

STATEMENT BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION
AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
MONDAY, 22 APRIL 2013, 10:00 A.M.
Conference Room 2, North Lawn Building

**Estimada presidenta,
Distinguidos delegados,
Señoras y señores,**

Es un privilegio y un honor estar aquí con ustedes,

Permítanme trasladarle, señora presidenta, las felicitaciones del Departamento de Información Pública, así como a los otros miembros recientemente elegidos del Bureau. Con su papel pionero como presentadora de radio y televisión en Omán, señora embajadora, nos sentimos muy honrados de tener una personalidad tan distinguida presidiendo el Comité. Esperamos con gran interés sus comentarios sobre como mejorar de forma

más eficaz el trabajo del Departamento. Estamos convencidos de que, bajo su liderazgo, seguirá imperando el espíritu de compromiso constructivo entre este Comité y el Departamento.

A este respecto, me gustaría rendir tributo al liderazgo en este Comité del embajador Eduardo Ulibarri, en su calidad de presidente, en los últimos dos años. Su buen rumbo y sus iniciativas, en el marco de las deliberaciones formales e informales del Comité, nos han permitido tratar las cuestiones que se nos planteaban con imaginación y desde nuevas perspectivas. He sido afortunado de poder contar con sus consejos cuando me incorporé al Departamento y sé que puedo seguir contando con él.

Tienen ante ustedes informes completos y detallados sobre la labor realizada por el Departamento. Me gustaría, esta mañana, empezar la conversación con ustedes, escuchar sus puntos de vista, sobre las Naciones Unidas, la comunicación, y como los dos pueden y

deberían trabajar mejor para beneficio de todos nosotros.

Madam Chairperson,

I joined the United Nations only last August, having spent the previous three decades working for the Austrian Foreign Service at various postings around the world, including India, the Middle East and here in the United States.

I had long been a supporter of the UN from afar, recognizing its value as the one truly multilateral institution that can bring together all the countries and peoples of the world to solve global challenges.

Now, heading the Department responsible for the UN's communications and public information, I get to see that value first-hand.

Whether it's bringing humanitarian aid to the victims of crises and conflicts...

Or vaccinating millions of children against infectious diseases that should no longer exist...

Or leading the fight to end poverty and hunger and fight violence against women and girls...

UN staff members are working on the frontlines, behind the scenes and in frequently dangerous conditions to make a positive difference in people's lives every day.

The role of the Department of Public Information is to tell that story.

To share the cause for which so many so courageously have risked, and, in some cases, given their lives.

To connect the work of the United Nations to the people in whose name this Organization was established and to help understand the essential work of the institution.

To spotlight the value that the United Nations represents.

We all share in the aspirations of the institution. And each of your governments has been unwavering in their support of the United Nations. It is incumbent upon us, the United Nations Secretariat, to prove equal to that trust. Through action and message, we can together make clear its worth to your people.

We will work with you to help win the support of the people you represent and demonstrate the value of their human, ethical and financial investment in the United Nations.

For the Department of Public Information, this is not always an easy task. As a global organization, we would like to tell our story in as many languages as possible. We try to keep pace with technology, and with new media – the story is being told in print and on radio and television, and also through social media.

At a time of economic difficulty the world over, we have to tell the story in a way that does not break the budget.

And we have to connect the legislative processes in New York – the Security Council, the General Assembly, the many committees and working groups – to the day-to-day work of thousands of UN colleagues and personnel in the field.

We are optimistic about meeting these challenges. And we draw strength from our greatest asset: multinational, multilingual staff who bring exceptional talent and dedication to telling the UN story.

Madam Chairperson,

In addition to the reports before you, and the materials presented at this afternoon's interactive session, allow me to update you with some of our most recent activities along the strategic directions I have outlined, namely:

- a. Working with you, the Member States**
- b. Coordinating communications with the UN family and between Headquarters and the field**
- c. Creating a UN communications capacity that is modern, efficient and results-driven and that seeks improvements through lessons learned**

Le Département a, au cours de l'année écoulée, décidé de renforcer son partenariat avec les États Membres pour s'acquitter des mandats que vous avez définis.

