

Statement by H.E. Oleksiy Shovkoplias, Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations (29 April 2003)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor for his valuable statement of April 28 on the progress of reforming the Department of Public Information (DPI), and to express our sincere appreciation for focused informal briefing by DPI, supplementing and updating the Reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of this Committee.

We support the Department's efforts to focus on the effectiveness of program activities, re-setting its priorities and eliminating the duplication and fragmentation of its functions. DPI is currently in the process of carrying out a very important exercise aimed at strengthening an understanding of the Organization's work and building broad-based global support for it in an ever-changing information environment. This is indeed a difficult and complex task, which could not be solved in one gulp. I pledge Ukraine's support for the Department's reorientation efforts and my delegation looks forward to cooperating with all members of this committee during this session.

The Ukrainian delegation would like to commend the Department for redesigned UN News Centre, which serves as an excellent source of news on the latest developments around the United Nations system as well as a gateway to a wide array of links to in-depth resources related to news of the day. In this era of instant communication, it is hard to underestimate the importance for the UN image of online availability of the news in easily accessible and user-friendly format.

We support efforts of the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information to achieve a more modern, highly integrated, and efficient system of library services within the United Nations. Collaborative reference services, supported by cooperative collection development and resource sharing, will insure immediate electronic access to the wealth of global information resources to be used in the development of all knowledge-sharing initiatives of the Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Today I'd like to raise some issues, which are more important to Ukraine.

First, during the past decade the changing nature and character of conflicts have substantially broadened the scope of UN peacekeeping activities and made them far more complex. The important role, played by the United Nations peacekeeping around the world and sacrifices made by individual peacekeepers deserve to be fully recognized by the international community. Last year, by adopting resolution A/57/522, the General Assembly designated the 29th of May as the International Day of UN Peacekeepers to pay tribute to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in the United Nations peacekeeping

operations and to honor the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. In this connection Ukraine welcomes the proposed arrangements and efforts undertaken by DPI aimed at commemorating the Day for the first time this year, which marks the 55th anniversary of the UN peacekeeping.

In this respect we would like to join previous speakers in underlining the important role of DPI in consolidating peacekeeping and peace building.

Second, just 4 days passed when we marked the 17th anniversary of the explosion of a nuclear reactor at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant.

That day went down in the history of civilization as a sad and tragic lesson of the scientific and technological progress of the XX century. But this tragic event is not the thing of the past; it is the challenge for the present and for the future.

The new United Nations strategy on Chornobyl "A strategy for recovery", which was launched in 2002, has provided a constructive framework for reinvigorating international cooperation on Chornobyl.

Since the adoption of the New UN Strategy a number of important events took place, which turned the spotlight on Chornobyl.

Among them was a remarkable visit of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to Ukraine in June 2002, which specifically drew the international attention to the importance of mobilizing international support for the people still living in the shadow of the Chornobyl tragedy.

However we do feel that the more distant is the day of this tragedy the less attention is drawn to this tragic technological catastrophe. That is why we believe that the reformed DPI should continue its activities to provide the objective information on the dimension of the Chernobyl disaster. In this context the Ukrainian delegation welcomes the ongoing efforts towards improving the United Nations Chornobyl web site and making it more informative and functional.

Today, when the Chornobyl recovery assistance is no less needed than 17 years ago, the world community cannot afford weakening its efforts with a job half done, but should maintain the momentum, provided by the new UN strategy, and take real action for the sake of present and future generations.

Third, on Friday, May 2nd, we will commemorate World Press Freedom Day. We strongly believe that a free press is a cornerstone of true democracy. It is a regrettable fact that dozens of journalists have been killed over the last year and that many others are in prison just for doing their professional duty. The number of attacks against journalists especially in areas of armed conflicts is growing worldwide.

Almost 55 years have passed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been adopted. It is a grim reality that still hampers the universal application of Article 19 of the Declaration which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this

right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference to seek, receive and import information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

Today Ukraine attaches great importance to taking the necessary measures to protect journalists, in particular those covering the situations in the conflict zones and in the regions of social and military tension. We believe that consideration of measures aimed at prevention of attacks against journalists in circumstances of armed conflicts, should be put in proper place on the future agenda of the Committee.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we of course understand that realistically all DPI's goals of improving its activities cannot be achieved overnight, and the department should be given sufficient time for implementing its plans. I would like to commend Mr. Shashi Tharoor for his able management and to thank the staff of DPI and the Committee's Secretariat for their hard work. I sincerely pledge Ukraine's support for the Department's efforts aimed at re-orienting its activities for the benefit of all.

I thank you.