

15th St. Jerome Translation Contest

— 2020 EDITION —



Statement by Mr. Movses Abelian Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and Secretariat-wide Coordinator for Multilingualism

Dear contestants, judges and students,
Dear colleagues,

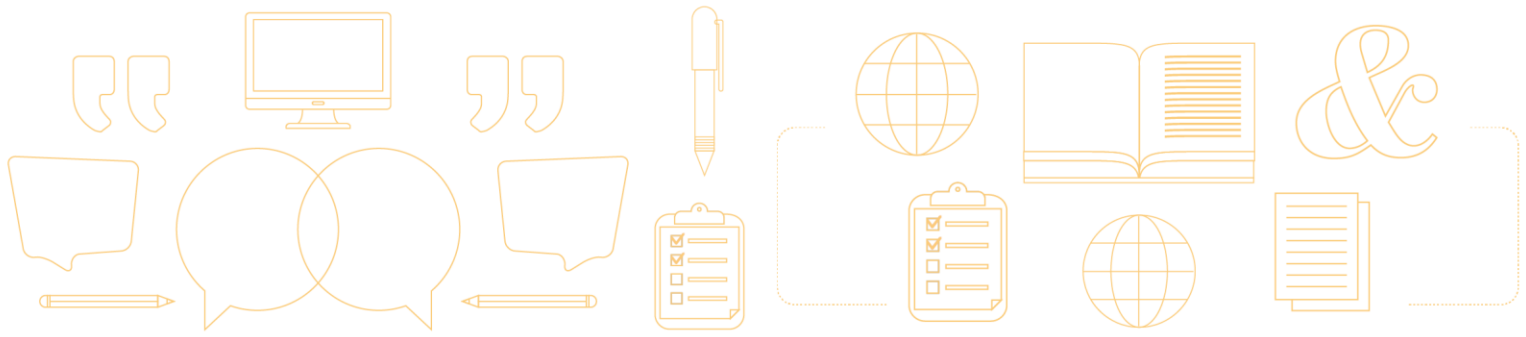
I would like to begin my statement with an apt quotation from the distinguished and enlightened Chinese philosopher Confucius:

*If language is not correct;
Then what is said is not what is meant;
If what is said is not what is meant,
Then what ought to be done remains undone.*

During these exceptional times, we search for common values that unite us as individuals, cultures, societies, and countries in an interconnected world. We draw comfort from our shared humanity, and our mutual desire for peace and prosperity. Communication is vital to achieving such collective goals; and language, as the instrument that bridges divides and resolves disputes across diverse societies and cultures, ensures that what ought to be done is done. It is in this spirit that the United Nations General Assembly recognizes multilingualism as contributing to achieving the goals of the Organization set out in its founding Charter.

In translation, where the journey starts not with the translator, but with an author and a reader, disparate social, cultural and economic backgrounds also come into play and the translator's mission is to forge common ground from divergent individualities, beliefs and approaches. This mission is reflected in the United Nations endeavour to cement multilingualism as a core value and as a vehicle for multilateral action towards peace, security, sustainable development and human rights.

The need for translation has existed since time immemorial. Translation of literary, philosophical and scientific works have contributed significantly to the march of civilization. Owing to the efforts of seasoned translators, facts and theories have been propagated across the globe, rather than being locked in one culture or one country.



Every year, the United Nations celebrates the role of language professionals who break linguistic barriers and facilitate communication. This year, given the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided to hold the St. Jerome awards ceremony online. That does not do justice to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which expertly organized the fifteenth instalment of this contest – the first time a United Nations regional commission has organized this event. It attracted 136 entries from competitors in the general category from around the world, who translated into the six official languages of the United Nations plus German. In addition, entries were received from 65 students enrolled at 23 partner universities, which also actively promoted the contest and handled the pre-selection of best entries.

I would like to thank our partner universities for their contribution to making the fifteenth edition of the contest a success but, above all, I am extending my warmest thanks to the distinguished judges without whom the contest just could not take place. Judges this year represented several United Nations entities, and academic institutions in various countries. They volunteered their time and skills to evaluate the submissions, and we are indebted as always.

I congratulate all the winners. The judges had a difficult time selecting the winners, but ultimately you were the best of a very strong field and you set yourself apart. I encourage all the winners and the other contenders to keep on translating, whether you do it professionally or as a pastime. Your enthusiasm and dedication to language and translation keep the rest of us inspired. Thank you.

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