

**STATEMENT BY MR. DEXTER WILBURG OF GUYANA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77,  
TO THE FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ON AGENDA ITEM 91,  
QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION**

**New York, 16 November 1999**

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to express what a great privilege it is for me to address the Fourth Committee, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as the Committee takes up agenda item 91, "Questions relating to Information." The Group wishes to thank the Chairman of the Committee on Information, Mr. Elhassane Zahid of Morocco, all the members of the Bureau and our distinguished colleagues on the Committee on Information for their thoughtful and productive contributions during the resumed session of the Committee. Our appreciation is also extended to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report on Questions relating to Information (A/54/415). Lastly, The Group would like to note the tireless efforts of the Under Secretary General, Mr. Kensaku Hogen and the staff of the Department of Information.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China once again reaffirms its support for the Committee on Information's mandate as defined in General Assembly resolution 34/182. We feel that this resolution remains as relevant today as when it was first adopted in 1979. In this context, the need for ensuring the development of an efficient communication infrastructure in developing nations, through the transference of advance technology, cannot be overstated.

Mr. Chairman,

Advances in telecommunications over the last two decades have wrought unimaginable changes in the daily lives of millions on our planet. Breakthroughs in this field have revolutionized everything from business and finance to education and medicine. Through the power of the Internet it is for example, possible to transfer the entire contents of a library to a remote village, thereby engendering its transformation to a virtual-university. Advances in telecommunications have also enabled physicians in developing countries to gain immediate access to lifesaving developments in their fields; and the telecommunications medium is an integral part of the phenomenon we call globalization. But as impressive as all these technological advancements may be, much of it still remains beyond the reach of many within the developing world.

As we have observed all too often in the past, recourse by the United Nations to more modern means of disseminating information increasingly favors the developed countries. This occurs primarily because of the lack of access to more sophisticated means of telecommunication technologies in developing nations. Moreover, this disparity has affected inter-state cooperation in a number of areas, including commercial and economic relations. In order to stem this negative tide, the United Nations must ensure that the developing countries are more equitably served by bridging this technological gap.

Mr. Chairman,

The program founded by Department of Public Information for the training of journalists from developing countries represents a commendable example in the effort to promote development. This twenty-year-old program not only exposes journalists from the developing world to cutting-edge innovations in their field, such as the use of Lexis-Nexis and other Computer Assisted Reporting tools, but also aids increased

participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and ensures a freer flow of information at all levels. UNICs are another integral component in the development of the information process. The Group of 77 and China recognize the importance of their role in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information in all parts of the world. Consequently, the Group remains particularly concerned that efforts to integrate them with UNDP field offices could hamper their effectiveness. Indeed, the Secretary General's own Task Force has produced findings that suggest that efforts at integration were not uniformly successful. There is clearly a need to be guided by caution on this matter. Furthermore, we will continue to demand that this process be placed in conformity with the General Assembly decision of 1993 that calls for any proposed integration of these entities to be done on a case by case basis that takes into account the views of host governments. The Group also looks forward to a full review of this process by the Secretary-General as mandated by General Assembly resolution 47/73 of 1992.

Mr. Chairman,

The multilingual enrichment and development of the United Nations Web Site in all official languages of the organization is an important goal of the Group of 77 and China and its eventual attainment has been affirmed in General Assembly resolution 53/208 C of December 1998. The Group appreciates the efforts undertaken by the Secretary General thus far on this matter and welcomes the reports (A/AC.198/1999/6) and (A/AC.198/1999/9). In this regard, we believe that the current proposals contained in the latter should be further developed in a manner that is not only cost-effective but also focuses, at least at this stage, on textual content and most importantly fully achieves the objective of linguistic parity. Moreover, the United Nations web site must be treated like any other of the organization's publications, with due respect for balance, comprehensiveness and the allocation of sufficient resources for its development.

Mr. Chairman,

As we strive to close the technological gap between the developed and industrialized states, it is important that we continue to provide for the sustenance of traditional forms of media in the developing world. Print and radio still remain, for many, the primary means of disseminating information. That is why The Group of 77 and China once again, call on DPI to begin as soon as possible the implementation of the Pilot project. We are eagerly awaiting meaningful progress on this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to now turn to the Secretary-General's report (A/54/415). Paragraph 20 of this document makes reference to a set of guidelines for Secretariat officials in their dealings with the media, that were issued by the Secretary-General in April of this year. While these guidelines offer Secretariat officials a freer association with the press they have not sufficiently addressed the issue of attribution. We have noted that in the past, some Secretariat Officials have made statements purportedly on behalf of the organization as whole when in fact they may have been expressing the opinion of the Secretariat or of an individual. In this regard, the Group calls on these guidelines to be strengthened in a manner that addresses our concerns regarding the proper attribution of public statements by Secretariat officials.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China look forward to participating in future deliberations of the Committee on Information. We feel that the coming year will offer us an abundance of opportunities for success. The Group, as always, remains committed to achieving the goal of a new, more just and effective world information and communication order and we will tirelessly work with all delegations that are concerned with the realization of this goal.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.