



STATEMENT
BY
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF SRI LANKA
AT THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
30 APRIL 2008

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Mr Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election to chair this Committee and also to other members of the bureau. The delegation of Sri Lanka will extend its full support to you and your bureau in all your endeavors. Our sincere thanks of appreciation also go to Mr. Rudolf Christen of Switzerland and Ms. Marcelo Suarez of Argentina for their successful stewardship of the committee's 29th Session and the outgoing bureau for their hard work.

Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, Under Secretary General for Communication and Public Information deserves our compliments for the exemplary manner in which he leads the Department of Public Information since his assumption of office last year. It is our earnest desire to continue to encourage him in our efforts to create a more positive profile for the UN, worldwide.

Sri Lanka delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I shall, therefore, limit myself to some remarks on issues that we consider to be of particular importance.

Today information is growing at an exponential rate making it a tool for power. The depth and reach of information and expansion of communication technology make some comment that the world is already flat, not just the familiar refrain, that is, the world is a global village! Information today travels to nooks and corners hitherto un-trodden, thereby bringing peoples and communities into contact with one another increasingly.

At the same time, however, it is becoming harder to access for those who are not resourceful. The poor and the unfortunate continue to remain on the margins of this information age. The DPI is providing a crucial service in disseminating the information for the benefit of the under-privileged, through its outreach programmes and other means. Its role is indispensable in

conveying the work and purpose of this great organization to the widest possible audiences in order to make the greatest impact on the lives of people.

Sri Lanka expresses its appreciation for the important work of DPI in promoting awareness on issues of importance to the International Community and also for its strategic approach adopted in recent times. Clearly defined communications strategies are in place that focuses on targeted audiences and on integrated use of the new information and communications technologies in promotional campaigns and outreach activities. This is also manifested in the quality of the reports, clustered around three thematic areas, as produced by the DPI. We are convinced that the DPI should continue to play this essential role, in order to help fulfill the substantive purposes of the United Nations. The complimentary role of the UNICs, UNIS, UNOs, and UNRIC global network of the UN DPI as the main link between the people of the world and the Headquarters does not need to be overemphasized. UNICs are key to the work of the DPI, giving its global work a local accent.

Despite its achievements and all good work, Sri Lanka believes that DPI will redouble its efforts in strengthening its partnership with the civil society. Many developing countries still lack in infrastructure facilities on information technology, and remain short of benefiting from technological advancements. It is therefore important that DPI understands the ground realities in each country, which, of course, are different from country to country, and consider resource mobilization to all the needy developing countries. Increasing the number of scholarships given to public and private media personnel from developing countries is one such activity.

The UN websites are an essential tool by which the DPI can improve accessibility for wider population through use of local languages. At present only 34 languages are reportedly used by UN information centers worldwide. It is important that the DPI increases the coverage and include more languages in the future so that a vast majority of people can benefit from knowledge and information. There is a long felt need for such an expanded coverage in Asia.

We also stress the importance of continuing the use of traditional media, including both radio and print media in disseminating the information on the United Nations. While targeting the local audience, it may be useful to also disseminate the positive contributions made by the country concerned in promoting the principles and purposes of the UN.

Sri Lanka believes that disseminating success stories on peacekeeping operations is a key role which the DPI should more actively play. The UN peacekeeping has evolved significantly over the past years as the needs for such operations continue. Today it has also morphed into peace-building to achieve a state of societal equilibrium where new disputes do not slip into violence and war or post-conflict societies do not relapse into conflicts again. It is thus important to let the world know the remarkable success of the UN in the fields of peacekeeping and peace-building in order to rally the global community behind such efforts.

Before closing, Mr. Chairman, let me take this opportunity to reiterate Sri Lanka's support to the work of the DPI in order to achieve a positive outcome of this session of the Committee on Information.