

## **Statement by Ms. Koreen Simon, Representative of the Republic of Guyana to the United Nations (24 April 2002)**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulations to you and other members of the Bureau on your re-election. We are confident of your ability to lead this session of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

Guyana wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and Jamaica on behalf of CARICOM.

As the international political, social, and economic environment continues to evolve, the United Nations must continue to examine its public information policies and activities so as to ensure that people worldwide obtain the most accurate and reliable information about the United Nations and its activities.

In this current climate where hatred and distrust have led to terrorism of the kind witnessed on September 11, 2001, it is now more important than ever that the United Nations inform and educate people worldwide of its work in areas such as peace, development, and human rights. If people are informed and educated they will be less likely to be aligned with groups that breed hate and distrust and they may choose instead to work for peace and development.

As an international organization with membership of over 180 countries, the United Nations has world recognition and it must therefore strive to maintain an image as an organization that freely circulates balanced and accurate information aimed at strengthening peace and international understanding.

Through United Nations Web sites and through more traditional media, the United Nations can educate and inform. Its efforts to inform on the situation in Palestine by developing a Web site dedicated to the issue is one example of how it could present balanced information to the public about situations in areas involved in conflict.

The Web sites and information centers should present an image of the United Nations that truly reflects its activities. A single portal for its Web sites would offer uniformity of content that should be characteristic of the Web site of a major organization with a global outreach.

New challenges in the area of information dissemination have emerged and the Department of Public Information, the department with overall responsibility for the public information program of the United Nations, must be reoriented to make it better equipped to provide the communication expertise required to face these challenges. The Secretary-General's focus on communication in its reorientation efforts is central to addressing these challenges.

United Nations activities in all areas must have the widest possible outreach if people everywhere are to understand the purposes and work of the United Nations and therefore support its programmes and objectives. Towards this end, there must be closer coordination

in the field of public information both within the United Nations system and within the Secretariat. Greater coordination is necessary to maximize outreach and avoid duplication, and the Joint United Nations Committee should have a key role in achieving this aim. The Department of Public Information must ensure that it communicates its message in a manner that is easily understood by all and to achieve this it is necessary for the Department to be included in the planning and decision-making processes of substantive departments and offices.

Information and communications technology is being increasingly relied on for information dissemination following revolutions in technology. The United Nations, as a world recognized organization with global reach should not be left behind but should be able to fully benefit from technological advances and should explore how new technology could enable it to fully implement its communications programmes. It is unfortunate that cuts in the programme budget for upgrading equipment in 2002-03 will affect the United Nations ability to carry out its information dissemination activities. Adequate resources should be provided to enable the Department of Public Information to fully implement current and future programmes.

It was noted in the Ministerial Declaration of the High-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on Information Technology that information and communications technology can play an important role in the creation of a global knowledge-based economy and that such technology can contribute to accelerated growth and poverty eradication in developing countries. Along with the benefits of information and communications technology come challenges such as finding means of bridging the digital divide that would enable the majority of the world's population living in poverty to benefit from the information and communications technology revolution. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force could play a role in this area and in other areas that would contribute to the development goals of the United Nations and in other areas outlined in the Millennium Declaration. The forthcoming meetings devoted to information and communications technology, including the World Summit on the Information Society should provide opportunities to further explore ways of bridging the digital divide and could provide the United Nations with useful impetus to carry out its activities in the area of public information.

The United Nations Information Centers keep people everywhere informed about the work of the United Nations. As field offices of the Department of Public Information, they provide a necessary service at the local and regional level. The United Nations Information Center in Port of Spain, the center which serves the Caribbean, is an important link between the United Nations and media outlets in the region and the public and should be provided with the resources necessary to meet the needs of the region. We note that the Web site of the Port of Spain office is not yet operational and we hope that it will soon become operational so that it could reach viewers in the Caribbean with access to the Internet.

The importance of traditional means of information dissemination such as radio and television must not be ignored since they serve people in developing countries who do not have access to modern technology. Reorientation efforts should address how the United Nations should

continue to use traditional means of information dissemination for the benefit of people who do not have access to other media.

The United Nations can influence the poor and underprivileged to work for a peaceful, better world instead of one torn by hatred and conflict and through the Department of Public Information this can be achieved.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman