
Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO

Sixty-First Series of Meetings Geneva, September 21 to 29, 2020

RECORDS OF WIPO MEETINGS

Document prepared by the Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. At its 59th Series of Meetings, the Assemblies of the World Intellectual Property (WIPO) approved a proposal designed to leverage advances in digital technologies in order to improve the speed and quality of services in relation to the production of WIPO meeting records, while also achieving significant cost efficiencies. The background and proposal was set out in full in document A/59/9.

BACKGROUND

2. As noted in that document, major shortcomings had been identified with regard to the existing production of WIPO meeting records. These included the lack of any indexing or search functionality within conference video recordings, which made it hard for users to locate specific interventions or agenda items; the difficulty in providing written records in a timely manner; and the highly labor-intensive preparation of verbatim reports. The proposal aimed to address these shortcomings and achieve the following objectives:

- more effective response to the needs of the Member States;
- faster, more efficient, digital records of meetings to replace the existing system of verbatim reports;
- support for the six UN-language policy;
- more cost-effective services thereby generating major cost savings;

- increased value and usefulness for Member States of audiovisual conference recordings.

3. Member States agreed to pilot a new approach, which would provide enriched video recordings of WIPO conferences using commercially available audiovisual technologies, complemented by automatically generated text records in the six United Nations (UN) languages using WIPO's Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. The proposal contained in paragraph 11 of document A/59/9 consisted of the following three elements:

- (a) Enriched video-on-demand (VoD) recordings with digital indexing to enable easy navigation and search by agenda item or speaker, as well as integrated access to relevant meeting documents;
- (b) Replacement of verbatim reports by a complete, fully automated speech-to-text transcript in English, synchronized with the video recording, and with automated translations into the other five UN languages;
- (c) Phased implementation. During an initial trial phase (Phase One) from October 2019 to September 2020, the replacement of verbatim reports by automated transcripts and translations will be tested at the four sessions of the Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP) and the Standing Committee on Patents (SCP). In the light of the experience gained, Member States would be asked to decide in October 2020 whether the new system should be extended in Phase Two to other WIPO meetings.

4. If successful, the new approach would enable a phased discontinuation of the current, resource-intensive human production of verbatim meeting reports. The potential cost savings of replacing the verbatim reports by fully automated speech-to-text transcripts and translations are substantial. In the 2018/2019 biennium, the total resources required for producing the verbatim reports of WIPO meetings in the six UN languages were estimated to amount to approximately 2.6 million Swiss francs (see Annex of A/59/9 for details).

OUTCOME OF THE TRIAL PHASE

5. The technology platforms for the enhanced webcasting and VoD, and for the automated speech-to-text system (WIPO S2T + WIPO Translate), were successfully launched as planned in November 2019, and were in operation throughout CDIP/24 (November 2019) and SCP/31 (December 2019). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the originally planned, second two sessions of the CDIP and SCP, in May and June 2020, respectively did not take place.

6. The estimated cost savings in 2019 for the 24th session of the CDIP and the 31st session of the SCP amounted to approximately 171,000 Swiss francs.

ENHANCED AUDIOVISUAL RECORDINGS OF MEETINGS: RESULTS

7. The VoD recordings of the two above meetings may be viewed on the WIPO webcasting page (webcast.wipo.int/) at:

- CDIP/24: <https://c.connectedviews.com/05/SitePlayer/wipo?session=102659>
- SCP/31: <https://c.connectedviews.com/05/SitePlayer/wipo?session=103351>

While no formal feedback was received from Member States on the new system, positive comments on the new features were received informally both from delegates and from internal stakeholders. Features which are particularly appreciated are the ability to jump straight to specific agenda items or interventions; and the integrated link to the documents under discussion.

8. In terms of language availability, the new system enables access to meeting recordings in all six interpretation channels. This marks a break-through, exceeding the original target for this phase, which had foreseen the continuation of floor plus English only. Furthermore, as noted in paragraph 17 of document A/59/9, the Secretariat is concerned to narrow technology and digital gaps for accessing and sharing records of WIPO meetings, particularly for users in countries where the Internet is not fast or reliable. A further benefit offered by the new system, therefore, is to enable all or parts of the audiovisual records to be downloaded rather than streamed.

9. The new system, an early deliverable of the wider Integrated Conference Services Platform (ICSP) project, is now established as the standard platform for the WIPO meeting recordings. It is also compatible with the remote participation platforms under consideration for eventual meetings in a virtual or hybrid setting.

REPLACEMENT OF VERBATIM REPORTS WITH AUTOMATED SPEECH-TO-TEXT TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION: RESULTS

10. The complete speech-to-text products of the two meetings are available on the WIPO website in all language versions at:

- CDIP/24: <https://www.wipo.int/s2t/CDIP24/sessions.html>
- SCP/31: <https://www.wipo.int/s2t/SCP31/sessions.html>

The transcript of each segment was published within an hour or so of the respective morning/afternoon session. This compares with the standard process of several months required to produce the human edited and translated verbatim reports.

11. Very few corrections have been requested by Member States to the CDIP/24 and SCP/31 speech-to-text transcriptions. In terms of accuracy, the WIPO S2T English transcription consistently scores over 80 per cent using industry-standard measurement tools. The quality of automated translations from the English transcript using WIPO Translate is also generally rated positively by Language Division expert translators. It should be noted that the original floor channel plus all six interpretation channels are now available via the VoD platform, thus providing a valuable means to verify the original in case of doubt.

PROPOSAL

12. In the light of the experience during the trial phase, Member States are invited to proceed to the second phase, whereby the automated speech-to-text transcription and translation of WIPO meetings would be extended to replace the production of verbatim reports for other WIPO meetings. The production of the Chair's Summary of decisions would remain unchanged.

13. The economic fall-out from the COVID-19 crisis, with its as yet unquantifiable impact on WIPO's future financial situation, increases the significance of the potential cost savings which the discontinuation of verbatim reports would deliver. It is therefore proposed that this should take effect from October 2020, and should apply to all WIPO meetings with the exception of the Assemblies and other WIPO Governing Bodies, and of Diplomatic Conferences.

14. The Assemblies of WIPO, each as far as it is concerned, are invited to decide on the replacement of verbatim reports of WIPO meetings by automated speech-to-text transcripts and translations, except for meetings of the Assemblies, of other WIPO Governing Bodies and of Diplomatic Conferences.

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