

**STATEMENT BY MIAN JAHANGIR IQBAL AT THE 33RD SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF COI  
(APRIL 27 – MAY 6, 2011)**

**Mr. Chairman,**

On behalf of Pakistan delegation, I would like to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau, on assumption of their offices. It is a matter of great pleasure for me to see you as the Chair of this important Committee and my delegation is confident that under your able guidance, this Committee will achieve optimum results. I also take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciations for your predecessor's excellent work last year.

2. We would also like to commend the valuable work done by the Department of Public Information (DPI), which has worked strenuously to carry out its mandate.

3. We align ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

4. We have heard with great interest the statement made by the Under Secretary General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Kiyo Akasaka. It gives Member States a comprehensive account of the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI).

**Mr. Chairman,**

5. Before I proceed further, let me thank DPI for projecting in a comprehensive manner the unprecedented destruction wrought by last year's floods in Pakistan as well as Pakistan's efforts to meet the challenge of relief and rehabilitation in collaboration with the United Nations and its partners. We are also thankful to the Spokesman's Office for organizing special briefings on the flood situation for the UN corps of correspondents, besides giving out daily situation reports at the height of the disaster.

**Mr. Chairman,**

6. My delegation is cognizant of the enormity of the task and challenges faced by the Department at a time of some crucial developments taking place around the world. The international community is also beset with misunderstandings between and among societies, religions and cultures. Freedom of expression is a universal right which needs to be promoted and protected but this right should not be misused to insult religions and create misunderstanding among various cultures and civilizations. The deplorable incident of desecration of the Holy Quran in Florida highlights the need for a more active role of the UN to promote tolerance, intercultural understanding and mutual respect. Pakistan appreciates the statement made by our Secretary General, terming this despicable and bigoted act as "unacceptable", and vowing to continue working towards promoting inter-faith harmony through the Alliance of Civilizations.

7. Pakistan joined the international condemnation of the sacrilegious of burning the holy Quran. As stated by our Permanent Representative in his letter to the UN Secretary General, "While this reprehensible act is the work of extremists and is evidently designed to provoke dissent and discord among communities and peoples across the world, such sacrilegious acts also go against the very concept of inter-faith harmony and threaten the multicultural fabric of the societies and the brotherhood of the United Nations".

**Mr. Chairman,**

8. In our view, communications should be used to bridge differences and promote intercultural and inter-faith harmony that is basic to coexistence of mankind. The COI has a central role in ensuring that the UN public information policies help forge greater harmony and respect among peoples belonging to various societies, cultures and religions. We urge the DPI to encourage discussions at regional and international levels, hold exhibitions, seminars and bring out publication towards this noble objective

9. We understand that the most important task before the DPI is to reach out to the widest possible audiences and to project the UN ideals and accomplishments of peace and sustainable development, maintain strategic coherence in the overall message, and ensure system-wide coordination. We laud DPI for having efficiently covered issues of importance to the international community such as UN Reform, Climate Change, Human Rights, Development of Africa, Preventing Genocide, Alliance of Civilizations, Millennium Development Goals, Peace Keeping Operations, Peace and Security and Counter Terrorism. This has raised the profile of the UN as more and more people across the globe have started knowing about its endeavours on a broad range of issues. We are confident that the DPI will continue on this path and use all available tools to maximize the impact of its message.

**Mr. Chairman,**

10. As the largest contributors of troops for UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs), Pakistan has first-hand knowledge of what the UN can accomplish. There is lot of constraints and challenges faced by the peacekeepers. We hope that DPI would project these issues in a suitable manner. We are -- this year -- celebrating 50 years of Pakistan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations. On April 25, the Pakistan mission organized a photographic exhibition to commemorate the golden anniversary. The UN Secretary General graced the occasion.

**Mr. Chairman,**

11. The work of the UN Information Centers around the world in disseminating UN-related information is of paramount importance. We urge that all possible measures be taken to strengthen these Centers, particularly in developing countries. We also support allocating adequate resources to ensure the effective functioning and strengthening of these Centers. In the context of securing rent-free premises for UNICs from host countries, it is important to keep economic conditions of such countries in view.

12. We appreciate DPI's efforts for achieving parity among official languages of the UN. We also, welcome the initiative of the UN Information Centers for publication of information materials and translation of important documents into languages other than the official languages of the UN, as well as developing websites in local languages. We urge DPI to continue extending support to this important endeavor.

**Mr. Chairman,**

13. The importance of accurate, objective and balanced news and information services in print, radio, television and over the Internet cannot be overemphasized. In this regard, we call for continued strengthening of technology, multilingualism and partnerships. We support the continuation of outreach to civil society; efforts to improve accessibility of library services; and a wide range of other initiatives. We call for the strengthening of training programmes for media persons from the developing countries by ensuring provision of professional training facilities under the International programme for the Development of Communications of UNESCO to correct the imbalance in the world information order. We fully support the Dag Hammarskjold Memorial Scholarship Fund for journalists from the developing countries to study and cover the annual sessions of the UN General Assembly.

**Mr. Chairman,**

14. The Democratic Government of Pakistan is committed to freedom of expression and free media. Pakistan has created an enabling environment for private media which have registered unprecedented growth.

**Mr. Chairman,**

15. We expect the Secretariat to accede to Member States' long-standing request for additional passes to press officers during the high-level segment of the General Assembly. Favourable action in this regard would greatly enhance the efficiency and comprehensiveness of coverage.

**Mr. Chairman,**

16. In conclusion, we reiterate our support to the Department Of Public Information and its endeavours to effectively carry out its mandate. We assure you of our fullest cooperation in facilitating the Committee's work.

**Thank you.**