

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

General Secretariat



Ref: **Circular Letter 92** 17 July 2008
IS/SM
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Subject: **Invitation to the consultation meeting on options for the use of the six official languages on an equal footing, 16-17 September 2008, Room B, ITU headquarters, Geneva**

Dear Sir/Madam,

By its Resolution 154 (Antalya, 2006), the Plenipotentiary Conference, recognizing the successful implementation of Resolution 115 (Marrakesh, 2002) placing the six official languages on an equal footing as from 1 January 2005, and further recognizing the budget constraints facing the Union, instructed the Council to continue work in this area, notably through the Council Working Group on Languages (CWG-LANG), chaired by Mr Kisrawi (Syrian Arab Republic).

It has become clear from the discussion in CWG-LANG that the membership's inputs, contributions and assistance, including, for example, through voluntary contributions, the provision of expertise, appropriate collaboration agreements, and local means of production and dissemination in the different languages, are desirable and even necessary for implementing the various options to fulfil language objectives within the budget adopted.

To this end, I hereby invite administrations to participate in a consultation meeting on 16-17 September 2008, at ITU headquarters (Room B) in Geneva, in order to explore all possible solutions to maximize the use of the six official languages of the Union on an equal footing, within the allocated budget, so as to ensure that the Union's products and services are disseminated effectively to the world community in their required languages.

A draft agenda for the consultation meeting is attached in **Annex 1**

In its work, CWG-LANG has focused particular attention to a number of areas in which solutions are being sought in order to maximize the use of all six official languages on an equal footing, most notably:

- Production of ITU News and other publications in the six languages
- ITU telecommunication terminology in the six languages
- Production, dissemination and sale of ITU publications in the six languages.

Administrations should refer in this respect to CWG-LANG [Document 14](#) on the CWG-LANG webpage, in particular sections 4, 5 and 6. Specifically, ITU has conducted some trials on the translation of terminology and on ITU News, the results of which are summarized in [Annex 2](#).

In composing their delegations for the consultation meeting, administrations are strongly encouraged to involve, at their discretion, not only officials from the administrations themselves but also representatives of any relevant stakeholders with relevant expertise from their country or region, such as specialized publishing houses, publications sales outlets, possible outsourcing partners, potential partners for terminology and/or publications projects/activities, telecommunication schools/universities with relevant expertise, etc.

Registration will be carried out online at the CWG-LANG website (<http://www.itu.int/council/groups/languages/index.html>) and will begin one month before the event.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage contributions from the ITU membership to the consultation meeting. They should be submitted, if possible by e-mail to cwg-lang@itu.int, by Friday, 22 August 2008.

Exceptionally, in view of the content and purpose of the consultation meeting, interpretation in the six official languages of the Union (English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, French and Russian) will be provided.

I look forward to your contributions and proposals and to seeing you in Geneva.

(signed)

Dr Hamadoun I. Touré
Secretary-General

Annex 1: Draft agenda

Annex 2: Summary: ITU trials on ITU News and six-language terminology

Attachment: Complimentary copy of Arabic, Chinese or Russian version of the March 2008 edition of ITU News (only for Member States using those official languages)

Annex 1
(to Circular-letter 92)

DRAFT AGENDA

**CONSULTATION MEETING ON OPTIONS FOR USE OF THE SIX OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES ON AN EQUAL FOOTING**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 154 (ANTALYA, 2006)
(Use of the six official languages of the Union on an equal footing)**

Geneva, 16-17 September 2008

**ITU headquarters, Room B
0930-1230 and 1430-1730 hours**

1. Opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary-General
2. Approval of draft agenda
3. Overview of the use of languages in ITU and implementation of Resolution 154 (Antalya, 2006)
4. Presentations of inputs of ITU members
5. General discussion
6. Conclusions and recommendations to CWG-LANG

Note: The afternoon of Wednesday, 17 September could be reserved for meetings with members on specific contributions, contract issues, etc.

Annex 2
(to Circular-letter 92)

**ITU PUBLICATIONS
TRANSLATION OF ITU NEWS IN SIX LANGUAGES
TRANSLATION OF TERMINOLOGY**

A brief summary of the secretariat's findings on the production of ITU News in six languages and the priority translation of telecommunication terminology for the six-language database is given below, as well as some information on the situation with regard to publications in general. More details can be found in [Document 14](#) of the Council Working Group on Languages, and these issues will be presented at the consultation meeting in September 2008.

Publication of ITU products

Publications are a critical vehicle for the strategic goal of disseminating ITU outputs globally, and particularly to the developing countries. However, the production and dissemination of publications in the six languages is a complex challenge, especially taking into account the underlying requirement of cost recovery. The secretariat is currently elaborating the necessary governance instruments (publications policy, publication guidelines, strategic guidelines), on the basis of which it wishes to explore all potential avenues for collaboration with the membership so as to optimize production, marketing and dissemination of publications in the six languages.

ITU News

The Union's flagship magazine ITU News is currently issued in three languages only (English, Spanish and French). Not only does this situation not comply with the resolutions requiring equality of treatment of languages, it also penalizes the strategic goal of dissemination of ITU activities to the global community. However, the requisite funding has not been provided in the budget to cover the cost of producing the magazine in all six languages. On a trial basis, and in order to cost the exercise accurately, the secretariat has produced the March 2008 issue of ITU News in Arabic, Chinese and Russian. Complimentary paper copies of the March edition in Arabic, Chinese or Russian are attached for the Member States using those languages, and pdf versions are posted at <http://www.itu.int/itunews/manager/pdf/02-ar.pdf>, <http://www.itu.int/itunews/manager/pdf/02-zh.pdf> and <http://www.itu.int/itunews/manager/pdf/02-ru.pdf>, respectively. The electronic version in English, French and Spanish can be consulted at www.itu.int/itunews. A solution needs to be found to fund the incremental cost of producing ITU News in all six languages in-house, amounting to around CHF 600 000 per year, or alternative production options in the respective regions or countries.

ITU telecommunication terminology in six languages

With regard to terminology, studies show that, in order to bring the volume of ITU telecommunication terminology in the database in Arabic, Chinese and Russian up to the same level as English, Spanish and French, some 30 000 terms need priority translation and inclusion in the database in A, C and R. This task is not budgeted. A detailed trial was carried out in the secretariat to evaluate the work involved, concluding that the activity (comprising translation, revision, validation, data capture and file extraction) could be completed in-house within approximately 2.5 years for a total cost of around CHF 1.75 million. Solutions need to be found to fund the cost of completing this task in-house, or alternative options within or in collaboration with the respective regions or countries.
