



Statement by H. E. Ambassador Piragibe Tarragô
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31st Session of the Committee on Information

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(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to congratulate you on your election to preside over the 31st Session of the Committee on Information (Col). It is very timely that a skilled representative from Portuguese speaking Africa is chairing this session. The special needs of Portuguese speaking African countries in the field of UN public information have been underlined in several reports and resolutions emanating from our work. I wish also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

We thank the Secretary-General for his reports to the Committee and Undersecretary-General Akasaka for his comprehensive briefing, as well as for his and his team's daily committed work.

Brazil aligns itself with the statements made by the G-77 and China and the Rio Group, and wishes to add the following comments in its national capacity.

In order to ensure that peoples in all parts of the world receive as full information as possible about the United Nations, it is necessary to have the UN message spread out in as many languages as possible. The activities of DPI and the United Nations as whole must take into account the linguistic diversity of these peoples. This would also serve to improve accountability of the UN programmes and activities. The global seminar on linguistic diversity, globalization and development, held by DPI and UNESCO last year in the context of the International Year of Languages, was a valuable opportunity to further this debate.

Brazil would like to commend once again the efforts undertaken in this regard by the Portuguese Unit of UN Radio, despite the limited human and financial resources available to it. The fact that the Portuguese unit of UN Radio added the highest number of new partners last year - more than 80 in Brazil and Africa - is a clear evidence of the important demand for UN public information content in Portuguese speaking countries.

My delegation also reiterates Brazil's continued support to the work of the United Nations Information Center in Rio de Janeiro, which has been disseminating information on the activities of United Nations family for more than six decades. The activities of UNIC Rio- carried out through intense collaboration with the media, NGOs, universities and government bodies - help educate and raise awareness of the Brazilian public about the fundamental role of the United Nations to promote multilateral solutions to

the contemporary challenges. We welcome, in particular, several events promoted by UNIC Rio last year to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, such as: a) the Special Media Award conferred in partnership with the Special Secretariat on Human Rights on the five most important journalists defending human rights in Brazilian media; b) the course on the UN and current international affairs, with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro; and c) the Forum on Security and Human Rights, organised with the Brazilian Press Association and the Movement “Rio in Peace”.

Mr. Chairman,

We encourage DPI and Member States to work together to explore creative ways to ensure the necessary support and progressive strengthening of the network of information centers, services and components of the UN. UNIC's were the first ever field presence of the United Nations in member States and remain an essential element of the public information activities of the Organization, especially in developing countries.

We note, however, that despite the offer by the Government of Angola to host and provide rent-free and maintenance-free premises for a United Nations Information Centre in Luanda no progress was made towards the creation of a Center to address the special needs of Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. I would like to recall that paragraph 40 of Resolution 63/100 B gave the Secretary-General a clear mandate to report to the Committee, at the current session, “on the measures necessary, including the budgetary requirements, to accommodate those needs, as well as any proposal to move this process forward”. We very much look forward to receiving such report, which, in our view, should not be a mere reproduction of language from previous reports that neither clarifies the measures and budgetary requirements necessary to satisfy the legitimate needs of Portuguese speaking African countries nor present alternatives to move this process forward.

UN maintains 22 UNICs and 1 UNO in Africa, but none is currently operating in a Portuguese-speaking country. Two Portuguese-speaking African countries are being served by a non Portuguese-speaking UNIC, whereas three Portuguese-speaking African countries are not covered by the network of UNICs at all. The support provided by the Portuguese unit of the UNRIC in Brussels and UNIC Rio, though commendable, cannot serve as a substitute for the strengthening of the UNIC network in Portuguese-speaking Africa.

We note that, as in the case of Angola's offer, several member States hosting UNICs, Brazil included, already offer rent-free and maintenance-free premises for their operations. Other States, however,

including developed countries, do not do so. We strongly encourage all States that host UNICs, and are in a position to do so, to consider offering rent-free and maintenance-free premises for their operations. Without prejudice to the need for enhanced budgetary support to the activities of DPI, this initiative on the part of Member States would enable the Department to concentrate its limited funds on outreach and public information activities, as well as on strengthening the UNICs network, where necessary, notably in Portuguese speaking Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

Brazil appreciates the work undertaken by DPI under the Special Information Programme on the question of Palestine. We consider that the sensitization of public opinion and the promotion of dialogue among journalists, civil society, academic community and policymakers may play an important role to foster innovative and grassroots initiatives for peace in the Middle East. We are pleased to host the next annual international media seminar on peace in the Middle East, to be held in July of this year in Rio de Janeiro.

Finally, I wish to stress once again the important role of DPI in spreading UN's message to world today and in preserving the historical memory of the United Nations. We commend DPI's efforts, inter alia, to provide free web access to all volumes of the UN Yearbook collection and to the making of progress in the retrospective digitization of UN documents. The digitization efforts need to be combined with continued measures to ensure the durable preservation and appropriate access to documents, photographs and audio-visual records of historical significance for the Organization. We note that the Capital Master Plan imposes additional challenges in this regard. Increased financial support, both budgetary and extrabudgetary, will be needed to undertake such digitization and preservation activities. Also, utmost care will have to be taken in the relocation process of the UN legacy during the refurbishment of the UN building. Preserving our institutional past and learning the lessons derived from it, we will be in a better position to achieve the principles and purposes of the United Nations in our future work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman