

ARGENTINA

32nd SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT BY FIRST SECRETARY GERARDO DIAZ BARTOLOME

PERMANENT MISSION OF ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

New York, 27th April 2010

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first to express my Delegation's gratitude to you and the Bureau for the work carried out, wishing you the best of success in fulfilling your goals. Argentina conveys, once again as traditionally, its full disposition to constructively contribute to the work of the Committee on Information at its 32nd session. Our warm welcome to Mr. Shalva Tsiskarashvili, from the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations, on his appointment as Vice-Chairperson of the Committee.

My Delegation associates with what has been expressed by the Delegation of Chile on behalf of the Rio Group as well as by the Delegation of Yemen, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Furthermore, we would like to express our recognition to Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Kiyoo Akasaka, for his responsibility and commitment in discharging his duties, as shown, on this occasion, by the clear and comprehensive description of the Reports submitted by the Secretary-General as well as those presentations that took place yesterday, during the fruitful interactive dialogue. We do commend the excellent work and presentations made by UN Television, Radio and Library as well as the UN Information Centres Directors attending this Session.

Mr. Chairman,

The Argentine Republic thanks the reports submitted by the Secretary-General on the Activities of the Department of Public Information contained in documents A/AC.198/2010/2, 3 and 4, concerning strategic communications, news and outreach services. This information undoubtedly contributes to a detailed follow-up of the work developed by the Department in the promotion and better understanding of the goals and mission of the United Nations in a wide variety of issues of high significance and interest of the international community. We are impressed by the magnificent application and use of new technologies to serving that goal, which we celebrate and encourage.

Mr. Chairman,

On this occasion, we reiterate Argentina's permanent support to the work of the United Nations Information Centres, elements of vital importance in dissemination the Organization's message. We thus encourage the Department to continue supporting their work.

We cannot but reiterate our satisfaction for the role of the United Nations Information Centre in Argentina. Established in 1948, the Centre in Buenos Aires is the "voice" in Spanish of the Department of Public Information in the field, raising awareness among a massive audience and mobilizing their support for the United Nations at both local and regional levels. This Centre also serves the brother Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

The function of this Centre, as we all know, is to disseminate and promote the principles, purposes and work of the United Nations around the world in an accurate, objective and balanced way among citizens and social organizations from both Argentina and Uruguay so that they can become aware of them and support them.

The Centre in Buenos Aires also assists newspapers, radio and television journalists in providing news, writing articles and special reports on the work of United Nations and its specialized agencies. In this context, the United Nations communications groups at the country level play a key role. We commend, in this regard, the workshop for journalists on violence against women held in Argentina in November 2009 which included, among the keynote speakers, a Justice from the National Supreme Court and Senior Officials from the United Nations system.

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation joins the Department of Public Information in understanding the significance of speaking to the people in their own language. That is why we do support and promote its commitment to multilingualism.

Even though the contents of the United Nations web site in Spanish has been expanded over the last years given the high number of visits, the number of documents available in Spanish continues to be lower than that of documents in the English web site. As a consequence, despite our recognition of the great efforts made by those responsible for the web site in Spanish language, it is still necessary to insist on the need to comply with the mandate set out in the resolutions adopted by this body, which request the offices of the UN system that publish their work in the English web site to provide the translation of the very same material translated to the web sites of the other official languages.

In this framework, we are still concerned that no progress has been observed regarding dissemination of press releases in all six official languages, which continue to be published in the two or even only one of the working languages. Therefore, we once again reiterate that it is under the responsibility of all the offices of the Organizations, including the Department of Public Information, to provide information in the six official languages.

It is a positive fact that the Secretary-General acknowledges in his report the reality that parity among the six official languages of the Organizations is a pending goal and that the Department routinely emphasizes the need for site content to be made available in all six official languages, a requirement mandated by the General Assembly.

However, it is a matter of serious concern that at the same time, the report on news services (A/AC.198/2010/3) warns that, should the present trend continue, there is the likelihood that the gap in content availability already existing between the English version of the website and the other language versions could increase.

We therefore fully support the Department in looking for solutions to redress this serious delay, in cooperation with the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, but bearing in mind the very important limitations of "automatic" translation unless responsible and professional human revision is carried out. We must not restrict ourselves to prioritizing "greater speed" over quality and accuracy given the significance and sensitivity of the issues considered by the Organization in terms of legal and political implications and which demand an equally balanced, neutral and accurate in all six official languages.

That is why my Delegation recognizes the permanent willingness of the Language Translation Services, with whom we keep a regular and excellent working relationship.

We do share their concern to solve this problem, in particular the Spanish Language Service, due to the lack of resources and consequent outsourcing of part of their work, without counting, on certain cases, on the knowledge, expertise and wise experience of the staff and officials belonging to the United Nations who fulfil their work based on the historic memory and their robust professionalism. This part of the work which is done externally is not always subject to due revision or editorial control and, as a consequence, mistakes are frequent. We are very much concerned about this, not to mention when this involves language which sometimes ignores versions previously translated by our UN translators and interpreters. We commend the information meetings with Member States to discuss issues relating to language services to share our common concerns and seek solutions.

This concern also extends to guided tours of the United Nations Headquarters. While recognizing the efforts to revitalize the tour route and the number of languages offered and without overlooking the restrictions deriving from the Capital Master Plan, it is our concern that guided tours in Spanish still fail to have a regular and pre-established schedule taking into account the number of Spanish speaking tourist who daily visit the Headquarters.

Mr. Chairman,

As regards traditional media, we wish to commend the work done by the United Nations Radio and Television services. Our special recognition to team of the United Nations Radio in Spanish. As has already been said, along with new technologies, we consider it very important to continue employing traditional media in conveying the message of the Organization as they constitute the primary means of communication in most developing countries.

Likewise, we call upon traditional communication media, particularly radio programmes, to disseminate information in as many languages as possible, including Portuguese and indigenous languages.

We are pleased that the Secretary-General acknowledges that serving the needs of Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa has been a longstanding concern. We therefore celebrate the commitment of the Department to work closely with the Government of Angola to establish the new Centre in Luanda on a priority basis, especially when the Angolan Government has offered rent-free premises and the necessary funding and posts have been included in the biennial budget for 2010-2011, approved by the General Assembly last December.

The Argentine Delegation also wishes to commend the work done by the Department regarding the translation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with priority given to translations in indigenous languages. Our special recognition to the United Nations Information Centre in Buenos Aires for its contribution to the translation of the said instrument into Mapuche and Wichi, in 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

We celebrate the significant progress made in the process of digitizing an important number of official documents, including the voting records for resolutions dating from the

first to the thirty-seventh sessions of the General Assembly. While urging the Department to continue with this task, our special recognition goes to the Library staff for their efforts for the benefit of mankind in preserving the heritage of us all.

To conclude, after a year of particularly intensive activities as evidenced, besides the aspects already described, of communications campaigns and technical innovations, we would like to extend our best wishes of success to all those working in the Department of Public Information. Our special recognition to all of them for their permanent disposition, willingness and openness to enquiries and requests from Member States in a framework of transparency, efficiency and high professionalism.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.