

Statement by Mr. Hossein Maleki, Second Counselor, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran (19 April 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you for your election to the chairmanship of the Committee on Information and express my wish for your success in guiding the Committee in the course of the negotiations. I also avail myself of this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretary General for presenting valuable and important reports on the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI) to the member states. My appreciation also extends to Under-Secretary General for Communication and public information, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for his commendable leadership of DPI.

Before pronouncing the position of my delegation, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Jamaica on behalf of G77/China.

Mr. Chairman,

The Department of Public Information is, in deed, a conduit for the flow of information between the United Nations and the peoples of the world. There is no doubt that the voice of the United Nations as an indispensable foundation for a peaceful and just world must be heard in a clear and effective way. To achieve this goal, we have to lay emphasis on strengthening the Department of Public Information as the voice of the Organization in providing precise, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to Member States and the international community on the tasks and the responsibilities of the United Nations. The DPI must be able to appropriately and precisely project the image of the United Nations to the people throughout the world. To this end, we need most efficient and effective United Nations Information Centers (UNICs) — especially in developing world — to support the DPI in its outreach activities.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the rationalization process, let me now draw your attention to few points that are important in my delegation's view:

1. We know that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen the international support for the activities of the Organization. But, as long as developing countries -the most populated part of the world- are suffering from the lack of suitable communication infrastructure, the DPI cannot achieve its goals of disseminating information without its affiliated bodies- the Information Centers.
2. Given the fact that developing countries are lagging behind in access to information technology, the closure of the Information Centers will only deepen the lack of information about the United Nations in those countries. So, we

appreciate the Secretary General for taking these realities into account- as he indicated in his 2005 report.

3. We take note of the Secretary General's recommendation (Para. 4 of the report A/AC.198/2005/3) to recalibrate, or realign the rationalization plan by strengthening Key information centers in each region to enable them to play a greater role in providing broad strategic communications guidance, coordination and support to centers in that region- without the need to closing any UNIC.
4. We, the member states, should seriously pay attention to the Secretary General's report (Para. 7 of A/AC.198/2005/3) regarding the budgetary limitations facing the UNICs. This is the main problem for the Department of Public Information in replacing the obsolete communication equipments in the United Nations Information Centers. The lack of resources and out of date equipments has certainly a negative impact on the ability of the centers. Efficient UNICs and ensured flow of information in developing countries and timely exchange of information between the UNICs and the Headquarter as well as local partners, requires us to duly address the current situation of UNICs which are mostly suffering from insufficient financial resources and obsolete equipments.
5. We are glad that the reform of the DPI and reorientation of the Department, undertaken since 2002, — as stated in the Secretary General's report (A/AC.198/2005/2)- has now been completed. However, we suggest that the DPI continue to integrate the culture of evaluation into all its future plans and programs and review the quality of its products and services on a regular basis.
6. To generalize and deepen the culture of evaluation, and better examine the efficiency and effectiveness of UNICs in the DPI's outreach activities, we emphasize the importance of the views of host countries about the UNICs as a valuable source of evaluation that should be considered by DPI in evaluating the efficiency and efficacy of the UNICs' annual activities.
7. We are happy that by launching two seminars relating to the issue of "dialogue among civilizations and cultures" in 2004, the Department of Public Information laid the issue on the agenda as one of its priorities. We continue to stress the importance of the dialogue among civilizations and request the UN Secretary General to continue to pay due attention to this issue. While taking into account the different aspect of the culture among civilizations, the DPI should explore different ways and means including utilizing the potentials and capacities of the UNICs in different regions and countries for promoting the culture of dialogue, respect and understanding among people. The promotion of the dialogue among civilizations can be further reinforced through the activities of the United Nations Information Centers.
8. Finally, I should thank the new director of Tehran UNIC who- despite the financial shortcomings has been playing an active role in promoting the Center's activities including holding workshops, press conference, and communication with NGOs, Student, etc. as well as for continuing the improvement of the Web site in Persian language. However it is important for my delegation that Tehran UNIC pay due attention to the "Dialogue among civilizations" and consider the issue as one of

the priority on its agenda. Furthermore, cooperation with the relevant local actors such as "the center for dialogue among civilizations and cultures" in the host country — the Islamic Republic of Iran —, as well as, cooperation with other UNICs in addressing the common issues is highly recommended.