

Statement by H.E. Mr. Hjálmar W. Hannesson, Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations (20 April 2005)

Mr. Chairman.

It is an honour to address this forum for the first time after Iceland became a full member of this committee. Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate you and the bureau on your election, and to commend the secretariat for professional work, timely issuance of documentation and a useful website of the committee.

Allow me also to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Sashi Tharoor for his comprehensive and inspiring opening address yesterday.

The Department of Public Information is a model department of our Organisation, and has shown an exemplary ability to cater for the very varied needs of its clients. It has succeeded in responding to an ever changing environment and rapid technological innovations, while maintaining the basic, traditional means of reaching audiences far and wide, young and old, at all levels of development and bringing the important messages of the United Nations to the world.

While we welcome the progress reached so far in the implementation of a regional strategic communications model by rationalizing the network of UN information centres around regional hubs — so successfully done in Brussels — it is regrettable that lack of financial resources is hindering its implementation. While a solution is sought it would be helpful if governments assisted UN information centers in their respective countries. As in many other European countries, the government of Iceland supports a local UN information center financially.

Another welcome modernization task ahead is the reform of the United Nations library community; moving away from collections to connections. A network of knowledge sharing, it will become the tool of the 21st century. Making the knowledge and information open and available to all is what the DPI is all about. Full access to the ODS documentation system on the Web will be another important step toward an open and transparent process of governing the UN.

The UN is on many occasions not given due credit for its work. It is good to learn of the work of the United Nations Communications Group over the past three years in integrating all communications resources of the United Nations and sharing the expertise available.

Ongoing innovations in information technology are among the strongest driving forces behind increased productivity and therefore increased wealth creation in many parts of the world. It is important that industrial and information technological advances are made available throughout the world. The role and potential of information and communication technology should be borne in mind in all development programs and development cooperation.

Icelandic IT experts and software developers are today second to none in finding solutions to arising IT problems and satisfying the demands of highly sophisticated users in a society now

better connected than most others. This expertise and experience might be useful in UN context.

Credibility and worldwide understanding are fundamental to support for the UN. Effective, rapid and targeted communication is therefore a key tool for the United Nations in reaching the objectives which the Secretary General has so eloquently outlined in his report "In a larger freedom." Iceland therefore looks forward to working with colleagues in this Committee to assist the UN in maintaining and improving the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of its communications.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.