous publication in all Union languages, something that usually do not happen.

2.8 The Secretariat acknowledge the issue raised on simultaneous publication, and indicated that efforts would continue to shorten the delay between publication in the original language and the publication in all other Union languages.

2.9 Regarding the concerns expressed by a delegation over the quality of interpretation from Russian into English, the Secretariat and Interpretation Service took note of it, and the latter communicated immediately with the interpreters, drawing their attention to the accuracy of interpreting. The interpreters have committed themselves to do their utmost to provide the quality service.

2.10 The Secretariat reported on the work of the Group on Study and Evaluation of the Translation Procedures, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, contained in Annex 2 and Addendum 1 of the Report of the Secretary-General. Members received updated information on the different pilot projects conducted in 2019. These included:

a) automatic translation of webpages (a project starting in January 2020 for a duration of 12 months, concerning a website translation tool that uses different commercial services depending on the language pairs;

b) translation of webpages with the help of some administrations: the Deputy Secretary-General thanked the Member States involved in the trial (Argentina, Tunisia, Russian Federation and China) and recalled that the original intention was for the participating Member States to verify the quality of translation and post the pages directly on the ITU website. However, Council had decided that the translation should first be checked by ITU translation services before posting. The resulting delay and additional costs meant that the application of this methodology would not yield the desired results of low cost and quick translation. In addition, the new procurement procedures would add increased complexity to implementing this methodology. It was proposed therefore to discontinue the trial and instead the secretariat will concentrate on other alternative translation methods such as ITU-Translate with the objective of achieving extensive translation into the six official languages of the Union on an equal basis whilst maintaining the high quality required;

c) remote interpretation: Information Services Department is in the process of introducing and deploying a new Multilingual Interactive Remote Participation (MIRP) platform, to gradually replace the current platform; the new platform is a fully cloud-based solution, which is scalable and can respond rapidly to technological changes and new market requirements;

d) automatic captioning: ITU has also been testing AI captioning during some ITU meetings in Geneva and during WSIS Forum 2019; The accuracy has improved a lot, but the quality shown during WSIS was still not good enough for ITU meetings that demand very high accuracy.

2.11 A delegation insisted on the importance of testing other relevant IT and AI tools as soon as they are available.

2.12 The Secretariat then reported on the practice of other UN organizations, that acknowledge that the transformation of the language professions will require member organizations to adopt comprehensive strategies that draw on the strengths of existing assets while harnessing the potential of new technologies.

2.13 Also, information was provided on the progress made on the implementation of measures and principles for translation and interpretation adopted by the Council in its 2014 session; these are systematically considered by the secretariat as a benchmark in the delivery of translation and interpretation services for ITU conferences, meetings, documents, and publications. Furthermore, TSB continues to translate Recommendations approved under the Alternative Approval Procedure (AAP) within the limits of available translation budget, and in accordance with requests received from the linguistic groups and the ITU-T study groups.

2.14 Then, the Secretariat reported on the review of possible approaches to financing and maintaining a WSIS Forum website available in the six official languages of ITU: as a result, ITU-Translate, the ITU neural machine translation tool, has been deployed for the dynamic translation of the WSIS-2019 and the WSIS-2020 websites. C&P budget allocated to “Web translation project” with a total amount CHF 230,000 provides the relevant financial support.

2.15 Finally, the Secretariat reported on the areas of interest for the implementation of Resolution 154 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) over the period 2019-2022, as identified by the CWG-LANG, concerning the review of ITU documentation and publication services with a view to eliminating any duplication and to creating synergies; possible measures to reduce the size and volume of documents and achieve greener meetings; the implementation in ITU of the United Nations system objective of multilingualism; necessary measures for equitable use of the six languages on the ITU website in terms of multilingual content and user-friendliness; review, in collaboration with the Sector advisory groups, of the types of material to be included in output documents and translated; possible measures to reduce, without sacrificing quality, the cost and volume of documentation; statistics on use, download and purchase of the different language versions of ITU documents and publications; and the respect of deadlines for the submission of contributions that require translation to conferences, assemblies and meetings of the Union.

* CWG-LANG took note of the information provided and commended the secretariat for its efforts on the study and evaluation of alternative translation and interpretation procedures.
1. **Contribution from the Russian Federation – Harmonization of Sector websites in all six languages of the Union (Document** [**CWG-LANG/10/3**](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-RCLCWGLANG10-C-0003/en)**)**

3.1 The representative of the Russian Federation submitted a proposal to draw the attention of the Council to the continuing failure to fulfil the instructions of the PP-18 and the Council for harmonization of sector websites in all six languages of the Union and to require the secretariat to take all necessary measures to unconditionally fulfil work on harmonization of the ITU Sectors' websites in a manner to ensure clarity, ease of navigation and an image of One ITU using of the six official languages of the Union on an equal footing .

3.2 The Secretariat, through addendum 1 to Document CWG-LANG/10/2, provided detailed information related to the harmonization of Sector websites in the six languages of the Union, which covered an open-source neural machine translation tool, called ITU-Translate, that will provide gist translations of webpages; the pilot project entitled “MyITU”, a new mobile-friendly platform set up for the six official languages; the drafting of a Service Order for Digital Channels and Content for a public-information website, and the work of the ITU-wide Web Project Group. The Addendum also included a Report on progress towards a secure and reliable new public information part of the ITU website, announcing that a detailed business case and project plan with a budget for platforms, services and translation using machine learning as well as a risk analysis will be provided to Council 2020.

3.4 One delegation asked for the reason of the late submission of addendum 1. The Secretariat responded that as the original document was written two months previously the addendum was submitted so as to provide the latest information, such as the alignment of the menus on each Sector’s home page. However, this could be done verbally in future.

* CWG-LANG supported the proposals contained in the Contribution from the Russian Federation and took note of the information provided by the secretariat on its efforts for the harmonization of Sector websites in the six languages of the Union.
1. **Any other business**

 One delegation complained on the organization of the cluster of Council Working Group meetings, that caused too much overlapping and forced delegations to choose among meetings that were of interest for them.

1. **Closure of the meeting**

 The Chair thanked the participants for their valuable contributions and their support, to the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary-General, the Chief of C&P and his team, and to the ITU secretariat as a whole, for the excellent work accomplished and the support provided to herself and to the meeting.

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