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Press release

Is French language in decline in international organizations?

Addis Ababa, June 8, 2012 - The « Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie » held on June 7, 2012 at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa a seminar on promoting French language and multilingualism in international organizations. For the benefit of the Consultative Group of Francophone Ambassadors in Addis Ababa, the meeting aimed to mobilize representatives of OIF member states around the implementation of the Guide on the use of French in international organizations, adopted at the Bucharest Summit in 2006.

The discussions revealed that in organizations based in Addis Ababa, French language is in a more favorable situation than in other organizations, particularly because of the presence of a majority of francophone countries in the AU (32 out of 54). However, the discussions helped to highlight many barriers to equality between working languages of AU and ECA, particularly in the areas of staff recruitment or human and financial resources allocated to translation and interpretation services. Language training for employees as well as external and internal communication of these organizations were also mentioned as barriers.

Nevertheless, the essential question remains that of linguistic practices, particularly in informal meetings held within organizations, where a monolingual trend is being witnessed.

Debates were introduced by the Permanent Representative of OIF to AU and ECA, HE Ambassador Libère Bararunyeretse, and were chaired by HE Ambassador Dominik Langenbacher, Permanent Representative of Switzerland and Vice Chairman of the Group of Francophone Ambassadors.

OIF/YNS