

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Cesar Mayoral, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, on behalf of the Rio Group (18 April 2005)**

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honor to pronounce this statement on behalf of the 19 member, states of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

At the outset, we wish to extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the reports that will serve as the basis for our debates on the agenda items for this session, as well as for the presentation made by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Shashi Tharoor.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Rio Group attaches great importance to the work that the Department on Public Information (DPI) develops, in accordance with its mandate, it divulges the purposes and actions of the United Nations to a public which, if it were to depend solely on the commercial media, would tend to be deprived of access to precise information about our Organization.

We believe it is appropriate and necessary to work to improve the dissemination of information about the United Nations, so as to raise awareness about the work performed by our Organization, in respect to the promotion of development and the promotion of human rights, the maintenance of international peace and security, and the fight against international crime, among other issues.

In this context, and keeping in mind the mandate established for the General Assembly by this Committee to make recommendations in regard to the work of the DPI, we avail ourselves of this opportunity to present the Rio Group's vision relative to some of the items of the agenda on the 27th session, with a view to contributing to a greater effectiveness of the system of public information and communications of this Organization. Specially in the current year in which the Organization will celebrate its sixtieth anniversary and, like expressed by the Secretary General, "will be a time of reflection and renewal (that) presents DPI with an excellent opportunity to tell the United Nations story in a more dynamic way to more people around the world than ever before."

Mr. Chairperson,

We looked in detail at the Secretary General's Reports presented to this Session.

We appreciate that the DPI has acquired new communications tools that seek to make balanced use of the new communications technologies, especially the Internet, within the strategies for information and communications approved by the General Assembly.

At the same time, we are happy to see that, while as a result of the digital gap between Member States, the DPI is continuing to improve upon its use of the traditional means of communication, including TV, radio and print materials.

We also appreciate the commitment and coordination of the DPI towards obtaining huge support for the attainment of the MDGs in the international and local level.

We refer to the report A/AC.198/2005/3. We highlight the fact that the DPI has acknowledged that there is no consensus on how to move forward the process of rationalization.

In this respect, the Rio Group will favor making the work of the DPI more effective, particularly in disseminating public information and establishing links to civil society and public in general, in particular in developing countries.

Last year the Rio Group expressed the convenience of not going on with the model of regionalization started in Europe without considering other alternatives and with assessing the process in Western Europe. The process, not only did not produce savings but showed to be expensive, at least at the beginning, and the DPI has no additional resources to move the process forward, as stated in the Report. Instead, the Report proposes a more strategic communicational approach by which UNICs will get broader programmatic functions, giving orientation and support in terms of strategic communication to other offices in their region.

The Rio Group understands that this new proposal of the DPI is not a preparatory measure to reassume in the future the process of rationalization or closure of UNICs, but it is referred to the way by which the existing UNICs will become more efficient to convey the peace message of the United Nations. The regionalization process is over.

In concluding our remarks on this item, the Rio Group supports the careful study of all reform possibilities within our reach, so that the DPI — always in consultation with the Member States and within the limits established by the General Assembly — can change its functioning in such a way as to, effectively, improve the public information and communications services of the UN in the world.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Rio Group attaches great importance to multilingualism and, therefore, could not fail to mention the need for this concept to be respected and applied in the dissemination of information by this Organization. Especially with respect to the UN website, that as a result of its outstanding expansion, makes it necessary to perform the constant work of making all documents available in the six official languages. It is highly encouraging for our countries to see that despite the limited resources available for the Spanish web site, it shows one of the highest level of access and impacts. We acknowledge the staff responsible for its maintenance for this growth.

Mr. Chairperson,

We wish, as well, to emphasize the need to double our efforts so that the UN website may be made accessible to persons with disabilities, especially given the relevance that the subject of disability has taken on lately in the United Nations. Neither the language, nor the format should be an obstacle for the dissemination of the universal message of the Organization. We encourage the DPI to systematically request the various offices to present their subject matter in accessible formats, as a part of the efforts to create a new conscience in the Organization and in the world regarding this issue.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Rio Group also wishes to express its appreciation for traditional forms of communication, in particular radio, which remains an effective and far-reaching media form, especially in developing countries, where access to advanced technologies is many times still limited. We also would like to acknowledge the UN Radio staff that, together with 174 radio partners in 75 countries make of this means of communication an optimum vehicle to convey the UN message to every corner of the world.

Mr. Chairperson,

Aware of the important contribution of the libraries of the United Nations, through their institutional memory and experience, we appreciate the transformation process that will better equip them meet the information needs of their diverse clientele in today's continually changing and challenging information environment. We encourage that different "think tanks" groups related to the UN and the DPI build up ways of better profiting from the resources and activities of the UN libraries.

Mr. Chairperson,

In regard to the ways in which the DPI can contribute to enhance awareness of the work of the General Assembly, we coincide in that it would be useful to establish a closer and more effective working relation between the office of the President of the General Assembly and the Department, as well as between the spokesperson of the President and the spokesperson of the Secretary-General.

The Rio Group took note of the cooperation that exists between the DPI and DPKO regarding activities of the UN in the field of peace keeping. In this regard, we encourage both departments to continue to cooperate, especially in disseminating the "zero tolerance" policy established by the UN related to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Lastly, we believe that the communication strategy of the DPI must be oriented to reinforce the positive image of the Organization and to disseminate the decisions taken in it.

At the end of the Report the DPI states that it is well prepared to take on the challenge of telling the story of a renewed and revitalized United Nations. We trust.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

