

Statement by Mr. Muhammad A. Muhith, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations (19 April 2005)

At the very outset, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman upon your election as the Chairman of the COI. My delegation is fully confident that under your stewardship, Mr. Chairman, the Committee will be able to lead its work to fruition. I would also like to congratulate the members of the newly-elected Bureau. Let me also thank the members of the previous Bureau for their invaluable contributions in the work of this important Committee.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of the COI for electing me as the Rapporteur.

We would also like to join others in congratulating the Under-Secretary-General Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for his excellent statement, delivered yesterday, in which he provided us a detailed and clear picture of where the department stands and where he wants to take it. He was very candid, as he is always, in providing us a realistic picture of the very daunting tasks ahead. In this regard, I would like to commend the USG for his able leadership, outstanding work, innovative ideas and relentless efforts in advancing the DPI to the right direction. Thanks are also owed to the members of the DPI. I should not also fail to thank the USG and the DPI for the very useful interactive session of yesterday.

On behalf of Ambassador Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, the last Chairman of the COI, I would like to thank you Mr. Chairman, the Under-Secretary-General and the distinguished delegates for having expressed their felicitations on his leadership of the COI in last two years.

Mr. Chairman,

The Bangladesh delegation associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the distinguished representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I shall therefore limit my statement to a few areas which are of importance to us.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting at a historic time for the United Nations. This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of its founding. Even though almost six decades have gone by, the dream of a better, safer and more just world that the UN had promised is still very much a dream. Wars continue to ravage many parts of the world; poverty continues to afflict much of humanity; and walls separating us along cultural and religious lines are still going up. At such a time, we are more acutely aware of the need for an organization that can unite our common will and translate that into common action and an organisation which will communicate our common action to the beneficiaries, the people's of the world.

In recent months, Bangladesh's own determination to stay on the side of international peace has been severely tested. This year in February, in one of the deadliest attacks on UN peacekeepers, nine Bangladeshi blue helmets were killed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bangladesh received this news with deep sadness and pain, but its determination to

keep supporting UN peace efforts was not weakened. In a remarkable display of solidarity, the Government of Bangladesh and its people renewed the pledge to continue supporting UN peace efforts.

We are very pleased with the way DPI brought into focus the story of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Congo. The UN Information Centre in Dhaka was also very quick in conveying the messages from the Secretary-General to Bangladesh and its people on this tragic occurrence.

Having been privileged to play a significant role in UN peacekeeping operations as one of the major troop contributing countries, Bangladesh notes with appreciation the growing partnership between DPI and DPKO in raising awareness about peacekeeping and also in preparing public information components of peacekeeping operations for rapid and effective deployment. We hope that the DPI will continue to work closely with the DPKO and the field missions to plan, staff and support the public information components of the new and expanded Missions in order to disseminate effectively the UN's success stories like peacekeeping to the people's of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now turn to DPI's reorientation, which Bangladesh has followed with keen interest. I thank the distinguished Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information for his frank statement, in which he outlined the progress DPI has made through its reorientation exercise, but also enumerated the challenges it now faces. We fully agree with his assessment that the Department is now more focused, its target audiences better defined, and its public information efforts yielding better results. We strongly realize that the Department needs and deserves more financial support from the Organization.

We are very pleased to see that the Department now fully realizes the value of local UNICs, especially in the context of technological unpreparedness of many developing countries. In this connection I would like to take note of the Secretary-General's report titled 'Further rationalization of the network of United Nations Information Centres' as contained in the document A/AC.198/2005/3.

I think it will only be fair to reiterate here the very important role UNIC Dhaka is playing. It remains a vital source of information for the media, students and civil society on global issues, including peace, human rights and development. Together with the Office of the Resident Coordinator of UNDP, it is taking a leading role in making the Millennium Development Goals better known throughout the country.

We have taken note of the Secretary-General's suggestion for greater financial contributions towards the maintenance of premises of the UNICs. We would like to mention here that Bangladesh, from the very outset of the operation of the center in Dhaka, has been contributing a certain amount of money to support the operation of the centre there. In this connection, we note with concern that the financial situation of the UNICs has worsened in real terms over the past two bienniums.

Mr. Chairman,

As for bridging the digital divide, we commend the role of DPI for its efforts to close the gap and also hope that it will continue its endeavour in this regard. We are also appreciative of the fact that, given the reality on the ground concerning the developing countries, the DPI is continuing to maintain a balance between new communications technologies and the traditional means of communication, including radio, television and print materials to cater the needs of the vast majority of the people who have minimum or no access to the fruits of the ICT.

Mr. Chairman,

We have also read with great interest the report of the Secretary-General on the new strategic directions of UN libraries. While we fully understand the need for the new directions and agree with most of the ideas, we would like to emphasize that the role of print products is not yet over. Needless to emphasize what makes a library a living experience. Yes, a library should have computers and electronic texts on CD-ROMs, but its shelves should also be decked with books, magazines and all other publications. I hope our observation will be taken into consideration and it will be made sure that UN libraries don't abandon their traditional role.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.