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**CLOSING REMARKS BY
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FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

**AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 30TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION**

**WEDNESDAY, 30 APRIL 2008, 11:30 A.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

M. le Président,
Distingués délégués,

Merci de me donner la parole pour m'adresser au Comité, au moment où vous concluez le débat général de cette trentième session. Permettez-moi de commencer en remerciant toutes les délégations pour les paroles aimables qu'elles m'ont adressées, ainsi qu'au Département de l'information et à son personnel. J'apprécie tout particulièrement les conseils et le soutien que vous m'avez prodigués au cours de ma première année à la tête de notre Département.

Les nombreux commentaires positifs et déclarations encourageantes que j'ai entendus au cours des trois derniers jours sont réconfortants. La confiance que nombre d'entre vous ont exprimée à l'égard du Département tandis que nous oeuvrons à relater l'information des Nations Unies nous pousse à bâtir sur nos réalisations et, même, à faire mieux.

J'aimerais maintenant répondre à quelques questions spécifiques qui ont été soulevées et à quelques commentaires qui ont été faits au cours du débat général. Si vous estimez, au terme de mes remarques, que vos questions et vos préoccupations n'ont pas été entièrement traitées, n'hésitez pas à me contacter, moi et mes principaux collègues, à n'importe quel moment.

De nombreuses délégations ont salué l'approche stratégique que le Département a adoptée dans son travail, de l'intégration plus étroite de ses bureaux de terrain avec les sièges, et de l'intérêt placé par le Département dans les thèmes de communication prioritaires.

Sur le terrain, la contribution importante que les centres d'information des Nations Unies font à cet égard a été soulignée par un certain nombre d'orateurs, y compris par le distingué représentant d'Antigua-et-Barbuda, au nom du Groupe des 77 et de la Chine, qui a demandé à ce que toutes les mesures possibles soient prises pour renforcer les centres d'information des Nations Unies, les qualifiant de « source essentielle pour le flux d'information ». Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec cette idée.

Plusieurs délégués ont appelé au renforcement des centres d'information des Nations Unies, en particulier de ceux situés dans des pays en développement. En effet, les contraintes financières auxquelles est soumis le Département limitent notre capacité à soutenir le travail des centres existants. Cependant, grâce à nos partenariats élargis, ainsi qu'à notre attention portée sur la coopération régionale entre les centres d'information des Nations Unies, nous continuerons à améliorer leur travail et leur portée.

Les efforts du Département en vue d'améliorer l'image de l'Organisation ont également été notés. En fait nous sommes très préoccupés par la mauvaise image de notre organisation dans le monde arabe en particulier. À cet égard, le distingué représentant de la République arabe syrienne a, au nom du Groupe arabe, qualifié les efforts du Groupe de la communication des Nations Unies pour le monde arabe et la revitalisation du Centre d'information au Yémen comme autant d'étapes positives en ce sens.

M. le Président,

Je prends note des commentaires faits par de nombreuses délégations sur les efforts entrepris par le Département pour améliorer le multilinguisme sur le web, ainsi que sur l'importance que vous accordez en particulier au Centre des nouvelles, au Service de presse et à la Radio des Nations Unies. Nous sommes engagés à accroître nos efforts en faveur de la parité dans toutes les langues officielles sur le site web des Nations Unies, et tout aussi engagés à maintenir la qualité de la production et de la portée du Centre des nouvelles, des communiqués de presse et aussi de la radio. Grâce à ces médias, ainsi qu'à la vidéo, nous continuerons à relater l'information des Nations Unies non seulement de manière objective et précise, mais aussi de façon concrète et très humaine, démontrant à quel point l'Organisation rend service aux gens ordinaires dans leur vie quotidienne.

La situation du français, toutefois, est différente de celle des autres langues. En raison notamment du fait qu'il s'agit d'une langue de travail du Secrétariat, la

quantité de documentation potentiellement disponible est beaucoup plus grande. Étant donné les contraintes qui affectent le système de traduction pro bono établi pour le chinois, le russe et l'espagnol – à savoir, le goulet d'étranglement que représentent le contrôle de la qualité et la mise en forme des matériaux –, le Département estime qu'un moyen plus efficace d'accroître le volume de documentation en français sur le site internet est de travailler plus étroitement avec les bureaux de production afin de s'assurer que le matériel existant et la capacité dans cette langue sont réunis pour publier et mettre à jour l'information sur la page d'accueil en français.

