

## **Statement by Mr. Tatang B. Razak, Representative of Indonesia (24 April 2002)**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to you and the members of the Bureau. We are confident that under your able guidance, our deliberations will lead to substantive results. My delegation wishes to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of its support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

We would also like to convey our gratitude to Mr. Shashi Tharoor, the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information, for his comprehensive statement and his leadership in guiding the work of the Department to meet the dynamic changes unfolding in the information and communication sector.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the Representative of Venezuela speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Allow me therefore to avail of this opportunity to make a few brief remarks on some issues of relevance to my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, the international landscape had been transformed by technological breakthroughs in the field of information and communication. From radio, television and telephone, the contemporary world is now being presented with the unprecedented giant leap forward in new information and communication technologies (ICT). While the opportunities offered by this powerful tool are far surpassed than ever before for mankind to advance in every sphere, the reality is that the majority of the world's populations are being bypassed and even marginalized. After all, most of the people in the world have never made a phone call and half the world's peoples live within three miles of a phone and not only do most people in the developing world lack access to computers, they do not have electric power. Thus, rather than bridging the digital divide, there are justifiable concerns that these technologies are accentuating them.

Against this backdrop, the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health Inter Network and the Information and Communications Technology Taskforce by the Secretary-General are significant endeavors aimed to bridging the digital divide and in response to the widening gap between the developed and developing countries. Furthermore, we welcome the initiatives of the Group of 77 Summit, the UNDP, the World Bank and UNCTAD and the Digital Opportunity Task Force of the Group of Eight Nations. It is our sincere hope that these efforts will achieve their desired objectives.

It has been Indonesia's consistent position that the new world information and communication order continues to be of relevance especially to developing countries to meet their aspirations and priorities. Therefore, forging cooperation to assist developing countries in building the necessary infrastructures is essential so that they can develop their own communication and information policies freely and independently to assure a free flow of information to all people.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has taken note of the reports of the Secretary-General before us especially on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of information and communications. We welcome the view of the Secretary-General that "public information should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of keeping the peoples of the world informed". That being the case, the role of the United Nations information centers (UNICs), in developing countries such as Indonesia, to communicate is undeniably important particularly when access to technology eludes the majority of the population. It is our view therefore that the review process should be implemented towards strengthening and expanding their role so as to effectively disseminate information about the United Nations, especially in the areas of economic and social development. In addition, the disbursement of resources to the UNICs must accord consideration to its locations in developing countries or those with special needs. It would also be useful for UNICs to develop their own web page as the "field voice" of the Department, in local languages, including Bahasa Indonesia as the language of a number of countries spoken in the Southeast Asian region. We were thus gratified by the informative briefing given by the DPI on Monday, 22nd of April 2002, including the work done by UNIC in Islamabad with its own web page in the local language.

Indonesia is also gratified with the taped Bahasa Indonesia radio program relayed across the country to more than 210 million people. It would be desirable to ensure for the timely dispatch of the taped program. In this context, we would like to underscore the importance of radio as a cost effective and far-reaching form of traditional media and is particularly relevant in places where other means of communication are not well developed. May we also add that we have noted with interest the progress report of the Secretary-General in the implementation of the pilot project on the development of radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations. It is hoped that this project is continued as radio has proved to be an effective method of communication to the peoples of the world.

As to the Department's other activities, we are cognizant that it is operating under budgetary constraints as underlined in the report and thus require some elements in its budget to be revised. However, it is hoped that this exercise does not undermine its ability to disseminate information on important activities of the United Nations, including, amongst others, economic and social development, eradication of poverty, debt relief, peace and security and other relevant issues.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it is our hope that as in past sessions, our deliberations will be characterized by a spirit of consensus and we look forward to working with other delegations to achieving an information-based society attendant with its potential opportunities and vast benefits for all humankind.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.