

Mr. Chairman,

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Representative of France on behalf of the EU and by delegation of the EU presidency, and is honoured to contribute to the work of the Committee with its own statement.

Croatia would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and wishes you success in conducting the valuable activities of this Committee. We express our appreciation to the former Chairman, Mr. Rudolph Christen, who offered his robust leadership of this Committee. We wish to convey special thanks to both the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for providing us with a very detailed Report, and Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Kiyoo Akasaka, on his valuable statement made at the opening of the session. We also join other Member States of the Committee in welcoming the wish expressed by Antigua and Barbuda, and Zambia, to become Members of the Committee.

Croatia shares the position of the EU concerning the continuing efforts of the DPI to carry out the regionalization of the work of UN Information Centers. It is true that the Western European model may not work for every region of the world. However, the inclusion and the role of success stories is in direct relation to the culture of evaluation implemented within DPI Headquarters, and it has an influence on the performance of the UNIC's, as well as their valuable assistance in fulfilling the activities of the UN, set to achieve the greatest public impact.

The principal mission of the Department of Public Information is to strategically communicate on the activities and concerns of the United Nations, in an effort to achieve the greatest possible public impact. One of the highest purposes of the DPI is to focus on coordinated communications campaigns in key priority areas, while using traditional means of communications, as well as new information and communications technologies (ICT's).

Croatia commends the DPI for its assistance to Member States in facilitating their contribution to promote the activities of the UN in the area of information, at the national and regional level, especially by using the ICT's, such as the Internet, because it reaches all media, including the services provided by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

Mr. Chairman,

For many years, the major Croatian media and information agencies have been using the UN information sources in publicizing about the work of the Organization in the world, on key priority issues, such as the crises in Darfur, the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, as well as on climate change and peace-building. Ever since Croatia became a Non-Permanent Member of the Security Council, the national media have raised considerably the attention of the general public on pressing issues discussed by the Security Council. It is only now, from the perspective of a Council Member, that Croatia really understands and appreciates more deeply the difficult task accomplished by the DPI.

In reference to four major themes which occupy the UN agenda, which are peace and security, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), and human rights, much attention has been paid to issues such as the Palestinian question, Africa's development, and the dialogue amongst civilizations. However, a crucial aspect of a successful public information policy for any state is its degree of respect towards one basic human right, which is the freedom of speech. This takes on special significance at the UN, in the year of celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Respect for the freedom of expression goes hand in hand with the responsibility to respect the beliefs and rights of others. Any abuse of such a fundamental right, especially in dangerous and highly volatile areas in the world, can easily lead to incitement, anarchy and irrational behaviour, which can in turn create hostility and hatred amongst peoples of different faiths and cultures. Croatia commends the Department for continuing to make efforts to promote the culture of dialogue among civilizations. We are convinced that the respect of these fundamental rights is the only path for the achievement of a lasting civilization of peace and security.

The Croatian government is very sensitive in implementing the principle of transparency, including the protection of secrecy of private data of its citizens, which, again, are closely connected to the fundamental right to express one's own faith and national denomination.

The outreach programme on the Holocaust and the UN organize each year, on 28 January, a memorial ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust. The purpose of this outreach programme is to send a universal message, which should be celebrated world-wide. We consider this event to have become an inseparable part of Croatian life and a tradition of tolerance and democracy. Information about this annual event should be given a priority and it opens up the path to positive dialogue.

A good way to avoid national or religious hatred is to streamline communication through a positive approach, through a positive story to be told to the world. An example of a success story is the GA's adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, outlining the rights of the world's estimated 370 million indigenous people, mostly children, which sets out their individual and collective rights as well as their rights to culture, identity, language, employment, health, education and other issues. UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman praised the UN Member States, after they voted in the Assembly, thus concluding their more than twenty years long debate. There is an added quality value to this event, namely, the hope that the adoption of the Declaration would add momentum towards achieving the MDG's.

We are proud to mention UNICEF's activities in Croatia. This is a success story of a private public partnership, which is set on a unique model of assistance to children, based on self-financing, and it relies exclusively on donations made by citizens and business partners.

Mr. Chairman,

What makes a success story successful? It is necessary that all stakeholders make a contribution. One of the roles of the UN is in providing information and assistance in the area of education about crucial problems in the world. We believe that the MDG's will not be met, unless successful national systems of Disaster Risk Reduction are established, which in turn depend on a national information system. Croatia commends the role of DPI and praises the role played by more than 30 UN Information Centers, in its communications at the country level, especially on innovative partnerships that countries develop with civil society and the private sector. Croatia commends the hard work of the DPI devoted to the promotion of the MDG's. We have given full support to the "Stand up and Speak Out against Poverty" initiative in which information centres work with their country partners.

Thanks to the work of knowledge-sharing and provision of information services provided by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, Croatia has been able to join in the system of depositary libraries of the DHLINK around the world, through its own National and University Library, thus establishing a partnership with the Information Centers of the UN. The existence of this link allows us to see the rate of interest of private or public clients for information about the UN. As a result, this culture of evaluation can give us an estimate about the efforts to achieve also a common public good, by sharing knowledge through information.

We believe that the DPI should continue to build partnerships with local, national and regional broadcasters, to extend the UN message to the entire world. It should also continue to focus on supporting this service in the six official languages of the UN, in order to meet the needs of an ever increasing audience. Croatia suggests that the local population in some areas of South-Eastern Europe should be given a chance to also use the Croatian language, because this could accelerate the pace of their development and economic reconstruction, specifically in those areas where English is not understood. We are sure that this could prove to be rewarding.

Croatia believes that in the preservation of international peace, UN PKO's are very efficient and resourceful mediators. Often the dissemination of public information in PKO's is one important factor for achieving a positive outcome of these operations, especially as peacekeepers are often the first to arrive at the front-line, and they establish a direct link between the local population and the authorities.

Moreover, the work done by DPI in further supporting the stories produced by the *UN News Service* is commendable, more so as it has served as the basic material for the inaugural issue of the *UN Police Magazine*, produced in early 2007. This seems to fully satisfy the Croatian proposal made at the previous meeting of this Committee, about the need to highlight success stories of peacekeepers in their areas of operation. Croatia would like to see the DPI continue with its efforts in implementing such a meaningful and effective communications strategy.

Thanks to timely information provided by the UN about the need for humanitarian assistance, Croatia has worked in the past year even more intensely through UN Funds, such as the World Food Programme, for the region of the Middle East, particularly for the Lebanese people, or for the Sudan, thus providing assistance to two regions of the world gravely affected by humanitarian crises. Of particular importance for Croatia is timely information addressed to the people in need about the delivery of such assistance. This is what makes the difference in a success story.

Mr. Chairman,

There is a danger that in talking to ourselves in this Assembly, we are only preaching to the converted. We have to reach out of these walls and try to engage other key stakeholders. We should work together with the UN to continue to provide individuals, groups of people and nations, with timely access to free and fair information, through success stories, instead of talking only about threats and missed opportunities. We all have to work harder to reach parliamentarians and political leaders, to make sure that the information that we create contains that kind of positive energy necessary for turning a potential success story into a reality, and with a purpose, so that the decision-makers integrate this purpose into their projects and evaluation processes, in our world of information society, to be shared globally by all constituencies, government and civil society alike.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.