



COUNCIL

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ADOPTION OF RUSSIAN AS A LANGUAGE OF FAO

I. Background

1. At its First Session in 1946, the FAO Conference agreed that the rules of the Organization "governing the use of languages in its proceedings and documentation shall be those adopted by the United Nations Organization". It resolved that, pending the adoption of such rules, FAO shall use two working languages, English and French, in its proceedings and documentation, and shall adopt English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Russian as its official languages.¹
2. In 1949, the Conference decided to add Spanish as one of the working languages of the Organization. This decision was reflected in the Rules of Procedure as new rule XXXIII, which did not mention Russian anymore.²
3. In 1967, the Conference approved the adoption of Arabic as a "limited working language" to be used for interpretation in Conference sessions and in Near East conferences.³ In 1974, the Council agreed to have Arabic interpretation also at its sessions.⁴
4. In 1977, the Conference decided to eliminate the distinction that existed among the languages used within the Organization between *official languages* (Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish), *working languages* (English, French and Spanish) and *working language for*

¹ Report of the First Session of the Conference, Quebec, 16 October-1 November 1946.

² Report of the Fifth Session of the Conference, Washington, 21 November-6 December 1949.

³ Report of the Fourteenth Session of the Conference, Rome, 4-23 November 1967.

⁴ Report of the Sixty-Fourth Session of the Council, Rome, 18-29 November 1974.

limited purpose (Arabic), as those terms were deemed “unnecessary and potentially confusing”.⁵ As a result, the relevant provision of the Basic Texts was amended to read: "Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish are the languages of the Organization." (Rule XLVII of the General Rules of the Organization.)

5. In 1999, the Council, noting that the FAO Language Policy considered that linguistic and cultural diversity “are essential features of international cooperation and form part of FAO’s most significant comparative advantage”, reaffirmed the principle of equality of FAO languages and its importance in ensuring the fullest participation of Members in the work of the Organization.⁶

6. Russian is an official language of the UN and the following specialized agencies: ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WHO, WMO and WIPO. It is an official language of most of the UN funds and programmes (UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP, UNFCCC) and of a number of international organizations. Further, many organizations provide translation into Russian, although it is not their official language, such as the following: European Patent Office, European Space Agency, International Monetary Fund, International Olympic Committee, SHAPE, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Universal Postal Union and World Bank.

7. In UN Organizations where Russian is an official language, Members which receive documentation in Russian include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

8. In line with UN established rules and practice, the Russian Federation has requested that Russian become a language of the Organization. The legal aspects of the adoption of Russian as an additional FAO language have been addressed by the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters at its 81st Session in April 2007.⁷

9. This document examines the financial aspects of the adoption of Russian as a language of the Organization. It sets forth the incremental services and estimated one-time and recurring costs required throughout the Organization. The document reviews such implications from the perspective of the standard language services to be rendered and the related changes affecting the working environment. The new staffing proposed for the Russian language will be similar to that of the other FAO languages.

II. Incremental services and costs expected as a result of the adoption of Russian as a language of FAO

A. FAO NEWSROOM, PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITE

FAO Newsroom

10. Services expected: The Media Relations Branch has information officers conducting media outreach campaigns in most of the official languages of the Organization and would require a Russian mother-tongue Information Officer to develop and maintain an effective campaign in this language.

Publications

11. Services expected: It is estimated that eight editions of the main flagship publications for a total of approximately 1,200 pages would have to be produced in Russian per biennium. In

⁵ Report of the Nineteenth Session of the Conference, Rome, 12 November-1 December 1977.

⁶ Report of the Hundred and Sixteenth Session of the Council, Rome, 14- 9 June 1999.

⁷ CCLM document 81/2, *Amendment of the Constitution and the General Rules of the Organization (Adoption of Russian as a Language of the Organization)*.

addition, an undetermined number of the approximately 600 other publications issued by the Organization per biennium would also need to be produced in Russian. The Information Division would need to have the capacity to provide editorial and support services in the Russian language (One P-4 specialist).

12. A large proportion of production, editorial services layout and printing would be outsourced. Consideration would also be given to establishing a co-publishing arrangement with an institution or publishing house (as per the existing arrangement with China) in order to handle the publishing process, including distribution, for publications.

