



**STATEMENT BY COUNSELLOR GUADALUPE SANCHEZ
PERMANENT MISSION OF MEXICO
ON BEHALF OF THE RIO GROUP
31 SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION**

May 4, 2009

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has the honor to participate in this debate on behalf of the Member States of the Rio Group: Argentina, Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica on behalf of CARICOM, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my country Mexico. At the outset, our Group would like to wish success to the Bureau and to you in the fulfillment of your mission. We would also like to express our complete disposition to contribute in a constructive manner to the work of the 31 session of the Committee on Information.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group appreciates the new format of the report presented by the Secretary General on the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI), included in documents A/AC.198/2009/2, 3, and 4, in relation to strategic communications services, news services, and outreach services. This new presentation allows for an improved appreciation of the progress made by the Committee in the implementation of resolution 63/100 B, as well as the challenges that remain present.

The Rio Group widely recognizes the valuable efforts of the DPI in promoting and achieving a better understanding of the objectives and the work of the United Nations in a wide variety of areas, such as peacekeeping and international security; the respect and promotion of human rights; efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; the fight against organized transnational crime,

including the illegal trafficking of arms and the global problem of narcotic drugs, prevention of diseases such as HIV/AIDS; natural disasters; climate change; eradication of hunger and poverty; financial, socio-economic and ecological crises; unrestricted respect of the norms and international law; and United Nations reform, among others.

We would also like to highlight the work of the Department in the adequate promotion of the *ad hoc* thematic debates held by the General Assembly, which have been especially relevant for the international community, such as the debates about the food crisis and the international financial crisis. In that sense, we call on the Organization to maintain objectivity in the messages it conveys, and to undertake future media campaigns on the energetic and ecological crises, as well as its impact on development, especially on the increase of poverty and hunger.

Mr. Chairman,

The changing international reality requires us to assume innovative methods that allow for a better flow and increased precision in the distribution of information. For that reason, the Rio Group welcomes the establishment of a new structure in January of 2009 by the United Nations Communications Group, whose main purpose is to improve coordination, unity, and effectiveness of United Nations agents in situations of crisis. We also take note with interest of the initiatives by the DPI to maintain the flow of information at the rhythm of cybernetic evolution through association with YouTube/Google that has considerably allowed the public to be informed on the events of most interest to the Organization. In the same context we can find initiatives such as "Txt4Peace", which promoted the International Day of Peace and mobilized more than 150,000 people, who sent text messages relative to the UN through their mobile phones.

Concerning the sphere of information technology, the Rio Group supports the spontaneity and agility of electronic communication. However, even though we consider that the development of web sites is a very useful tool to promote, convey, and access the message of the UN, we express our concern over the growing digital gap between developed and developing countries. We also consider that traditional media, such as radio, television, and written press, should continue to be employed in order to convey the message of the United Nations, since they constitute a major source of information in developing countries.

The Rio Group reaffirms that the media should be used with full respect of the international legal framework. In that sense, the Group is concerned by the violation of radio-electronic frequencies, and reiterates the need for these frequencies to be used in favor of public interest and in conformity with the principles of international law.

We recognize the efforts by the DPI to continue strengthening its interaction with other organs of the United Nations System, particularly the close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, as well as broadening an understanding of activities relative to peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Similarly, we welcome the intense work in the area of information and promotion by the DPI and the United Nations Information Centers. Our Group considers that the work of the 63 Information Centers, their services and information components provided throughout the world are essential due to the invaluable promotion of a better understanding of the work of the United Nations. We encourage the DPI to continue supporting them through the effective use of the resources available.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the most valuable goals of the Rio Group, which has been expressed constantly to this Committee, is to achieve parity among the six official languages of the United Nations, on a basis of equality. In this context, we are concerned that there have not been advances in the emission of press releases, which continue to be released in two and occasionally in only one of the working languages, which is unacceptable. For that reason, we reiterate, once again, that it is the responsibility of all UN offices, including the DPI, to offer public information in all official languages, and therefore, we will give punctual follow-up to the commitment that the new version of the website, on the page of the United Nations News Center, will be available in Spanish and in the other official languages of the Organization.

In that respect, we are uplifted by the fact that in his report, the Secretary General recognizes that the goal of parity among languages continues to be an incomplete task. For that reason, we support the search for alternatives by the DPI in order to remedy this situation, for example, making use of services provided by volunteers or educational institutions, such as the University of Salamanca, whose work, in conjunction with the work of volunteers, has resulted in a notable increase of the number of updated pages in Spanish.

The Group invites the Secretary General, especially now that the world has to confront several crises that have impacted it in the last months, particularly the possible global sanitary emergency, to continue to create and maintain multilingual UN web sites, as well as to regularly update the web site of the Secretary General in all six official languages.

In the same way, we call for the distribution of information, at least through traditional media, and particularly in radio programs, to be distributed in as many languages as possible, including Portuguese and indigenous ones.

Multilingualism is inherently associated with the United Nations, due to the nature, reach, and goals of the Organization.

The Rio Group recognizes the results of the effort by the DPI to promote accessibility to people with disabilities to the services of the United Nations. We invite it to continue with this work in order to remove the barriers to access and to promote the application of relevant norms in the creation of new UN websites.

We also take note of the initiative by the DPI to transform the UN Chronicle Magazine into another with more methodological rigor, which will allow it to be a useful analytical tool in the decision-making process to different sectors of society.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group values the efforts of the United Nations, especially the effort by the DPI in support of the peace process in the Middle East, through the dialogue among journalists, intellectuals, and civil society. It welcomes, in that sense, the holding of the next "International Seminar for the media on the peace in the Middle East", to be held in Rio de Janeiro, in July, 2009.

The Rio Group welcomes the interest of the DPI to increase its collaboration with non-governmental organizations. In that sense, we will be closely keeping track of the results of the annual Conference of the DPI with the NGOs, to be held in Mexico City, in 2009, and whose central focus will relate to disarmament and international peace.

Our Group reiterates its recognition and support for the work of the Department of Public Information and invites it to increase its efforts to continue to improve its information machinery in order to fulfill its praiseworthy goal of bringing the voice of the Organization to the world.