

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**STATEMENT BY
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**30th session of the Committee on Information
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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Committee on Information as it begins its deliberations on “Questions relating to information”.

Let me start by congratulating Mr. Andreas Baum on his election as Chairman of the Committee. I am confident that under his astute leadership, the relationship between the Committee and the Department of Public Information will be further strengthened. I also take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the outgoing Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Rudolf Christen, for his strong leadership and support for the United Nations and its ideals. I also congratulate Mr. Xavier Rosa on his election as Vice Chairman. I look forward to working with you as a team in fulfilling our shared responsibilities and in enhancing DPI’s effectiveness and impact.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Committee on Information. In 1978, when the General Assembly established the Committee, it stressed the importance of close cooperation between DPI and Member States on informing the world’s public about the “aims and achievements” of the United Nations. Today, we can say with certainty that the evolving partnership between the Committee and DPI has been a cornerstone in defining DPI’s role in a continuously changing global media environment. Thanks to the support and guidance from this Committee, DPI’s efforts are more strategic and coherent, its products and services are conveyed faster and more effectively, and its reach and partnerships engage greater and broader audiences.

In the Reports of the Secretary-General submitted for your consideration, Activities of the Department of Public Information, Part I and Part II, we have provided information on DPI activities in areas specifically identified by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/111 of 12 December 2007. I will provide additional information on present DPI activities and a number of challenges before us in my statement. Later today, in the interactive dialogue with Member States, there will be further opportunity to discuss DPI activities in greater detail. I would encourage you, especially those attending the Committee for the first time, to join me and my colleagues in that dialogue.

Mr. Chairman,

DPI remains committed to providing timely, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and coherent information about the United Nations and its objectives. Its mission – to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact – is central to, and inseparable from, the objectives and aims of the Organization.

I would like to briefly outline the approaches that I have undertaken to guide the work of the Department.

1. A strategic approach. I have consistently emphasized the need for setting priorities and early preparation to ensure that our work is focused, and to achieve the greatest impact from our efforts. This is particularly important given DPI's shrinking resource base but expanding mandate. The Department early in the year identified broad communications priority themes in the areas of development, peace and security, human rights, and climate change. It also identified Africa as a regional focus, and youth as a strategic audience for its work. These priorities, which reflect and build on the mandates provided by the General Assembly, as well as the vision articulated by the Secretary-General, guide us in our work. Examples of our strategic approach in action, and its resulting successful communications campaigns include: the series of events and activities at UN Headquarters and in venues around the world as part of the Holocaust and the United Nations outreach programme; the launch of Secretary-General Ban's multi-year campaign to end violence against women and girls; and the first annual worldwide commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

2. Improved coordination. I have held a series of consultations with the heads of departments and offices to identify specific areas of cooperation. The purpose of these consultations has again been to set communications priorities, to provide advice and expertise on effective ways to inform the public at all levels about specific UN initiatives, and to coordinate early action across departments. I have also sought to be more proactive in ensuring coordination across the UN system on selected priorities, including at the global, regional and country levels through the UN Communications Group. The Department presently serves, for example, as the chair of inter-agency communications task forces on the Millennium Development Goals, and on Climate Change. Both task forces have delivered coherent and coordinated UN messages and public information materials that have advanced the debate on these subjects. I have also led meetings of UN Information Centres and UN Offices from the Arab region, and from the Asia-Pacific region, in Cairo and Bangkok, respectively, to focus on global and regional priorities. We are currently planning a similar regional meeting for Africa in early 2009.

3. New and expanded partnerships. I am convinced that building support for the United Nations requires us to make new partnerships and to expand old ones. I have taken a number of steps on this front, including by initiating and promoting creative long-

term partnerships with, for example, the film industry, NGO coalitions, the business community, and young people. Youth represent a top priority for my Department as well as a new generation of support. The Model UN programme, in which more than 400,000 students participate worldwide each year, is just one excellent way to educate and excite young people about the United Nations. Model UN events are organized at the local, regional, national and international levels by many different associations. I believe there is an enormous opportunity for DPI to play a more active role in Model UN programmes and in engaging the interests and energy of young people. And here, I would seek your support for a new DPI initiative to launch a global Model UN, beginning in 2009. We could do this using the august General Assembly Hall, and could webcast the event worldwide. This global Model UN would be developed on the basis of best practices, and, we hope, could rotate among the different regions of the world.

4. Multilingualism. With due consideration to the status of French as one of the two working languages of the Organization, the department continues to make every effort to enhance the multilingual nature of the United Nations in all of its activities. This includes through UN radio programmes in the six official languages as well as non-official languages, and webcasting in the language delivered in addition to English. The UN information centres make enormous contributions in engaging the public and producing information in roughly 80 local languages. We are also making active efforts to strengthen and increase the resources available to the language News Centres, for example, which are among the most popular sites on the language homepages. I would welcome the support of Member States with regard to these efforts.

