

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

I would first like to thank the Under Secretary-General, M. Kiyoo Akasaka for his remarks.

I would like to thank you yourself and your entire staff for making significant improvements to the quality and clarity of the Department's activity reports. As the European Union has emphasised at several previous sessions, the Committee on Information needs to have activity reports with precise figures and comments which clearly evaluate results, spell out difficulties and propose solutions for resolving them in order to do a good job. Only in this way will the Committee be able to work and give you a clear mandate to successfully carry out your mission.

Mr. Chairman,

The European Union has set three priorities for this session which are simple and follow on the action carried out since the last several sessions:

The first is to improve the effectiveness of the DPI within the budget constraints that we all know. This applies in particular to the information centres which are an essential instrument for the DPI in its mission, i.e., to promote the action of the UN and the main issues it is called on to address.

On this point, we noted with satisfaction all the initiatives taken by the Regional Centre in Brussels, in particular, as we are celebrating this year the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the initiative, "Know Your Rights." This clearly demonstrates the validity of regionalization. The European Union has also taken note of the improved resources of the centres and especially the increased cooperation among them and the pilot role allotted to some of them. The European Union considers this approach positive and encourages its expansion to other centres when it can be done in full consultation with the countries concerned, on a voluntary basis, and within the constrained budgetary framework that we all know.

Furthermore, the European Union encourages the Department of Information and the network of United Nations information centers to enhance cooperation with all other

United Nations entities at the national and local levels in order to develop a more coherent communications strategy and to speak with one voice.

The European Union is also sensitive to the development of actions to extend influence and to partner with civil society directed to key publics such as young people, academics and decision-makers, present and future. More than ever, the UN has to explain, debate and convince in order to show that it is still wholly relevant in the face of today's and tomorrow's challenges. The EU will strongly support any initiative to this end.

The second priority is the effort to advance multilingualism, that is, to ensure that all the official UN languages are treated equally in all the activities of the Department of Information—and again, within our budget constraints and in keeping with the timeliness of DPI's messages. Multilingualism is a key aspect in the work of the United Nations to which I believe all the members of the Committee are profoundly attached. Much has been done, and we are grateful to you, Mr Under Secretary general, to the Department and all its personnel. Unfortunately, the situation is not satisfactory, and we will be paying close attention to make sure that all the resources available for this purpose to the Department of Information are indeed used to achieve our common objective.

The third priority is streamlining the resolution. Let's be honest enough to say that our resolution at this time is very long, very complicated, and in the view of some, lacking in clarity. We need to meet our responsibilities by streamlining it and making it action-oriented so that the message of the UN is passed on better and understood better all over the world. The European Union wishes to address this task with all the members of the committee in a constructive way and with a desire for consensus. I recall that during the 29th session, the Group of 77 and China assured the European Union that it would offer a text to streamline the resolution. We are waiting with great interest for this resolution to be officially communicated to us. Having seen it, we shall eventually propose, in the same spirit of constructiveness and consensus, to continue this work by engaging in a long-term action between this session and the next.

Mr. Chairman,

In a few days, we shall be celebrating Press Freedom Day. This day is particularly important for our committee.

Every year, we reaffirm in the first part of our resolution our attachment to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, and the principles of independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, and which urges all states to ensure that journalists can work freely and effectively. Surely we all have progress to make. But we must also

keep in mind the commitments that we make solemnly and publicly in this forum and elsewhere, and respect them.

Every year, we also resolutely condemn all attacks against journalists. According to the committee to protect journalists 65 were killed in 2007 and for 2008 so far, it has been the case for eight of them. It too many of them. Far too many. And we collectively have a responsibility to put an end to this.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to conclude these remarks by reiterating the EU's commitment to work openly and in cooperation in order achieve, through consensus, effective responses to the problems that will be referred to us.

Thank you.