Website

13. Services expected: The FAO homepage and the first level of navigation of the main cross-cutting Web sites would have to be adapted into Russian. In the same way, the main Corporate database-driven web based applications and web sites would also need to be adapted in order to support Russian. It is not possible to quantify additional costs related to the technical content of the FAO Web site, as these costs would be borne by many originating units on a case-by-case basis. However, a rough estimate for the cost of translation/ adaptation into Russian would be some \$300 per page. A Russian version of the Knowledge Forum (which includes *AskFAO*, *Best Practices* and *Knowledge Networks* pages) would have to be implemented. The ongoing need to support the Russian language for FAO web-sites and related corporate information, knowledge and library management services would require the establishment of a P-2 Information Management Specialist position, with similar terms of reference as for the post covering the Chinese language. A small additional amount of non-staff resources would also be required to support this work.

IT Infrastructure

i) Basic Support for Cyrillic script

14. Services expected: For general use of Russian, all workstations in FAO must be able to correctly display and correctly print Cyrillic script. Testing is necessary to establish correct functioning of FAO applications in such a context, and to permit composition of work objects (documents, emails) in Russian. A small number of Cyrillic keyboards would be required for those persons who mainly work in the language, e.g. translators, and some PCs may need to be configured in an all-Cyrillic software set. The primary help desk team and problem resolution teams will need to have enough skills in Russian to enable problem diagnosis, and the fact that there is an additional language/script to consider will make all software migrations somewhat more difficult.

ii) Support for FAO forms in Russian

15. Services expected: Addition of Russian to the FAO Letterhead form is an obvious essential, but there are about 50 existing forms which are adaptations of the letterhead. There are also numerous internal forms which are provided now in several of the existing five languages. In each case consideration would need to be given by the Form Owner as to whether a Russian version is also required. The Templates used for meeting documents will have also to be modified to include Russian.

iii) Support for FAO computer applications in Russian

16. Services expected: Many of the computer applications of FAO which support the mandate of the Organization across the whole gamut of program delivery would require adaptation to insert support for Russian language, and some would even require modification to support Cyrillic script. In each case consideration would need to be given by the Application Owner (typically in a technical department) as to whether Russian support is required for that information system.

B. LIBRARY SERVICES

17. The FAO library catalogue and the data entry and search systems would need to be updated to manage Russian-language material.⁸ Over time, there would be a progressive need to increase the proportion of the Library collection focusing on topics relevant to Russia, and therefore to information resources, both hard copy and electronic, in Russian language. The AGROVOC system, which permits searching of FAO Web content across languages is being expanded to cover Russian during the current biennium. However, additional funds would be required to integrate the Russian language version with the other official languages and to re-index legacy material with the Russian terms.

C. CONFERENCE SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Translation

18. Services expected: Based on current volumes and trends, it is estimated that about four million words per biennium would be translated in Russian for official meetings and 500 000 words for flagship publications. In order to cope with this volume, and according to current practice for other languages, a Russian Translation Group should be progressively established to reach, when the full team will be in place, one P-5 Senior Reviser, one P-4 Reviser, one P3 Translator and one P2 Translation Workflow and Reference Officer, together with one G-5 Documents Clerk and 1 G-4 Typist/Proofreader. As is the current practice for other languages, the group would be sized to translate approximately 50% of the expected volume. The remaining 50% would be outsourced to external consultants and subsequently revised in-house. It must be noted that the overall cost will be recovered from the Divisions using the translation services, through a backcharging mechanism.

19. Existing normative documents not available in Russian such as Treaties, Agreements, Conventions and standards will be translated progressively according to their use in connection with sessions of statutory bodies, to serve as reference and background material for meeting documentation in Russian.

Terminology

20. Services expected: The terminology in Russian should be built up in the FAO terminological database, FAOTERM, for all entries already available in other FAO languages. A P-2 terminologist would need to be recruited to perform these tasks.

Interpretation

21. Services expected: FAO should define, in consultation with countries using Russian as a communication language, the list of meetings for which interpretation services should be available in 2008-09 and then for each subsequent biennium. A post of Russian interpreter (P-4) should be created in early 2008.

22. However, most of the interpreters recruited to service FAO meetings are freelances. It must be noted that Russian freelance interpreters must be recruited from outside Italy, at a high cost, as there are at this moment no local interpreters working from or into Russian.

