

Statement

by Mr. Hery Saripudin, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia
in the General Debate of the 30th Session of the Committee on Information

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the thirtieth session of the Committee on Information. I congratulate, as well, members of the committee bureau.

I further wish to express the appreciation of the delegation of Indonesia to the Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information, Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka for his comprehensive presentation on the strategies to be adopted by the Department of Public Information (DPI) for the years ahead. We note with pleasure the constructive interaction between DPI and the members of the Committee on Information. We also pay homage to the staff and leadership of DPI for their dedicated efforts to help fulfill the mission of the United Nations by globally communicating its activities and concerns.

Associating myself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G-77 and China, I will now make a few remarks on a few specific issues.

Mr. Chairman,

Indonesia would like to underscore the important role of DPI as the voice of the Organization in disseminating information about its work, for the purpose of achieving the greatest impact. In this regard, we take note of the reports of the Secretary-General before us. They are extremely rich in information about the breadth and depth of the coverage of DPI, as well as the internal structural arrangements that make its success possible.

My delegation appreciates the department's past and continuing activities to extend to the deepest areas of the work of United Nations bodies, as well as its work on such issues as development and development financing, the Millennium Development Goals, Human Rights, Climate Change, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and the question of Palestine, particularly in its program aimed at both enhancing the awareness of the international community with regard to the Question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East as well as strengthening Media capacity and skills of Palestinian journalists from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

These are but a few examples, but they illustrate the wide range of issues that DPI has to keep an eye on, and keep informing the world about. As we have said in the past, we are pleased that the strategy of better-defined communications goals, identification of target audiences, and the use of research and impact assessment methods, are paying off.

There can be no doubt that the increasing use of information and communication technologies is part of the reason why some of the DPI's communication strategies have proved to be so successful.

We commend DPI for extending the use of these technologies as far afield as possible. Not only has this brought the work of the United Nations closer to the people of the world, it is also bringing United Nations offices and programs closer to each other, and enhancing partnerships. In this connection, we are pleased at the increasing use and influence of the United Nations Information Centres, and their deeper involvement with the local media. In October 2007, for instance, UNIC Jakarta, in cooperation with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, organized a two-day media and stakeholders workshop with the objective of giving journalists a better understanding of the United Nations Climate Change Conference scheduled for December 2007 in Bali. We have no doubt that the workshop was of tremendous value to local journalists.

As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia recognizes how important information dissemination is in United Nations peacekeeping. This is why we are pleased at the current growing cooperation between DPI and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We fully believe that this continued cooperation will enhance the image of the United Nations in the eyes of the world, as well as the quality of peacekeeping missions.

As we prepare for World Press Freedom day on 3 May, Mr. Chairman, Indonesia would like to reiterate its strong commitment to freedom of expression. We believe, however, that it is unrealistic to exercise this freedom of expression without a corresponding sense of responsibility, or without regard to its dire impact on the sensitivities of others. A clear example of this is the most provocative kind of extremism exhibited on the world stage recently by the airing of Geert Wilders' insulting film on the Holy Qu'ran.

In our view, that film served no purpose other than to cause offence, and we condemn it in its entirety. We hereby express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon who also condemned it in the strongest terms.

Mr. Chairman,

Towards eliminating the opportunities for such extremism, we continue to advocate dialogue at all levels of society to help bridge the gap between various cultures and beliefs, including with the mass media. This is because we believe mass media practitioners can be the messenger either of peace and tolerance, or of misunderstanding and hatred. Indonesia has been, and will continue to work in this direction.

Indeed, next week in Bali, Indonesia and Norway will again host the Global Inter Media Dialogue initiative, which is intended to promote mutual understanding, diversity and freedom of expression. This will be our third time of cooperating in this endeavor. So far, over 130 renowned journalists from 67 countries have participated in it.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we commend DPI for this and other efforts to disseminate information about the United Nations globally, accurately and in a balanced and objective way. We express our fullest support for its commitment to this mandate, and also for its support of the work of the Committee.

Thank you.