

Statement by Mr. B.N. Malakhov, Representative of the Russian Federation (27 April 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like to thank you for your able guiding of the Committee's work and Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information S. Tharoor for his substantive presentation at the first meeting of the current session.

We note with satisfaction that in recent years the UN made a significant contribution to resolving international problems of information. The UN activities in the area of public information are becoming more indispensable, the demand for them is growing. This is due, firstly, to the fact that we are already living in the information society. Secondly, the need for an impartial and broad coverage of the UN work is bigger than ever because of the objective problems that the Organization is facing and because of those difficulties that it met in the wake of the recent international developments.

In this context, we believe that the restructuring of the Department of Public Information (DPI), initiated by the Secretary-General following the recommendations of the UNGA resolution 56/253, was a timely undertaking. We are convinced that the innovative and interested approach of the DPI leadership ensures a consistent progress in addressing the tasks ahead of the Department. We support these efforts by the DPI and call to keep the pace and to firmly adhere to the course of establishing the culture of communication as one of the key elements in the reform and enhancement of effectiveness of the whole UN system.

The reports by the Secretary-General submitted for our consideration reflect a great amount of work done by the DPI to implement the recommendations of the Committee in all the priority areas identified at its last year session. They rightly raise a whole number of not easy questions that touch upon the most critical spheres connected with the UN activities in the area of information. We expect that during this session we will be able to move forward in our search for an adequate response to many of them.

We note with satisfaction that the adopted measures have already resulted in the strategic approach to communications functions and put DPI working programs and its field offices closer to reality. What is particularly important: the DPI structure has been harmonized with the four key subprograms, i.e. with the cornerstones upon which all the UN activities in public information are based.

Emphasis on a closer cooperation with the functional divisions of the Secretariat looks quite modern and has already become fruitful. Thus, orientation toward substance gets embodied in the communications strategies meant to address critical programs.

Finally, we noticed that the leadership of the Department has gradually started to assess the efficiency of the efforts being undertaken. We welcome this tendency. Indeed, the communications activities can not be efficiently carried out if their repercussions, the reaction

of customers and partners are not tracked and the grade of their satisfaction with what is being done is not monitored.

Mr. Chairman,

We continue to closely follow such an important component of the DPI activities' reform as the process of regionalization of the UN Information Centers network on the basis of integrated regional "hubs". We note that the Department has done considerable and hard job in this area and the strategic designs of the leadership started to take specific shape: the first integrated Information Center in Brussels became operational. We wish the center in Brussels a good start and we will be waiting for a comprehensive analysis of the first results of its work from the Department.

Now, as we understand, attention is shifting to other regions, mainly in the developing world, where most information centers are located. We believe that the criteria and models developed by the DPI for the suggested new integrated information centers with due regard for the regional specificity, are quite interesting and well substantiated. We hope that implementation of this regional initiative will be fruitful and, in the end, will broaden the flow of information and exchange of information on the United Nations between countries. We expect some of the free funds saved thanks to the establishment of the new European hub to be used for these centers.

We are pleased to see that the report notes this steady and efficient work of the UN Information Center in Moscow. In recent years the center has considerably strengthened its partnership links with the other UN institutions in Russia and plays a coordinating role within the system of the coordinating resident in Russia on most issues related to the outreach activities of the United Nations institutions.

We have carefully studied the Secretary General's comprehensive report on the reform of the library related activities of the United Nations, which essentially can serve as a solid reference material on the work and interaction of all the Organization's libraries. We support the launched mechanism of the Steering Committee on Modernization of the UN libraries. We assume that its impartial recommendations will enhance effectiveness and accessibility of the Organization's library services. We hope that informing the members of the Committee on Information about the implementation of the specific initiatives designed by the Steering Committee members during the quarterly meeting will become a common practice.

At the same time, we are concerned about the provision contained in the UN Secretary General's report about insufficient funds to be used by the participating libraries and the Steering Committee itself to ensure successful implementation of the proposed reorganization with a view to creating a more effective and modern system of library services. We deem it is appropriate not to decrease the DPI's efficiency in this area and to think about the necessary financial support.

The Department's adherence to the principle of multilingualism, development of the UN web-site on a language parity basis, its firm commitment to further improvement of the web-site to

make it keep up with the new information era, deserve a positive assessment. We are convinced that the Department's permanent monitoring of the implementation of the UNGA Decision 57/579, as it is stated in the report A/AC.198/2004/2, and a responsible attitude by all the divisions of the Secretariat to the preparation of materials for the web-site in all the official UN languages, will contribute to this goal. In this regard, we are satisfied that some of the funds saved because of the establishment of the integrated information centers are to be allocated precisely for the development of the multilingual UN web-site.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to note the successful functioning of the Russian version of the UN web-site and of the recently opened UN News Center in Russian which become more and more popular among Russian-speaking users.

We welcome the Department's efforts to radically change the UN Chronicles which are published in all official languages, can be accessed at the UN web-site and are more frequently used for learning and information purposes. We welcome the UN efforts to consolidate the Organization's communication capacity, and to ensure that all UN institutions speak "in one voice". In particular, we believe that the activity of the UN Team for Communications established in January 2002, which has already made a significant contribution to bringing together different UN institutions in preparation for important international meetings and events, is quite useful.

We note the job done by the Department to prepare the first stage of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva. We take note of the Broadcasters' Declaration circulated by the DPI on fundamental information values which had been elaborated at the Summit during the World Electronic Media Forum.

We believe that Department's efforts to enhance the UN capacity to promptly provide information for the media are timely. The daily verbatim records of press briefings by the Secretary General's Spokesman together with the news bulletin, press-releases and relatively new e-mail service form a solid foundation which can be successfully used by national information agencies.

The international UN Radio Service can serve as an illustrative example of the multilingualism in the UN activities. This project, which used to be a pilot one, is one of the most successful Department's innovations, which was supported by almost every member of the Committee on Information, and through joint efforts became a standing one. We would like to emphasize our firm conviction that one should carefully treat this staff potential of the UN Radio Service, especially those officers who stood at the origin of the project and basically ensured its success and its final incorporation in to the program activities of the Department.

Mr. Chairman,

The DPI is facing crucial and complex tasks, and we would like to assure you that our delegation stands ready for a constructive cooperation in the interests of improvement of the

UN information mechanisms and achievement of mutually acceptable solutions in these areas.

We would also like to thank the Secretariat for the timely provision of documents related to information issues, which, undoubtedly, adds to a more specific and purposeful work during the current session.