

## **Statement by H.E. Mr. V.K. Nambiar, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations (27 April 2004)**

Mr. Chairman,

We congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your re-election.

We also express our appreciation to Under Secretary General Shashi Tharoor for the detailed presentation he made yesterday, giving us a clear idea of the changes in DPI's operations over the past year. His tireless efforts have contributed to a reformed or transformed DPI, today. While targeted goals still remain to be met, we have no doubt that under his leadership, the process will reach its logical culmination. We wish to extend our wholehearted support to him and to his team in these endeavours.

I wish to align my delegation's statement with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Qatar in his capacity as the Chairman of the G-77.

Mr. Chairman,

We have before us the various reports of the Secretary General contained in documents A/AC.198/2004/2 - 7. We commend the Secretariat for these documents that build upon ideas put forward over the past year regarding reform, restructuring and repositioning of the DPI. We broadly support the proposals contained in these documents. For the sake of brevity, however, I will not comment on the details of the proposals but highlight only those areas that are of particular concern to my delegation.

### **United Nations Information Centres (UNICs)**

Given the key role played by UNICs, their proposed reconfiguration to make the most cost-effective use of scarce resources, assumes paramount importance. Last year, we welcomed the proposal to restructure UNICs by collapsing these centres into regional hubs. We were then told that Western Europe (Brussels) would be the first region to be taken up. This was a region whose centres consumed a major portion of the DPI budget and where the resources thus freed were capable of being diverted to areas identified as priority. While the first half of the promise has been met with the Regional United Nations Information Centre (RUNIC) in Brussels functional since 30 January this year, the second part of the "deal" seems to have slipped. This also undermines the assertion of the Secretariat that the initiative should not be seen as a cost-cutting exercise. Without a firm linkage to plough back resources 'saved' from administrative expenses into operational and programmatic activities of the Centres, it would be difficult to convince member States of the sincerity underlying the effort. We understand that the resources freed from the shutting down of the UNICs in Western Europe have not been fully released, somewhat crippling the entire proposal. We wish to register our serious concern in this regard and, hope that wiser counsel prevails when the matter is taken up by the General Assembly later in the year.

The question of extension of the regional hub initiative to the developing countries is a delicate one. While we are in broad agreement with the guidelines and criteria prescribed in the Secretary General's report A/AC.198/2004/3, we would continue to urge that the process be implemented on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the Member States concerned. We would also, in keeping with paragraph 15 of GA Resolution 57/300, request that a status report on the functioning of the RUNC in Brussels be made available to the Committee next year, before we consider the question of extending the model to the other regions. We should hope that best practices and lessons learned from the Brussels experience will be duly incorporated in the report, so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past in the future exercises.

We, however, take note of the proposals contained in paragraphs 43 - 67 of the Secretary General's report (A/AC.198/2004/3) regarding the model to be adapted in the developing countries which, unlike the model employed in Western Europe, would not consist of one large hub, but rather a significant number of small hubs, located so as to ensure that distance and linguistic diversity do not inhibit their operation. We are in agreement that no single model can be successfully applied to all regions of the world and welcome the fact that the Department intends to tailor the regional concept to the geographical, cultural and linguistic characteristics of each region.

## United Nations Peacekeeping and Public Information

We welcome the emphasis being placed in the DPI on the need to dialogue and exchange information with substantive Departments, so as to maximise efficacy and efficiency. Cooperation between the DPI and DPKO is especially key, in the context of peacekeeping operations, *where we need to project the success stories of peacekeeping*. We welcome the steps taken by DPI to increase its involvement in the planning stage of new or expanding peacekeeping operations, as well as the deployment of public information components in new missions. Development of peacekeeping mission web sites is another instance of the enhanced synergy between the Departments. We are, therefore, disappointed to learn from the Secretary General (A/8/694) that public perceptions of peacekeeping are lagging behind the new realities and success of multidimensional complex peacekeeping operations, especially in Africa, which is presently experiencing a surge. We call upon the DPI and the DPKO to work in closer tandem in order to bridge this "information gap". There is, now, more than ever, need to develop a comprehensive public information strategy on peacekeeping operations to ensure "the greatest public impact". This, we feel, can be achieved by greater collaboration and cooperation between the concerned departments, and not simply by a call to augment existing resources.

## Annual Programme Impact Review

We welcome the continuing promotion and refinement of *a culture of evaluation and performance management*, which we have been told, is now an integral part of the reorientation of the DPI. Two aspects, however, are particularly relevant: (i) data collection, valuable as it is to any evaluation exercise, cannot be the only index of performance

management; there must simultaneously be emphasis on *data analysis* and possible adaptation of that analysis to improve the system. This should be done on a continuous basis and must be an integral part of the new approach; (ii) the accent on data collection and analysis should not be to the detriment of the day to day work of programme managers. If the right balance is not maintained, we stand to nullify any advantage that may have been gained from the process.

## Outreach

We share the emphasis being placed, through the services of the newly created *Outreach Division* to reach out to specialised target audiences such as NGOs, research institutions, libraries and academic communities. We recommend that the Department should continue to increase this outreach service in all regions, while at the same time, working towards the strengthening of its role as a focal point for two-way interaction with civil society, relating to the priorities and concerns of the Organisation. The DPI/NGO conference "Human Security and Dignity: fulfilling the promise of the United Nations", held in September last year was one example of how this can be done.

We continue to subscribe to the utility of the flagship publications of the Department, which are invaluable reference points for all matters related to the Organisation, meeting the highest standards of quality and reliability over the past so many years. We particularly welcome the dual focus in the "*UN Chronicle*", now also available on the UN website, as a journal for academic and education outreach and for informed debates and exchange of information and ideas among educators, policy makers and thematic experts. We are happy that the General Assembly pronounced itself last December on the need for continued publication of the Chronicle and allocated the financial resources for this publication.

## UN Website

The DPI has continued to make impressive strides in the development of the UN website, as seen from the figures contained in paragraphs 39 and 40 of the Secretary General's report A/AC.198/2004/2. We welcome the establishment of the *UN News Centre* in all official languages, which was a promise made last year. At the same time, we would reiterate that this emphasis on new technology should not be at the expense of the more traditional means of communication, which are still the main source of information in most developing countries. While enhancing non-traditional means, the DPI should continue to reach out by utilizing traditional media, print, radio and television, especially through local languages.

Mr. Chairman,

There have been several worthy initiatives undertaken by the DPI since the ball of reform was set rolling more than two years ago. Much has been achieved during this period and most of this is laudatory. More, we understand, is underway. We encourage Mr. Tharoor and the DPI to continue this excellent work. In doing so, we take cognizance that financial considerations alone should not determine the continuance or discontinuance of a mandated programme. While financial transparency may help member states appreciate the connection between the

cost of a programme and its measurable impact, there are some activities worth promoting for valid programmatic benefits, all of which are not tangible and therefore, cannot be quantified, outside of cost considerations. As the voice of the United Nations, indeed its torch bearer whose activities and benefits touch the four corners of the globe, the DPI plays a fundamental role. It should be able to communicate the UN's work effectively to the world's peoples, in whose name the Organisation was established. We should hope that we do not lose sight of this vital aspect.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.