

**Statement  
on behalf of the European Union  
by**

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**in the General Debate  
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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

Let me, Mr. Chairman, congratulate you and the other members of the bureau – all three vice-chairs and the rapporteur – on assuming the important duty of presiding over the work of this Committee for the next two years. Having my excellent personal experience with the DPI, I am sure that you will be able to rely on the support of the Under-Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, Director Paula Refolo, head of the committee liaison unit Hassan Ferdous and their colleagues. I would also like to express our appreciation for the informative reports on the work of the three DPI's divisions as well as for the efforts to keep us continuously informed on the activities of the Department, including the two briefings that preceded the session this year as well as the presentation of the central UNICs website in the Fall. We look forward to the continuation and perhaps even intensification of this practice of the Department staying in touch with the committee members between the sessions.

**The mission of the Department of Public Information** is to broaden an understanding of the work of the United Nations among the widest possible audience, thus supporting the achievement of the substantive goals of the United Nations, the universal forum that the international community has for tackling ever growing global challenges. The Department's natural focus is to advance the work of the UN in three key areas that correspond with the three basic pillars of its activities – development, human rights, and peace and security. The role of the Department and consequently this Committee is not to search for ways how to achieve a substantive progress in these areas, but rather to reach the international public with information on challenges that we jointly identify and measures that we all agreed on. Realizing the obliging opportunity that this fact represents for the work of this Committee, let me assure you, Mr. Chairman and the other members of the bureau, the DPI, the G77 (submitting the draft resolution) and other member states of our readiness to search actively and constructively for ways to support the DPI in its important mission through the mandate that this year's session is to provide. Having experienced, already in the preparatory phase, the support of the DPI and representatives of other member states (starting with Mr. Khalid Mohammed Osman, chairing the Group 77), which I appreciate, I have all the confidence in our ability to succeed.

The European Union is going to continue to put emphasis on the three priorities that it outlined for the thirtieth session.

In accordance with its Aide-mémoire from last year, the EU continues to advocate for further **streamlining of the resolution**. A clear and well structured resolution is not only important as a starting point for the work of the DPI, but also as a wider demonstration of our ability to formulate our shared priorities and mission. The resolution reflects its gradual development that generally tends not to lead to the optimal overall structure for a document. Our structural adjustments should not put into question the content of the resolution, but rather address this naturally implied weakness of the text.

The European Union has also been highlighting the importance to focus on **further enhancing of the effectiveness of the work of the DPI within a limited budgetary framework**. As an important means to this end, we have been emphasizing an introduction of benchmarks and clear criteria into all aspects of the Department's work. We have gradually observed the progress and now note with appreciation that the Office

of Internal Oversight Services reports that, "the DPI has made a technically sound effort in ascertaining that indicators of achievement have been expressed in a manner that yields precise measures." The same report also indicates in what respects improvements would still be desirable and we certainly encourage the DPI in the continuation of its efforts.

**Regional and local information centers**, building on new opportunities originated by the technological development, continue to be an important tool in the service of the DPI's mission. The Centers are the most direct means of communication with the world public and need to be a step ahead on topical issues. In the case of the current flu epidemic, there can be hardly any doubt about the importance of flexibility of their communication particularly on effective prevention. Other aspects such as origins, impacts and the role of the UN, of course, also deserve their gradual attention. In this sense, the daily work of UNICs should reflect upon implications of current developments for our long-term goals. Here, the effects of the financial and economic crisis on the eradication of poverty and achievement of MDGs are the prominent example.

We welcome the steps taken in the areas of coordination and cooperation between centers worldwide that hold a promise of savings and, at the same time, do not limit their capacity to pay attention to local specifics. As another important tool for raising the efficiency of the centers in the context of their resource and capacity constraints noted in the OIOS report, we perceive the attainment of comparable evaluation of performance of individual centers – both regional and local – that would invite further "competitive" sharing of lessons learned and best practices among them. Finally, we note with appreciation the efforts to coordinate the information activities of the UNICs, UN Resident Coordinators' Offices and UN field missions, if present in one given area. Still, we encourage further measures of the DPI in this area, where the OIOS report also appears to be a source of valuable guidance. System-wide coherence became an important part of the reform process and continued attention will need to be paid to the consistency and coherence in the information activities of different UN agencies and institutional units in the field and furthermore to the elimination of duplications in capacities and outputs.

