

**INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY**

Sixth session of the Assembly

Abu Dhabi, 16-17 January 2016

**Progress review: Use of Languages in IRENA Activities****Note of the Director-General****I. Introduction**

1. The use of different languages in communicating and implementing programmatic activities in different countries and regions is proving of increasing importance in IRENA's work to ensure a more effective role for the Agency in the promotion of renewable energy globally. Accordingly, the Agency continues to review, assess and upgrade its capacities to provide publications, communications materials and conference services targeting audiences in languages other than English.

2. IRENA was established and has been supported by its Members as a centre of excellence, an advisory resource for countries and a network hub of country, regional and global programmes in this fast-growing and vital sector. Based on the mandate outlined in its founding statute, the Agency promotes the widespread and increased adoption and the sustainable use of all forms of renewable energy in the pursuit of sustainable development, energy access, energy security and low-carbon economic growth.

3. In order to ensure the highest impact of IRENA activities, communications and other engagement in different countries, the IRENA Assembly, at its inaugural session, stressed "the value of multilingualism" and the resulting "inclusiveness and participation" in the Agency's work. Members expressed support for measures "aiming at a progressive integration of official UN languages to advance the work of the Agency, based on a reasonable and cost-effective use of the resources of the organisation" (A/1/DC/9). With that, the Assembly recognised the need to balance the benefits of multilingualism with cost considerations, without diverting significant funds from programmatic activities.

4. The Assembly also decided at that inaugural session to review progress on language implementation no later than at its sixth session, forthcoming in early 2016. A decision at the third session (A/3/DC/3) requested that this progress review include:

- a. An assessment of the implementation of translation and interpretation in the Agency's activities, including challenges faced;
- b. The result of its contacts with other intergovernmental and UN organizations regarding the possibility of forming a consortium or a joint language service, affording IRENA access to a pool of pre-screened language professionals who can provide high quality services; and

- c. The results of its contacts with the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP), with the aim of learning about best practices and obtaining additional specific information that may be useful in the IRENA context.

5. The present document has been prepared in response to the Assembly's request.

## II. Translation and interpretation in IRENA activities

6. With the steady expansion of programmatic activities and importance of outreach to different country experts, the Agency has employed multiple languages, in both written and spoken forms, in the implementation of its initiatives and projects. Decisions to employ translation or interpretation service have been approached pragmatically and on a case-by-case basis, in line with the Assembly's request for a reasonable and cost-effective use of the Agency's resources. Each case where translation or interpretation has been used has been grounded in programmatic needs and the aim to optimise impact with a certain target audience, while bearing in mind the costs incurred, the Agency's size and the resources available. In practice, the same considerations, as well as, in some cases, the willingness of certain Member States to bear translation or interpretation expenses, have supported the production of some materials in languages other than the six official UN ones.

7. When warranted by programmatic needs, reports have been translated in full. For example, *REthinking Energy*, certain Renewables Readiness Assessments (RRA) and key reports in the REmap 2030 series have been translated in their entirety into selected languages. More often, the executive summary of a publication may be translated into multiple languages, as was the case with *REthinking Energy*, *Renewable Power Generation Costs* and *Renewable Energy and Jobs* reports.

8. Besides the six UN languages, IRENA work has been translated, to date, into German, Japanese, Polish and Portuguese.

9. Some reports are translated into the language of a concerned country (two examples being the RRA reports for Djibouti and Peru); at other times, countries decide to bear translation costs of the reports that are of direct relevance to their countries, as was the case with REmap studies on Germany and Poland.

10. The Agency has also, on a case-by-case basis, published multilingual brochures and information flyers in support of outreach efforts and certain programmatic activities. To bolster global communications efforts, IRENA press releases have been increasingly disseminated in different languages. Additionally, efforts are underway to identify practical and cost-effective solutions for translating IRENA's rich array of web content, including through such specialised platforms as the *REsource* knowledge gateway and the *Global Atlas for Renewable Energy*.

