

## THE NYÉLÉNI FORUM'S COMMITMENT TO LINGUISTIC JUSTICE

Speaking in our own languages is,  
*a way of fighting,*  
*existing, and collectively creating a different world.*

The **3rd Nyéléni Global Forum** is a gathering place where movements fighting for **food sovereignty** from a feminist, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, anti-fascist, and anti-colonialist perspective can coordinate their ongoing struggles.

At this multilingual and multicultural gathering, with more than 500 participants, one major challenge is ensuring that all voices are heard. Simultaneous interpretation is necessary to allow everyone to participate and is **an essential tool for emancipation and empowerment** for grassroots activists.

Within the Nyéléni process, linguistic justice is understood as a key dimension of our struggles that goes far beyond mere translation. Defending the right to speak, think, and organize in our own languages is fundamental to ensuring genuine, plural, transformative participation. Without it, there can be no collective construction or transformation.

We advocate for **an intersectional, decolonial Linguistic justice** that recognizes and addresses historical and contemporary power inequalities linked to language and guarantees the full participation of all movements, peoples, and communities.

**Intersectional Linguistic Justice** recognizes that communication barriers do not affect everyone equally. Different forms of oppression intersect: gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, and immigration status combine and multiply, further invisibilizing those of us who live on the margins. For this reason, linguistic access cannot be treated as just another “service”, but rather as a cross-cutting axis of a plural, inclusive process.

**Decolonial Linguistic Justice** involves questioning and transforming the hierarchies imposed by centuries of colonialism—and neocolonialism—that continue to be reproduced in our practices, even in spaces that fight for systemic change. The centrality of languages such as English excludes those who have not been able to learn them for structural reasons: women, racialized people, rural communities, migrants, low-income groups, indigenous peoples, and all those who bring knowledge and experiences that are fundamental for systemic change. In other words, those who cannot express themselves in the “correct” language will be excluded, and with them their worldview, their knowledge, and their voices.

## HUMAN, LOGISTICAL, AND TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

In the global struggle for food sovereignty, the Nyéléni Forum will offer simultaneous interpretation in 18 languages: Spanish, English, French, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, Tamil, Sinhalese, Hindi, Malayalam, Korean, Turkish, Mongolian, Thai, Bahasa, Kannada, Bangla, and Nepali. To enable this to happen, there will be a team of 73 volunteer interpreters and a maximum of eight rooms for parallel meetings with interpretation systems.

We are committed to **real, living diversity**, not symbolic diversity. This requires us not only to offer multilingual interpretation, but also to build collective tools that recognize diverse, plural knowledge and counter hegemonic knowledge. We understand language as a tool of power: whoever defines words also defines the frameworks for action. That is why we defend the right of every community to think, organize, and express itself in its own language.

Despite upholding these ideals, we are also realistic with regard to the possibility of giving all participants the opportunity to speak in their own language. This is currently impossible due to human, material, and technological limitations. In the search for solutions, colonial languages play an important role, as centuries of colonialism have meant that they are also many of our mother tongues and second languages and the languages we use to communicate. The 3rd Nyéléni Global Forum is taking place in Sri Lanka, in the Asia-Pacific region, and English is the pivot language. This means that it is a bridge that helps us to include many other languages in this space.

## COATI'S CONTRIBUTION

**COATI** is the Collective for the Self-Management of Interpretation Technologies and it is based in Barcelona, Spain. It offers technical solutions for interpretation and works to build and maintain vital tools based on the DIY (do-it-yourself) culture and open-source tools, aimed at those who organize life from the bottom up.

Its work stems from activism rather than the market. It is a politically engaged collective that has been collaborating with social movements and organizations around the world for years.

At this 3rd Nyéléni Global Forum, COATI is responsible for two tasks that contribute to linguistic justice:

- **Coordination of interpretation teams** during the preparatory process, the forum, and the evaluation stage. The team helps to assess the linguistic needs of the forum, coordinates the interpretation, and determines the context of each meeting. The following selection criteria were used to select the interpretation team: language combinations (two-way booths) and representation of the six regions in the Nyéléni process, drawing on the interpreter networks of all the organizations involved.

