



Sixteenth session
Dakar, Senegal, 28 November – 2 December 2005
Provisional agenda item 14(c)

ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL AND STATUTORY MATTERS

(c) Implementation of linguistic diversity

Note by the Secretary-General

In this document the Secretary-General transmits to the Assembly the report concerning the implementation of linguistic diversity at the WTO.

ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL AND STATUTORY MATTERS**(c) Implementation of linguistic diversity**Arabic language

1. In accordance with resolution 466(XV), the Arabic language is now one of the languages used in the Organization.
2. Its implementation has been progressively carried out since the last session of the General Assembly in 2003 in the following areas:
 - Executive Council
With few exceptions, all Council documents are translated into Arabic.
 - General Assembly
The documents for the forthcoming Assembly session will also be translated into this language. Interpretation into Arabic will be provided during the most important plenary sessions.
 - Other conferences and meetings
A series of meetings and conferences were held over the past two years in the Middle Eastern countries, where participants were provided with the documents in Arabic as well as the corresponding interpretation.
 - Publications
Certain publications of particular interest are already available in this language, as well as the majority of the statutory texts of WTO, which will be published shortly.
3. The Secretary-General is obliged to remind the Members that the amendment to Article 38 of the Statutes making Arabic an official language of WTO has not yet been ratified.

Other languages*a) Portuguese*

4. In the same resolution, the fifteenth session of the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the seventy-third session of the Executive Council a report on the financial and other consequences of the progressive and pragmatic adoption of Portuguese as a working language of WTO.

5. In document CE/73/4(e), the Secretary-General transmitted to the Members of the Council a study on the practice of the United Nations and of its specialized agencies with regard to the Portuguese language, whose findings show that the role of Portuguese, despite its status as a universal language, remains relatively limited.

6. It should be noted, nevertheless, that around ten WTO publications are available in Portuguese, and that their translation did not generate any cost to the WTO's budget, thanks to the transfer for valuable consideration of translation rights to publishers of Portuguese-speaking Member States.

7. As for interpretation to and from Portuguese during meetings, this is carried out to the extent needed. This was the case at two meetings in Africa, (Mozambique in 2001 and Angola in 2002), as well as at major events held in Brazil (Forum for parliamentarians in 2000 and the Conference on the Tourism Satellite Account in 2005).

8. The seventy-third session of the Council decided to continue the policy followed consisting in translating into Portuguese certain publications without incurring significant costs to the WTO, and requested the Secretary-General to consult the Portuguese-speaking countries regarding the possibility of financing the cost of interpretation at General Assemblies.

b) *Chinese*

9. Lastly, this same General Assembly resolution (466(XV)) asked the Secretary-General to study the request made by China for the introduction of Chinese in the World Tourism Organization.

10. A new survey was carried out by the Secretariat on 9 other specialized agencies whose official languages include Chinese.

11. It should be pointed out, first of all, that these institutions have much greater financial, budgetary and human resources than our Organization.

12. Generally speaking, these institutions only use Chinese at meetings of their major governing bodies, corresponding to our Executive Council (when China has a seat) and our General Assembly. For any other subsidiary organ or meeting of a technical nature, only the three main languages (Spanish, French and English) are used. Moreover, the current trend is for a great many meetings to be held in English only.

Language use by WTO personnel

13. Considering the small size of the Secretariat, the WTO makes an effort at the recruitment level to ensure geographic representation that is as broad as possible, pursuant to Article 24.3 of the Statutes. Thus, 40 nationalities are represented among its one hundred or so officials. It should also be noted that the WTO has several officials whose mother tongue is Arabic, one whose mother tongue is Chinese, and one whose mother tongue is Portuguese.

14. Moreover, Secretariat officials are encouraged to learn languages, and language courses are held at Headquarters to enable them to use other languages.