

Draft CITES policy on interpretation and translation

1. The present document contains the draft CITES policy on interpretation and translation as requested by the Standing Committee at its 66th meeting.¹ The aim of this document is to elaborate a comprehensive policy, which responds to the needs of Parties and is financially sustainable, covering meeting documents, interpretation, and the CITES website. The present document is a first contribution to the development of that policy and to the definition of the related resources.

Introduction

2. The provision of interpretation and translation services is intended to facilitate access to the Convention and participation in its work by providing interpretation and translation into three working languages. Multilingualism is essential for a global multi-stakeholder organization. CITES formal meetings and the associated documents and information must be accessible in all three languages of the Convention.
3. The goal of this policy is to ensure that CITES operates as a highly effective global organization, providing high quality, consistent, timely and cost-effective services, reflecting current usage of technical terms by native speakers. In line with other UN agencies and according to Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties (CoP), the three working languages of the CoP and of the Permanent Committees are English, French, and Spanish.

Interpretation

4. According to Rules 8 and 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the CoP, a delegate may speak in any working language of the Convention. The speech is interpreted simultaneously into the other working languages of the Convention. At times, a delegate may choose to make a statement using a non-official language. In such cases, the delegation must provide interpretation. Interpretation by the Secretariat into the other working languages will be based upon that interpretation.

Translation

5. According to Rule 8, official meeting documents shall be distributed in the three working languages, except for informative documents submitted in accordance with Rule 28 which are not submitted for discussion and therefore shall be distributed in the language in which they are provided. This document focuses on the translation of official meeting documents (Conference of the Parties, Standing Committee, Animals Committee and Plants Committee). These include working documents, in-session documents and summary records. All official communication with Parties (Notifications, Diplomatic Notifications, etc.) is translated in all three working languages. Within the limits of the current general translation budget, the CITES Secretariat aims to publish its website in all three languages. This is however given a lower priority by the Secretariat compared to the official documentation and communication with Parties. Interpretation and the translation of documentation of special meetings is provided when extrabudgetary funding is available. Countries hosting meetings also often interpret and translate into national languages that are not one of the official working languages of the Convention. With the support of CITES Parties, the Virtual College has been translated into other languages, which is encouraged wherever possible.

Volume of documentation

6. The volume of source text² documentation has a direct bearing on the workload of translation services and on their capacity to contribute to strict adherence to rules governing the simultaneous distribution of documents in all working languages within the approved deadlines. Indeed, one of the critical factors for determining the ability of the Secretariat to provide timely translation of documentation for meetings is the

¹ See [SC66 SR](#), p. 6.

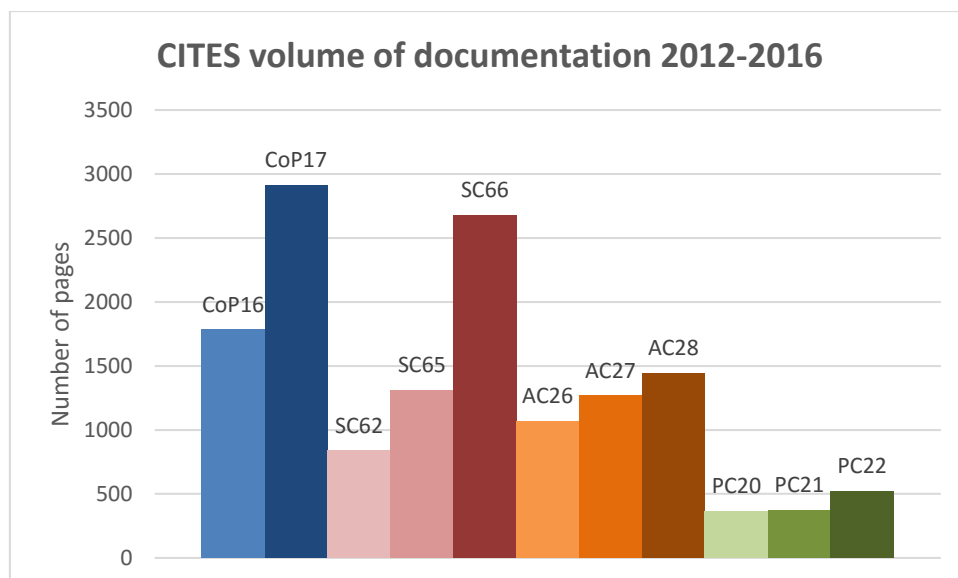
² For reference, the term "source text" is used to designate the text in which the original version of a given document is drafted. A "page" is defined as comprising 350 words (in English), in line with common practice within the UN system.

volume of source text to be translated, in terms of both the number of documents as well as the number of pages to be translated.

