

Statement by H.E. Mr. Yaw Osei Osei, Minister, Permanent Mission of Ghana to the United Nations (24 April 2002)

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to join previous speakers in commending your election to chair the session of this Committee on Information, and through you, to congratulate other members of the Bureau. Be assured of my delegation's cooperation and support throughout the session.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation, in a departure from our practice where we have participated in the general debate of the Committee's past session, had chosen not to speak but hear out other speakers. More so, since the statement read by the delegation of Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, which we endorsed covered elements that totally reflected our concerns on Information Technology.

However, Mr. Chairman, we have been sufficiently stimulated by the presentations made by other delegations, but particularly so, the comprehensive statement of the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information, Mr. Shashi Tharoor. He has urged Member States to tell him what their expectations of the DPI are, and therefore my delegation wishes to respond to this invitation with some observations.

In this regard, I would like to focus on the Mission Statement proposed by the DPI, which is set out on page 5 of the Secretary-General's report, document No. *A/AC/198/2002/2*.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to quote in extenso this proposed Mission Statement:

"The DPI's mission is to manage and coordinate United Nations Communications content — guarded by the activities of the Organization and its component parts — and strategically to convey this content, especially through appropriate intermediaries, to achieve the greatest public impact."

The DPI deserves our commendation for the initiative of proposing the Mission Statement, which in our view demonstrates its institutional maturity and desire to set out a goal and thus allow a process that facilitates evaluation of progress towards the attainment of these objectives or goals.

In endorsing the DPI initiative, we take particular note of the fact that it seeks to align this vision with the challenges set out in the Millennium Declaration as facing the organization — namely, poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the battle against international terrorism and the specific needs of Africa.

My delegation notes in the Secretary-General's report the DPI's desire to better identify target audience, through appropriate intermediaries to achieve the greatest public impact as stated in its mission statement. From my delegation's perspective, the greater majority of these audiences are the citizenry of Member States, especially in developing countries whose interests we represent here, who do not have easy access to the information highway through

advanced technology such as internet connections, e-mail and other publications, facilities that many of us here take for granted. We should be concerned about these people who are denied access to the information highway and remain uninformed and unable to help shape public opinion in their countries, so that Governments can be properly sensitized to their needs. We need to identify how through sharing of information and their easy accessibility to tools of information, their vulnerability on account of these social hindrances identified in the Millennium Declaration can be reduced.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation highlights the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) as the most appropriate channel to reach such target audiences. We must focus also on how the work of UNICs can be fine tuned to achieve even greater input in their information outreach programmes.

Mr. Chairman, UNICs, as the local focal points in their countries for outreach programmes on behalf of the UN system, my delegation particularly commend their inputs into various sectors of national development. As noted in the report under reference, in Ghana recently, UNIC Accra assisted the DPKO in organizing a UN training seminars for armed forces for the sub-region. It is through such programmes, often run in coordination with local governmental agents and non-governmental organizations, that the agenda on social development can be well publicized and the appropriate awareness created.

In conclusion, I wish to commend your efforts so far in guiding our deliberations and assure you again of my delegation full support.

I thank you, Sir.