We acknowledge the importance of **new information and media technologies** in enabling the DPI to spread the United Nations messages rapidly and in a cost-effective manner. The new technologies and electronic publications should be promoted where possible, in order to prevent unnecessary printing and transport in the light of climate change and the need for sustainable development. In this regard, we support further development of the use of the Internet, a medium that continues to reach a large audience around the globe. We would also like to note the increased value of web-casting in delivering the UN messages live and on demand on multiple platforms and devices.

The third area that we highlighted as our priority over the previous session was **multilingualism**. We look forward to seeing further progress in this regard, both with respect to topical issues such as the creation of an enhanced UN website and the UN Affairs as well as to further development of long ongoing processes that are a critical ingredient in the needed client-oriented approach in the DPI's outreach activities. The current capacity of information centers to work in 48 languages and produce information materials in over 130 languages is certainly an impressive example to be built on.

As far as the transformation of the **UN Chronicle to UN Affairs** is concerned, we have perceived it from the beginning as a part of a more general and called for strategy to target motivated audiences that, consequently, have a role in the shaping of news and policy. In this sense, reaching out to scholars and practitioners can have multiplying reinforcing effects in our reaching the world public. The transformation would also be a response to the stagnation or even slight decline in the subscription rate of the UN Chronicle. In the last resolution, we expressed our concerns over the transformation that needed to be addressed. Today, we commend the DPI's ambition and efforts to move

beyond the scope of the UN Chronicle project in terms of issuing UN Affairs in more languages by means of partnerships with Universities, and also its commitment to create a floor for voicing perspectives from different parts of the opinion spectrum, as well as regions of the world, on pressing global challenges on the UN agenda.

This consideration of multiplication effects and notion of "allies" (if you will) in conveying the message of the United Nations invites a more general remark on the **partnership with non-governmental organizations and civil society**. We all know that their contribution in the form of provision of information in areas such as the human rights protection, health and elimination of violence against women has been invaluable over the years.

I have already referred to the basic three pillars of the UN work and their natural reflection in the DPI's communication strategies and activities. The existing **main focus themes**, including human rights, peacekeeping operations, Millennium Development Goals - now perhaps in the context of the potential impacts of financial crisis - and climate change have our obvious and strong support. In addition, we encourage the Department to broaden another of these main themes - violence against women - by focusing on a more general and ambitious challenge of achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. We would also like to propose the UN reform to be included among these main priority topics.

There is also a rather practical issue that I would like to raise on behalf of the European Union and that, I know, is on the minds of our other colleagues as well. The **improved access of press counselors into the restricted areas during the ministerial week and other high-level summits** was already discussed in the Committee and the "red dot" solution was attempted last year. Unfortunately, this solution was not only lacking the ambition to go far enough in terms of securing our necessary access to all restricted areas, but has even failed us in our basic expectations, starting with its inability to allow us to escort journalists within the zones where the mere UN badge sufficed for free movement. We would like to ask the DPI to search for a new solution, identification of press counselors from the Missions (perhaps just a technically advanced "red dot") that would be acceptable for the UN security departments.

**Freedom of media** is at risk anywhere where the independence of thinking is under pressure. All UN member states made their commitments to respect the fundamental freedoms, to guarantee full respect for freedom of expression and access to information, and to ensure the unhindered movement of press representatives. The EU considers it of paramount importance that these commitments are fully adhered to. History has shown how important the freedom of media is for the development of a society, for post-conflict internal stabilization of countries and for international peace and security. Last year, we celebrated already the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in its article 19 sets out the right to freedom of opinion and expression; "freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Every year our resolution reaffirms our joint commitment to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media. It urges that journalists are enabled the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemns resolutely all attacks against them. Yet, every year we are over and over again confronted with a tragic and most compelling evidence that, by far, not enough has been done and achieved - in many parts of the world, freedom of the press is seriously limited or even non-existent. Unfortunately, also this year, I am going to refer to the reports of the Committee to Protect Journalists, according to which, an alarming number of 41 journalists were killed in 2008 and 11 already this year. They either died in the line of duty or were deliberately targeted for assassination because of their reporting or their affiliation with a news organization. More than 15 years ago, the General Assembly declared May 3 to be World Press Freedom Day to raise awareness of

the importance of freedom of the press and to remind governments of their duty to respect and uphold the right to freedom of expression. Let us make a good use of the opportunity for this critical message to be heard.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

\*Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilization and Association Process.