Simultaneous interpretation facilities

23. Based on the number of meetings for which Russian interpretation is foreseen, FAO should review the number of booths available in each meeting room. In most meeting rooms the number of booths is adequate to serve meetings even with an additional language, but in some of

⁸ Multilingualism and the associated relatively low annual costs are contingent upon Genio Civile funding of an integrated library management system which allows multilingual (semantic) authority interfaces to the document repository, library catalogue and other documentation finding tools and search engines.

them the sound system of the room requires upgrade. An exception is the Iran Room, which has only five booths and is used for presentations to Permanent representatives. Here, the architectural and practical feasibility of adding an extra booth must be carefully reviewed.

D. STAFF TRAINING

24. Training in Russian must be given to selected staff having to work with Russian documents/ materials and, in general, to staff members in the whole Organization who will have to use Russian in their work. Corporate funding was identified in 2006-07 for the development of course curricula in Russian, but the on-going cost of the actual courses would correspond to the fees of two teachers, initially, plus the cost of pedagogical material. The cost would be recovered from Divisions, on the basis of the number of attendees.

E. COST ESTIMATES

25. Estimated costs per biennium for the above described services and the related changes affecting the working environment are shown in the following table.

Cost estimates per biennium

Services	Staff (based on 2006-07 costs)	Non-Staff	Total staff + non-staff	One-time expenses
FAO Newsroom • <i>News stories and press releases in Russian</i>	One Information Officer, P-3, US\$244,000	US\$50,000	US\$294,000	
Publications • <i>Editorial and support services in Russian</i>	One Managing Editor in Russian, P-4, US\$310,000	US\$150,000	US\$460,000	
Website • <i>Corporate sites in Russian</i>	One Information Management Specialist, P-2 US\$200,000	US\$20,000	US\$220,000	US\$250,000
IT Infrastructure • <i>Support to Cyrillic script</i> • <i>FAO Forms in Russian</i>	Additional support cost of US\$40,000		US\$40,000	US\$67,000 To be determined

Services	Staff (based on 2006-07 costs)	Non-Staff	Total staff + non-staff	One-time expenses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support for FAO computers applications</i> 				To be determined
Library Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Updates to data entry and search systems</i> • <i>Russian scientific subscriptions/reference tools</i> • <i>Re-indexing in AGROVOC</i> 		US\$50,000	US\$50,000	US\$20,000 US\$30,000
Translation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Russian Translation Group</i> • <i>Outsourcing of translation (1,200,000 words)</i> • <i>Additional funding for translation of past normative documents (1,000,000 words)</i> 	US\$1,400,000	US\$408,000	US\$1,400,000 US\$408,000	US\$170,000
Terminology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One P-2 Terminology Officer</i> 	US\$ 200,000		US\$200,000	
Interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Interpretation in Russian</i> • <i>Updating simultaneous interpretation Facilities</i> 	One staff interpreter, P-4, US\$310,000	Freelance interpreters US\$1,200,000	US\$1,510,000	To be determined (US\$100,000 per room to be modified)
Staff training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees of two Russian teachers • Pedagogical material 		US\$45,000 US\$10,000	US\$45,000 US\$10,000	
Physical infrastructure: add one travertine slab reproducing an extract of the FAO Constitution, in the reception hall, and repositioning the existing slabs				US\$10,000

Services	Staff (based on 2006-07 costs)	Non-Staff	Total staff + non-staff	One-time expenses
TOTAL COSTS	US\$2,704,000	US\$1,933,000	US\$4,637,000	US\$547,000

III. Funding

26. The current document has identified the most significant implications of the adoption of Russian as an official language and, where feasible, provided an estimate of the relative costs. As is seen, full implementation of an additional language would require significant investment, both in KC Department, which has lead responsibility for management of communication for the Organization, as well as in the technical Departments, who are directly responsible for decisions regarding technical publications, web-sites, meetings, etc., including the languages in which these services will be delivered. It should be recalled that when the Conference decided to adopt Arabic as a language of FAO, the implementation of that decision was greatly facilitated by the financial support provided by several Arabic-speaking Member Nations and by the League of Arab States.

27. In the absence of additional resources, the adoption of a sixth language would require reductions to the programmes of the Organization. Members would also be encouraged to provide voluntary contributions, possibly to a Trust Fund, in order to cover the cost of some of the Russian language services.

IV. Suggested action by the Council

28. The Council is invited to review this document and may wish to provide guidance or make comments.