



STATEMENT BY H.E. STAFFORD NEIL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, UNDER AGENDA ITEM 33 "QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION" IN THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION (FOURTH) COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (13 October 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time that the Group of 77 and China, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, is intervening in this debate, allow me to congratulate you Mr. Chairman on your election to guide the work of the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee. Our congratulations are also extended to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information has provided a comprehensive report of the activities of the Department of Public Information. We thank Mr. Tharoor for the information he has provided.

Mr. Chairman,

The G77 and China reaffirms the indispensable role of the DPI in promoting a positive public image of the United Nations through the provision of accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the role and activities of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

The report before us contained in document A/60/173 contains a detailed account of the activities undertaken by the DPI including since the 27 th session of the Committee on Information.

As indicated in the report, the new operating model and organisational structure of the DPI are now in place. We congratulate the Under-Secretary General and the staff of the Department for the completion of the reform and reorientation of the DPI. We look forward to continuing reports on the results of these changes in forthcoming sessions of the Committee on Information.

We welcome in particular the efforts being undertaken by the Department to integrate new information and communications technology at all levels and hope that this will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness, and increase the outreach of the DPI.

At the same time, it must be borne in mind that many of the target audiences in developing countries are not all keeping pace in the information and communications technology revolution. The Department should therefore continue to take into account the special needs and requirements of developing countries in the field of information and communication technology so as to ensure an effective flow of information. This means continuing to utilise many of the traditional methods of communication including radio and print media.

Mr. Chairman,

We commend the DPI for its work in preparation for the celebration of the 60 th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. This could not have been an easy task. We make special mention of the role played in this connection by the network of United Nations information centres especially in developing countries.

The particular focus by the Department on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, the question of Palestine, decolonisation, the dialogue among civilisations and the special needs of Africa continues to be necessary. It should also pay special attention to implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations summits and conferences which has been a special theme of the General Assembly this year.

Our Group also urges that the DPI continue to pay particular attention to the promotion of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) to be held in Tunisia in November of this year.

Mr. Chairman,

The G77 and China commends the DPI for the launch of UNIFEED which is assisting in the widening of the broadcast network for UN stories. Increased resources should be devoted to this activity which has assisted many UN agencies in bringing their accomplishments to the attention of the world. Oftentimes, much of the work being undertaken by the UN goes on behind the scenes and does not receive attention from the major media networks which exercise monopoly control.

Mr. Chairman,

The G77 and China reiterates the importance of United Nations Information Centres in developing countries in promoting the public image of the UN and in bringing the message of the UN closer to local populations.

We are studying the proposals being made to rationalise the work of UNICS but wish to stress that UNICS in developing countries should be assisted to strengthen their impact including, if necessary, through strategic communications support. The G77 and China looks forward to receiving further details on proposals related to the network of United Nations Information Centres, including the new operating concept at the next session of the Committee on Information. Moreover, as part of the process of consultation and information sharing, it is hoped that the additional resources will be found to hold workshops in all regions for the staff of the network of United Nations information centres.

The G77 and China reiterates its position that rationalisation involves only the improving of the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations Information Centres and the activities of the DPI. Given the importance of UNICS in developing countries and their core responsibility in transmitting the message of the United Nations, any improvements in the context of rationalisation must not be to the detriment or closing of existing UNICS worldwide. The views of the host country should be taken into account on all proposals relating to its UNIC including, in evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of its centre.

Mr. Chairman,

The G77 and China supports the work by the DPI to strengthen the United Nations website in all official languages, including through the creation of major new sites. The Group maintains that the achievement of parity should continue to be the main objective of the DPI and we urge that continued attention be paid to this issue.

The Group also maintains the importance of strengthening the public information capacity of the DPI in the field of peacekeeping operations. Coordination and collaboration with the DPKO in this area should be continued.

In conclusion, the G77 and China reaffirms its support for the work of the DPI in being the public voice of the Organisation. This role should be further consolidated in the ongoing process of reform, as it is essential that the DPI continues to play a leading role in promoting to the wider public worldwide, the importance of the purposes and objectives of the United Nations.

In particular it is important that efforts continue to counter negative publicity and correct distorted stories and biased reports about corruption and ineffectiveness of the Organisation. We should also mention, especially in relation to controversial aspects of the current UN reform process, that it is necessary for the Secretariat to maintain political impartiality and avoid imparting negative perceptions of positions taken by Member States in the negotiating process. A balanced approach which recognises the rights and interests of all Members in accordance with the principle of the sovereign equality of states is clearly required.

The G77 and China regards this as fundamental.

Thank you.