- **Installation and operation of the technical system** for simultaneous interpretation. The team installs the booths, consoles, sound/video system, and receivers for each of the rooms where interpretation is needed. It also operates the system throughout the process to ensure effective interaction among participants.

Rather than being mere service providers, the COATI technicians support the political process from a linguistic justice perspective, collaborating in the construction of a space where speaking different languages is not a limitation, but rather a source of richness. We are here not to “translate” the Nyéléni process but to be part of it, to weave networks, to build community, and to put technology and humanity to work in our political struggles.

The **interpreters** support the process voluntarily, with deep political commitment and solidarity. They donate their time to provide a highly specialized service that requires concentration, preparation, and appropriate conditions. Their work has physical and mental limits: it is not possible

to interpret for hours without a break. The recommended time in the booth—also approved by the interpretation working group—is a maximum of six hours per day. They must also sleep well so that they are able to make the effort we are asking of them.

Despite having a great team, we face multiple challenges and there is no room for improvisation or spontaneity. The priority is scheduled meetings, emergencies, and booth shifts with sufficient breaks.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING WITH SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETERS**

As well as being an ideal that unites us, linguistic justice is also a commitment to and from all of us. In order to create spaces for multilingual discussion, debate, and dialogue, we need everyone's help. Here are some practical recommendations that we believe will help the interpreters and COATI technicians do their jobs effectively.

### **Recommendations for using technical equipment**

- You must always carry your **headphones** with you, as you will use them throughout the Forum (don't forget them and take good care of them). You can also use your own wired headphones if you prefer (COATI does not have Bluetooth technology).
- The **receivers** may be different depending on the room. Follow the instructions given by the COATI technicians. At the end of the day, all receivers must be returned so that they are available and charged for the next day.

### **Recommendations when speaking:**

- **Use the microphone** and make sure it is turned on. If not, your message will not be heard or interpreted. Try to stay within the interpreters' field of vision, as this is important for their work.
- **Introduce yourself and state your language.** This allows the interpreters to prepare and those listening to the interpretation to know who is speaking, avoiding confusion.
- **Speak clearly at an appropriate volume.** Avoid speaking quickly. If you speak too fast, much of your message will be lost. Keep in mind at all times that there is a slight delay in the delivery of your message to other languages.
- **Use short sentences.** Get to the point. Start and finish an idea. A clear message will be better understood and the interpreters will be able to convey it to everyone.
- **Use simple words and standard language.** Avoid acronyms and make sure you give details such as **names, dates, and places** clearly.
- **If you are going to read a text,** you must have shared it with the interpreter coordinators 24 hours in advance and in the pivot language, if possible. Read slowly so that the interpretation team can interpret at a good pace without omitting anything. The listeners will appreciate it.
- **Follow the instructions of the moderators and COATI technicians.** They may ask you to slow down or pause for a moment to address technical issues.

## BACK OR FRONT COVER

Linguistic justice is neither a voiceover nor a booth at the back of the room. As we have pointed out, it is much more than just *translating*.

We hope this fanzine will serve to highlight the work involved in enabling participation in spaces for debate, the ideals that underpin it, and the organization, preparation, and planning it requires.

We know that we will not always reach everyone or cover everything. But it is always relevant to ask ourselves who is being silenced without interpretation, who would be left out. This fanzine compiles ideas, lessons, and recommendations for better organizing multilingual spaces, with all that this entails: **care, commitment, and planning**.

This fanzine is intended as both a reminder and a tool for collective use, born out of the urgent need to listen to one another. It is an attempt to pave the way for linguistic justice—even if only a little—as an essential part of our struggles for food sovereignty.

May this experience help us to continue searching for ways to enable what is not yet possible, to improve on what we have already achieved, and to continue listening to one another.

**Without planning, there can be no interpretation!**

**Without interpretation, there can be no revolution!**