

Statement by H.E. Mr. Francisco Seixas Da Costa, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations (2 May 2001)

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation takes this opportunity to compliment His Excellency Mr. Milos Alcalay, Ambassador of Venezuela, for his assumption as Chairperson of this Committee and to extend our congratulations to the other new members of the Bureau.

We would also like to warmly welcome the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, and to thank him for his comprehensive and lucid statement at the opening of this session. Portugal states its full cooperation with the DPI and supports Mr. Tharoor's strive to "energize" the Department.

Before going any further, Portugal fully associates itself with the statement addressed to this Committee by the representative of the Netherlands, on behalf of the Western Group, and with the statement made by my colleague of Mozambique, on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, CPLP.

Our comments, therefore, will focus on specific areas that are dear to us.

Mr. Chairperson,

Portugal has examined in detail the important reports (A/AC.198/2001/2 to A/AC.198/2001/9) placed before us by the Secretary-General, to whom we express our gratitude and appreciation. We find these documents incisive and very much coherent with the "Millenium Report" that highlights the central role that information and particularly new information technologies plays for the United Nations in its task of helping to build a more equitable world communications and information order.

In this regard, Portugal wishes to emphasize the excellent work achieved by the United Nations Information Center in Lisbon, as it helps to enlighten the Portuguese people about the objectives of the Organization, either by providing multiple information at the Centers' facilities or by posting information guidelines on the new UNIC's web site in Portuguese language. The UNIC in Lisbon is also to be commended as it plays another important role in disseminating information to other Portuguese-Speaking Countries where the UN does not have the same means to inform the public, such as Angola.

Mr. Chairperson,

Portugal attaches the utmost importance to the message of the United Nations through its radio broadcasts and, specifically, to the Portuguese-language programme, that has completed more than four decades of being the UN's primary information service to the Portuguese-speaking peoples, spread on five continents.

Today, this audience of more than 230 million people benefits from the news, features, analysis and interviews put together on a daily basis here, in New York. Indeed, thanks to the

outreach and quality of the UN Radio's Portuguese-language programme, the Lusophone Community is better aware of the Organizations' role in today's world.

Portugal is particularly satisfied with the agreements established between UN Radio and RDP, the Portuguese public broadcasting radio, which reaches as far as East Timor, Kosovo, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe and South Africa.

We are strongly convinced that the demands and working responsibilities of the Portuguese-language programme to cover all UN objectives in those, and other areas, requires the strengthening of the capacities of this service.

The Portuguese-language programme is the only non-official language service that strives, today, to offer an amount of work equal to that produced by the six official languages in the UN Radio. Such task is performed today by one single producer, Mr. João Lins de Albuquerque, whose tireless efforts towards meeting the goals of the United Nations in the complex field of public information is highly commended by us.

Mr. Chairperson,

We know the financial constraints of the Department of Public Information. However, we think that, through creativity and skillfully allocating resources, it is possible to reinforce the Portuguese-language programme service towards a better efficiency and quality.

We believe that DPI recognizes this need. Such awareness is testified by the support given, via the Departments' News and Media Services Division, to the initiative of the web page of its Portuguese-language radio programme, to be launched on May 8th.

Let me point out, Mr. Chairperson, that the President of the Portuguese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Sampaio, has already sent his message of support for this new challenge of the UN Radio.

The new web page will be made available without DPI having to commit further budgetary resources. Such accomplishment is to be fully credited to Mr. João Lins de Albuquerque, from the UN Radio, and Mr. António Carlos Silva, from the Multimedia Unit, who have been putting additional work into making this initiative come true.

The Portuguese-language programme found, thus, a valuable platform to improve its information services towards reaching the same technological level already available to the six UN official languages.

Mr. Chairperson,

Portugal asks for the support of the Department of Public Information and of this Committee to give the practical means so much needed by the Portuguese-language programme to carry on its most valuable service. We believe that the creation of one additional producer post would meet such demands.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.