Dans le cadre de son Programme de communication sur le génocide au Rwanda et les Nations Unies, le DPI travaille, chaque année, en étroite collaboration avec la Mission permanente du Rwanda pour commémorer le génocide de 1994. À travers un film, des photographies, des discussions, des visites dans les écoles ou d'autres outils, le Département mène des activités de sensibilisation afin de faire en sorte que de tels événements ne se reproduisent plus. Au début de ce mois, le Département a organisé, avec l'appui d'ONU-Femmes, la projection d'un film sur l'association de veuves et d'orphelins rwandais « Duhozanye » (ce qui signifie littéralement « consoler l'autre »), qui a été réalisé par un rescapé du génocide. La fondatrice de cette association a participé à la discussion qui suivait cette projection. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, le Département a organisé la cérémonie de commémoration 2013 du génocide, en présence de la Ministre des affaires étrangères du Rwanda, Mme Louise Mushikiwabo. Plus de 15 centres d'information

des Nations Unies à travers le monde ont également organisé des manifestations commémoratives.

Il y a quelques semaines, avec la participation active de quelque 70 États Membres, dont de nombreux membres de l'Union africaine et de la Communauté des Caraïbes, nous avons commémoré la Journée internationale de commémoration des victimes de l'esclavage et de la traite transatlantique des esclaves. Le Département a organisé une série d'événements à travers le monde pour, d'une part, commémorer cette Journée et, d'autre part, sensibiliser aux conséquences de la traite des esclaves aujourd'hui, tout en mettant plus particulièrement l'accent sur l'éducation des générations futures. Les manifestations organisées comprenaient notamment une discussion interactive entre des étudiants issus de cinq pays ; la projection d'un film organisée par la Mission permanente des Etats-Unis ; une lecture de poèmes organisée avec l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie et le Bureau de la Martinique en l'honneur du centenaire de

la naissance du poète Aimé Césaire. Le Département a également entamé des discussions avec le Mémorial de l'abolition de l'esclavage, à Nantes, en France, pour s'appuyer sur la capacité de cette institution en matière de sensibilisation et d'éducation dans le cadre des commémorations futures de cette Journée, en particulier dans les pays francophones.

Le Département travaille, tout au long de l'année, pour sensibiliser à la question de Palestine. À la fin de l'année dernière, par exemple, nous avons organisé le séminaire annuel de formation à l'intention des journalistes palestiniens. Pour la première fois, l'accent a été mis sur les médias sociaux et le journalisme digital et un nombre record de demandes ont été reçues pour participer à ce séminaire.

La Journée internationale du bonheur est une autre initiative qui a été mise en place avec les États Membres. L'idée, qui a été proposée en premier lieu par le Royaume du Bhoutan, a été approuvée par

l'Assemblée générale, et l'initiative Impact universitaire des Nations Unies a organisé, le 20 mars, un dialogue interactif qui a réuni d'anciens ou actuels ambassadeurs du Bangladesh, du Bhoutan et de l'Iraq, ainsi que des représentants du monde académique et de la société civile, pour une discussion sur le lien entre le bonheur et le bien-être durable.

Nous continuons, tout au long de l'année, à travailler avec les États Membres pour approfondir la compréhension des enseignements de l'Holocauste. Le travail de notre Programme de communication sur l'Holocauste met l'accent sur l'éducation et vise plus particulièrement les élèves et les éducateurs ; il a aussi pour objectif d'« enseigner au personnel enseignant » et de développer des outils pédagogiques dans les six langues officielles de l'ONU afin de les diffuser dans les écoles à travers le monde.

The Department also partnered with the Permanent Missions of Israel and the Philippines to

organize activities marking World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April. This year, the subjects addressed included celebrating the abilities of people with autism, the challenges faced by young people with autism during the transition to adulthood, and the testimonies of families with young children who have been recently diagnosed.

Madam Chairperson,

Away from Headquarters, in the field, partnerships with Member States find a whole new meaning; 63 of our Information Centres provide an important local context to our global efforts, working in at least 53 languages and often directly impacting people’s daily lives. Consider one recent example.

In Kenya, UNIC Nairobi worked closely with sports organizations, private companies such as Google and other UN agencies to develop an innovative, interactive campaign called “Sports 4 Peaceful

Elections’’. This campaign enlisted Kenyan sports stars to host social media events promoting tolerance and non-violence in the period before, during and after presidential elections held last month.

DPI also partners with Member States in other ways. In June, in Istanbul, Turkey has kindly agreed to co-host the annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East. This event brings together senior UN officials, diplomats, policy makers, academics, activists, journalists and artists from Israel, the occupied Palestinian territory and the wider Middle East region.

We work with Member States to raise awareness about press freedom and the dangers that journalists face every day around the world as they try to carry out their duties. Next week, DPI and UNESCO are working together to celebrate World Press Freedom Day with a series of events and activities around the world. They include a high-level event and panel discussion here at

UN Headquarters on 2 May, and I would like to invite all of you to join us for that.

