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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

NEW YORK

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me congratulate Ambassador Eduardo Ulibarri, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica as well as rest of the members of the Bureau. We wish you all the best of success and assure you the full cooperation of India. We also pay tributes to your predecessor Ambassador Antonio Pedro Lima, Permanent Representative of Republic of Cape Verde for his dedication and contribution to the work of the Committee and wish him all the success in his future endeavor.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the reports of the Secretary-General on the three-fold activities of the Department of Public Information, namely strategic communications, news and outreach services. India aligns itself with the statement made by the Chair of the G-77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

This debate provides an occasion to reiterate the central concerns of Member States over the process of dissemination of information. For us, the defining characteristic of the work of this Committee lies in its relationship with the Department of Public Information, and the ensuing cooperative effort to continually improve upon the delivery of relevant information inputs to millions of potential users across the world.

The DPI's role is pivotal as it has to strategically communicate the message of the United Nations with the greatest public impact in a situation where the UN confronts a variety of complex challenges and opportunities. Let me illustrate this with some encouraging facts. According to the report on news services, UNifeed which serves hundreds of broadcasters throughout the world has shown substantial growth in all aspects of its operation since July 2010 including story production and satellite/online distribution. According to Teletrax data, the use of UNifeed stories doubled in the last years from 18,540 in 2009 to 36,993 pick-ups in 2010. Its web downloads also saw a substantial increase from 7,853 in 2009 to 10,277 in 2010.

Between July 2010 and January 2011 the meeting coverage operation of the DPI produced 2,481 press releases including 414 covering 65th session of the General Assembly, 313 on the Security Council, 1,150 concerning statements from the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General and close to 600 summaries of press briefings of the spokesman of the Secretary General. However, it must also be pointed out that such impressive performance is shown in the midst of the continuing anachronism of press briefings which remain off limits for delegates from various Permanent Missions accredited to the United Nations. In other words, this means, that while I can make a statement on the working of the DPI here at the UN headquarters, I cannot sit in as a silent observer in a press conference at the Dag Hammarskjold Library Auditorium!

Mr. Chairman,

The Committee's focus has to be on how to make the work of the Department of Information as pertinent and accessible as possible to the largest number of users, making it an effective channel for the flow of information between the UN and the peoples of the world. To achieve this, the widest possible range of technologies needs to be harnessed. As many countries simultaneously span several centuries in technological terms, it is essential that the end product offered by DPI is dispensed through a wide spectrum of media channels. Thus, while the selection employed should incorporate the latest technologies, such as webcasts and podcasts, a strong emphasis must also be retained on using traditional and very cost-effective means of communication, such as radio and print. These remain of tremendous importance in reaching out to ordinary people in many parts of the developing world and must constantly be kept in sight.

We also fully support the effort to enable the emergence of a more linguistically equal world, in which information is disseminated not merely in the official languages of the UN, but also in other languages. We congratulate the DPI for now producing information in roughly 150 local languages and note with satisfaction that UN radio programmes are being made in Bengali, Hindi and Urdu, among other languages. This promotion of multilingualism by the DPI in its activities needs to be further widened

and intensified, including in particular parity among the six official languages in terms of content on the website.

There is also much value in raising the level of local content and local involvement in the production of DPI programme material. Doing so will also encourage local talent and creativity to involve itself in the work of the UN. A related issue is the question of UN Information Centers, which are crucial in enhancing the public image of the UN and in disseminating its message, particularly in the developing world. We agree with the views expressed by many that our goal should be to strengthen, rather than weaken, these information outposts of the United Nations. We would encourage the Department to work closely with host countries in these efforts. We would also support adequate budgetary resources being made available to strengthen the public outreach and ensure the effective functioning of Information Centres in developing countries. We would like to commend the useful and creative work being undertaken by UNIC in New Delhi, including in the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

The information being disseminated has to be relevant and meaningful and, to the extent pertinent, it has to be spread in a manner that makes it not only interesting but also enjoyable for the target audience. This is not easy to achieve and those working on content management must be driven by a constant yearning for further improvement. Moreover, DPI's programmes must seek to further deepen and strengthen their coverage and projection of the most noteworthy activities of the UN, in particular, those that directly impact upon the lives of ordinary people. These include humanitarian activities as also the work performed, often under extremely demanding circumstances, by UN peacekeepers in strife-torn lands.

As regards the latter, we would like to see DPI, DPKO and DFS working closely in highlighting UN peacekeeping success stories and providing accurate, impartial and timely information on the regular activities of UN peacekeepers, as also on the exceptional work that they

often do that goes beyond the routine keeping of the peace and the call of duty.

Mr. Chairman,

India appreciates DPI's Outreach Division for its Academic Impact programme aimed at aligning institutions of higher education with the UN in actively supporting universally recognized principles in the areas human rights, literacy, sustainability and conflict resolution, formally launched by the Secretary General on November 18, 2010. We believe that such initiative will help building stronger ties between the UN and institutions of higher learning around the world and leverage the resources of the global higher education sector in promoting UN goals. We are pleased to mention that of more than six hundred members of this global initiative, institutions of India aggregate the second largest number and that the University of Calcutta, one of our oldest and most renowned universities, is the Academic Impact's global hub for peace and conflict resolution. We look forward to the continued sharing of what Under Secretary General Akasaka has called the "culture of intellectual social responsibility" and to the administrators, faculty and students in institutions around the world furthering their contribution to relevant UN programmes.

Indian Mission is actively associated with DPI and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in organizing an Authors Colloquium on "Unlearning Intolerance" at UN headquarters on May 5. Indian authors are participating in the event dedicated to our former President R. Venkataraman.

Mr. Chairman, we would like to assure you of India's full backing as you guide the work of this Committee, as well as to the DPI as it projects the UN story and builds support for the Organization and its noble aims.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.