Dans un premier temps, le Département a demandé à des administrateurs auxiliaires de langue française au sein du Secrétariat d'aider à évaluer l'étendue du matériel et de la capacité de production en français dans leurs domaines respectifs. Nous travaillerons étroitement avec ces bureaux en vue d'établir les voies régulières d'affichage et de mise à jour de l'information en français. Un tel système décentralisé peut potentiellement dépasser la capacité d'un service de traduction pro bono pour augmenter le volume de documentation en français. Toutefois, un tel système n'exclut pas l'utilisation de services complémentaires pro bono par une université française.

En réponse à une préoccupation exprimée par le distingué représentant de la République arabe syrienne, je suis heureux de vous faire savoir que l'unité arabe de la Section des services web bénéficie maintenant d'un effectif complet de quatre membres, égal à celui des autres langues. Les deux postes professionnels sont désormais pourvus par de véritables affectations. Les deux agents des services généraux sont maintenant sur des contrats temporaires en attendant que ces postes soient pourvus par le système de sélection du personnel. Au premier tour, aucun candidat approprié n'a été trouvé et, de ce fait, ces postes ont fait l'objet de nouveaux appels à candidatures.

Je remercie le distingué délégué de la France pour avoir attiré notre attention sur la question de la nomination d'un coordinateur pour le multilinguisme. Le Département comprend l'importance de ce rôle, non seulement pour son travail, mais aussi pour celui de l'ensemble du Secrétariat. La décision de nommer un Coordinateur appartient au Secrétaire général et nous l'attendons.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the call by the distinguished representative of Jamaica for an information component within the UNDP Office in Kingston to complement the work carried out by the UNIC in Port of Spain, our Department recognizes the

important contribution that such an arrangement could bring to our communications activities in the region. Although we currently do not have either the staff or financial resources to provide for such a component, we would be interested in exploring other options with the Government of Jamaica.

With regard to the request from the distinguished delegate from Cape Verde on the establishment of an Information Centre in Luanda, and comments made this morning by the distinguished delegate from Brazil, I would emphasize that the Department recognizes the importance of serving the needs of the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. To establish the centre would require a decision by the General Assembly and an allocation of sufficient resources to make it a viable operation. That said, we will continue to be guided by the Committee on Information on this matter, and stand ready to provide whatever assistance or information may be needed in this regard.

I would also like to express my Department's deep appreciation to the many Member States who have continued to provide support, in cash and in kind, to the operations of the network of UN Information Centres, whether in connection with their ongoing activities or for special projects or workshops.

The representative of Mexico, on behalf of the Rio Group, asked about DPI's role in relation to the newly created Public Affairs Unit within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Department of Field Support. I have noted that many of you have made reference to this role of our Department in cooperation with the DPKO and the Department of Field Support. Our Department supports peacekeeping missions in several ways by providing strategic guidance for mission planning, and support to public information components of UN peacekeeping operations in formulating and implementing communications strategies. It also provides the entire UN system with guidance on peacekeeping-related issues, and carries out numerous activities to promote UN peacekeeping. DPI organizes specialized training for public information personnel identified for possible rapid deployment. And finally, it creates content and maintains the UN website on peacekeeping and assists in developing local mission websites.

In this context, and in response to a question by the distinguished delegate from Bangladesh, I would like to inform you that DPI has increased its promotion of the work of the peacekeepers, with particular emphasis on the troop-contributing countries and their media. Different parts of the Department, particularly its Peace and Security Section, UNTV, UN NewsCentre and UN Information Centres, feature stories involving peacekeepers, such as those in the past three months

about Bangladeshi peacekeepers serving in Liberia and Haiti. For this year's 60th anniversary of UN peacekeeping, our Department and DPKO have collaborated on a major photographic exhibit that looks at peacekeeping "then and now." We have created tailored versions of this exhibit, with additional images of peacekeepers from major troop-contributing countries, including from Bangladesh, and other Member States. DPI has also produced a series of posters featuring individual peacekeepers and key troop- and police-contributing countries, which it has also made available to the permanent missions in New York.

I would also like to inform the distinguished representative of Bangladesh that DPI will explore the possibility to further promote International Mother Language Day.

