

Annual Meeting of the AIIC Staff Interpreters Committee (SIC/CdP)

Decision Record

Paris, 1st November 2015

Members in attendance:

David Sawyer (U.S. State Department) Interim Chair, Andrew Constable (ICC) Vice-Chair, Brigitte Kraushaar (OECD) Secretary, Marina Marton (IMF) Group Coordinator, Julia Antony (UNOG), Denitza Bogomilova Atanassova (EP), Paolo Cappelli (ITA MOD), Christopher Davies (STL), Marie Diur (UNOV), Katalin Fedineczne Vittay (EC), Francisco Garcia Hurtado (UNNY), Christopher Guichot de Fortis (NATO), Paula Lopez Novella (WCO), Dominique Marechal (ECJ), Nathalie Pham (Nato Defence College), Benoit Kremer (SCAS Observer), Sergio Alvarez Rubio (SMP Observer)

Written reports submitted by: BAD, CJUE, CoE, ITA MOD, EC, ECCC, EP, FAO, ICAO, IMF, NATO, Nato Defence College, OECD, SPC, STL, UNNY, UNOG, UNON, UNOV, WCO

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was unanimously adopted. Members were told that Friday would be a session open to all AIIC members with guest speakers devoted to marking the CdP's 40th anniversary. Saturday, equally open to all members, would act as a forum for a topic-based discussion on training. However, the Sunday meeting at the OECD would be an internal meeting.

2. Approval of the decision record

Members approved the decision record of the Addis January 2015 meeting, held on the margins of the AIIC Assembly. On behalf of the committee, the Chair expressed gratitude to Luke Tilden for the fine work drafting the decision record and website report.

3. Volunteers to draft meeting minutes and website report

Christopher Davies volunteered to draft both the Decision Record and the website report. This Decision Record captures the internal discussion on Sunday. The website report details the

anniversary celebrations that were held on Friday and the presentations and open discussion on training that was conducted on Saturday.

4. Election of a new Chair

David Sawyer stood down after an extremely successful term of office and after selflessly serving as interim chair while his successor could be found. Christina Edwards put her candidacy forward and was elected by acclamation.

5. Executive Committee report

Andrew Constable provided an update on the activities of the Executive Committee.

6. Report of CdP liaison officer at the Advisory Board

Members were reminded of the Advisory Board's function as a brain-storming forum to make AIIC constituencies' voices heard. At the Advisory Board meeting, the AIIC website was addressed, with some regional websites still sub-par; decluttering of the Extranet has not yet started. New rules of procedure were mooted to more appropriately frame proceedings at future Assemblies. The CdP initiative under the leadership of Andrew Constable to conduct an association-wide survey of distance interpreting practices and the use of new technologies has been welcomed, and coordinating it with the Advisory Board Project Team and other AIIC groups has been suggested in order to move this project forward. Other topics of discussion in the Advisory Board include hiring practices and employment insecurity, compliance with AIIC agreements, AIIC representation in the non-region formerly known as PECO (French acronym for Countries of Eastern and Central Europe) to include Russia, and training and professional development.

7. Private Market Sector (PRIMS) report

The PRIMS representative highlighted and described the various areas of PRIMS activity, some of which intersect with the work of other groups and are of interest to the entire association. Topics include reviewing the Basic Texts, drafting guidelines for responding to tenders, revision of the standard contract, attracting new members through events and training, updating the website, employment insecurity among interpreters, and the new technologies project on distance interpreting initiated by Andrew Constable. Particular focus was given to AIIC's ability to attract new members and how it views the profession's future. It was felt that AIIC value for money now resides less in being in the AIIC directory than in the bespoke training AIIC can offer: the directory was characterised as an illusory source of work, whereas training could positively contribute to increasing job opportunities. As such, staff and freelance share a common interest, bound, as they are, to the same fate. PRIMS has also joined forces with the Advisory Board to improve the conduct of proceedings at Assembly. PRIMS indicated continued interest in the possibility of a workload study that had been discussed at the CdP meetings in Strasbourg and Noumea.

