Frequently Asked Questions

## Why should I adopt Akoma Ntoso for the United Nations (AKN4UN)?

Akoma Ntoso is an official standard for parliamentary and legal documents. It has been adopted by the HLCM as standard for the UN System, in its localized version Akoma Ntoso for the United Nations (AKN4UN). Adopting AKN4UN in your organizations means entering a network of UN Organizations and international institutions that collaborate to create a shared ecosystem for knowledge.

## Who is leading this process?

UNSIF is a project co-led by the [Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the United Nations Secretariat](https://www.un.org/Depts/DGACM/), the [Food and Agriculture Organization](http://www.fao.org/home/en/) and the [High Level Committee on Management of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination](https://www.unsceb.org/).

## Is converting our documents in Akoma Ntoso compulsory?

Akoma Ntoso for the United Nations was adopted by the HLCM as common document standard for the UN System: this means that, although its adoption is not compulsory, it will greatly enhance inter-operability and provide the opportunity for collaboration and shared efforts.

## What are Uniform Resource Identifiers? What is Linked Open Data?

Having machine-readable documents in a common standard means entering an harmonized “information space” where information in documents is tagged with common identifiers (Uniform Resource Identifiers) so that every data can be easily looked up and linked to other documents. It is open in the sense that information is freely available to everyone to use and republish as they wish, without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control.

## This is quite complex: can you give me an example?

Let’s say you have a UN General Assembly Resolution:

* The Resolution contains many “entities”, i.e. references to other resolutions and documents, as well as mentions to organizations, dates, events, SDGs, etc. For a human being, it is easy to understand the content of the document while reading it – as it is **human-readable** – while it is hard to grasp the whole network of relations that it establishes. On the contrary, machines are very good in understanding these linkages, but they need a document which speaks their “language” (i.e. they are **machine-readable**).
* The process of making a document machine-readable requires:
  + A way to ***identify*** entities that are mentioned/referenced in the document, such as Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs)[[1]](#footnote-1);
  + A ***machine-readable language***, such as XML: this contains both a way to describe the structure of the document, including typographical features, and identify the entities there contained.
  + Datasets to describe the relationships between entities, in the form of ***ontologies, vocabularies, thesauri****,* etc. These are usually available on the web and can be linked to the XML document through the use of URIs.
* At this point, machines are now able, for example, to retrieve all UNGA Resolutions from the year 2018 which reference SDG n. 12 and the country of Somalia. They can also interpret references to understand whether the overall tone of the related discussion was positive or negative.

## How do AKN4UN and UNDO fit this picture?

**Akoma Ntoso for the United Nations** is the standard for XML mark-up; while the **United Nations Document Ontology** outlines the main entities contained in United Nations documents and the relation between them.

## What is a XML editor?

Manual mark-up can be extremely time-consuming. XML editors are used to support manual the mark-up of documents, greatly speeding-up the process.

## This sounds great. Can I have this tomorrow?

The process of creating machine-readable document required resources and time: it is not possible to do this overnight. The process usually involves starting a pilot project that involving a selection of documents and a limited scope. The pilot helps showcasing to management the concept and benefits.

## I would like to start an Akoma Ntoso pilot: what should I do?

Many organizations have or are conducting pilot projects on Akoma Ntoso. All of them are keen to share their knowledge and provide guidance. Get in touch with the HLCM Secretariat to receive guidance.

## What do I need to start a pilot?

To start a pilot, we need a complete use case of your needs: this should include details on which documents you would like to start with and their format, including samples; the resources you would be able to put in place; the expected outcome. Any additional details to help framing your needs are warmly welcomed.

## Can the High Level Committee on Management provide technical support and resource to set up a pilot in my Organizations?

The HLCM Secretariat is an inter-agency coordination body: it does not have dedicated staff and resources for pilots, but it can provide strategic guidance and connect you with other Organizations that can help.

1. The most known type of URI is the URL (e.g. <https://www.unsceb.org/content/unsif>), which is used to express the location of a resource on the web. URIs in Akoma Ntoso documents are connected to the relative URL on the web repository. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)