

Statement by S.E. Mr. Daniel Carmon, Chargé d'affaires, Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations (19 April 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election to chair the Committee on Information, and by expressing my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, H.E. Ambassador Chowdhury, for his very able leadership.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, for his continuing leadership of the Department of Public Information during this crucial era in its history. We congratulate the DPI and the members of the Committee for their work this year and express our gratitude for the very useful reports provided by the Secretary General.

Mr. Chairman,

The DPI is the custodian of one of the most important duties at the United Nations: to enlighten the citizens of the world about how we are serving their collective interests and advancing the universal ideals of the United Nations itself. In the flow of information there is great power and great potential. We must use it wisely, and not allow its nefarious misuse.

In this regard, Israel commends the DPI's continuing efforts towards the reorientation in public information and communications, the design and maintenance of the exceedingly effective, useful, and well-organized United Nations website, and the modernization of the United Nations library system.

The DPI's on-going endeavors to modernize its efforts are as significant as they are vital. Through an increasing usage of the latest tools of technology, including an emphasis on closing the digital divide so that these tools will benefit all of the world's peoples, we can realize the immense promises of technology as a conduit for communication.

These are the promises of the global village — to improve the movement of information through the world, so that we can improve the world through information.

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to these general and continuing actions taken by the DPI, this year Israel was particularly pleased by several new praiseworthy initiatives.

The "Unlearning Intolerance" seminar on anti-Semitism on June 21st 2004 was a very good first step towards a situation where, as the Secretary General put it, Jews everywhere "feel that the United Nations is their home too." As Under-Secretary-General Tharoor said in his opening statement yesterday, "it brought together people of different faiths in an open forum for exchange, consultation, and cooperation."

The efforts of the DPI to facilitate January's momentous Special Session of the General Assembly to Commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camps were impressive and successful, as was its work to make possible the historic exhibition on the liberation that was put on at the same time at the UN headquarters here in New York, and recently also in Geneva.

In this context, I would like to particularly commend and congratulate Under Secretary-General Tharoor on his important contributions to all of these events. He is deserving of much praise.

At this time, may I also suggest that rather than being simply a one-time event, the experience of the Special Session can serve as an educational vehicle, teaching the world the lessons of the Holocaust, so that the world does not forget.

Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding these positive developments this year, UN mechanisms, including the DPI, are not immune from the unfair politicization that continues to encumber many of the UN's noble goals, as a result of the pressure of certain states.

In this regard, it is wrong for these states to seek to further their political agendas through the DPI's conferences, summits, and reports, while allowing other individual states to be repeatedly and unwarrantedly singled out in the context of its activities. The UN and the DPI should endeavor for the flow of information to be free of the shackles of politicization. Anything else is simply inefficient and disingenuous.

As the Secretary General's progress report on "Continuing Reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications" acknowledges, this year "the image of the United Nations in the Middle East region continued to be of particular concern." Today, Mr. Chairman, the people of the Middle East find themselves facing a window of opportunity in their struggle for peace, and in this hopeful era, the United Nations should avoid being the purveyor of anachronistic and unhelpful agendas. In truthful objectivity there is credibility, and with credibility comes the better chance of a positive image.

The Secretary General's report also states that in some quarters of the world the UN is facing a crisis of credibility. The DPI is, of course, crucial in its efforts to retain and build on its legitimacy, and insisting on neutral and non-politicized information policies would go a long way towards this end.

It is through the DPI that the world sees the UN and, especially in this sensitive period, Israel urges the UN not to forget the gravity of this simple truth.

Mr. Chairman,

In just a few weeks we will commemorate World Press Freedom day. It is an appropriate time to commend the protections given to a free press in some areas of the world, and to condemn the oppressive controls imposed on it in others. It is also an appropriate time to urge the DPI

to use its will, resources, and energy to foster the former and combat the latter. The more free information is, the more free people are.

In the same breath, I would urge the DPI, and the international community, to struggle against incitement in all parts of the world. As long as Government supported media and educational establishments continue to incite youths towards hatred, the ideals of harmony on which the United Nations were founded cannot hope to be realized. In the age of terrorism in which we live, allowing Governments to fan the flames of intolerance is something we cannot afford. Allowing incitement to continue, and new generations to be indoctrinated with the seeds of hatred, builds an infrastructure of demonization that cannot but lead to a more dangerous future. In the Middle East, and around the world, incitement, a fuel that powers terror, must be eradicated.

As we approach the second part of the World Summit on the Information Society in November 2005, we would do well to work so that information technology is used to bridge gaps and not create divisions, to build peace and not incite hatred. We would do well to use it, along with the other tools at our disposal, to reach a point where information flows freely so that dialogue between all cultures can truly flourish.

Mr. Chairman,

This fall we will celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and the theme that has been chosen, "UN60: A Time for Renewal," is wholly appropriate. It is indeed a time for renewal and for rejuvenation.

It is a time to reaffirm the importance of this organization, and the ideas on which it was founded. For all this, the work of the DPI is vital. Israel supports its mandate wholeheartedly, and looks forward to continuing to work with it to advance our collective goals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.