



Towards a Multilingual Internet

Dawit Bekele
African Regional Bureau
Internet Society (ISOC)
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Introduction

- The Internet is no more monolingual
- But, it does not yet represent the linguistic diversity of this world
- This has severe consequences
- The challenges are many
- Key issue for the digital divide

Status

- In the « real » world
 - More than 6,000 languages in the world
 - More than 2,000 languages in Africa
 - UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity considers these languages as an important cultural heritage for humanity
 - At national level, linguistic diversity is considered as a human right

Status

- On the Internet

TOP TEN LANGUAGES IN THE INTERNET	Internet Penetration by Language	Growth in Internet (2000 - 2008)	Internet Users % of Total
English	37.2 %	226.7 %	29.1 %
Chinese	23.5 %	894.8 %	20.1 %
Spanish	32.0 %	619.3 %	8.2 %
Japanese	73.8 %	99.7 %	5.9 %
French	17.8 %	503.4 %	4.6 %
Portuguese	29.7 %	857.7 %	4.5 %
German	67.7 %	135.5 %	4.1 %
Arabic	14.2 %	1,545.2 %	2.6 %
Russian	27.0 %	1,125.8 %	2.4 %
Korean	51.9 %	93.3 %	2.3 %
TOP 10 LANGUAGES	30.4 %	329.2 %	83.8 %
Rest of the Languages	11.2 %	424.5 %	16.2 %
WORLD TOTAL	23.8 %	342.2 %	100.0 %

Source: www.internetworldstats.com

The status

- On the Internet
 - In Africa

	2006	2007
English	73.6%	79.6%
French	3.7%	5.7%
Arabic	0.5%	2.1%
Afrikaans	0.79 %	2.51%
Swahili	0.014%	0.04%
Malagasy	0.014%	0.006%

Source: Language Observatory Project

The stakes

- No multilingual internet, No Internet for all
- The next billion needs new languages on the Internet
- Unless it is multilingual, the Internet might be one more lost opportunity

The challenges

- Content
- Economic reasons
- Writing system and illiteracy
- Political support
- Technical

The fundamental enablers

- Creating critical mass of content
 - Not only written
- Tools and standards
 - For all
- Capacity building
 - For users and developers

Conclusion

- Multilingualism on the Internet should be a conscious goal
- Local communities are key
- The International community can and should help
- Concerted and organized effort needed