

Taskforce on Language

Working suggestions

Language is important for good communication and conversations should be understood by all.

The official languages of the United Nations are the six languages that are used in UN meetings, and in which all official UN documents are written. In alphabetical order, they are:

Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic)
Chinese[1] (specifically, Mandarin Chinese[2] and Chinese characters: Simplified Chinese characters)
English (British English with Oxford spelling)[3]
French
Russian
Spanish (Castilian Spanish)

Looking at these languages Africa and some of Asia are excluded. Africa is the largest continent on the earth and because no African language is included this is a form of exclusion, India is maybe one of the highest populated countries and no Indian language is included therefore a number of the IGF population has been excluded if their first language is not one of the 6 UN languages.

It is time to take a stance on this and include African and Indian Languages in the dialogue.

Suggestions

- We continue as a working group to work towards getting this rectified.
1. Main session rooms at the IGF have transcription and translating services. there are also services for those with hearing and sight disabilities, but only in the main rooms. To enable services in the other rooms will come at a cost. The IGF has limited funding and any more costs will not be beneficial.
 2. The working group can engage with funding activities to increase the funds of the IGF with the help on UNDESA and the Secretariat. These can be in-kind contributions, or volunteering from those who speak the languages. How can this take place? A change of infrastructure will be required to set up additional translation services and could disrupt plans already in place.
 3. The WSIS forum is indicated as a source of engaging with potential donors, but a MAG meeting is not in the pipeline and only those already attending the WSIS will be available for any meeting the Secretariat may call. This indicates a lack of African and Asian members who receive funding will not be included, at present the Secretariat intends to have a 2 hour MAG meeting, those present will attend, those not present will join online. With only 2 hours we cannot engage beneficially with potential

Commented [1]: If we are looking at native language speakers by population, then Portuguese is missed as well, it is the 6th most spoken language worldwide, with speakers from the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_languages_by_number_of_native_speakers

Commented [AE2]: I would avoid singling out specific regions or people. There are so many languages.. and parts of the world that are even more excluded than people in Africa and India where many people do speak English.

Commented [AE3]: I had the impression that the group was trying to deal with multilingualness and the needs of the entire IGF community, not specifically with African and Indian languages.

Commented [AE4]: Sorry if I am missing this but did we not suggest that outcome documents/at least key messages and chairs summary, be translated into UN languages.

Deleted: meeting rooms

donors. Those present will most probably be from countries that are not funded and do not have a problem with the UN languages.

4. Apart from the change of infrastructure to accommodate additional languages. We can suggest workshops are presented in other languages. The problem with this is that we still need translation. Attendance will be compromised as those who understand the language will attend these workshops only. This also presents a problem for the MAG evaluations as these W/S will be presented in the language and MAG will need translation services to decipher. Translation quality and consistency can be an issue. Scoring can be an issue and training will be needed.
5. At the IGF during presentations, attendees can sit in groups with an interpreter translating for them alone. However, this will be chaotic and confusing unless the language is indicated prior to the IGF and arrangements made to decide the rooms. Despite this, however, efforts are still needed to connect with those participants.
6. That the MAG insists on having main rooms for sessions that are presented in different languages. That those of us who use the UN languages can still attend and use the translation services. However, we will still need an interpreter who can interpret the specified language.
7. The UN cannot at a wisp change languages as mentioned previously, this comes at a cost, the UN is a large organization placed all over the world and methodology, SOP and procedures will have to be changed. The IGF is only a part of the UN. Therefore the IGF has to find a solution to prevent the exclusion of those at risk, those who are excluded and ethnic people do diversity. The IGF should be diverse and inclusive and promote change and education globally.
8. The best way forward is to find volunteer interpreters, include a device for the room that will translate to other languages. This has to be well thought out to prevent chaos. Perhaps included in WS proposals which language the session will be presented in, enlist an interpreter from the session organisers, arrange a device for those who do not speak the language to be able to attend. Put out the call for interpreters as soon as possible. Continue to submit the WS in English and in the language it will be presented in.
9. It is now 2020 and the IGF needs to change to be more inclusive, apart from language we need more excluded participants to be included. Africa and Asia need to have access to knowledge that is as good as that of Europe and the North and developed countries.

Commented [AE5]: OR to allow people to raise funding for interpretation? And did we not talk about enabling certain type of meetings to do this>

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