

Statement by H.E. Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, Representative of Japan (2 May 2001)

Mr. Chairman,

Japan associates itself with the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, and would like to make a few additional comments.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to begin my remarks by congratulating the new members of the bureau on their election. I would like to welcome Mr. Shashi Tharoor as the interim head of the Department of Public Information, and to express the appreciation of my delegation for his introductory statement. Although his predecessor, Mr. Kensaku Hogen, now Japanese Ambassador to Canada accomplished much and greatly contributed to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the DPI's activities, it is clear that more needs to be done, especially at this time when the international order is changing dramatically and the evolution of information technology is accelerating day by day. My delegation is confident that, under the guidance and leadership of Mr. Tharoor, the DPI will meet these challenges in a most effective way.

Mr. Chairman,

This Committee has convened to discuss ways and means of strengthening the public information activities of the United Nations and the DPI in particular. People around the world need to be apprised of decisions and actions taken by the UN and the experiences of UN-related organizations in the field, as well as information the UN has gathered on such vital issues as the environment, development, conflict prevention, AIDS and other communicable diseases. Through its public information activities the UN should also promote awareness on human rights and the welfare of children, as well as a sense of interdependence among all peoples. It must do so in a way that is relevant to the targeted population, in terms of content and technology.

The task is indeed enormous. In view of the limited resources available to it the DPI will be able to fulfill its mandate only by rationalizing its activities, adopting new technologies, and cooperating with and mobilizing the private sector. In this regard, Japan considers that the proposal which the Group of Western European and Others will submit during our discussion of the draft resolution will be most useful. It is our sincere hope that this discussion will proceed in a constructive atmosphere and that the final resolution will be a balanced and action-oriented one that will serve as a useful tool in guiding the work of the DPI in the coming year.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation strongly supports the "UN House" initiative taken by Secretary-General Annan as a practical way to strengthen the public information capability of the UN in many Member States. Consolidating various UN-related offices scattered around a country into one UN House will not only increase the efficiency of the activities of those offices but will also

heighten the visibility of the UN presence and enhance peoples' understanding of its activities. I am therefore pleased to inform this Committee that, during his visit to Japan last January, the Secretary-General attended the official opening of the UN House in Tokyo where UNIC, UNU, UNICEF, UNHCR and other offices are brought together in one location. The Government of Japan values highly the work of UNIC Tokyo as the core public information unit in this newly established UN House. Also, let me add that the building and the land on which the UN House is located was provided by the Tokyo Municipal Government on a rent-free basis.

Lastly, I would like to comment upon the United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS), which was proposed in the Millennium Report of the Secretary-General and is to be carried out by the UN Volunteers. Japan has contributed US \$500,000 to this project in the belief that it has the potential to be a catalyst in the effort to bridge the digital divide.

Regrettably it is the only country to have done so. I would like to take this opportunity to call upon other Member States to join us in supporting the UNITeS.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.