Our partnerships are not only with Member States. We work with civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, the media, the private sector, activists, local authorities, lawmakers and others to help tell the story of the UN and to raise awareness about priority UN issues.

The Department is making particular progress with the creative community and celebrity advocates in amplifying UN issues to new audiences. Only a week ago, I met with directors, producers and scriptwriters in Los Angeles to discuss integrating UN issues into film and television projects.

On another front, the UN Academic Impact initiative is working with *The Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom on its contest on development

journalism, which this year has a focus on the Millennium Development Goals.

Madam Chairperson,

DPI is also proud to be at the centre of a new thrust by the Organization for – and by – young people. The Secretary-General, with financial contributions from Member States, appointed an Envoy on Youth, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, who is working within DPI's Outreach Division. The Envoy will serve as both a voice for youth within the UN System, and as an advocate for the UN to the estimated 1.2 billion young people worldwide – the largest ever population of young people in history.

The Envoy's appointment coincides with the adoption of the first-ever System Wide Action Plan on Youth Development by the UN Chief Executives Board and his work will be carried out in line with the World Programme of Action on Youth that Member States

adopted at the General Assembly in 1995. Some of you may have already met Ahmad. I look forward to formally introducing Ahmad to you at this afternoon's interactive session.

DPI has significantly expanded its news coverage over the past year, due to the support of Member States. For example, China National Radio airs UN Radio's Chinese-language programmes and live link-ups when there is breaking news, including in prime-time morning slots. As an upshot of this partnership, the UN Weibo account – the Chinese version of Facebook – now commands some 3.5 million followers. On Friday, we signed an agreement with China Business Network so that we can co-produce a Chinese version of the UNTV feature programme *21st Century*. Its first show will go to air next week.

Our Russian-language news outlets – UN Radio and UN News Centre – have stepped up their social media presence, with new accounts on Facebook and

Twitter. To reach an even wider audience, an account has been set up on V Kontakte, a highly popular platform.

As for the UN aims to “deliver as one”, so does DPI. I have encouraged colleagues across the Department’s three divisions to jointly participate in activities and programmes: the result is a more focused and more effective DPI. All three Divisions, for instance, will contribute to the third international conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa next year; 12 of these States are members of this Committee and we particularly look forward to their creative ideas.

Another example of DPI’s unified approach is our support to peace operations worldwide. Staff have provided communications advice and guidance for the various peacekeeping and special political missions, including the political mission in Mali and the recent addition to the existing operation in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. Through television, radio, photo, social media and a combination of news and feature articles on the UN News Centre, DPI produced and disseminated content about the various peace operations and the multinational staff who work for them. The Department also carried out outreach campaigns to spotlight the work of our peacekeepers, such as a recent photo exhibition at UN Headquarters that showcased the UN political mission in Libya.

A good example of how the Department is harnessing the ingenuity of our staff is the recently launched children’s tour for UN Headquarters, featuring Peekka, Ibrahim, Elena, MP3, Lei Lei and Luis – the six custom-designed cartoon characters known as UN Kids. The project started as an idea to make UN Guided Tours more accessible to children. Visitor services and graphic design staff drafted a proposal, reached out to a focus group of local children, refined their plans and, by February this year, unveiled a really fun – and also educational – children’s tour.

I encourage all of you to bring along your children or younger friends to the tour to experience the UN in a whole new light. Meanwhile, you will see that we have placed special vouchers on your desks so that you can enjoy, if you wish, a sneak preview of the newly renovated Visitors Centre that is currently being developed in the basement of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

DPI works to implement Member State priorities, such as the Millennium Development Goals. Just this month, DPI supported MDG Momentum – 1000 Days of Action, which spotlighted the 1,000-day milestone in our efforts to try to achieve the Goals by 2015. Working closely with other UN offices and departments, DPI developed a series of promotional events around the world to raise public awareness, particularly among segments of the population that otherwise may not closely follow UN issues. This included a meeting between the Secretary-General and young people in

Madrid; the Secretary-General's involvement in the kick-off at a Real Madrid game in Spain; a joint public event between the UN and Member States in New York; a tree planting ceremony in Armenia; a photo exhibition in Eritrea; and a panel discussion in Bhutan; and many more events and activities.

Finally, our emphasis on greater budgetary discipline through efficiency, modernization and a results-driven approach includes the optimal use of new information and communications technologies. Being aware of the needs of its audiences in various parts of the world, DPI continues to maintain a strong focus on traditional means of communication. We are firm that print publications should not be consigned to the recycling bins of history but must be parent to newer forms of communication – including “apps” – while refining and improving their original formats and content.

