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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Opening of the 39th Session of the Committee on Information

Statement by Austria (Chair)

delivered by

**Ambassador Jan Kickert
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations**

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Mr. Acting Under-Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As I assume the Chair of the Committee on Information, I would like to express my gratitude for this honour you bestowed upon me. I am grateful to the members of the Committee for the confidence placed in me; and to the members of the outgoing Bureau for their work during the past two years, on which we shall build upon.

I would like to commend, especially, my distinguished colleague, Ambassador Kaha Inadze, Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations, for his chairmanship, and the dear colleagues who served as Vice Chairs and Rapporteur, during the previous biennium of the Committee. Our provisional agenda was prepared on the basis of consultations among those members of the Bureau of the Committee. Thanks to the contribution of our predecessors and to the constructive relationship that has been cultivated between the Committee and the Department of Public Information (DPI), the promotion of global awareness and understanding of the work of the United Nations have continued to progress.

The new Bureau profits from the continuation of the distinguished delegate from El Salvador acting as Vice Chair from the regional group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and we welcome the newly elected representatives of Japan from the group of Asia-Pacific States; Poland from the group of Eastern European States; and look forward to the nomination of a candidate from the group of African States. On behalf of the new Bureau, as we all now proceed to consider "Questions

relating to information”, I pledge that we shall do our best to advance our cause of promoting the awareness and understanding of the United Nations through the work of DPI. I trust that we can rely on your support for achieving that end.

Dear colleagues,

As a subsidiary body of the General Assembly established to deal with questions relating to public information, the Committee on Information is responsible for overseeing the work of the Department of Public Information and for providing guidance on its policies, programmes and activities.

We shall hear, shortly, a statement by the Acting Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications. Later today, we shall hold an informal interactive meeting that will allow members of the Committee to exchange ideas with, and pose questions to, senior DPI management. In the remainder of our session over the next two weeks, we shall conduct our General Debate in consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General on DPI activities (including strategic communications services, news services and outreach services); meet in our Open-ended working group; and, finally, consider and adopt our report to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

The public information that DPI provides and the audiences that DPI addresses worldwide are as varied as the United Nations system itself, ranging in content from political and security matters to human rights, economic and social questions, international law, and institutional, administrative and budgetary issues of the Organization itself. These all

find their expression in such forms, among others, as news output; websites; promotional campaigns; collaborations with partners in government, civil society and the private sector; flagship magazines on United Nations priorities; and research tools on the Organization as a whole. They are conveyed via radio, internet, print, photography, video and audio or in multimedia format. Some may be sales items, yet they may also be freely downloadable or otherwise distributed. They are meant for the peoples whom we serve: for such recipients as the global public, for academics, for youth, for students, for women, for journalists, for government officials, for citizens, for refugees, for host communities—or for any combination of these, and more. They can be as ephemeral as press releases and social media messages about what we are doing today, and meant for immediate consumption and quick impact, or they can be as long-lived as reference materials or library and multimedia archives intended to inform generations to come about what we have accomplished or where we may have not yet succeeded in our efforts. United Nations information centres work to maximize the local effect of global campaigns and of principal United Nations activities and concerns, while DPI as a whole undertakes to make its products as multilingual as possible within existing resources and to make use of new technologies. For all of this, your views—your critical observations and your constructive engagement—are sought, so that we can continue to strengthen the voice of the Organization.

Dear colleagues,

The annual observance of World Press Freedom Day falls during our Committee's session. While the commemoration on Thursday, 4 May, is not a part of the Committee's own agenda, this will be an opportunity for

us to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom; assess the state of press freedom throughout the world; defend the media from attacks on their independence; and pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Dear delegates and friends,

Seventy-one years ago, our predecessors established the Department of Public Information in the knowledge that the “United Nations cannot achieve the purposes for which it has been created unless the peoples of the world are fully informed of its aims and activities”. In a time of viral misinformation and so-called ‘fake news’ effective public information for achieving peace and security, human rights, justice and sustainable development is even more important—and relevant—today than it was in 1946. I look forward to working with you in order to develop a productive consensus that, reflected in our concluding resolution, will provide DPI with guidance on the public information policies and activities that we expect and need in moving forward.

Thank you for your attention.