

Statement by the Representative of Brazil, on behalf of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (27 April 2004)

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honor to address the Committee on Information at its 26th session on behalf of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, comprised of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor-Leste.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election, as well as the other members of Bureau, and to assure you of our Community's readiness to work constructively with a view to improving the capacity of the United Nations in the field of public information and communications.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the reports that will serve as the basis of our work during this session and in the months ahead.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our Community acknowledges the valuable work of the Department of Public Information in raising awareness of the broad range of UN endeavors, as well as in providing real time information in strenuous situations. In this sense, we consider the work of the DPI to be crucial for ensuring the external accountability of the UN and we welcome the efforts of its staff, under the leadership of Mr. Shashi Tharoor, towards increased efficiency.

In this context, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries attaches great importance to the maintenance and, where possible, improvement of the structure in the DPI dedicated to the dissemination of information in Portuguese.

Due consideration must be given to this issue, as we proceed with the process of rationalization currently in place. The work previously carried out by the UNIC in Portugal should not be compromised by the creation of the Brussels hub.

In Latin America, whichever the criteria adopted for the eventual establishment of hubs, the Portuguese language needs of Brazil must be adequately addressed. The Rio de Janeiro UNIC is a special case in Latin America, in that it is the only one in the region to provide services in Portuguese — in fact, with the creation of the Brussels hub for Europe, it is currently the only Portuguese language UNIC in the world —, thus enabling it to cater to the specific demands of Brazil, not excluding the possibility of eventually expanding those services to other Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa.

Such services to the African continent, however, would be best covered by the offer made by the Government of Angola to host an information center, which could function as a hub for the Portuguese-speaking African countries. The offer is most welcome, and we appreciate the fact that the Secretary-General has reflected it in his report.

Furthermore, a word should be said about Timor-Leste. While its public information concerns are currently still met by the UN presence in that country, we should begin to envisage as of now the provision of Portuguese language services in a future regional hub for South-East Asia with a view to providing an uninterrupted flow of public information in Portuguese to Timor-Leste.

In all these cases, adequate arrangements for translation of reports into Portuguese should be provided.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite increasing technological progress, traditional means of communication, such as radio, remain effective and far-reaching media instruments, particularly in developing countries, where access to more advanced forms of communication is still far from satisfactory.

The Portuguese Speaking Community, spread over five continents, comprising close to 250 million citizens, has greatly benefited from United Nations international radio broadcasting. We are greatly appreciative of the work carried out by the Portuguese Language Unit, despite scarce resources, and trust that, as its staffing is incremented, such as with the recent positioning of a second producer, it will provide even better services.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the support of our group to the ongoing process of reforms, which we are certain will be conducted so as to increase efficiency, raise the quality and increase the flow of UN public information and communications, particularly for the benefit of developing countries, so as to bridge the information gap between the developed and developing world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.