



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
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Food
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Organización
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Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

COUNCIL

Hundred and Thirty-third Session

Rome, 14-16 November 2007

ADOPTION OF RUSSIAN AS A LANGUAGE OF FAO – FUNDING MODALITIES

I. Background

1. At its last session in June 2007, the Council examined the legal¹ and financial² aspects of the adoption of Russian as a language of the Organization. On the legal side, the Council decided to forward to the Conference two draft resolutions containing the changes which would need to be made to the Constitution and to the General Rules of the Organization for Russian to become an FAO language. This was done on procedural and legal grounds, with no political or financial commitment, and without prejudice of a final decision on the substance of the issue.³

2. From the financial standpoint, while expressing concern about “the financial implications that the adoption of Russian could have”, the Council called for the identification of appropriate funding modalities, “including through trust fund and voluntary contributions”. The view was also held that “consideration should be given to phasing the introduction of the Russian language.”⁴ The Council therefore requested the Secretariat to make proposals of funding modalities for the provision of Russian language services, “in close consultation with interested countries, for further consideration at the next session of the Finance Committee.”⁵

3. In response to that request, this document outlines potential funding options for providing language services in Russian, in the light of consultations held with interested countries. In the following sections, the document first recalls, as a matter of illustration, how Arabic was

¹ Report of the Eighty-first Session of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters, CL 132/5, April 2007.

² Adoption of Russian as a Language of FAO, CL 132/17, May 2007; and Report of the Hundred and Eighteenth Session of the Finance Committee, CL 132/14, May 2007.

³ Report of the Hundred and Thirty-second Session of the Council, Rome, 18-22 June 2007, CL 132/REP, paragraph 114.

⁴ Report of the Hundred and Thirty-second Session of the Council, Rome, 18-22 June 2007, CL 132/REP, paragraph 92.

⁵ Report of the Hundred and Thirty-second Session of the Council, Rome, 18-22 June 2007, CL 132/REP, paragraph 93.

introduced in FAO and how the costs involved were met. The document then presents two possible funding options for the adoption of Russian: Option I, under which Russian would be fully implemented in the next biennium; and Option II, under which Russian would be introduced in a phased manner.

II. The Example of Arabic

4. In 1953, the Conference observed that Arabic-speaking countries were eager to find “means by which at least selected FAO publications of special value to these countries might be available in the Arabic language so as to serve a wider audience.”⁶ In 1967, the Conference decided to introduce Arabic as a “limited working language” – that is, to be used for interpretation in the Conference sessions and in the Near East regional and technical conferences, as well as for the translation of certain documents and publications within agreed limits.⁷ In fact, Arabic translation and interpretation services began to be provided at the Ninth Regional Conference for the Near East (Baghdad, 1968).

5. Subsequently, the Programme of Work and Budget for 1970-71, as approved by the Conference in 1969, provided for Arabic interpretation as decided in 1967 (see paragraph 4), and set a ceiling for translation of documents into Arabic to 1.8 million words in the biennium.⁸ The Conference also approved the adoption of Arabic as an “official language” of the Organization and as a “working language for limited purposes.”⁹ An Arabic Translation Group was accordingly created in May 1970, with staff enabling it to translate the biennial volume.

6. In 1973, although aware that the target of 1.8 million words of Arabic translation had in fact already been exceeded in 1972-73, the Conference did not decide to increase that figure. However, it recommended that Arabic interpretation be also provided at plenary meetings of the Council.¹⁰ This recommendation was endorsed by the Council in 1974, which agreed to have Arabic interpretation at its sessions.¹¹

7. In the following biennium, upon a request made by the 12th Regional Conference for the Near East (Amman, 1974), the initial ceiling of 1.8 million words was raised to 2.5 million words for the 1976-77 Arabic translation programme. This increased volume level allowed, at that time, to cover translation needs for Governing Body documents as well as agreed-upon publications and technical documents.¹² Arabic interpretation also continued to be provided at Conference and Council sessions, at Regional Conferences for the Near East and at technical meetings held in this region.

8. In 1977 the distinction which existed in FAO between “official languages” (Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish), “working languages” (English, French and Spanish) and “working language for limited purposes” (Arabic) was eliminated by the Conference.¹³ This entailed redrafting of Rule XLVII of the General Rules of the Organization as follows: “Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish are the languages of the Organization.” Henceforth, all FAO languages acquired equal legal status. Consequently, in 1979 the Conference approved a

⁶ *Report of the Seventh Session of the Conference*, Rome, 23 November - 11 December 1953, C 7/REP, paragraph 215.

⁷ *Report of the Fourteenth Session of the Conference*, Rome, 4-23 November 1967, C 14/REP, paragraph 650.

⁸ *Report of the Fifteenth Session of the Conference*, Rome, 8-27 November 1969, C 15/REP, paragraph 566.

⁹ Resolution 16/71, *Report of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference*, Rome, 6-25 November 1971, C 16/REP.