11. Deliberations at a number of high-level conferences as well as certain workshops and meetings at the country or regional levels, have been supported by interpretation services. Costs for translation and interpretation have been covered from the appropriate programme budget. At Assembly and Council meetings, interpretation has been provided for UN languages that are well-represented among IRENA's membership, financed from the UAE government bid.

12. Translation and interpretation continue to be outsourced to external suppliers, as the Agency lacks the scale and budget to maintain in-house capacities for these services. In 2014, long-term agreements were concluded with language service providers to ensure reliable and flexible support throughout the year. Experience and knowledge gained in earlier years has helped with anticipating the resource

requirements and associated costs for language integration for any given project, improving workload forecasting and accountability.

13. In order to ensure that costs remain at a reasonable level, the process of selecting publications for translation involves a programmatic assessment, a cost evaluation, as well as consultation with relevant Member States, striving to ensure maximum effectiveness and benefit to target audiences. Furthermore, each translation of written materials undergoes a stringent quality-control process, akin to editorial control for the original publications. A roster of professional proof-readers has been assembled to review translations in Arabic, Chinese, French and Spanish, with other languages expected to follow. These qualified proof-readers have been selected for their knowledge of specialist renewable energy terminology, as well as their proficiency in ensuring clarity and overall cohesion. Some IRENA Members have expressed willingness to provide support in revising translated material which will be pursued for future publications where appropriate.

### **III. Contacts with the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) and other intergovernmental and UN organisations**

14. IRENA became a member of the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) in June 2014. As a member of this association of international organisations that employ conference and language services providers, the Agency gained access to IAMLADP's internal knowledge base, with a view to learning from established best practices, sharing experiences and lessons learned and tapping into relevant professional networks. This has helped to emulate the most effective practices and to keep up-to-date on trends, data and statistics related to the development and use of multilingual communication among comparable institutions.

15. Through IAMLADP, IRENA has made contacts with the conference and language service departments of other international organisations. Systematic cooperation to share language professionals with other IAMLADP members on an as-needed basis has not to date been feasible because of high demand for the best-qualified language specialists. Nevertheless, contacts to qualified freelance language professionals have been obtained through the network, and efforts continue to make the best use of the network's expertise. Focal points in IRENA Member States have also provided contacts for language specialists with renewable energy knowledge.

16. Further, IRENA has been in contact with the International Association of Conference Translators (AITC) which shared its directory of accredited language professionals with the Agency. Positive results are being achieved in working with translators and revisers listed in this directory, who, for the most part, are experienced in working with other intergovernmental organisations.

### **IV. Conclusion**

17. One of IRENA's greatest strengths is its broad membership base, combined with a strong sense of ownership and active engagement by countries in its work. Given the Agency's constantly expanding membership and the global transformation taking place in the energy system toward an increase in levels of uptake of renewable energy worldwide, the use of different languages in implementation of programmatic activities, particularly at country level, is becoming an important element in the Agency's future development and delivery of its mandate. Translation of IRENA's messages and findings into different languages are an important aspect of effective communications and outreach. This enables the

Agency to disseminate pertinent renewable energy information, deliver strong messages and leverage strategic partnerships that are indispensable in effecting lasting change.

18. The progressive integration of different languages into programmatic work will continue to maximise the Agency's impact and bolster the effect of its activities, in addition to facilitating communication and cooperation with IRENA Members and stakeholders. Translation of selected publications and communications materials, as well as interpretation in relevant conferences and meetings will continue to be driven by a pragmatic approach, based on real programmatic needs and the availability of resources. The Agency will continue to optimise all processes pertaining to the use of translation and interpretation services, with a view to maximising cost-effectiveness as requested by the membership.

19. Members, meanwhile, are invited to provide financial support to facilitate the delivery of the Agency's work in different languages. Additionally, Members are encouraged to facilitate contacts with relevant national institutions that could support IRENA with the translation or revision of texts, as this could boost IRENA's outreach capacity while helping achieve further cost reductions.