With regard to the proposed name change of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library (DHL), as raised by the representative from Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative from Switzerland, this in no way alters the commitment to fulfill the previous agreed mandates and General Assembly resolutions relevant to libraries.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is giving considerably more attention to access to information and knowledge management, particularly in developing countries. As more and more information is available on the internet, librarians in those countries need additional training. Based on a recent survey conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of over 400 UN depository libraries, 93.5% of the respondents indicated that they had Internet access on their premises and most indicated a preference for receiving UN documents electronically.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is placing a greater emphasis on regional training for depository libraries. A regional workshop, organized in conjunction with ESCAP and held in Bangkok this past November, also encouraged a new partnership approach with UNICs. Similar regional workshops were held in Ethiopia in 2004 and in the Dominican Republic in 2007. In June of this year, a training session for libraries in the CIS countries will take place in St. Petersburg in the Russian Federation. As resources permit, this initiative can be expanded.

Other libraries in the UN Secretariat, most notably the UN Office in Geneva Library, have also adopted new approaches to encourage knowledge-sharing within the Organization. Knowledge-sharing activities are discussed in meetings of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries. Member libraries have progressively adopted new methods for reaching stakeholders and supporting UN constituents to access

information and knowledge, thereby reinforcing their roles and making their services more relevant.

Mr. Chairman,

A number of delegations referred to the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine, including the distinguished representative of Palestine participating as an observer this morning. DPI continues to implement this General Assembly-mandated programme objectively. The programme includes an annual training session for Palestinian media practitioners, an annual media seminar on peace in the Middle East, updating booklets and materials, and other activities. In this connection, I am pleased to announce the decision by the Government of Austria to co-host this year's media seminar in Vienna in October. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this generous offer.

I would like to thank the distinguished delegate of China for his interest in the evaluations conducted by the Department. In 2007, a major focus of our assessment activities was our work with the media. This included best practices and lessons learned in working with UN system partners to produce relevant and timely media products and services. We also examined UNIC media outreach activities and analyzed the placement of opinion pieces by the Secretary-General and other senior officials, to better understand what factors influenced the willingness of newspapers to print such pieces.

DPI uses the information from such evaluations to continuously improve its products and services, but we also use it to report to you, as succinctly as possible, what we have achieved. Most recently, we collected data on such DPI activities as the UN CyberSchoolbus, library services, and the Reham al-Farra journalists' fellowship programme, to cite just a few examples. Owing to space limitations, however, not all the evaluation results could be fully reflected in the report on the activities of DPI and we, therefore, included an overall rating, compiled from all the feedback we received across all target audiences. As mentioned in the report on the activities of the Department, 84% of our respondents were satisfied with DPI's products and services, compared to 80% in 2005.

I thank members for their comments about our work on the Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In my opening statement, I briefly mentioned the *Africa Renewal* information programme – *Africa Renewal* magazine, its website, and its associated features service. UN Radio facilitates radio broadcasts on issues of central importance to NEPAD's vision for Africa in the 21st Century.

DPI also works closely with the Pretoria-based NEPAD Secretariat, providing its staff and advisers with updates on Africa's progress on the MDGs, arranging opportunities for NEPAD's senior officials to speak to the press when they are in New York, and facilitating the flow of information on NEPAD's sectoral programmes to a wider audience. Also in cooperation with the Secretariat, the Department is making widely available in print for the first time, copies of *The NEPAD Plan*, and is looking for partners to produce this booklet in some of the major African languages.

The Department is also playing an important role in the UN's inter-agency consultative group charged with formulating joint projects that will further NEPAD's implementation.

In response to the concerns voiced by several Member States, our Department, in consultation with the Department of Safety and Security and other relevant offices, will do what it can to facilitate access by press officers from the permanent missions to restricted areas during periods of elevated security, such as the opening of the General Assembly.

In response to questions on the Capital Master Plan, our Department is working very closely with the CMP Secretariat and with colleagues in the Department of Management and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to ensure that coverage of all open meetings, as well as of briefings and other public events, are maintained during the renovation of the complex. There will, however, be certain limitations during the renovation time and logistical issues, as well as the possible impact of unforeseen circumstances for a project of this magnitude and complexity.

For coverage, connectivity is key and our Department, the Information Technology Services Division and the Department of Management have been involved in detailed planning with the CMP Secretariat to ensure that cabling and connectivity is available for TV, radio and Internet needs. DPI has worked very closely with these offices, including with the Broadcast Conference and Support Section, to plan for not only normal Secretariat IT functions, but also the special needs of coverage. Detailed discussions have been held on connectivity issues to enable full coverage and dissemination of audio, video and electronic outputs.