The Department will take a leap forward later this month when its new media asset management system (MAMS) and the new permanent broadcast facility, or PBF, become operational. MAMS will enable all of the Department's television and audio materials to be brought together on a shared digital platform and allow for production on that same platform. It will also enable direct posting for quicker distribution and dissemination to Member States and the public across the Department's news and media online outlets.

The use of digital technology is benefiting DPI in multiple ways. Consider the case of the Networked Interactive Content Access (NICA) project that allows processing and distribution of photographs to archive and make them available online. With several UN agencies partnering in this project, DPI is now able to offer a more diverse collection of photographs in the UN Photo website and in the Photo Library to the media, Member States and the public. Through cost-sharing

with partners, DPI is also able to recoup some of the costs towards running and maintaining the system.

The Department was able to intensify its communications with UN Information Centres and become more cost-effective by switching to WebEx, an affordable online video conference tool to interact with field office colleagues, hold meetings and briefings, conduct interviews and provide remote technical support.

Madam Chairperson,

I have found the Dag Hammarskjold Library to be a “hidden treasure” within DPI. Not only does it serve to safeguard history of the Organization through the preservation of parliamentary documents, but it is also a source of valuable knowledge and reference services aimed to assist Member State delegations and UN staff in performing their responsibilities. The Library must be an information hub. With this aim, we are in the

process of addressing long-standing issues of strategy, structure, processes and services, where previous reform efforts have not yielded sufficient results.

The aim is to refocus the service on effective information research support for Member State delegations and on organizational priorities, achieving significant improvements within existing resources. Feedback from clients, including delegations, is being sought and will feed into a review of services to ensure the best-possible fit with Member State needs. Library activities and work processes will be reviewed and streamlined to free resources for higher-value work. Team-building and the creation of a faster, lighter organization are core elements of the envisaged reform.

At the more operational level, we are developing new online services and tools for the users of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services delivered. A digital repository that can preserve and make available

UN documents, online information and multimedia resources is being developed. When fully implemented this will help preserve UN knowledge and also make diverse and hard-to-find information more accessible for you, the Member States, as well as for researchers and others.

Recently, we have begun a complete assessment of our media monitoring and analysis services being carried out across the Department with an aim to improve, streamline and strengthen DPI services in this area in accordance with client needs and to maximize their beneficial impact to Member States.

We have embraced the PaperSmart initiative of the Secretary-General. This will be the first COI session that will use the Integrated Sustainable PaperSmart Services of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. With support from DGACM, you as COI delegates can download documents on your mobile devices or tablets. Documents will also be

available via flash drives. Print-on-demand copies will also be made available upon request. We are confident that this initiative will improve our efficiency and, in the process, reduce our environmental footprint.

Indeed, thanks to partnerships with publishers around the world, many UN publications are now available through print-on-demand – reducing the financial burden on the Organization and ensuring that copies are still available to clients whenever they need them.

Madam Chairperson,

I would like to share some thoughts on communicating the UN story in different languages. At last year's COI, you the Member States asked us to come up with a strategy to produce press releases in all six official languages on a timely and cost-neutral basis. We can report to you that we are running a pilot project with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management where DGACM will make

available in Spanish the press releases for the Commission on Population and Development, which is meeting this week. Following the pilot project, we will share with you the results of this pilot and what additional resources would be required. This is a first step, and we are continuing to explore cost-effective ways to expand our multilingual reach.

We are also conscious of the impact that communicating in different languages has on you, the delegations of the Member States. As someone who has been a diplomat myself, I am aware of the need to access information readily and swiftly. When the information is available in a language that is immediate, the task of actively participating in the workings of the UN is much easier – particularly when one is trying to keep pace with the range of meetings being held. For this reason, we are looking at how we as DPI and the UN as a whole can do a better job of making that information available in the six official languages.

I am looking forward to our interactive dialogue this afternoon, to learn from you and to hear your thoughts, your comments, your criticisms, your observations for how DPI can do a better job. I would like to invite all of you, especially those attending the Committee for the first time, to join my colleagues and me in this dialogue.

Madam Chairperson,

I count on the wisdom and guidance of this Committee to protect and enhance the responsibility assigned to the Department by the General Assembly to “remain the focal point for coordination and implementation of information activities of the United Nations.” It is a responsibility that we have sought to address and nurture from the very foundation of this Organization. We look forward to continuing to work hand in hand with you to achieve those ends.

Thank you.