5. Evaluation represents the fifth overall approach to our work that I would like to emphasize. I have underlined to my team the value I place on the achievement of results, and on understanding the impact of our work. As part of these efforts, the Department conducts an Annual Programme Impact Review on selected programme outcomes. We are also increasing the number of evaluations of our services and programmes, with a view to making them more effective.

Mr. Chairman,

Parts I and II of the Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the Department of Public Information contain many examples of communications successes in the year since the Committee last met. These include successful campaigns and outreach programmes on thematic issues; cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support on UN peacekeeping; the expansion of a full range of news services to larger audiences; and examples of new partnerships with, for example, educators, the academic community, libraries, and NGOs.

I would like to inform you briefly about a number of current initiatives and strategies that we are working on with our partners in the Secretariat and in the UN system. All of these efforts aim to target new audiences and to establish new partnerships.

- To mark the 60th anniversary of UN peacekeeping, which will be launched on 29 May, the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, DPI has developed an elaborate communications strategy, working closely with DPKO. In addition to guidance for information centres and UN Country Teams on main messages for the occasion, DPI is developing press materials, a photo exhibit, and a 10-minute documentary.
- To mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the annual DPI/NGO Conference, which is planned to take place in Paris in September, intends to focus on “Reaffirming Human Rights: the Universal Declaration at 60.” The Department is working actively to identify partners with whom it could collaborate on such conferences being held at venues other than Headquarters. This initiative, taken jointly with our affiliated NGO community, is aimed at encouraging greater international presence and participation, particularly from the developing world. For this important anniversary, DPI has also created a web site with links to products and activities. In addition, a cooperative project to digitize the early documentation that led to the adoption of the Declaration is being developed by the Dag Hammarskjold Library and the UN Office in Geneva Library. This web site will provide access for historians and others interested in the earliest negotiations on this defining issue.
- On MDGs, the Department is actively working with the Secretary-General’s Office on plans for the September 2008 High-Level Event on MDGs, and is chairing an inter-agency task force to develop a joint communications strategy leading up to and for the High-level Event. We will also continue to work with the Millennium Campaign and other partners in support of this October’s “Stand Up and Speak out against Poverty” MDG awareness campaign. This campaign successfully mobilized roughly 44 million people last year, almost double the number of people who took part in the campaign in 2006. Our efforts this year will be to focus on encouraging meaningful participation and action as part of the MDG campaign.
- We continue to draw special attention to human interest stories that resonate with diverse audiences through different communications means, including, for example, through the 21st Century TV programme, which is now broadcast by more than 50 outlets. UN Radio reports focus on topical stories like the linkage between climate change and development, and provided broad coverage of the Secretary-General’s MDG Africa Steering Group meeting in March. DPI’s decision to bring last year’s UN Conference on Climate Change in Bali live via webcast yielded excellent results. Total live and on-demand webcast views over the period of the conference to the end of February 2008 were 455,312 from 143 countries. These statistics are orders of magnitude larger than any other previous UN conference. They also indicate that the technology is maturing as more and more people obtain broadband access to the Internet.

- And four times a year in both English and French, *Africa Renewal* delivers feature stories on the most important issues of concern to Africa and the international community to more than 250,000 dedicated readers of the magazine in print. *Africa Renewal* also produces special thematic issues on major topics, most recently on NEPAD -- the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The magazine is available on the *Africa Renewal* website, and its articles are posted on major Africa-interest web portals like allAfrica.com and, in French, Afrik.com. Over the past two years, *Africa Renewal's* material was re-published some 600 times in more than 90 media. This year, the short feature service is expanding to include Swahili and Spanish-speaking media outlets.
- DPI, with the excellent efforts made by the UN information centres, also successfully amplifies key UN concerns like global food challenges and the complex situation in Darfur, by the strategic placement in newspapers around the world of op-eds by the Secretary-General and senior UN officials. With almost 300 op-ed placements during 2007 in more than 20 languages, these publications reached millions of readers.

In a rapidly changing media environment, where young people use the internet, social networks and mobile phones to communicate and get information, DPI has developed strategies to target this key group. For example, the UN Works Programme is developing with VH1 networks a celebrity hosted TV series and complementary website with online advocacy and educational resources. The UN Cyberschoolbus has sponsored live video chats on human rights, the MDGs, Darfur, and the realities of nuclear war and has brought them directly into the classroom.

We have also been looking into new ways we might better reach out to academics and policy makers around the world. Here, we would like to discuss with you our proposal to create an entirely new journal, "UN Affairs", which would replace the "UN Chronicle" magazine, and which would target this key academic audience more closely. The new journal would be accompanied by a multilingual "UN Affairs" website, subject to available resources. The website would include an interactive capacity that would allow the global academic community to engage the Organization on selected themes. My colleagues and I look forward to discussing this proposal with you further this afternoon.

