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| **Keywords:** | JCA-AHF; accessibility; report |
| **Abstract:** | This document provides the draft report of joint JCA-AHF and ITU-T Q26/16 meeting (virtual, 21 May 2020). |

Related links

* [JCA-AHF webpage](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Pages/default.aspx)
* [Meeting documents page](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Pages/202005-docs.aspx)

1. Opening of the meeting

The joint JCA-AHF and ITU-T Q26/16 e-meeting was held on 21 May 2020 chaired by Ms Andrea Saks (USA), JCA-AHF Chairman. This meeting was collocated with the Rapporteur meeting of Q26/16 (18 - 21 May 2020) which was held also virtually. Ms Lidia Best, G3ict and UK National Association of Deafened People (NADP) took role of the remote moderator by reading texts in Chat Box of the remote participation tool. The first 30 minutes were devoted to finalizing the planned Q26/16 work. The list of participants is available on JCA-AHF [Document 396](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc396_list%20of%20participants.docx).

1. Approval of the agenda

The Chairman introduced the draft JCA-AHF meeting agenda and document allocation as contained in JCA-AHF [Document 394](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc%20394-agenda.docx). It was approved without substantive changes.

1. Approval of the last JCA-AHF meeting report

The Chairman introduced the last JCA-AHF meeting (10 October 2019) report (JCA-AHF [Document 388](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2019/October2019/JCA-AHF-Doc388-report.docx)), and the report was approved by the JCA-AHF after the corrections of some spelling mistakes.

1. Candidate of new JCA-AHF co-Vice Chair – Lidia Best, UK National Association of Deafened People (NADP), and G3ict

The Chairman introduced Ms Best as a candidate for a new co-Vice Chair of JCA-AHF. It was approved by the JCA-AHF meeting.

1. Sign Language Interpretation (SLI) during the Covid-19 crisis

Mr Oliver Pouliot from Overseas Interpreting, and who is an AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters) sign language network member as well as a member of the Taskforce on Distance Interpreting, was invited to explain the background and the situation of Sign Language Interpretation (SLI) at ITU and other UN organizations. Mr Pouliot firstly highlighted that the rules for remote SLI are the same as the ones for onsite interpretation, covered by the AIIC agreement.

Some people consider that **International Sign** cannot handle the amount of technical information that may be present in an expert meeting, however Mr Pouliot thinks that it is not correct. It depends on the familiarity of the interpreters with the subject matter of the meeting and that with International Sign. Mr Pouliot thinks International Sign as an option, depending on who is in the meeting. While he thinks International Sign is not a replacement of existing Sign Languages already provided at a meeting such as American Sign Language (ASL), British Sign Language (BSL), he also thinks that one of the reasons that International Sign is used is when there are deaf participants from several countries not only two but more countries in a meeting. In this case, it is prohibitive to hire many interpreters at the same meeting.

Mr Pouliot further expanded on the background of International Sign as the JCA-AHF Chairman requested. He firstly mentioned that the topic was still being discussed by the community or researchers. Then he explained that International Sign was not a made-up language like Esperanto, but that it had evolved spontaneously and naturally as a communication medium when deaf people from different countries and having different sign language communicated. However, it is not called International Sign “Language”, as it does not fit in the same category as National Sign Languages.

**Questions and answers**:

Question by Ms Judy Okite: Is sign language considered as an option to captioning and both must be used in remote meeting?

Answer by Mr Pouliot: People have different preferences in terms of how they want to access a meeting, and sign language and captioning are different options and thus one should never be seen to replace the other. It depends on the audience that a meeting has.

Comment by the JCA-AHF Chairman: In addition, sign language is a two-way communication and a deaf person from the audience can comment and ask questions in the native tongue of his own choosing, such as BSL, ASL or any of the other languages.

Question by Simao Campos: Do you know Kudo, a remote meeting platform, which may have a feature to include sign language interpreting.

Answer by Mr Pouliot: No experience in using that platform yet, but some colleagues reported that the platform did not have a feature of including SLI. Additionally, a platform called Interprefy is not SLI friendly, and none of the existing platforms are ready for sign language interpretation, according to Mr Pouliot.

