

Opening Statement by Ambassador Mihnea Ioan Motoc, Chairman of the Committee on Information (18 April 2005)

Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Committee on Information for electing me as your Chairman for the next two years. On behalf of the newly-elected Bureau, I wish to assure the Committee that, with the support of the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, and the staff of the Department of Public Information, I will make every effort to ensure that this twenty-seventh session is a productive one, and that its results are fully reflective of the vision that the Secretary-General have for DPI, and do deliver on the expectations the membership has from a Department they hold in trust and respect.

I should also like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Ambassador Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury for his wise and skilful leadership over the past two years. I shall continue to count on him for support and guidance.

In recent years, the relationship between the Committee and the Department of Public Information has been characterized by a very high level of cooperation and partnership. This has been possible thanks in large part to the exceptional leadership of Under-Secretary-General Tharoor. His energy, creativity and willingness to implement change have greatly contributed to the renewal of DPI. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Tharoor, and with your staff, to further the activity of your Department. I would also like to welcome Ms. Paula Refolo as Secretary of the Committee. On behalf of the Bureau, I trust we will be counting on Ms. Refolo and her team for an excellent cooperation.

The Committee is meeting at an extraordinary time in the history of the Organization. It will turn sixty this year, a milestone in any way you measure it. Coinciding with the observance of the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization and marking five years of progress towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General has presented to Member States a package of bold and far-reaching policy and institutional reform proposals. These changes could provide an effective collective response to current global threats and also lead to the renewal of our Organization. Of course, public information is an integral part of this renewal, as the Secretary-General affirmed this in his 2002 reform proposals, and DPI has the responsibility to inform the peoples of the world of the substantive purposes of the United Nations — to tell the UN story. The six reports that have been submitted by the Department for the consideration of this Committee reflect the fundamental changes in the way the Department accomplishes its work. I would like to congratulate Mr. Tharoor and his staff for the timely issuance of these reports, which will form the basis of our general debate over the next three days.

The reports are notable for their thoughtful analysis of the issues and challenges facing the Department. The report on the continuing reorientation of DPI, the main report summarizing

DPI's work, is a synthesis of many wide- ranging activities carried out by the Department. The report on the web site presents new insights on how this complex, but highly successful activity, is being implemented. The report on library services reflects the new strategic directions being undertaken by the Dag Hammarskold Library and other UN libraries. We also have a report on the further regionalization of the network of UN information centres, which I am sure will receive your close and careful scrutiny.

In other words, we have ample food for thought for this session. However, the basic objective before us is to produce a consensus resolution that will provide the Department with clear and unambiguous guidance on public information policies and programmatic activities. I have no doubt this will be done on time and in the most collegial manner.

We will soon hold our traditional commemoration of World Press Freedom Day. On this occasion we will pay tribute to journalists in conflict situations. We will honor those journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty. We should firmly condemn the kidnappings of journalists around the world — this is presently the unfortunate case of three of my compatriots held in Irak — and express our solidarity with those who are still in the hands of the insurgents.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said in the past, reform is not an event, it is a process. However, the annual session of the Committee, which takes stock of the progress made and the distance traveled by DPI, is an event in itself. I know many Committee members look forward to this session as a unique opportunity, not only to better understand public information policy of the United Nations, but also to contribute to making it fully reflective of global public opinion. I urge you all, especially those attending the Committee for the first time, to make the best use of this opportunity.

DPI is the voice through which the UN speaks. The Committee on Information can strengthen this voice by giving DPI the support and tools it needs. I am confident that during the next two weeks, you will be debating about how this can be done. As your chairman, I will do everything in my power to support your efforts.