

Statement by H.E. Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Nepal to the United Nations (30 April 2003)

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to extend my warm congratulations on your election as Chairman of the 25th session of the Committee on Information. I would also like to felicitate the newly elected members of the Bureau.

My delegation expresses its sincere appreciation to the Secretary General for his comprehensive reports. I will be failing in my duty if I do not commend the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for his comprehensive remarks on the road map the Department of Information has drawn up for itself.

We align ourselves with the statement of the Kingdom of Morocco delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

It goes without saying that the DPI serves as the lynch-pin of the United Nations System in creating public awareness about the myriad activities that the world body undertakes on a day-to-day basis in the interest of global peace, security and development. Thanks to the extensive UN information network, people all over the world have access to reliable means of knowledge and information that touch our lives on a daily basis.

The reform measures being implemented to strengthen and rationalize the DPI are showing results, enhancing ordinary people's awareness about what the UN is doing to make our lives better. We cannot but agree with the Secretary General that the DPI, with the welcome addition of Strategic Communications Division, News and Media Division and Outreach Division, has been successful in promoting synergy and repositioning itself as a refurbished and dedicated Department. No doubt, these developments will go a long way to leverage the activities in fulfilling the DPI's objectives.

In a similar vein, the new mission statement for the department aimed at fulfilling the substantive purposes of the United Nations is encouraging. With the United Nations Millennium Declaration as the guiding precept, the DPI's renewed focus on such cross-cutting issues as poverty eradication, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, HIV/AIDS, terrorism, and needs of the African continent is a pointer to the right way forward.

Mr. Chairman,

We support the new operating concept outlined for the United Nations information centers whereby the resources from the proposed rationalization are intended to be redeployed, among others, to the information centers in developing countries. As such, these centers serve as an effective medium to promote public awareness around the world. In developing

countries, especially in least developed and low income countries, these centers remain vital source of information in general and UN related information in particular. Hence, the need for strengthening them in developing countries in consultation with the host countries cannot be overemphasized.

Likewise, it is a fact that traditional means of communications such as the radio has the most impressive outreach to the vast majority of peoples in developing countries. Given the abyss in the persistent digital gap, there can be no better cost-effective and convenient alternative to radio broadcasting. While the upcoming first phase of the World Summit on Information Society to be held in Geneva in December this year should address this concern, the UN, specifically the DPI, should make the best efforts to vouchsafe the interest of the poor and marginalized.

The ongoing reform in the library system within the UN in order to upgrade its services is a welcome initiative. The creation of the Steering Committee is a significant step in this direction. We believe that the Dag Hammarskjöld (DHL) Library in its capacity as the focal point should take necessary measures to strengthen the depositary libraries by providing them trainings and other assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

More broadly, the United Nations must foster closer partnership with the media by providing improved access to media persons and by encouraging them to cover United Nations activities better. Media persons from developing nations, particularly the least developed ones, should be given more opportunity for internships and trainings with the DPI so that they can be more effective partners in disseminating messages from the United Nations. The journalists from poor countries must be able to take advantage of the revolution in communications technology. The DPI Training Program for Broadcasters and Journalists from Developing Countries should play a meaningful role in achieving these objectives.

Incidentally, the World Press Freedom Day is being observed next week, on May 3. It should inspire all of us to redouble our efforts to make DPI as efficient, well-equipped and accessible as is physically possible. We owe this to the people of the world that we pledge to serve.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.