

Meeting of the Focal Points for Multilingualism
Tuesday, 3 May 2016

SYNOPSIS

Chair:

Ms. Catherine Pollard, Coordinator for Multilingualism
Under-Secretary-General, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

Agenda:

1. Opening remarks by the Coordinator on the role of focal points
2. Presentation by the Coordinator of the terms of reference of the focal points
3. Presentation by the Coordinator of the matrix of mandates
4. Programme of work of focal points and related timelines
5. Any other matters

Synopsis:

Item 1

The Coordinator opened the meeting by recalling the importance of multilingualism and the equal treatment of the six official languages. Concerns over the growing disparity between the use of English and the other languages, particularly on the web, were raised. The Coordinator explained her role, as well as that of the focal points. Since no additional resources were allocated for multilingualism, it was important to share information and best practices so as to mainstream multilingualism in the Secretariat. The Coordinator suggested that meetings be held periodically, preferably on a quarterly basis. DESA, OCHA, DFS, DSS, ECLAC, ESCWA, DM, OSAA and OLA offered comments and remarks.

Item 2

The Coordinator presented the draft terms of reference of the focal points. The focal points were asked to consider the responsibilities reflected in the ToR and to present comments or suggestions before the next focal point meeting. Any requests for adjustments would be addressed, as appropriate.

Item 3

The Coordinator presented a detailed matrix of the multilingualism mandates, originating from various UN organs. Focal points were asked to prepare an overview of the current status of implementation of the Assembly's mandates in their respective Departments and Offices and to identify obstacles for implementation. A discussion followed.

Item 4

The Coordinator asked the focal points to prepare elements for a programme of work, containing timelines, by 31 May 2016.

The Coordinator also mentioned her intention to present a progress report on multilingualism at the Secretariat's Management Committee meeting on 5 May 2016, and inform the network of focal points about the outcome of the meeting.

Regarding the upcoming report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism which was being prepared by her office, the Coordinator requested comprehensive inputs by 31 May 2016, and proposed focussing on the following areas:

- Senior management's approach to multilingualism
- Information and communication, including policies, campaigns and tools
- Management, including human resources management (covering policies, training, language skills and language incentives) and procurement
- Challenges and opportunities to strengthen multilingualism

Focal points were invited to refer to the previous report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism ([A/69/282](#)).

Item 5

N/A