8. Standing Committee of the Agreements Sector (SCAS) report

Negotiation technique training has been offered with professional trade unionist trainers. Future courses will be open to a broader participant base. In the Q&A, reference was made by members to the NATO situation, envisaging any potential benefit for spin-off training for staff when negotiating with their organisation's management.

9. NATO

Grave concerns were expressed regarding the severe adverse effects of management practice on working conditions of staff interpreters and their very serious knock-on effects on colleagues' mental and physical well-being. With the unanimous support for the CdP, a letter of protest will be signed by the Outgoing Chair and the President of AIIC, after review by the CdP Bureau and AIIC's Executive Committee, respectively.

10. Test format survey

The test format survey was very comprehensive and prompted lively discussion. Two main objectives of the survey were identified: 1) providing concise information to orient would-be test-takers to the types and basic parameters of tests conducted by organizations where they are considering applying for work and 2) exchanging detailed information on testing practices among CdP member organizations. In this sense, there is an external and an internal audience for the survey. It was decided that an executive summary for quick reference should be drawn up initially, pending more in-depth processing of the material, so that the information at the Staff Interpreters' section of the website can be updated quickly. Additionally, tests for adding a language to one's combination will be included in the survey. Marie Diur volunteered to join Chris Guichot de Fortis and Denitza Begamilova as a member of the project team. The team will finalize the survey form and distribute it to all members.

11. Possible themes for future meetings

Members expressed a marked interest in the notion of "quality", and agreement was reached that this would be the thematic topic at the next annual CdP meeting. Since interpretation practice differs from one institution to the next, quality will necessarily be understood and evaluated differently. Consequently, this topic had a clear link with the test format survey. Professional development, the future of the profession and stress were also pinpointed as possible future meeting topics.

12. CdP Budget

The entirety of the budget for 2015 was used for the Paris meeting as it also funded the CdP's 40th anniversary celebrations. Members were reminded that there are modest funds in the committee budget for outreach activities and social outings to promote solidarity among staff and freelance interpreters. Any members wishing to use such funds should contact the CdP Bureau, who will track the use of funds and secure the needed prior approval from AIIC's treasurer.

13. Any other business

Publicity of organisational reports

Members asked whether confidential CdP organisational reports could in future be written for a non-member readership. Several options were mooted. The current system could be maintained with guidelines on what can and cannot feature, with candid reports only made orally during CdP internal meetings. Alternatively, there could be a public version with a confidential annex. A third option could be for non CdP staffers to read all the organisational reports; they would read them at the home institution simultaneously and in camera and then hand them back to their delegate. No final decision was taken. The Outgoing Chair reminded members that the reports should not reflect the personal opinion of the delegate. Rather, they should reflect that of the staff team as a whole. To that end, the delegate's colleagues should review the report before its submission.

Format of organisational reports

Word doc. drafted reports sent by email was seen as an archaic process and the reporting format should therefore be revised in favour of a less unwieldy process.

The issues of report format and distribution will be discussed at length at the next meeting to find a solution for the long term. Any agreed changes would need to be reflected in the committee's rules of procedures.

Interpreters in Conflict Zones

Angela Keil reminded members to sign and distribute the petition on a UN Resolution supporting Interpreters in Conflict Zones.

Announcement of upcoming exhibit

The Committee was informed that an exhibit on the history of interpreting at international tribunals will be opened to the public on January 18, 2016, at the CJEU in Luxembourg.

14. Outstanding business

Two items remained on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting: 1) the Staff Interpreters Charter and follow-up to the Addis Assembly resolution and 2) the possibility of joint meetings with other AIC committees or groups.

15. Date and venue of next meeting

UNNY volunteered to host the next meeting, either in August 2016 or January 2017, depending on the availability of UNNY colleagues and meeting space in New York. The committee expressed its appreciation to Francisco (Paco) Garcia Hurtado for the invitation. In Assembly year, organising that year's CdP meeting in the margins of the Assembly was seen as a very positive development. Since the time period between meetings will be considerable either before or after the meeting at UNNY, at least one virtual meeting is advised. Andrew Constable volunteered information on virtual meeting platforms, if needed.