Seventy-third session
Hyderabad, India, 8 - 9 July 2004
Provisional agenda item 4(e)

ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL AND STATUTORY MATTERS

(e) Linguistic Diversity

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General transmits to the Executive Council in the following document the report concerning the financial and other implications of a gradual and pragmatic adaptation of Portuguese as a working language of WTO.
ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL AND STATUTORY MATTERS

(e) Linguistic Diversity

Introduction

At its fifteenth session, the WTO General Assembly, in resolution A/RES/486(XV):

"Recalling that Portuguese is the official language of eight countries (Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, and Timor-Leste), and is spoken by more than two hundred million people,

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to the seventy-third session of the Executive Council concerning the financial and other implications of a gradual and pragmatic adoption of Portuguese as a working language of WTO; ..."

At the present time, seven of the eight countries are Full Members of WTO, while Timor-Leste has approached WTO concerning the possibilities of membership.

Of the seven Full Members, five participate in the WTO Commission for Africa (CAF), one in the WTO Commission for the Americas and one in the WTO Commission for Europe (CEU). In addition, the official language of the Associate Member, Madeira, is Portuguese while Portuguese is one of the two official languages of the Associate Member Macao, China.

Study of the implications of adoption of Portuguese

As an essential step in the study of the implications of a "gradual and pragmatic" incorporation of Portuguese as a working language of WTO, and given that WTO is since 23 December 2003 a United Nations Specialized Agency, the Secretariat has studied the practice of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies with regard to the Portuguese language. The results are as follows.

At the United Nations Headquarters in New York and at its offices in Geneva and Vienna, Portuguese is neither an official nor a working language. At the regional level, Portuguese is neither an official nor a working language of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) based in Addis Ababa, nor the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) based in Geneva. However, Portuguese is a working language, but not an official language, of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) based in Santiago de Chile. Finally, Portuguese is neither an official nor a working language of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) based in Bangkok and to which Timor-Leste, as a Member of the United Nations, belongs.
Concerning the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations, which are in effect the sister organizations of WTO, the Secretariat could find no evidence of the use of Portuguese at either an official or working level at the ILO, FAO, WMO, ITU, IMO, WIPO, IFAD, UNIDO and the IAEA.

Two Specialized Agencies, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) based in Berne, and the World Health Organization (WHO) based at Geneva, classify Portuguese as an "Other language" meaning that they have a capacity to translate to and from Portuguese when this is required.

Finally at UNESCO, with headquarters in Paris, Portuguese, while not a working language, is recognized as one of the nine official languages of UNESCO’s General Conference (the equivalent to WTO’s General Assembly). Concerning the use of official languages, UNESCO has provided the following information:

"Use of Official languages"

1. Any amendments to the text of the Constitution, and any decision of the Conference regarding the Constitution and the legal status of UNESCO, shall be translated into all the official languages.

2. At the request of any delegation, any other important document, ......., may be translated into any other official language. The delegation concerned shall provide the necessary translators if the occasion arises."

Present Practice of WTO

Up to the present time, the practice of WTO with respect to the Portuguese language has been essentially pragmatic. It has focused upon the fact that, as stated in the Assembly resolution, more than 200 million people throughout the world understand Portuguese, thus constituting a significant audience for WTO's written communications.

Accordingly, through the mechanism of selling translation rights to publishers in Portuguese-speaking member states, a significant number of WTO publications have been translated into Portuguese so as to be sold or otherwise distributed throughout the lusophone world. Among those documents translated have been:

1. WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (both Brazilian and Portuguese editions)
2. E-Business for Tourism
3. Guide for Local Authorities on Developing Sustainable Tourism
4. International Tourism: A Global Perspective
5. Sustainable Development of Tourism - A Compilation of Good Practices
7. Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism
8. Tourism Signs and Symbols
9. Handbook of Quality, Hygiene and Food Safety for the Tourism Sector
10. Educating the Educators in Tourism

It should be noted that all this was accomplished without cost to the budget of WTO. Furthermore, the publishers concerned have adapted the WTO texts to the needs of the lusophone market (for example by adding examples or case-studies from lusophone countries) thus ensuring that the resulting publications were attractive and commercially successful.

The way forward

It is clear from the survey of the practice of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies that the role of Portuguese, despite its status as a world language, remains relatively limited. This applies even in the largest organizations of the system which naturally have greater financial and budgetary resources than WTO.

On the other hand, WTO is the first Specialized Agency of the United Nations to be established with its Headquarters in the Iberian peninsular, the birthplace of both Spanish and Portuguese. Therefore, it may be affirmed that WTO owes particular respect to these two languages and the cultures they represent as well as to other lusophone countries which play an important role in the life of WTO and in the Organization’s statutory bodies.

In reflection of its geographical location, WTO already possessed a certain linguistic capacity in Portuguese. This was further strengthened through the recruitment in 2003 of a Portuguese official coming from the National Tourism Administration of that country. This greatly facilitates the transmission of ideas contained in Portuguese studies and research to the WTO Members through their incorporation into documents drafted in the official languages of the Organization.
Having regard to the foregoing, the following possibilities could be considered:

i) To continue, and to expand, the practice of offering translation rights of WTO publications to lusophone publishers. As stated above, this has no financial cost to the Organization, serves a major market for WTO handbooks, studies and research and enables the organization to better establish its identity and assert its presence in the lusophone countries.

ii) To translate WTO’s foundational documents into Portuguese with the cooperation of a lusophone Member. This would follow the precedent of UNESCO and make WTO’s statutory texts more accessible to the lusophone world.

iii) To consult the lusophone countries about the possibility of financing Portuguese interpretation during the plenary sessions of the WTO General Assembly, and in particular during the General Debate. This would follow the practice of the, admittedly much larger United Nations Specialized Agency, UNESCO. Cost estimates for interpretation are indicted in the Table.

It should be noted that WTO has not to date been requested to offer Portuguese translation during its meetings, _inter alia_ because of the rather wide understanding of spoken and written Spanish in the lusophone world.

The Committee on Budget and Finance is invited to consider the above proposals and to reach a conclusion which could be submitted to the Executive Council.

**TABLE**

Estimates for provision of Portuguese interpretation during a General Assembly (excluding transport costs).

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<th>All Plenary Sessions</th>
<th>General Debate Only</th>
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<td>€ 12,500</td>
<td>€5,000</td>
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