

## **Statement by the Delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt (22 April 2002)**

Mr. Chairman

I would like at the outset to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau of the Committee on Information on your reelection this year to steer the work of the Committee during its twenty-fourth session. We pledge the delegation of Egypt's full cooperation with you and the other delegations in order to crown the work of this important session with success and achieve the positive results that we all desire to enhance the information policies of the United Nations and to support the capabilities and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information in carrying out its valuable activities. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to Mr. Shashi Tharoor, the Interim Head of DPI, for the efforts he is undertaking and for the comprehensive presentation he provided to the Committee.

Mr. Chairman

The delegation of Egypt has considered the six reports presented by the Secretary-General on the various aspects of the UN's information activities. While it associates itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of Venezuela on behalf of the G-77 and which addressed all the issues that reflect the priorities of the Member States of the Group concerning the activities of the organization in matters related to information, the delegation of Egypt would like for its part to address a number of specific points in which it finds importance in highlighting:

First, the Committee on Information managed during its last twenty-third session to adopt a comprehensive and balanced resolution reflecting the broad consensus among Member States on the various fields that must receive priority in the information activities of the UN and the wide degree of trust in and support of the DPI by all delegations. While we hope that the work of this session will lead to reaching a similar positive resolution resulting from a constructive process of negotiation among all interested delegations, we also find ourselves obliged to express our deep regret towards the approach of some delegations that had previously accepted what had been agreed to in this Committee and later attempted to obstruct this agreement during its translation in the proposed budget for the DPI for the 2002-2003 biennium within the Fifth Committee. These delegations surprised us with their extremist positions and numerous manoeuvres to circumvent what the Committee on Information had endorsed by re-opening the discussion of the UN's information policies in another forum that is only responsible for examining the financial — and not substantive — aspects of these policies; this is a matter which we hope will not re-occur this year.

Second, the report presented by the Secretary-General entitled "We-orientation of UN activities in the field of public information and communications " reflects a clear and honest description of the situation of the DPI and the position it finds itself in to respond to the numerous and varied mandates and directives issued to it by the General Assembly over the last years. The report also contains a number of preliminary findings that were possible to ascertain in the context of the comprehensive review that the Secretary-General was requested to conduct on the performance and effectiveness of the Department.

While we noticed that these findings are confined solely to those aspects where the performance of the Department can be improved, as described in paragraph 9 of the report, we also affirm that addressing the substance of the report should not aim to restrict the activities of the Department, discontinue some of the programs it is carrying out or withhold the financing required for them; on the contrary, addressing the report should result in the reaffirmation by this august Committee of its support for those programs that we all place importance in and that represent for the Member States an indispensable priority. And while we are aware that the comprehensive review the Secretary-General is attempting to prepare will not be finalized until next May and will only be presented during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, I nonetheless would like to stress three fundamental points which I hope will be taken into consideration in this context:

1. The Committee on Information, as the primary legislative body mandated to make recommendations to the General Assembly on the performance and policies of the DPI, must first examine the comprehensive review before any other forum proceeds to address its results or take action based on them. This approach will afford the Committee the opportunity to examine the performance and effectiveness of the Department in all its aspects — be they positive or where there is room for improvement — in a comprehensive and coordinated manner that allows Member States to adopt a broad range of general recommendations and specific directives that will form the basis of the Department's work in the forthcoming period.
2. We must all refrain from examining the comprehensive review from one narrow angle that is based solely on financial considerations; thus our response to what has been put forward by the Secretary-General in paragraph 58 of his report is represented in the need to elevate the two factors of "political importance" and "results benefited" above all other considerations that may be used, and both of these may be precisely ascertained from the clear mandates adopted by the General Assembly and the evaluations that may be conducted on the size of the target audiences for the UN's information activities.
3. There must be an acceptance of the need to enhance the capabilities of the DPI to implement those programs that have proven their effectiveness whether in the sense of them meeting the wishes of the general membership of the UN or by them reaching a broad segment of beneficiaries throughout the world. I would like here to single out, for example, the UN's live radio broadcasting program that reaches tens of millions of listeners in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas, as well as the Press Releases issued by the Department on formal meetings of the bodies and committees of the UN and which the vast majority of delegations in this organization depend upon.

Third, my delegation has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the development and enrichment of the UN's web site on the internet in all official languages. While we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to put forward a set of new ideas in response to the successive requests of the Committee on Information on this matter, we would also like to affirm a number of points that the report has accepted, at the forefront of which is that the multilingual development of the UN web site was not achieved at the desired pace due to the

lack of resources required for it. And if we address the specific recommendations contained in the report, we would stress very clearly our objection to option two to develop the web site — which will depend primarily on the capacity of the Departments' producing the information to provide it in the six official languages — since this approach will only increase the disparity between the English and French languages on the one hand and the other official languages on the other.

On the other hand we welcome the first option that is based on translating all the information available on the web site in English into the other official languages. While we accept that some delegations may have reservations on endorsing this option, and while we are ready to show the necessary flexibility to consider the compromises contained in paragraphs 34 and 35 of the report, we would also like to stress that the full linguistic parity that the General Assembly has repeatedly called for in its successive resolutions will not be attained unless everyone displays the required political will and accepts that reaching this goal can only be achieved through the provision of the additional financial allocations needed for it. I also find it essential here to remind the Secretariat of the importance of carefully implementing paragraph 57 of GA resolution 56/64 which requested the Secretary-General to ensure the equitable distribution of financial and human resources allocated to the UN web site among the six official languages, that is until the GA takes its decision on the most suitable approach to achieving full linguistic parity on the site.

Fourth, concerning the integration of information centres with the field offices of the United Nations Development Program, the delegation of Egypt would like to express its appreciation for the care displayed by the Secretariat in respecting the specific criteria and guidance approved by the General Assembly for the integration of these centres as referred to in paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's report on this subject. We also welcome the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat to restore those resources that have previously been reduced to a number of information centres especially in developing countries. We also look forward to the examination by Member States of the proposal put forward by the Secretary-General to consider the viability of maintaining those centres whose host governments do not provide rent-free premises for, especially when it comes to those centres present in the five developed countries referred to by the Secretary-General and whose rent expenses account for 40 percent of the non-staff resources allocated to all UN information centres around the world.

Fifth, the delegation of Egypt is always mindful to reaffirm the importance it attaches to the DPI's adherence to the full implementation of all the information activities endorsed by the General Assembly in the special program for Palestine until a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question is achieved. There is no doubt that these activities gain increased significance during these difficult times in which more light must be shed on the suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the occupation and enhancing the awareness of world public opinion of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians for self-determination and the establishment of their independent state. I would also like in this context to once again express our appreciation for what the Department is undertaking in organizing the annual

training program for Palestinian journalists and we look forward to it continuing — and even enhancing — its efforts in this arena during the forthcoming period.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.