¹⁰ *Report of the Seventeenth Session of the Conference*, Rome, 10-29 November 1973, C 17/REP, paragraphs 235-36.

¹¹ *Report of the Sixty-fourth Session of the Council*, Rome, 18-29 November 1974, CL 64/REP, paragraph 91.

¹² *Strengthening the Use of Arabic at FAO Headquarters and the Regional Office - Progress Report*, Thirteenth Regional Conference for the Near East, Tunis, 4-12 October 1976, NERC/76/12, paragraphs 7-11.

¹³ Resolution 19/77, *Report of the Nineteenth Session of the Conference*, Rome, 12 November - 1 December 1977, C 19/REP.

programme increase to provide for “full Arabic documentation in the Conference, Council, Programme and Finance Committees.”¹⁴

9. As is apparent from the foregoing paragraphs, Arabic was introduced in FAO in a gradual manner. Originally, interpretation and translation services were provided partially, and then they progressively expanded to cover all Governing Body meetings and all main publications. This was accomplished primarily with Regular Programme resources, by means of budgetary allocations to meet the costs required for growing Arabic languages services. Furthermore, Regular Programme allocations were supplemented by extra-budgetary resources to help expand the use of Arabic.

10. Greater use of the Arabic language was indeed made possible thanks to additional resources contributed in the 1980s by Arabic-speaking countries, namely Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. From 1974 to 1978, such voluntary contributions mostly aimed to strengthen the use of Arabic at the Near East Regional Office for the benefit of the countries from that region. Moreover, a regional Trust Fund was established in 1979-80 by some of those countries with a twofold objective: (i) further enhance the use of Arabic in the Near East and North Africa; and (ii) expand its use in FAO as a whole.¹⁵ Significant progress could be made as a result, particularly by widening the range of publications in Arabic and improving their timeliness.

III. Option I - Full implementation of Russian

11. Document CL 132/17 (*Adoption of Russian as a Language of FAO*), which was reviewed by the Finance Committee in May 2007 and by the Council in June 2007, has identified and costed the incremental services that would be required for Option I, that is: full implementation of Russian as language of the Organization as from the next biennium. The biennial costs needed to cover such additional services and the related changes affecting the working environment were estimated at US\$ 5.2 million. Of this amount, some US\$ 4.6 million would represent recurring costs, and approximately US\$ 0.6 million would be one-time costs.

12. This level of funding would allow for the required infrastructure to add Russian to the Organization’s multilingual capacities and provide Russian language services on a par with the other FAO languages. The additional services involved would mainly include the following:

- translation and interpretation for sessions of Governing Bodies and other FAO meetings;
- provision of editorial services and production of flagship publications in Russian;
- adaptation of the FAO homepage, key and corporate Web applications and Web pages into Russian;
- upgrading FAO’s Newsroom and associated media outreach to include Russian;
- building-up of reference materials in Russian for the library services;
- use of Russian in the FAO terminology databases;
- upgrade of corporate systems to handle the Cyrillic alphabet;
- creation of templates for document production in Russian;
- staff training in the Russian language.

¹⁴ *Report of the Twentieth Session of the Conference*, Rome, 10-28 November 1979, C 20/REP, paragraph 164.

¹⁵ *Strengthening the Use of Arabic at the Near East Regional Office*, NECP/REM/528/MUL, FAO/Near East Cooperative Programme, 1979.

IV. Option II - Phased Introduction of Russian

13. At the last session of the Council in June 2007, the view was expressed that “consideration should be given to phasing the introduction of the Russian language”. In this context, the Secretariat consulted interested countries in order: (i) to identify with them the priority Russian language services that would be primarily required in terms of meeting documentation, interpretation and publications; and (ii) to discuss possible voluntary contributions they could make, including the type of in-kind assistance they might provide to help perform certain tasks.

14. While confirming the need for full adoption of Russian, interested countries recognize the current financial difficulties of the Organization and would therefore support a phased introduction of Russian language services in FAO, the first stage of which would be implemented in the 2008-09 biennium along the following lines:

- documentation: only the main documents for Conference and Council sessions, the Regional Conference for Europe and Central Asia, the sessions of the Committees on Fisheries, Forestry and World Food Security, and the final reports thereof would be translated into Russian;
- Russian interpretation would be provided only to plenary meetings at Conference and Council sessions and to one Commission during the Conference session, to the Regional Conference for Europe and Central Asia, and to the sessions of the Committees on Fisheries, Forestry and World Food Security;
- publications: only flagship publications would be translated into Russian;
- Web site: the main pages of the FAO Web site would be developed in Russian with the assistance of specialists from interested countries (e.g. home page, links to meeting documents and main publications);
- Russian terminology (about 20,000 terms) would be developed with the support of specialists from interested countries.

15. To meet the costs of the above services for Option II, the Programme of Work and Budget 2008-09 would provide for a budgetary allocation of approximately USD 1.7 million, which would include some one-time expenses (USD 30,000) as well as recurrent expenses (USD 1,671,000). A breakdown of these figures is given in table 1, together with that of the cost estimates for Option I.