Mr. Chairman,

The capacity of DPI to deliver the services required will, however, depend a great deal on resource availability. Our approved budget for 2008-2009 has been reduced to such an extent that its non-post initial appropriation is almost three million dollars less than the non-staff portion of the proposed budget for this biennium. Unless alternative sources are found, the resource shortfall could hurt several of our programmes.

For example, one of the flagship publications of the Organization, the Yearbook of the United Nations, which made significant gains over the last decade to maintain a meaningful production schedule, could once again face publication delays. Our efforts to

put the entire collection of the Yearbook on-line, from 1946, could also be slowed. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library's information services to clients could be further affected. The ability of UNICs to translate materials into multiple languages, in particular local languages, could be curtailed.

Meanwhile, broadcasting has gone digital and mobile -- making it cheaper and easier to reach audiences around the world -- in cities as well as remote rural areas. But with a smaller operating budget, DPI is ill-equipped to buy the digital equipment it needs to take full advantage of this transformation of the dissemination of audio and video material. Nor will we be able to meet the growing demand for webcasting meetings and events in all official languages. Fewer resources may also mean that same day photo and press release coverage of late meetings will be delayed, and that late meeting television coverage may no longer be possible when our budget for overtime costs is exhausted.

With 63 field offices, the Department is also forced to cope with the impact of currency fluctuations, the declining value of the dollar, inflation and rising costs for rent and utilities. UNIC Rio de Janeiro, for example, has calculated that when inflation and currency fluctuation are factored in, its actual operating budget has decreased by over 70 per cent between 2002 and 2007. In addition, we will have to manage the continuing question of security for our staff in the field. Even before the attack on UN offices in Algiers, requests from information centres, approved by local security officials, exceeded our 2008 allotment for UNIC security by \$124,000. The Department is simply not able to meet current needs, let alone cover any new costs that arise owing to evolving security requirements.

Resources will also be key to implementing the proposal on press releases included in Part II of the Report of the Secretary-General. Guided by the mandate in last year's resolution, the Department considered several proposals to expand press release coverage to the other four official languages, in addition to English and French. We are aware that each of the options before you has financial implications. In developing these options, we consulted the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management on ways to expand language press releases, including within existing resources. However, this was not feasible, given the volume of content involved. Member States might wish to offer alternatives the Department has not considered on the kind of content they would like to have available in other languages, and provide further guidance in that regard. The Department remains ready to explore the matter further.

Despite these resource constraints, I would like to assure you that we are not standing still. To make up for the shortfalls, we are reaching out to Member States, private sector and civil society partners for extra-budgetary contributions. We are also looking for creative solutions. For example, since February of this year, through a cooperative agreement with the UN Information and Technology Services Division (ITSD), we made available to UNICs computers in good condition that would otherwise have been returned to stock and discarded. And we have now completed the four training seminars for UN Information Centres on Holocaust Remembrance, and will hold an

“Unlearning Intolerance” seminar on “Art and the Environment” next week, all paid for by partner institutions and at no cost to the UN.

Mr. Chairman,

Another challenge that we will face is the forthcoming move of staff in connection with the implementation of the Capital Master Plan. Every effort will be made to ensure the continuation of all the essential services that you rely on from DPI. Meetings will continue to be broadcast and webcast and press releases issued. The media will continue to have access to briefings and stakeouts, and will be able to send out their stories as quickly as they do now. However, during the CMP renovations of the conference building, the guided tour operation will be limited to the General Assembly building. DPI expects that the number of tours and visitors will be reduced, as will the revenue from this income-generating operation. We will work with many external partners to alleviate some of the consequences stemming from these constraints, as well as find new and creative ways to engage the millions of visitors to the United Nations.

But the CMP provides opportunities as well. For example, we are working closely with the Department of Management to create a more efficient and more integrated digital asset management system for all audio and video services. Such a system, provided Member States will agree to meet the request now submitted for the associated costs, would both enhance services to delegates, the media and other users, as well as realize a number of efficiency gains.

Mr. Chairman,

DPI is determined to live up to the expectations that you, Member States, have entrusted us with. However, the task before DPI – to tell the UN story and build public support for the Organization and its aims – cannot be achieved by DPI alone. We also need your active participation. I ask you, the distinguished delegates, to think of ways your Government and civil society can continue to partner with DPI and other UN offices to bring to your own national audiences a greater and deeper understanding of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General often says that the world is moving in the United Nations’ favour. More and more issues of global importance are being brought before the Organization, and the world’s expectations of the United Nations to find solutions have grown. It is all the more important, therefore, that the global public understands accurately what the United Nations can, and, more importantly, cannot do, so that their support and faith in the Organization is sustainable. Our work in public information is crucial in this regard. I know that with your support and advice we can make a difference for a better world.

Thank you.