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Administrative and managerial matters

For consideration

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit: Multilingualism in the United Nations system

The Enterprise Risk Management Division presented a document on [reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP](#) at the 2021 first regular session of the Executive Board, on 23 February 2021. During the session, Member States requested WFP to provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit in its review of multilingualism in the United Nations system, which was issued after the reporting deadline. This document has been prepared in response to that request.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit: Multilingualism in the United Nations system (WFP/EB.A/2021/10-C).

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

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The Joint Inspection Unit

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 2150 (XXI) in 1966, is an independent external oversight body of the United Nations system mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations system-wide. The JIU is composed of 11 inspectors whose aim is to help improve management and methods, promote greater coordination among United Nations organizations and determine whether activities undertaken by participating organizations are carried out in the most economical manner.
2. The JIU's participating organizations are the United Nations and its affiliated bodies and specialized agencies. WFP is a participating organization through its constitutional ties to the United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Relevant JIU reports are addressed to the Executive Director for transmission to the WFP Executive Board.

Review of multilingualism in the United Nations system

3. As part of its programme of work for 2019, the JIU performed a [review of multilingualism in the United Nations system](#).
4. As the JIU noted in its report following the review, "the importance of multilingualism in achieving the goals of the United Nations, as set out in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, and its contribution to the three pillars of the organization – international peace and security, development and human rights – has been consistently emphasized since the organization's establishment. Being an inherent part of the genetic code of the United Nations, multilingualism is both an asset and a shared commitment for all organizations in the United Nations system."
5. WFP welcomes the report of the JIU and its observations and accepts all the recommendations, with the exception of one – the appointment of a single agency senior official as multilingualism coordinator – which it partially accepts, given that the United Nations has appointed a system-wide coordinator at the Under-Secretary-General level with whom WFP will work to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism (see annex, remarks on recommendations 2 and 5). WFP recognizes the importance of multilingualism in the United Nations system to ensuring harmonious communication, effective participation and increased effectiveness in the work of the organization.
6. The annex to the present document sets out six of the seven recommendations in the JIU report, including three recommendations for action by the legislative body, and the responses suggested by the Secretariat. All six recommendations are proposed for closure, as multilingualism is embedded in WFP operational, administrative and governance processes, including human resources, conference services and interpretation, translation, programming and the WFP website. Furthermore, WFP will support any inter-agency initiatives resulting from the recommendations in the JIU report.

ANNEX

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT RECOMMENDATIONS ON MULTILINGUALISM IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FROM "MULTILINGUALISM IN THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT" (JIU/REP/2020/6)					
Recommendation no.	Recommendation	Acceptance*	Implementation**	Status***	Remarks
1	The legislative or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads of their respective organizations that have not yet done so, to prepare a strategic policy framework for multilingualism, accompanied by administrative and operational guidelines for its implementation, and submit this for adoption by the end of 2022.	Accepted	Implemented	Closed	<p>Focal points: Executive Board Secretariat (EBS), Human Resources Division (HRM), Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM), Programme and Policy Development Department (PD)</p> <p>Multilingualism is embedded in WFP operational, administrative and governance processes, including human resources, conference services and interpretation, translation, programming and the WFP website. The WFP people policy, which will be presented to the Board at its 2021 annual session, includes multilingualism as one of its core commitments and provides a framework for WFP to support multilingualism in the coming years. WFP notes that the United Nations system as a whole could benefit from a common, comprehensive strategic policy framework that individual entities can draw from and use as guidance. WFP will support any inter-agency initiatives resulting from this recommendation.</p>
2	The legislative or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads of their respective organizations that have not yet done so, to appoint, by the end of 2022, a senior official as a coordinator or focal point for multilingualism, with clearly defined responsibilities and delegated authority, tasked with the coordination of the implementation of the strategic policy framework for	Partially accepted	Implemented	Closed	<p>Focal points: EBS, HRM, CAM, PD</p> <p>WFP notes that multilingualism is embedded in its operational, administrative and governance processes, including human resources, conference services and interpretation, translation, programming and the WFP website and that coordination of multilingualism is an integral responsibility of the managers in those areas. WFP management does not plan to appoint a single senior official as coordinator but rather will work with the United Nations System Coordinator for Multilingualism to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism. See also recommendation 5.</p>

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Recommendation no.	Recommendation	Acceptance*	Implementation**	Status***	Remarks
	multilingualism across their respective organizations.				
3	The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so, should, where appropriate, introduce or enhance, by the end of 2022, their policies for attracting new translators and interpreters and retaining talented and skilled language professionals, including the preparation of succession plans with specifications for required languages and language combinations, as well as the expansion of outreach programmes.	Accepted	Implemented	Closed	Focal point: EBS WFP notes that the organization complies with: a) the <i>Association internationale des interprètes de conférence</i> (AIIC)-United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) agreement for interpretation; and b) the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions- <i>Association internationale des traducteurs de conférence</i> (CCAQ-AITC) agreement for translation. The Executive Board Secretariat continuously seeks opportunities to attract, train and retain talented and skilled language professionals on its roster of external interpreters and translators, in collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies. WFP notes that succession planning for language professional staff is limited, as the organization has no interpreter staff positions and only one translator/reviser and one proofreader staff position per language.
4	The legislative or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads of their respective organizations that have not yet done so, to introduce, by the end of 2022, learning policies that encourage continuous learning and improvement of the language skills of their staff members in the official languages of the respective organizations as well as in other languages, as appropriate, securing sufficient funding for this.	Accepted	Implemented	Closed	Focal point: HRM WFP welcomes the recommendation and notes that multilingualism is a key factor in creating an environment of diversity and inclusion at WFP, in line with its core values. WFP continues to support the improvement of employees' language skills through various online and face-to-face learning resources, partial reimbursement of training expenses and granting of special leave with or without pay for language learning purposes. In early 2021, the Rosetta Stone online language learning platform was made available at no cost for the year to all personnel, irrespective of their contract type.

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Recommendation no.	Recommendation	Acceptance*	Implementation**	Status***	Remarks
5	The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should request the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to establish a working group on the preparation for adoption, by the end of 2022, of a United Nations system language framework for language teaching, learning, assessment, and certification in the six official languages of the United Nations, which could be based, inter alia, on the results of the work already undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat in this area.	Accepted		Closed	Focal point: HRM WFP notes that the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management was appointed Coordinator for Multilingualism and also serves as the lead for multilingualism-related matters at the United Nations system level, with the support of the CEB secretariat, an existing mechanism for coordination in this area that could efficiently coordinate work on a comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism, including a United Nations system language framework. WFP will support any inter-agency initiatives resulting from this recommendation.
6	The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, in their capacity as members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should direct the High-level Committee on Management to develop a system-wide, comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism as a core value of the United Nations system organizations.	Accepted		Closed	Focal point: EBS, HRM, CAM, PD See response to recommendation 5 above. WFP will support any inter-agency initiatives resulting from this recommendation.

* Column 3 acceptance categories: accepted, partially accepted, not accepted.

** Column 4 implementation categories: in progress, implemented. Field left blank if implementation depends on the action of an entity other than WFP or if further action is not planned.

*** Column 5 status categories: open, closed.