

MAG TASK TEAM ON LANGUAGE
DRAFT TOR

Background

The [WSIS Declaration of Principles in Geneva](#) in 2003 sets the context for meaningful engagement and inclusive participation. States and the global communities have continually acknowledged through the WSIS Declaration of Principles that “the ability for **ALL to access and contribute information, ideas and knowledge is essential** in an **inclusive Information Society**” (clause 24, emphasis ours) and that the “**sharing and strengthening of global knowledge for development can be enhanced by removing barriers to equitable access to information** for economic, social, political, health, cultural, educational, and scientific activities and by facilitating access to public domain information, including by universal design and the use of assistive technologies” (clause 25). A [report](#) released by the UN Broadband Commission in 2015 reveals that only about 5% of the world's estimated 7100 languages are currently represented on the internet. It also notes that the use of the Latin script remains a challenge for many Internet users, in particular for reading domain names.

Commented [1]: We should try to find a more recent source.

The United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/70/1 in adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognizes that there can be no development without inclusion. Various other Frameworks aside from the Resolution such as the A/RES/71/312 (Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action), A/RES/69/283 (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030), A/RES/69/15 (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA), A/RES/66/288 (The Future We Want) support the need for greater cohesion that can only come from removing the barrier to equitable access of information.

ICANN and the IETF took an important step in promoting Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs). IDNs facilitate the use of domain names written in non-Latin alphabets such as Chinese, Arabic, Cyrillic, and others.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) provided the first element of governance regimes which has instigated many initiatives focusing on multilingualism, including the adoption of important documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity and the Internet Universality Indicators.

Furthermore, The evolution and wide usage of Web 2.0 tools, allowing ordinary users to become contributors and content developers, offers an opportunity for greater availability of local content in a wide variety of languages.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrates International Mother Language Day annually on February 21 each year. With the language day, UNESCO seeks to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity.

History of the Removal of Barriers of Mono Use of Language within the IGF [To be completed]

Year - The IGF was predominantly in English
Year -The IGF was opened to other languages

Though there had been some level of inclusion by way of providing an interpretation of main sessions at the annual IGF event. This began at the IGF.....

The issues of language challenges came to fore at the just concluded 2019 IGF in Berlin, Germany with the special initiative undertaken by the German Government to bring the global south to the IGF

Some of the participants at the IGF 2019 from the global south were unable to follow the proceedings or participate in the workshops, open fora and coalition sessions due to language barriers.

Having raised these concerns during the post-IGF MAG briefing and 1st MAG Open Consultation, it was agreed that this Taskforce is created to deliberate on the challenges and come up with concrete recommendations on how the MAG would integrate language in the IGF process and ensure inclusion and leave no one behind.

Open Calls by the Global Public to be more inclusive and to encourage Meaningful Participation

Since the inception of the Internet Governance Forum, there have been calls from global communities to make the dialogue accessible through infrastructure such as languages, translators so that there is authentic meaningful participation. [\[Reference Transcripts of Past IGFs and MAG Meeting Transcripts on Open Consultations\]](#)

The MAG Taskforce on Language Diversity

The essence of setting up the Taskforce by the MAG is to address one of the concerns of some members IGF community had raised regarding the mono-language use in the IGF processes since its inception.

OBJECTIVE(S)

The objectives of setting up the Taskforce by MAG are

- to give the issues of language the needed attention;
- a short-term task team to look at the issues within the financial constraints of the MAG;
- identify the implications and also which language to add.
- develop a proposal for the MAG to consider.

ISSUES

IGF is in its 14th year

There is rapid growth in the number of NRIs

The IGF loses a lot not capitalizing on inputs and suggestions coming from non-english speaking communities

Bias on conclusion and recommendations due non-English communities proposals exclusion

Different "Call for" and other documents from the IGF to the community are in English and are not translated

Heightened Interest for IGF participation by non-English communities

Responses and submissions in other languages from the community are not encouraged by the MAG

Non-English speaking MAG members are not able to understand and participate adequately in MAG meetings conducted in English only

Interpretation is an expensive venture and IGF has financial constraints towards supporting the activities

How can we overcome that issue?

Interpretation is crucial to the IGF and MAG meetings

Strategize and mobilize donors to fund language diversification within IGF

All IGF documents have to be translated in the 6 UN languages before diffusion

Encourage people to speak and write in their own languages

METHODOLOGY

The Taskforce has a very short time to produce a workable proposal to the MAG, for this reason, the Team would deploy several communications platforms for meetings, i.e. mailing list, WhatsApp, Google Doc, Skype, and Online zoom meetings

MEMBERSHIP

Serving and former MAG members are free to join the Team

REPORTING

The Team is expected to submit its proposal by.....

WORKPLAN

1st Online Call 11th February 2020

Collaborative Google Doc work till 20 February 2020 (Draft Proposal)

Finalize

Submission of Proposal to MAG