Comments by Mr Christian Vogler: Agree to what Mr Pouliot said regarding International Sign, it needs practice to get familiar with a sign language and a communication subject. Being user of ASL, Mr Vogler normally meets interpreters before a meeting to make sure what he speaks will be interpreted correctly. However, he is not a confident user of International Sign, and he does not feel the same way with International Sign.

Comments by Mr David Fourney: Mr Fourney was following this discussion via multiple channels of communication, via ASL, captioning and audio, to have a maximum information. But he had the Internet cut during the discussion, then he continued to follow the discussion via telephone. It is necessary to think about backups when technology fails. Hard of hearing people tend not to be signers, so they have to use captioning to support what they are hearing. However captioning has no emotion so it takes much effort to follow captions. Regarding International Sign, while Mr Fourney is ASL fluent, it is difficult for him to follow International Sign, as any languages require a level of fluency.

Question by Mr Pradeep Balachandran (Chat box): Do automatic sign language interpreting platforms give equal prominence to different sign modalities e.g., hand gestures, lip reading, facial gestures, etc. Or is there a relative weight age assignment?

Answer by Mr Christian Vogler (Chat box): There is no such platform for automatic interpreting that is even remotely usable.

Comments by Mr Christopher Jones: He supports the comment made by Mr Fourney that he followed the discussion watching both SLI and captioning stream at the same time. A research study made by Mr Matjaž Debevc from Maribor University, Slovenia, found that deaf people often watch television broadcasts with both captioning and SLI together as this dramatically increased their communication level. For Mr Jones, captioning and SLI are both equally as important. It should also be noted that he can have networking opportunities during physical meeting breaks, thanks to sign language interpreters following him.

Comments by Mr Pouliot after hearing what was said by the meeting participants: First, he concluded that he was of a position that International Sign was not the preferred option of the meeting participants, thus should not be used. Second, he invited to have a look at a [Remote working guidelines](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/dcal/remote-working-guidelines) developed by​​ UCL (University College London) Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre. The guidelines have a section describing interpretation, which would be of interest of the JCA-AHF members and meeting organizers. Finally, Mr Pouliot highlighted that all stakeholders should be involved in development of guidelines of remote SLI at ITU-T.

Comments by Ms Maya de Wit: Working with screen causes more fatigue than normal, so shorter time and more interpreters would be considered. If interpreters can travel to Geneva, working at ITU would be the best practice. But a hybrid solution, such as working at a hub where there is a dedicated technician, would be an option.

International Sign is used at WFD and UN-CRPD, etc., as a common practice, to make it accessible for the international audience viewing the streaming. On the other hand, at ITU-T Study Group meetings, only ITU-T members participate in the meetings, and they have own mode of communication or preference for which language they use to access the meeting. For this case the participants should be asked their preferred sign language. International Sign is not understood by all signers, as expressed by this meeting participants.

Comment by Mr Jones: As being said by Ms De Wit, longer breaks would be needed for deaf participants when participating in e-meetings.

Answer by the JCA-AHF Chairman: This will be taken into consideration.

Comment by Mr Founey: For hard or hearing people, the situation becomes worse when captioning is not available.

Then, Mr Jones explained his experiences on the virtual meeting of Q26/16. He utilized three different devices to show the meeting document, SL interpreters, and captioning. However, deaf persons may not have three devices, so there is a need to consider a solution to reduce the necessary number of devices. It should also be considered that deaf persons are able to tune the interpretation.

The JCA-AHF Chairman appreciated all the comments made, and invited JCA-AHF members to email her regarding the [FSTP-AM (2015)](https://www.itu.int/pub/T-TUT-FSTP-2015-AM) “Guidelines for accessible meetings” and [FSTP-ACC-RemPart (2015)](https://www.itu.int/pub/T-TUT-FSTP-2015-ACC) “Guidelines for supporting remote participation in meetings for all” that are being updated at Q26/16 (due to a lack of time, the drafts of the updated versions of these Technical Papers were not presented, but shared via the JCA-AHF mailing list for possible comments).