In addition, issues such as stake-out areas, camera positions, desks for press officers in the main temporary meetings rooms, lighting, and other factors that affect coverage are resolved largely to our satisfaction. I would add, however,

that given cost constraints, there may be some small quality loss in lighting, for example, in some temporary rooms.

Proximity to conference and broadcast facilities has been the primary criteria for the location of News and Media Division staff during the CMP. A number of staff will remain on-site: broadcast, webcast and photo staff in the basement; staff servicing the press corps in the Library and South Annex. The rest of the News and Media Division staff will be located in DC-1 across the street, providing ready-access to the complex, particularly the temporary conference facility on the North Lawn. DPI staff will move only in the early part of 2009, after the regular session of the General Assembly is over; and the move will be staggered. We have requested space to be allocated in DC-1 to enable some editing and production work to take place there, as well as in the studio capacity that will remain in the complex. Discussions are also being held on the locations for the audio-visual archives, as we proceed with a planned digitization programme.

The press corps will remain onsite, located in the Library, as I mentioned in the interactive session, and full connectivity for them is part of the current planning. The press briefing room will be located in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium and the Spokesperson's office, Media Documents Centre and Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit will also be located in adjacent areas. The CMP Secretariat has assured us that the press will have direct access to stakeout positions located elsewhere in the complex – the General Assembly, Security Council, and North Lawn complex -- although clearly the press will need to allow more time to get to these locations from their new offices.

The CMP will affect other services, including those for visitors. Based on current dates available, the guided tour operation will be impacted by the renovation of the conference building as of June 2009. DPI is working with the CMP to identify a new route in order to continue to offer visits to the public. Meanwhile, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library will necessarily have its services dispersed as a result of the building being partially used as a swing space. CMP staff have been working closely with the Library to come up with new solutions. Current plans will allow for continued onsite reference services, and a phased removal of library stacks, to allow for the replacement of current shelving with more modern equipment. Other library services will be maintained off campus but in close proximity to clients.

Distinguished delegates,

Finally, I would like to repeat what I said at the opening of this session of the Committee. My approach to the work of the Department is based on the idea that a strategic approach will result in the best and most effective outcome. I have emphasized this strategic approach because we need to plan and prepare ahead, prioritize, coordinate, and enhance partnerships. I have promoted this idea in every aspect of our work. Last year, as you have seen, we prioritized our work in such areas as climate change, the Millennium Development Goals and peace and security. This year, a number of events have taken place. But these events are not taking place separately from each other. We are trying to prioritize our activities so that they are more effective and have a greater impact.

You have said that the good image of the United Nations should be promoted by our Department. Indeed, as I mentioned, there are some concerns in certain areas of the world about the United Nations' image. This may be because of the lack of our public information activities, or because of substantive disagreements among Member States on important issues before the United Nations. We must enhance and strengthen our activities so that the United Nations' goals and ideas can be better understood, and so that we can achieve stronger support from the global general public. And it is because of our limited resources and constraints that we need to prioritize our work and take a strategic approach. We would like to enhance our partnership with Member States, NGOs, civil society, business and young people. You will see that we are doing some interesting things with partners like filmmakers and screenwriters, because through them, we know that our work will be understood by a greater general public.

As to the management of our Department, I mentioned six basic principles to my colleagues when I began my work in the Department, which I refer to as TEAPOT: transparency, efficiency, accountability, partnership, organized approach and teamwork. I believe that under these principles, our staff have produced enormously important work. You have seen our work with television, radio, webcasting, press releases, and organized events and seminars – and I hope you have seen a difference. I would like to make sure that with greater transparency, efficiency, accountability, partnerships, an organized approach and teamwork, our Department will be even more effective and more responsive to the needs of the Organization. I also hope that it will make a difference in helping to make the United Nations stronger for a better world.

Distinguished delegates,

Even though the formal debate has now come to a close, our dialogue with the members of this Committee, through its Bureau, shall continue. I look forward

to the outcome of your deliberations over the coming days and to the strategic direction and guidance that the Committee will provide through its recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I count on our cooperation. I count on your good work and your guidance and support to the work of our Department. I thank you.