

**UNOV Director-General's Remarks St. Jerome Translation Contest
Awards Ceremony
4 October 2023, 15:00, Conference Room 7**

Dear colleagues,

I am very pleased to join you today for the 16th St. Jerome Translation Contest Awards, and it's wonderful to see such a diverse gathering of representatives, colleagues, and contest winners both in this conference room and joining us online.

We are coming together today to celebrate the incredible art of translation and interpretation.

The need to understand one another and to communicate in different languages has been around since the dawn of human civilization.

From deciphering the inscriptions on the Rosetta Stone, which unlocked the secrets of Ancient Egypt, to translating the Epic of Gilgamesh poem from Sumerian into various Asian languages in the second millennium BC.

Or, in the fourth century AD, when St. Jerome himself translated the entire Bible into Latin, which has since become one of the most widely translated and famous books in history.

Fast forward to the modern age, where the Internet and smartphones make it possible for millions around the world to communicate with each other in thousands of different languages, and where the rise of artificial intelligence is raising new questions about language, communication, and how we interact in society today.

Yet, at its core, translation remains a profoundly human endeavour.

Translators do not simply convert words on a page; they breathe life into ideas, concepts, emotions, and nuances that machines simply cannot grasp.

Nowhere is this more apparent than within these conference rooms of the United Nations here in Vienna.

As the Director-General of UNOV, I am constantly reminded of the critical role that translation plays in our daily operations.

Our organization's mission of promoting peace, human rights, and sustainable development relies on clear and effective communication among its Member States.

Our skilled translators and interpreters are at the heart of this effort, conveying the meaning of texts, resolutions, and speeches in the six official languages of the UN, translating millions of words and thousands of pages every year.

They perform this task seamlessly, ensuring the wheels of diplomacy turn smoothly and efficiently.

And they do so behind the scenes, their efforts often going unseen and unrecognized – so today is an opportunity to express our deep gratitude to them for the work they do.

It is also an opportunity to celebrate the rich diversity of our staff – men and women who come from across the entire world, so that our work may reach a diverse, global audience.

As we celebrate the winners of this year's St. Jerome Translation Contest, let us reflect on the enduring contributions of translators and interpreters worldwide, and cherish the value of communication and language.

In the immortal words of Nelson Mandela, "If you talk to someone in a language they understand, it goes to their head. If you talk to them in their own language, it goes to their heart."

With that sentiment, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the winners of this year's Contest, and to express my gratitude once again to all our translators and interpreters for their invaluable work.

Thank you.
