



International
Labour
Office
Geneva

CONFERENCE INTERPRETATION AT THE ILO



In order to assist effective international communication at your meeting, the ILO is pleased to supply conference interpretation services in a range of languages. The ILO is proud of this service – and justly so: the ILO pioneered the development of modern simultaneous interpretation at international meetings.

Conference interpretation involves a set of highly specialized and complex professional skills.* For your communication to be successful - *for the sense of your message to be fully understood by the other delegates attending the meeting* - it is important to make sure that you draw the best possible benefit from this service.

Remember that interpreters feel that they have achieved their purpose in supporting you, when spontaneous interaction in the meeting takes place as if everyone were speaking one and the same language!

To that end, you are kindly requested to observe the following 7 simple guidelines (which will even aid communication with delegates listening to you in your own language).

- 1)** Whenever you take the floor:
 - Remove your ear-piece and distance it from the microphone (to prevent painful sound feedback)
 - Speak directly into the microphone (do not tap it to test it – again, this is to avoid inflicting pain on everyone's eardrums)
 - Speak naturally and at a moderate pace (most people tend to speak much faster than they imagine).
- 2)** Speak in your own language if you know that interpretation is supplied in that tongue.
- 3)** Remember that you are better understood when you “talk” than when you read. When you read, the natural music of your voice – which carries so much meaning – becomes weaker. Delegates – and interpreters – find it more difficult to follow the thrust of your message. Speakers who read also tend to read too fast - even for them to be understood in their own language. In such conditions, there is a limit to the information load that interpreters can process effectively (and the same applies to anyone else listening to you).
- 4)** If, despite this caveat, you do read, make sure that the interpreters - who know by instinct when a text is being read - receive a copy of your statement in advance. In this way, they can render you their best service by preparing your speech properly.
- 5)** Whenever you refer to a particular document, take time to give the correct reference. Use paragraph numbers – not page numbers: these will differ from language version to language version, and may cause confusion.
- 6)** Apply the same care when mentioning any figures and names; make sure that everyone understands any acronyms that you wish to use.
- 7)** Ensure that mobile phones are disabled throughout the proceedings: phones produce sound interference in the interpretation equipment and can bring communication in the meeting to a halt.

Your interpreters are always pleased to receive your feed-back; do not hesitate to approach them: they are part of your meeting's team.

The ILO Interpretation Service

* These skills include: listening to the speech; analyzing its content; mental transposition of the message into another language with its different cultural references; speaking the new language version to the listener. These processes are performed together, but each one on different parts of the statement at the same time: e.g. as the interpreter speaks the interpretation of one part of the speech, s/he is already listening to, and analysing, a subsequent section of that statement. These skills, and the way in which the performance thereof is organized by the interpreter across two different languages, are the constant subject of intense scientific study.