Table 1 - Cost estimates for Options I and II per biennium in US\$¹⁶

Services	Option I Costs for full implementation				Option II RP costs in 2008-09 for phased introduction	
	Staff	Non-staff	Total staff and non- staff	One-time expenses	Staff and non-staff 2008-09	One-time 2008-09
FAO Newsroom • News stories and press releases in Russian	One Information Officer, P-3, 244,000	50,000	294,000		For later implementation	
Publications • Editorial and support services in Russian	One Managing Editor, P-4, 310,000	150,000	460,000		250,000 ¹⁷	

¹⁶ Based on 2006-07 costs.

¹⁷ 1 P-3 Editor/Translator for 12 person/months (US\$ 120,000), plus external consultants.

Services	Option I Costs for full implementation				Option II RP costs in 2008-09 for phased introduction	
	Staff	Non-staff	Total staff and non- staff	One-time expenses	Staff and non-staff 2008-09	One-time 2008-09
Website • <i>Corporate sites in Russian</i>	One Information Management Specialist, P-2, 200,000	20,000	220,000	250,000	120,000	
IT Infrastructure • <i>Support to Cyrillic script</i> • <i>FAO Forms in Russian</i>	Additional support cost of US\$40,000		40,000	67,000 To be determined	20,000 <i>For later implementation</i>	20,000
• <i>Support for FAO computers applications</i>				To be determined	<i>For later implementation</i>	
Library Services • <i>Updates to data entry and search systems</i> • <i>Russian scientific subscriptions/reference tools</i> • <i>Re-indexing in AGROVOC</i>		50,000	50,000	20,000 30,000	<i>For later implementation</i>	
Translation • <i>Russian Translation Group</i> • <i>Outsourcing of translation</i> • <i>Additional funding for translation of past normative documents (1,000,000 word)</i>	1,400,000	408,000 (1,200,000 words)	1,400,000 408,000	 170,000	543,000 ¹⁸ 204,000 (600,000 words) <i>Contributions from interested countries</i>	
Terminology • <i>One P-2 Terminology Officer</i>	200,000		200,000		<i>Contributions from interested countries (20,000 terms in 2008-09)</i>	
Interpretation • <i>Interpretation in Russian</i> • <i>Updating simultaneous interpretation Facilities</i>	One staff interpreter, P-4, 310,000	Freelance interpreters 1,200,000	1,510,000	To be determined (100,000 per room to be modified)	479,000 ¹⁹ <i>For later implementation</i>	

¹⁸ 1 P-4 Reviser, 1 G-5 Clerk.

¹⁹ Russian interpretation, and incremental English and French costs.

	Option I Costs for full implementation				Option II RP costs in 2008-09 for phased introduction	
Services	Staff	Non-staff	Total staff and non- staff	One-time expenses	Staff and non-staff 2008-09	One-time 2008-09
Staff training						
• Fees of two Russian teachers		45,000	45,000		45,000	
• Pedagogical material		10,000	10,000		10,000	
Physical infrastructure: in the reception hall, add one travertine slab reproducing extract of FAO Constitution in Russian, and repositioning the existing slabs				10,000		10,000
TOTAL COSTS	2,704,000	1,933,000	4,637,000	547,000	1,671,000	30,000

16. In view of the concerns expressed by Council Members about the financial implications of the adoption of Russian, a full implementation of the Russian language in the 2008-09 biennium would be greatly facilitated by the availability of extra-budgetary resources, possibly through a dedicated Trust Fund. Such voluntary contributions could be made at the level required to meet all the costs that could not be met from Regular Programme resources in the PWB 2008-09. Taking into consideration the estimated Regular Programme costs tabulated under Option II, voluntary contributions would have to be in the order of US\$ 3.5 million to implement Option I during 2008-09. Additional extra-budgetary resources could be used, in the first instance, to meet the costs of translation and interpretation services for sessions of Council Committees (in addition to those mentioned in paragraph 14 – see table 2) and for other relevant meetings not costed under Option II, as well as translation costs of technical documents and other publications.

Table 2 – Biennial cost estimates for Council Committee sessions (not included in Option II) in US\$²⁰

Committee	Words	Translation Cost	Interpretation Cost	Total Cost
Finance Committee (four sessions)	360,000	158,400	94,300	252,700
Programme Committee (four sessions)	521,800	229,600	116,400	346,000
Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (four sessions)	111,400	49,000	28,000	77,000
Committee on Agriculture	55,550	24,400	28,100	52,500
Committee on Commodity Problems	36,800	16,200	17,560	33,760
Totals	1,085,550	477,600	284,360	761,960

17. Towards the end of the 2008-09 biennium, the requirements in Russian language services would be reviewed in the light of the experience gained. Any subsequent changes that might be needed would be submitted to the relevant Governing Bodies for appropriate decision.

²⁰ Based on 2006-07 costs.

V. Suggested Action by the Council

18. The Council is invited to review this document and to provide guidance in respect of the funding options put forward.