

United Nations



Nations Unies

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT NAIROBI • P.O. BOX 67578, NAIROBI
OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES À NAIROBI • BP 67578, NAIROBI 00200
TÉL: + 254 (0)20 762 25695 • FAX: 254 (0)20 762 24681

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Following the unprecedented upheaval of our usual modes of work due to the COVID-19 crisis, the Division of Conference Services at UNON has initiated several measures to continue to service multilingual meetings for Member States.

- The UNON Task Force on Remote Interpretation was activated on 27 March 2020, alongside similar Task Forces at UNOV, UNOG and UNHQQ, together forming a Working Group on Remote Interpretation headed by the Director of Meetings and Publishing, DGACM – Mr. Imre Karbuczky.
- Since that date, the Working Group has been testing various remote interpretation platforms in various configurations to see whether they could be used to service six-language meetings of all sizes.
- The Working Group has also been working on the technical and other requirements needed for such systems to work and provide the requisite level of quality in interpretation for Member States. It should be noted that interpreting remotely adds a great deal of complexity and cognitive load to the task of interpretation as well as additional technical requirements.
- Procurement at UNHQ have been engaged so that testing of platforms in real meetings could begin. No firm timeframe has been communicated on this process, but the Working Group will continue actively testing and refining needs and requirements to meet the needs of Member States as soon as possible.

- The UNON Task Force have been actively involved in tests conducted at other duty stations and contributed to documents on requirements. On 30 April, a test is planned with interpreters on the UNON compound (adhering with all Government regulations and the advice of the Joint Medical Service), and mock delegates joining from other duty stations, with a first platform. Further tests with a second platform are tentatively planned for the week of 4 May.
- The UNON Task Force has invited the Secretariats of UNEP and UN-Habitat to participate in or observe these tests and will continue to do so moving forwards. Remote moderation of, and participation in, meetings will also require a paradigm shift in the modes of work of delegates, including the use of specific equipment, how to request and take the floor, protocols on speaking and background noise, etc., so the Task Force would want to engage and work with organizations and Member States as closely as possible in this endeavour.”