Table 1 below shows the number of documents, related number of pages of source text, and budgeted and actual translation costs for the documents prepared by the Secretariat from 2013 to 2016 to service the work of the Permanent Committees.

Meetings	Number of documents from the Secretariat	Number of documents from Parties	Number of pages	Budget (USD)	Expenditure (USD)
CoP16 (2013)	37	56	1782	275,000	364,507
CoP17 (2016) (up to 30 June 2016)	36	84	2909	200,000	336,165
SC62 (2012)	45	36	836	105,000	96,891
SC65 (2014)	47	23	1311	65,000	101,993
SC66 (2015)	50	47	2678	65,000	146,256
AC26 (2012)	20	14	1064	35,000	27,971
AC27 (2014)	30	23	1266	50,000	48,064
AC28 (2015)	20	33	1444	50,000	59,981
PC20 (2012)	13	21	362	35,000	34,168
PC21 (2014)	14	18	372	50,000	36,196
PC22 (2015)	13	40	517	50,000	57,666
General translation for 2012	-	-	-	50,000	47,005
General translation for 2013	-	-	-	75,000	70,554
General translation for 2014	-	-	-	100,000	82,226
General translation for 2015	-	-	-	100,000	105,619

Table 1: CITES translation costs



Procurement of interpretation and translation services

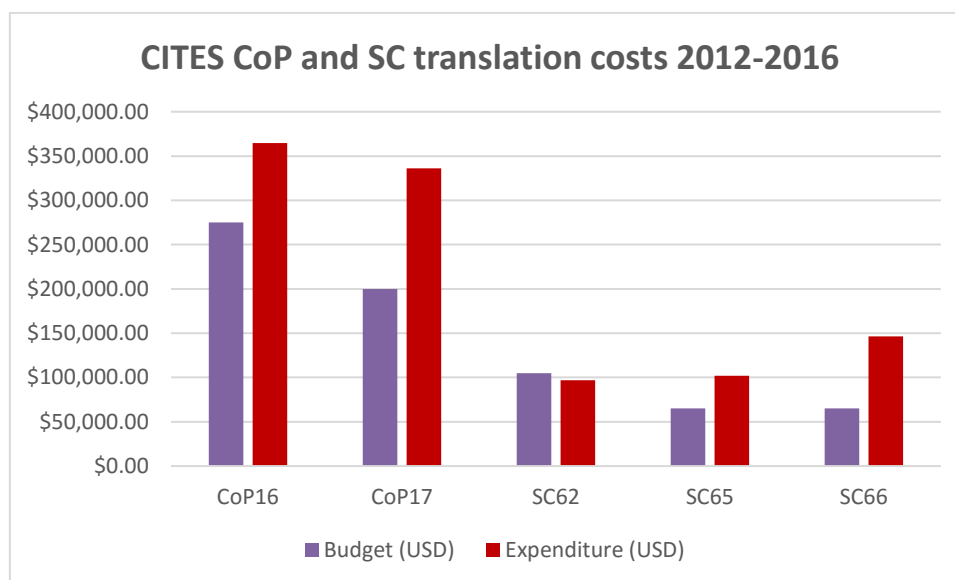
7. Interpretation and translation services are procured in strict compliance with the United Nations Procurement Procedures and all applicable regulations concerning staff employment, specifically:
- the United Nations Staff Regulations and Staff Rules;
 - the Guidelines for the Recruitment of International Consultants; and
 - the United Nations policy regarding the Employment of Retirees.

Only the services of interpreters and translators who charge the United Nations approved rates are retained.