1. Audiovisual accessibility during a world crisis

Ms Lidia Best from G3ict and NADP presented JCA-AHF [Document 393](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc%20393%20.docx) on Audio visual accessibility during a world crisis. The document explains an overview of lack of accessibility of audiovisual main TV channels during current COVID-19 pandemic. Examples presented in this document shows that SLI and captioning in broadcasting programs are not accessible. The same document was presented at the Q26/16 meeting the day before and it was agreed to consider the inclusion in Q26/16 Work Item [H.ACC-GAP](https://eur06.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.itu.int%2Fitu-t%2Fworkprog%2Fwp_item.aspx%3Fisn%3D14440&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cb5dd8a284e6c4e8110b408d7fd894fea%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637256638496356447&sdata=rDWQ21oEY0vSDuefji03cxpmmHfSlBdHzs9%2BgSssFYw%3D&reserved=0), a twin text with ISO/IEC 20071-25:2017, on functional displays of sign language interpretation and captioning in audio-visual media. Ms Best also suggested to send a Liaison Statement on this document to ITU IRG-AVA to share it with broadcasters (post meeting note: done).

1. EDF guide for accessible meetings for all

Then, Ms Best invited JCA-AHF members to have a look at [EDF guide for accessible meetings for all](http://www.edf-feph.org/sites/default/files/edf_guide_for_accessible_meetings_1.pdf) which provides guidance on how to make meetings accessible for people with multiple disabilities and specific needs. The Chairman suggested this document could be included in accessible meetings review which will take place during Q26/16 meeting in June 2020.

1. ITU-T SG20 work - Updates on draft ITU-T Y.ACC-PTS “Accessibility requirements for smart public transportation services”

Mr Yong Jick Lee presented JCA-AHF [Document 389](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc389.zip) which includes the latest version of the draft ITU-T Recommendation Y.ACC-PTS “Accessibility requirements for smart public transportation services”. Two-layer structure is introduced in this draft Recommendation: information layer and interface layer. Several functional areas and accessible information needed for persons with disabilities were identified and detailed in Appendix 1 of this draft. The work will be completed soon, so experts review and comments are necessary. It will be discussed at next SG20 meeting which will take place from 6 – 16 July 2020.

1. Use of alternative text in standards – David Fourney, G3ict

Mr David Fourney from G3ict briefly explained ISO/IEC200.1-11 on Guidance on alternative text for images. The document was originally presented at Q26/16 meeting on the day before and discussed to create a new work item for a possible twin text. Mr Fourney suggested ITU to use this document for its standardization work. As an example, Mr Fourney mentioned that ISO has adopted as a general practice, and uses it when describing technical diagrams in its documents. Mr Fourney requested JCA-AHF to endorse and support it, but the JCA-AHF Chairman clarified that JCA-AHF could not endorse anything. Instead, JCA-AHF can disseminate information and connect related parties to discuss the matter.

1. UN-ESCAP webinar on protecting persons with disabilities during COVID-19

Mr Masahito Kawamori introduced [UN-ESCAP webinar on protecting persons with disabilities during COVID-19](https://www.maketherightreal.net/event/webinar-protecting-and-empowering-persons-disabilities-context-covid-19-pandemic) which took place on 15 May 2020. It was discussed what was happening with persons with all kind of disabilities in the world during the Covid-19 crisis. The video is available on YouTube and Mr Kawamori invited the JCA-AHF members to view the content.

1. Incoming Liaison Statements

LS on accessibility matters (from ITU-T SG20) (JCA-AHF [Doc 389​](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc389.zip)) was covered at item 8 above.

Due to a lack of time, the following liaison statements were not reviewed. These may be reviewed at the next JCA-AHF meeting.

* LS on Accessibility Contributions made to Study 2 regarding Relay and other access via numbering (from ITU-T SG2) (JCA-AHF [Doc 390](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc390.docx))
* LS on new accessibility question at ITU-R SG6 (from ITU IRG-AVA) (JCA-AHF [Doc 391 ​](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc391.docx))
* LS on special mobile communications tariffs (from ITU-D SG1) (JCA-AHF [Doc 392](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc392.docx) )
* LS to inform on new Question 11/9 on “Accessibility to system and services” and first meeting results (from ITU-T SG9) (JCA-AHF [Doc 395](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/jca/ahf/Documents/docs-2020/May%202020%20meeting/JCA-AHF-Doc395.docx) )

1. Any Other Business

None.

1. Next JCA-AHF meeting

Next JCA-AHF meeting is planned during next ITU-T SG16 meeting in June 2020 (post meeting note: it will take place virtually on 1st July 2020).

1. Closing

The JCA-AHF Chairman thanked all speakers of the meeting, participants, SL interpreters, caption writers and TSB. She closed the meeting.

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