

171st Session of the Council

Item 19: Strategic policy framework for multilingualism

Multilingualism is a defining characteristic of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as an international, intergovernmental agency. It is firmly rooted in FAO's Basic Texts, where Rule XLVIII of the General Rules of the Organization establishes that "Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the languages of the Organization". All six languages enjoy equal status within FAO and as such, they provide an effective tool for the Organization to engage and interact with Members, partners and recipients of its goods and services.

Multilingualism enables the participation of Members in the governance of the Organization in an efficient, effective and transparent manner; it promotes unity in diversity; and it is pervasive in the composition and workings of the Secretariat. As a specialised and knowledge-based organization, FAO provides a wide range of multilingual products and services from headquarters to decentralised levels.

Since the 2020-2021 biennium, there has been increased demand for, and commitment to, multilingualism at FAO. Building on such momentum, this strategic policy framework for multilingualism is developed to identify the corporate approach for further promoting multilingualism across FAO. It aims to serve at the corporate level and provide a holistic and practical approach to meet the demand for improved performance and optimised resource mobilisation on multilingualism in the Organization.

Document CL 171/17, *Strategic policy framework for multilingualism*, outlines the various components that form together the framework for enhancing the use of all FAO languages in a balanced, coherent, efficient and effective manner to facilitate the governance and branding of the Organization, as well as the delivery and communication of FAO's programmes of work in support of the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2022-31. It encompasses the role of the Corporate Coordinator for Multilingualism; presents the landscape of FAO's multilingual products and services; covering translation, interpretation, publications and communication and other products; and outlines the use of non-FAO languages and finally the Organization's prioritisation of the multilingual skills of FAO staff.

Based on this framework, the integrity and enhancement of the plethora of language goods and products within FAO is ensured as a synergetic corporate commitment, supported by quality and qualified in-house language expertise, and facilitated by the Corporate Coordinator for Multilingualism. Above all, the strategic policy framework offers Members a dedicated vehicle to drive the determination, assess the delivery and update dynamically the direction of multilingualism at FAO.

The Council is invited to endorse the strategic policy framework for multilingualism as provided in document CL 171/17.

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