

Statement by the delegate from the Permanent Mission of China on the equal development of the United Nations web site in the six official languages (23 April 2002)

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation had the honour of attending the briefing given by the Committee on Information yesterday. That important meeting gave the Chinese delegation an opportunity to acquaint itself with the important role played by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in publicizing the UN to the outside world for a better understanding of and support for the UN's work. Most of the Member States are satisfied with the results that the DPI has achieved in opening up channels and initiating major information activities. The Chinese delegation would like to affirm its full support for these valuable efforts.

My delegation has carefully read the documents provided at that meeting. In particular, we have studied the Secretary-General's report on "Continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages" (A/AC.198/2002/6). The Chinese delegation would like to express its views on the balanced development of the UN web site in the six official languages.

The Chinese delegation is gratified to note that though launched not long ago, the UN web site has become an effective instrument for publicizing the UN. In particular, the re-designed web site in the six official languages not only ensures the depth and breadth of its coverage, but also reflects the parity of the UN's six official languages. My delegation also notes, however, that some of the facts presented in paragraphs 7 and 9 of the report are a cause of concern for a significant number of Member States, including China, i.e., that "the number of pages available in Arabic and Chinese is very low," with "almost [equally low] levels of access for the Arab, Chinese and Russian languages." Furthermore, paragraph 14 of the report stresses that "the General Assembly and the Committee on Information have recognized that parity among the six official languages on the web sites is an important consideration," hence "the need for the continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web sites, with a view to achieving equal treatment of the six official languages on those web sites".

My delegation believes that to maintain the high-quality development of the UN web site and to raise it to a higher level, it is necessary first and foremost to ensure relative parity in the development of the web site using all six official languages. As paragraph 11 of the report points out, the levels of usage of the language sites other than English are not high, and users are often unable to find the information they need. The reason for this is that no language units have been set up for those language sites. Consider the organizational structure for the management of the language sites: it is not entirely rational to lump all six language sites under one unit, instead of establishing a relatively independent unit for each language site. Likewise, there is an obvious imbalance in staffing for the six language sites. At least three language sites have no established posts for assistants. The Chinese site, in particular, not only has no established post for an assistant; as yet, it does not have any

established post at all. Such disparity certainly hinders the balanced development of all the language sites. My delegation therefore proposes that the DPI work in coordination with the appropriate offices in the Office of Human Resources to re-adjust the management structure for the language sites by establishing six relatively independent and equal units for the six language sites, for a rationalized distribution of human resources among the language sites, in a way that is in line with the staffing and post structure of the other language processing units in the UN Secretariat. This will facilitate the full and high-quality development of the UN web site in all official languages.

Moreover, my delegation supports the course of action proposed by the Secretary-General in his report to "allow the web sites to develop independently in each language on the basis of the resource capacities of author Departments and Offices." We fully understand that owing to resource constraints and other factors, full parity and balanced development of the UN web site in all six official languages is difficult to achieve in the near term. However, we believe that the most important thing is that the importance of parity and balanced development be fully recognized, that parity and balanced development be established as a principle and a goal in the process of implementation, and that efforts be made towards the gradual realization of this goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.