



17th PSC Steering Committee Meeting

Agenda item 5: Translation of Pronouncements

Introduction

INTOSAI's pronouncements are used by many SAIs in their day-to-day work. The quality of the pronouncements thus reflects directly on the credibility and the image of INTOSAI as a whole.

For pronouncements to be accessible and useful they need to be clearly drafted, unambiguous and readily understandable by any practitioner. Although English is the original drafting language for the vast majority of pronouncements, having them available in the five official INTOSAI languages is of major reputational importance, and a requirement under due process¹.

At the meeting of the PSC-Steering Committee in 2019, delegates welcomed the PSC secretariat's proposal to encourage the establishment of a network of volunteer SAIs, in specific language groups, able to undertake the translation and revision of documents. The steering committee mandated the PSC secretariat to establish guidelines on how this might be organised and could work in practice².

This report i) recaps on the need and background to establishing a network of volunteer SAIs, ii) outlines the feedback from our consultation with SAIs, and iii) proposes concrete guidelines to harness and direct the new translation procedures.

1) The need and background to establishing a network of volunteer SAIs

Current policy and practice on translation

Current practice is that unless another approach has been agreed, the working group³ responsible for drafting the pronouncement is also responsible for organising the translation of the approved endorsement version into the five official INTOSAI languages⁴. Current translation options include: translations being made by the members of the working group itself, for a fee by commercial

¹ "Unless other mechanisms have been established, the working group is responsible for translation of the approved endorsement version into the five official INTOSAI languages" Due Process for INTOSAI's framework of professional pronouncements, stage 3, page 9.

² Draft minutes of the 16th PSC Steering Committee Meeting.

³ For the sake of simplicity and line with the due process for the INTOSAI Framework of Professional Pronouncements (Section 1.1), we use the term "working group" throughout this document to mean any INTOSAI working group, subcommittee, task force or project group that carries out work in accordance with the due process. This includes any preliminary or *ad hoc* working groups established for the purpose of specific tasks as well as any existing working groups (subcommittees) that form part of the general structure of the PSC, CBC or KSC.

⁴ Due Process for INTOSAI's Framework of Professional Pronouncements, page 9.

professional translators, ex gratia by professional translators working for a SAI or other relevant organisation, or by auditors of an SAI which works in the target language. These will remain the fall-back options if no suitable voluntary translation possibilities can be found.

A sustainable, quality translation framework

The PSC-SC accepted last year that translation of pronouncements by SAIs, by their own translators or auditors, would be the only sustainable and cost-effective way forward for INTOSAI.

Specifically, the committee noted that there are a number of SAIs worldwide which have language departments to translate documents using INTOSAI language combinations. When they have spare capacity, they may be willing to translate INTOSAI pronouncements, particularly if deadlines are flexible. A major advantage of this proposal is that SAI translators already have considerable knowledge of translating in the field of public audit and are familiar with the relevant terminology.

Alternatively, there may be experienced auditors in those SAIs working in one of the INTOSAI official languages, who know the subject matter (and have a good command of English) and who may be willing and have the time to undertake the translation of a document with the approval of their employer.

In both cases, the SAIs involved may have a strong incentive to contribute to this task and ensure quality, as their audit staff are likely to be the ones who will make the greatest use of the resulting translations.

Finally, the PSC-SC also accepted that any pronouncement submitted for translation also undergo a mandatory revision (the formal term for checking) to ensure its quality. This would normally be done as an independent review of the translation accuracy, and correct use of terminology. This practice is not currently widespread amount existing INTOSAI pronouncements.

II) Feedback from our consultation with SAIs

Our translation and revision partners

In March 2020, the PSC secretariat identified and contacted those SAIs which work in French, German, Spanish and Arabic and sought their commitment to this scheme. We had positive responses from four SAIs offering us possibilities to translate and revise into German and Arabic subject to their availability and workload⁵. Although the response was lower than we would have liked (especially from French and Spanish speaking SAIs), we are confident that the scheme is nonetheless viable, and that other partners will take part as the arrangement expands.

⁵ SAI Austria, SAI Germany, SAI Qatar, SAI United Arab Emirates

III) *Guidelines to harness and direct the new translation procedures*

Guidelines to harness SAI corporate and individual translation capacity

Working within the parameters outlined in section (i), a working group requiring a translation will contact the INTOSAI Technical Support Function (TSF) who will arrange for the translation and revision to be made by one of our SAI partners in the language combination(s) available⁶. The working group concerned would arrange, as before, for translations in all other language combinations.

For those translations and revisions arranged by the TSF, the TSF will take responsibility to coordinate and answer any queries arising from the translators. A major benefit of this approach would be to enable an exchange of ideas between auditors and translators in order to align terminology and promote consistent translations. To help with this, all translators would additionally be encouraged to consult, and use critically the INTOSAI Online Glossary⁷ (available in all INTOSAI languages), as well as considering setting-up specific databases at working level to benefit from expert input.

Translators and revisers would not be required to format the translated text. To ensure consistency, the TSF and the PSC secretariat would do this at a later stage when uploading the document to www.issai.org

The next steps ...

- The PSC-SC is requested to take note of this document, and mandate the PSC secretariat to report back to the committee after one year on the functioning of these arrangements;
- The PSC secretariat should continue its efforts to encourage more SAIs with translation capacity to commit to the network of volunteer SAIs for translation.

⁶ This will ensure a level of coordination of the requests going to the SAIs / translators concerned.

⁷ <http://www.intosaiglossary.org.mx/Main.aspx>