8. The Secretariat will endeavour to source the most flexible and experienced translators able to work on complex scientific documents, be it freelance translators, as is currently the case, or UN translators. The CITES Secretariat relies on computer-assisted translations that are partly created through machine translation or translation memory technology and then edited and finalized by human translators. The CITES Secretariat has no reviewers controlling the quality of the translation submitted by outside translators (as the two P4 positions carrying out these functions were abolished at CoP15). The CITES Secretariat has been relying on a limited pool of highly experienced translators who know very well the work of CITES and are thus able to produce good quality translation without a reviser.
9. For interpretation, interpreters under a consultancy contract and traveling as a team to provide simultaneous interpretation during CITES meetings has proven to be the right model for delivering high quality interpretation services. Table 2 below shows interpretation and translation service costs

Service provider	Type of services	
	Interpretation (daily rate)	Translation (per page/language)
CITES (freelance consultants as per agreement of the International Association of Conference Interpreters)	USD 750	USD 87
UN Office Geneva (UNOG) Conference service	USD 900	USD 230
UN Office Nairobi (UNON) Conference service	USD 830	USD 175

Table 2: Comparative table of interpretation and translation service costs



Proposed measures to rationalize and control document volumes and to contain translation costs

10. In accordance with Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, estimates of translation costs should be included in the budget estimate for all proposed draft decisions and resolutions.

a) *Limiting the length of working documents*

11. The first measure that may be adopted to reduce the translation workload is to introduce a statutory limit to the length of “standard” working documents. Based on information obtained by the Secretariat through IAMLADP, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament (EP) all apply page limits ranging from four to 10 pages for certain working documents. CITES currently has a recommended limit of 12 pages. This policy would strictly enforce the 12 pages limit.

- All meeting documents under 12 pages or 4,200 words³ in the font described by the Secretariat will be translated in all three languages of the Convention, except information documents.
- Any Party submitting a document over 12 pages or 4,200 words should provide its translation in the other two working languages of the Convention. Parties should note that any document not translated in all three working languages could not be considered by the Permanent Committees.⁴
- The Secretariat will strictly adhere to the 12 pages or 4,200 words limit for all its documents, with the exception of documents related to compliance issues.
- Annexes to working documents shall not be translated (unless they are included in the 12 pages or 4,200 words limit or the annex is a draft resolution or decision.)

b) *Streamlining document management*

12. The second measure that may be adopted to reduce the Secretariat workload is to ensure that staff spends little time formatting the documents submitted by Parties.

- All submissions to the CITES Secretariat must be in one of the three working languages of the Convention and any document submitted to the Secretariat in any language other than a working language shall be accompanied by a translation into one of the working languages (Rule 9).
- Documents submitted by Parties and the Committee Chairs shall not be edited or formatted by the Secretariat.
- Documents shall be prepared in Microsoft Word, in 10-point Arial using available templates from the CITES website. PDF and PowerPoint presentations cannot be accepted.
- Revised version of a document will be translated subject to available resources and time constraints.
- Information documents shall not be translated.⁵ Information documents shall normally be submitted to the Secretariat at least 7 days before the meeting.

Not using the proper format for submission will entail additional work for the Secretariat and the late translation and publication of that document on the CITES website.

c) *Introducing Consolidated Executive Summaries in place of Summary Records*

13. The Secretariat currently prepares summary records for each of the Permanent Committees. This practice is extremely costly in terms of resources. For instance, the summary record of SC66 cost approximately USD 10,100 to produce.⁶ A third measure to reduce translation workload would consist in replacing the current costly practice of preparing summary records with consolidated executive summaries. They would be limited to statements of fact (agenda, participants) and a record of decisions and recommendations. A digital conference room recording system is currently being used for all Permanent Committee meetings. The Secretariat will include the digital recording of proceedings to replace the current practice of preparing summary records. The consolidated executive summaries would be translated into all three working

³ A page within the United Nations is normally comprising 350 words. 350 words per page x 12 pages = 4,200 words. Since translators are paid per word, it is important to establish a word limit, rather than a page limit to contain cost.

⁴ See Rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee.

⁵ See Rule 8, para. 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties

⁶ Estimate based on 5 working days of a P3 working as a rapporteur and 3 days of a G7 staff formatting and preparing the summary record for translations. The actual cost for the translation of the summary record of SC66 was of CHF 6,150.

languages of the Convention. Summary records of the Conference of the Parties will continue being prepared in the same way.

Way forward

15. The Secretariat will keep track of the number of documents submitted and of the translation costs for each meeting and the Parties will review this policy based on the updated data provided by the Secretariat.