

Statement by Mr. Charles Ononye, of the Delegation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the United Nations (23 April 2002)

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Nigerian Delegation I wish to express our appreciation to you and through you, to other members of the Bureau for the able manner you have conducted the affairs of this committee since your election. I also thank the Chairman for his statement this morning and reassure him of our support and cooperation. Let me also express our appreciation to the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information for his very detailed statement, and documents made available to us. We commend his leadership role in the DPI.

The Nigerian delegation endorses the efforts of the Secretary General towards the review and modernization of the communication system of the United Nations, especially in the face of financial constraint. We would urge the Secretary General not to relent in his efforts, given the fact that the Department of Public Information is the principal arm of the United Nations outreach to the world, providing services to the media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the general public.

The DPI has succeeded in creating tremendous awareness about the United Nations. We observe that the Department is poised to reset its priorities, address its deficiencies and improve its working methods in a manner that is consistent with the millennium Declaration. In this respect, it is our view that the Department continues to emphasize, such areas as, poverty eradication, elimination of illiteracy, control of HIV/AIDS, women's rights and the plight of children in armed conflict.

With respect to the Department's live radio project, my delegation still maintains the view that the radio remains the cheapest and most accessible means of communication in our region. The DPI's outreach through broadcasting arrangement with the Federal Radio Cooperation of Nigeria has a record listeners population of not less than 50 million, making it the largest in Africa. We are particularly impressed with this achievement, and would therefore urge that every effort be made to sustain the project, because it educates and enlightens our people on the work of the United Nations.

The Nigerian delegation welcomes the involvement of the Department in the Secretariat's implementation plan for the Brahimi Panel Report on the United Nations Peace Operation. We affirm that the provision of an adequate information infrastructure in any peace operation is crucial to the success of the Mission, the safety of the peacekeepers and other international personnel involved. We are therefore delighted to note that the DPI has continued to provide planning and operational support to information components of peacekeeping operation, as it did in the operation in Kosovo, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, East Timor and most recently Afghanistan.

We note with delight that the United Nations Information Centers have continued to serve as the local voice of the Organization throughout the world, through the dissemination of information on the work of the Organization. We commend the outreach activities organized

by the centers in, such areas as, seminars, workshops and training programme for journalists and Broadcasters. However, given the necessity to maximize the limited resources available to information centers, we endorse the proposal by the Secretary General to establish regional information Centre "hubs" in areas where "linguistic commonalities facilitate regionalization".

Mr. Chairman,

Permit me, at this juncture, to refer to a particular service rendered to delegates by the Department, which tremendously facilitates the participation, and performance of delegates to numerous United Nations Meetings. This service is no other than the daily press releases in English and French issued by the Department. We consider the press releases particularly useful because it enhances our capability as delegates, especially those of us from Africa with limited resources. We would therefore urge the Secretary General to ensure its continuation. In addition, the Nigerian delegation commends the efforts of the Secretary General to make the Dag-Hammarskjöld library a virtual library with world outreach. We note that the library continues to support delegates and Permanent Missions to the United Nations with information and research necessary for the performance of their responsibilities.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, while we understand the necessity for a review of the services of the Department of Public Information, consequent upon unavailability of funds, we would stress the indispensability of the outreach services of the Department, and therefore urge that extreme caution be applied in the review exercise and allocation of funds, in order not to disrupt these very important services.

I thank you.