



The Director-General

Dear Director-General,

Thank you for your letter of 15 August 2019 emphasizing the importance of multilingualism as a core value of the United Nations and for your call to the heads of Geneva-based United Nations agencies to become Multilingualism Champions.

Multilingualism is a vital precondition for the delivery of the ILO social justice mandate to its tripartite constituents. Furthermore, it is essential for their access to and full benefit from the Organization's technical support, for informed decision-making and good governance, as well as to ensure respect of cultural diversity.

In light of this, the ILO has always been strongly committed to multilingual communication in pursuit of its mandate. Indeed, the first system for simultaneous interpretation was conceived and first used at the ILO in the mid-1920's. Since then, and throughout its 100 years of existence, the Organization has progressively expanded its linguistic services. At present, the ILO provides language services to its official meetings in its three official languages (English, French and Spanish), four working languages (Arabic, Russian, Chinese and German), and in more than 40 languages in its field operations.

Furthermore, the Office is sparing no effort to promote multilingualism among its staff members. In this regard, the Office has put in place policies ensuring that its workforce is both linguistically diverse and multilingual. Language requirements are specified in every vacancy announcement. At recruitment and appointment, officials are required to have an excellent command of an official language (English, French or Spanish) and demonstrate working-level proficiency in another official language of the Organization or an official national language of the duty station.

Likewise, language skills are a prerequisite for mobility of ILO officials, and are taken into consideration in geographical, functional, or lateral mobility as well as promotion policies. The Office's commitment to enhance language skills is also reflected in the ILO staff development policies, in which multilingualism is given a high priority. Consequently, a dedicated language incentive scheme and a comprehensive language-training programme have been put in place.

Ms Tatiana Valovaya
Director-General
Palais des Nations
GENEVA

Additionally, English, French and Spanish are consistently used for the Office's internal communications and operations. Interpretation is provided for the major internal meetings where participants can express themselves in any of the three languages.

The ILO has a multilingual intranet, where staff can access, navigate and search content in English, French and Spanish. This includes internal governance documents, announcements, news and other institutional information. Staff also has recourse to the internal disputes resolution mechanisms in English, French and Spanish.

Last but not least, the ILO is a member of IAMLADP and collaborates within CEB in the joint endeavour to foster a system-wide comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism. In 2019, the Office made a comprehensive contribution to the 2019 JIU Review on Multilingualism.

I share your conviction that multilingualism is of key importance for international cooperation and effective multilateralism. Rest assured that the ILO will accord its full cooperation to your initiative for Multilingualism Champions among Geneva-based UN agencies.

I look forward to working closely with you in a joint endeavour to promote social justice in all nations and among all peoples.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Guy Ryder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and "R".

Guy Ryder