

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
AMBASSADOR ANTONIO LIMA
AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION, 26 APRIL 2010**

Mr. Under-Secretary-General, Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Kiyo Akasaka, and through him to the Department of Public Information, for the excellent cooperation extended to me, and to the members of the Bureau of the Committee on Information, during the past year.

I am greatly encouraged by the growing working relationship between DPI and the Committee, which over the years has evolved into a solid partnership. Even though the Committee meets only once a year, as members of the Bureau we are in contact with DPI throughout the year, and are able to convey to the Department the views of Member States on issues which relate to the priority concerns of Member States and to DPI's work. Mr. Akasaka has also taken steps to increase his Department's interaction with Member States. We are particularly appreciative of the series of "conversations with Member States," launched last year. These conversations – I would call them "dialogues" – allow the Department and Member States to reach out to each other on many challenges faced in areas of communications and public information.

I particularly enjoyed the "conversation" on new media organized in December 2009, where I was invited to share Cape Verde's experience in e-governance. Although my country has taken the lead in using the new information and communications technologies to promote better governance, clearly the

continuing “digital divide” remains a stumbling block for many developing countries to take full advantage of the unfolding cyber revolution. In that meeting, I emphasized that while the new technologies can spur growth, reduce poverty and help reach other development goals, this can happen only if – and when - the digital wall that now stands between the developed and developing countries comes down.

I was pleased to note that Mr. Akasaka in his response – and DPI in the reports of the Secretary-General on its programmatic activities – underscored the need for a balanced approach. Mr. Akasaka reiterated that DPI, in its search for more effective and cost-effective communications tools, would not abandon the so-called traditional media. In fact, he told us, new media would be used to complement the traditional media, especially radio and TV.

DPI’s job is to inform the world about the work of the UN, but it is our responsibility to keep DPI informed about the priorities agreed to by Member States. This is possible when we work together, hand in hand. This Committee looks forward to working with you, Mr. Akasaka, and with your Department, to build upon the achievements realized by DPI over the last few years.

In this connection, I recall with appreciation, that at DPI’s invitation, I attended the annual DPI seminar on the peace process in the Middle East, co-hosted by the Government of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro in July 2009.

Distinguished delegates,

We are meeting at a time when the United Nations is facing challenges on many fronts, the most immediate ones being humanitarian emergencies. In January, Haiti was hit by an earthquake that took the lives of over 200,000 people. Among those dead were 101 UN staff members and UN peacekeepers. Even before recovering from this natural disaster, earthquakes hit Chile and China. These natural disasters created a humanitarian emergency of an unprecedented nature.

I must congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his able stewardship in mobilizing quick and effective response to the Haiti emergency. As we saw over and over again, it was only through the convening power of the United Nations that the world was brought together, the latest example of which was the International Donors Conference Towards a New Future for Haiti on 31 March.

DPI also acted swiftly to communicate UN actions in Haiti, and in addition, coordinated UN system's effort to inform the public about the unfolding crisis and the collective humanitarian response. I can tell you from my personal experience that the UN's website, especially its multilingual News Centre, became the most sought-after source of information during those dark hours. I was also deeply moved by the Haiti memorial service organized by DPI at UN Headquarters and throughout the world. I am thankful to Mr. Akasaka and his team for providing me an opportunity to recite a poem at the New York memorial, which I had composed after watching a child being rescued from the rubble several days after the quake. I felt life was pulsating even amidst ruins and rubble.

We all agree that this sense of optimism and common purpose can best be conveyed through DPI, the UN's public voice. Clearly, DPI has the tools and the expertise to do this job well. I would like to consider this Committee as a natural partner in this endeavour. However, to be an effective partner of DPI, the Committee itself must also consider ways and means to strengthen its role. Over the next two weeks, that is exactly what we intend to do.

Distinguished delegates,

This year's session will provide us with an opportunity to review DPI activities via-a-vis the mandates given to it by the Committee and the General Assembly. Taken together, these reports provide a clear picture of DPI activities. I congratulate the Department on producing such results-based reports and on their timely publication.

A fourth report, the Strategic Framework for 2012 – 2013, issued for the Committee on Programme and Coordination, is also before you for review and reflection. This document outlines the overall orientation of the Department, including the strategy and logical framework for each of the Department's three divisions for the next budget cycle. It is my understanding that CPC will review this document in June this year. As COI is the main deliberative body dealing with public information, I encourage you to take a closer look at this document and share your views and critical observations with other Committee Members and with DPI. These views, taken together, will be conveyed to CPC for its consideration.

Distinguished delegates,

The task before us is the adoption of a consensus document at the end of our deliberations, and the overarching objective is to collectively provide through this resolution the best possible policy guidance to the Department so that our Organization continues to benefit from the strong voice given to it by DPI. As your Chairman, I promise to do my part. I am sure you will do yours. Thank you.