

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MAKARIM WIBISONO, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, BEFORE THE 20TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

New York, 4 May 1998

Mr. Chairman,

It is a distinct honour and privilege for me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, we should like to express our confidence that under your stewardship, the work of the twentieth session of this Committee will achieve fruitful results. Allow me to assure you of the support of the Group of 77 and China as you discharge your important task and responsibilities that lie ahead.

The Group of 77 and China wishes also to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/AC.198/1998/2. Our sincere appreciation also goes to the new Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information, Mr. Kensaku Hogen, for his comprehensive statement concerning the work of the Department. Allow me to avail of this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the former Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, Mr. Samir Sanbar, for his tireless efforts undertaken towards fulfilling the mandate of the DPI during his tenure.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China reaffirms that it attaches utmost importance to the question of realizing the establishment of new, more just and effective global information and communication practices. Those principles enunciated by the Non-Aligned countries more than two decades ago and later addressed by the General Assembly during its 33rd session remain equally valid today. We continue to believe that there is a need to establish a balance in the dissemination of information, to ensure a diversification of information sources and to attain a mutually beneficial partnership in the information sector.

The deliberations of the Committee on Information on these issues can not be over emphasized. Its implementation should be pursued in all earnest. Towards this end, we should endeavour to exert our collective efforts to enhance cooperation and to coordinate such activities in this vital field at the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

In an information age where new media technologies are opening up new vistas and horizons before us, the vast majority of peoples can not be deprived of the reality of the situation surrounding them, as well as benefiting from a better quality of life. Ongoing struggles against poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy are being waged by millions of people globally. If a more comprehensive mass-media coverage could be accorded to these struggles, the world would be better informed and motivated to provide their best efforts towards the attainment of our common interests of economic progress and social emancipation.

In developing the mass media for the years to come, it is most relevant to stress the need for professionalism, ethics as well as a sense of self-defined responsibility. The principles of the UN Charter should be consistently upheld, especially in making public information available to all humankind and not be left to the media of a few developed nations that seek to impose their own narrow perceptions. The Group of 77 and China acknowledges the important work carried out by UNESCO and its collaboration with news agencies

and broadcasting organizations in developing nations to disseminate information on priority issues. It is important for the United Nations and its agencies to exert unswerving efforts towards promoting an equitable information and communication order.

Mr. Chairman,

On the eve of the next century characterized by an era of bright promise as well as profound change and transition, the United Nations will be called upon to grapple with a multitude of issues, including those concerning international peace and security as well as development. It is beyond doubt that the Department of Public Information as the focal point of the Organization, should play a crucial and vital role. Against this backdrop, we believe that the Department should be strengthened to fulfill the expectations of member States.

We have noted the report of the Secretary-General concerning the implementation of the measures regarding information and communication. We look forward to studying in greater detail the Secretary-General's plan and strategy regarding the orientation of the Department's communication and information activities. Indeed, such proposals can be rendered more beneficial if the views of member States are fully taken into account. Furthermore, we deem it important to strengthen consultative arrangements between the Department of Public Information and other departments of the Secretariat dealing with development-related issues.

Over the past few decades, the United Nations Information Centers (UNICs) have been a key component of United Nations outreach, especially for developing countries where there is a need for greater understanding of its activities. In light of the aforementioned and taking into account the results of some integrated centres, the Group of 77 and China expresses concern over the problems encountered with the integration of UNICs with UNDP field offices. It deserves emphasis that the process of integration should be implemented on a case-by-case basis while taking into account the views of the host state. Simultaneously, views of member States should be seriously considered during the development of proposals concerning the restructuring of UNICs and the establishment of regional hubs by the Secretary-General.

Without a shadow of a doubt, rapid technological advances in electronic and visual communications have transformed the international landscape into a global village. Despite these dramatic changes and an array of technological breakthroughs, the radio remains the principal medium of communication for the millions of people around the world. We are therefore gratified that efforts will continue to be exerted towards the strengthening of the UN Radio, with a view to reaching a world-wide audience and serving the interests of all regions. In addition, United Nations publications have a significant role to play in focusing global attention to the critical issues before the Organization and should be sustained.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China reiterates the need to achieve consensus on the issues before this Committee, and towards this end we stand ready to participate in a mechanism for negotiations of the resolutions that are open-ended, transparent and inclusive. For it is only through cooperation that we can advance on the path to establishing a more democratized global information and communication order.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.