

Statement by Mr. Moon Tae-Young, Deputy Director-General for International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea (27 April 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by extending my congratulations to you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee on Information. My delegation looks forward to constructive deliberations under your able stewardship in the coming days and reaffirms our support and cooperation to this end.

We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor for his considerable efforts in guiding the work of the Department of Public Information (DPI) towards the implementation of the Millennium Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

As this meeting of the Committee on Information has been convened so soon after the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva, we hope to build on the momentum that was generated by this significant forum. Through its various discussions and events, including the World Electronic Media Forum, the WSIS brought international attention to the benefits that can be reaped by information and communication technologies (ICT). The Republic of Korea (ROK) shares in the vision of the WSIS in harnessing the power of ICT to ultimately achieve balanced development and a higher quality of life for all humankind.

We are encouraged by the DPI's successful completion of its organizational reform at Headquarters. In particular, we welcome the DPI's new mission statement, operating model and strategy. Moreover, we support the continued promotion of the culture of evaluation, which has been adopted as an integral part of the DPI with the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

It is now an opportune time for the DPI to reorganize its dependant organizations in order to ensure that the DPI's new strategy will be in place for carrying out their important activities. In this regard, the ROK wishes to comment on two particular areas, namely, the regionalization of the UN Information Centres (UNICs) and the strengthening of the UN website.

While recognizing that the task of regionalization of the UNICs will not be easy, we believe that this initiative should be based upon the guidelines and criteria for the selection of regional hubs already agreed upon by the Member States. All processes should be implemented in full consultation with the relevant Member States. Discussions on regional hubs must be carried out in a transparent and democratic manner. In particular, these discussions must take into account the concerns of Member States located in the surrounding area of the regional hub.

According to the General Assembly report on the rationalization of the network of UNICs (A/AC.198/2004/3), only 143 of the 191 UN Member States are covered by the current field

information capacity of the DPI. The ROK would like to request that the DPI explain why certain Member States have been excluded from the UNICs' services.

The ROK welcomes the newly established hub in Brussels for the European region. Considering the political and economic integration and the rapid development of ICT that has taken place in this region in the past decade, we view this as an important and overdue action. The ROK is also pleased to note that Portuguese countries are being considered for a regional hub. In light of the sizable segment of Portuguese-speaking society, we would view the creation of this hub as a positive development.

In a similar vein, the ROK believes that the DPI should accord more attention to the populations that do not speak official language of the UN in its outreach activities. As my delegation noted in the discussion on UN Radio broadcasting at this meeting last year, we wish to reiterate that it is necessary to establish guidelines and criteria in the selection of languages.

With regard to the DPI's regionalization plan for the UNICs in higher-cost developed countries, we are not fully persuaded by the DPI's proposal as described in the aforementioned GA report. We believe that the discussions on the regionalization of UNICs and the establishment of regional hubs should take into account the needs of each region. Other elements should be dealt with on a complementary basis. A regional hub is rendered irrelevant if it only covers one Member State. In this context, we must remember that currently 48 Member States are not covered by the UNICs' services.

Mr. Chairman,

The ROK is pleased to note the significant progress that has been made in the DPI's utilization of online information. Traffic to the UN website has increased from 1.6 billion hits in 2000 to over 2.1 billion in 2003. This statistic not only reflects the status of the UN website itself, but also evidences the effective dissemination of UN information through technical means.

We believe that the enhancement of the capabilities and content of the UN website is the most cost-effective way to improve the delivery of information on UN activities to as many people as possible. In this regard, the ROK fully supports, *inter alia*, the efforts of the DPI to enhance the website's language capacity and to consolidate its design, programming and presentation. We underscore the need to provide timely and useful content on the UN website. In this regard, the ROK welcomes the DPI's continued and further coordinated cooperation with the content-generating offices of the Secretariat.

The ROK recognizes the desire to attain UN official language parity on the UN website. We also believe that a new search engine in all of the official languages would make it easier to locate materials. However, in light of its limited resources, the DPI will not be able to undertake all of the proposed improvements to the UN website simultaneously. The ROK believes that the DPI should give greater priority to deepening and enlarging the capacity of the UN website in those major languages that currently receive the most traffic. We

underscore that the provision of timely and relevant information in the major languages is far more important than the increase of services in various languages to the targeted audience of the outreach policies of the DPI, namely the media, academia, and NGOs.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, in this new age of information, the benefits of information and communications technologies continue to expand, offering vast opportunities to people around the world. It is thus the obligation of the international community to exert our collective efforts to ensure that the benefits of these vital resources become accessible to all. The Committee on Information has a pivotal to play in promoting and enhancing international cooperation towards this end and the Republic of Korea assures you of its full support in this regard.

Thank you.