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STATEMENT BY

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UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION**

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Mr. Chairman,

I thank you for the opportunity to address the 32nd Session of the United Nations Committee on Information.

My delegation wishes to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on the exemplary manner you have presided over the affairs of the Committee during the past one year. With your able and dedicated leadership, clearly, the Committee is poised for even greater achievements on the road ahead.

Zambia aligns herself with statement by Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Information is power. It cuts across all sectors of national and international life. It is unarguable that nations that have effectively used information to their advantage have made tremendous strides in science and technology, medicine, agriculture, commerce, mining, industry and indeed in virtually all aspects of life.

The technological advances witnessed during the century have largely been due to pronounced and correct use of information. Truthful, accurate and balanced information further contributes to transparency, accountability and good and democratic governance.

It is for this reason that Zambia, like the rest of the United Nations family, places high premium on the work of this Committee in promoting the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to bridge and strengthen peace and international understanding based on free circulation, wider and balanced dissemination of information.

Mr. Chairman,

To achieve this and other objectives, the role of the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), is critical in public information outreach programmes, capacity building of media and other information disseminators and advocacy for and on behalf of members states, on major international issues and challenges such as climate change, Millennium Development Goals and investment, among others.

Zambia also sees the role of the DPI as crucially important in bridging the gulf between developed and third world countries in terms of information communication tools and technologies and balanced coverage and ranking of issues between the two divides.

Mr. Chairman,

In a few years time, the global community is to migrate to the digital era. This will not be a simple transition for many countries, including mine. It is our expectation that the DPI, as always, will be on hand, to lead member states in embracing and settling down with this new technology.

Mr. Chairman,

Zambia appreciates the important work the United Nations Information centre (UNIC), located in the capital of the Republic of Zambia, Lusaka is doing in raising public visibility around the United Nations and its activities. The Centre has not only heightened its public information outreach programmes, but has also, and so far, translated the booklet 'UN in Brief,' and other booklets on the MDGs into the country's seven major local languages. The Zambian Government highly values the regional information centre's vital services.

The Zambian Government is pleased to note that the Centre is also in the process of translating a booklet: 'A stronger United Nations for a better world,' another important document in which Secretary General Ban Ki-moon highlights priorities for the world body. When completed this work will further enhance local knowledge of the United Nations in my country.

Mr. Chairman,

Significant investments have also been made in the installation of information communication technology, (ICT), infrastructure which has made the centre more accessible to members of the public. Following the installation of the ICT, the number of people accessing the library at the centre rose from 19,189 in 1989 to 21,653 in 2009.

As stated in this session last year, the United Nations Information Centre in Zambia which also covers Botswana, Malawi and Swaziland, has been a beacon of the United Nations in our sub-region since its establishment in 1975. It is through its activities that my country's role in the United Nations received support of many Zambians at a time when the nation hosted refugees and freedom fighters from countries that were still under colonial rule in Southern Africa. Indeed the story of Zambia's role and support to the liberation struggle in Southern Africa cannot be complete without the DPI.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the DPI and its country offices are vitally important to Member States in the implementation of various mandates bestowed upon them by the General Assembly and the Security Council. It is therefore our appeal that these offices are not closed down in the Member States where they still exist, financial constraints notwithstanding.

Mr. Chairman,

The media plays a vital role in facilitating public access to information and the right for individuals and society to express themselves. To this effect, Zambia has taken and continues to take a wide range of measures aimed at achieving country-wide media coverage and information dissemination.

Primary among Government interventions is, the liberalisation of the media industry which has resulted in the resurgence of private owned print and electronic media, which is running vibrantly side by side with the state owned media in the country.

The country now has a fairly large number of newspapers on the market and no less than 40 community radio stations which are making a significant contribution in, bridging the information gap between the urban and the rural populace.

The Government is also taking measures to reform the media industry in line with the present and future challenges of this vital sector.

We have passed the Independent Broadcasting Authority, (IBA), Act, while the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation, (ZNBC), Act has been amended to transform the national broadcaster into a public broadcaster. Government also plans to take back to Parliament, the Freedom of Information Bill, intended to enhance public access to information.

The process towards media self regulation is ongoing, aimed at developing a professional and ethical media in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

Zambia, like the rest of the world, is a beneficiary of the fruits of the internet, which has brought about a new form of communication referred to as, 'social media.'

Meritorious though this medium is, in enhancing the day to day social contact and communication among people, it should not supplant the important and unique role the traditional media that is newspapers, radio and television, play and will continue to play in the information and communication sector.

No effort should be reserved therefore, in ensuring the conventional, as the social media, is preserved.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I wish to applaud the importance Member States attach on the DPI as a vehicle to achieving the goals we have set for ourselves. With this commitment, success is not in doubt.

I thank you.