Statement by H.E. Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations (20 April 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by extending our warmest felicitations on your election and assumption of the Chair of the Committee on Information. With your known diplomatic skills and leadership qualities we have every confidence that you will steer the Committee's work with great efficiency and effectiveness.

I also congratulate the new members of the Bureau and welcome our new Secretary, Ms. Paula Refolo.

Our deepest thanks go to Ambassador Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh and our previous Chairman, for the wise guidance he provided throughout his tenure and the positive contribution he made towards the achievement of the Committee's objectives.

It is a particular pleasure for us to welcome the new members — Cape Verde, Iceland, Luxembourg, Madagascar and Qatar — to the Committee. Their participation would further enrich the work of our Committee, which is now 107-member strong.

Mr. Chairman,

We appreciate the comprehensive presentation by Undersecretary-General Shashi Tharoor on 18 April. The Department of Public Information has a daunting mission to accomplish and it has an able and energetic leader equal to the task. We are grateful to him for providing the update on the Department's activities during the past year and for giving us a full sense of the continuing challenges. The interactive dialogue on 18 April was equally useful and we thank Mr. Tharoor and his team for responding to the points raised by members of the Committee in a spirit of candor and realism.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary General is right that the UN has a compelling story to tell. We believe this story needs to be told with much greater vigor today, as the UN grapples with the worst crisis of image in its entire life. Indeed, questions about corruption, mismanagement, and lack of transparency and accountability in some of the UN's activities would have to be addressed. But this debate must not be allowed to eclipse the good work being done by the United Nations in the service of humanity across the globe. Rather than through scandals, people should know the United Nations through its substantial contribution to Tsunami relief operations, to consolidation of the peace in Sierra Leone, to efforts for national reconciliation in Iraq.

This makes DPI's role pivotal in ensuring that — despite the media's penchant for projecting "bad news" — the positive public image of the Organization remains the dominant public

image. For this purpose, it is essential to continuously highlight the UN's ideals and accomplishments, intensify proactive outreach, maintain strategic coherence in the overall message, and ensure system-wide coordination. Equally essential is to transmit the UN's message to peoples in all member states.

We welcome DPI's efforts aimed at the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Public support for the United Nations would obviously grow as more and more people know about its endeavors to address their needs and priorities on a broad range of issues — from poverty and hunger to illiteracy and sustainable development. We all believe it is vital to maintain a balance between development and security. This balance must also be reflected in our public information and communications strategies and actions.

Mr. Chairman,

This is the 60th anniversary year of the United Nations and in September we will have the 5-year review of the Millennium Declaration. A broad and ambitious reform agenda has been laid out before the Member States and the intergovernmental process is now fully underway. The reform debate is rich, and contains varied perspectives. While disseminating the statements of senior UN officials on reform issues, it is equally important to project the positions and perspectives of Member States. We hope DPI's public information campaign would reflect this essential balance as the reform debate further evolves.

Mr. Chairman,

We have taken note of the reports submitted for the Committee's consideration in this session. We note from the Report A/AC.198/2005/2 that the reorientation of DPI, launched in 2002, is now complete. The reported "new culture of evaluation and performance management" should inter alia be an important way of assessing the impact of DPI's activities and of ensuring responsiveness to future requirements. Feedback from Member States should, however, be the key measure of evaluating effectiveness of all activities undertaken.

Mr. Chairman,

We have also noted the Secretary-General's report in document A/AC.198/2005/3. It is clear that no further regionalization is possible. The Under-Secretary-General has reported that DPI is in no position to open new regional hubs.

Pakistan's position on this subject has been clear and unambiguous. We have strongly urged that all possible measures should be taken to strengthen the UN Information Centers (UNICs) in the developing countries. These Centers are a vital source for the flow of information and help bridge the gap between the developed and developing countries in terms of access to information and communication technologies. The Centers are also playing an indispensable role in building public support for the United Nations and its multifarious activities. We acknowledge the highly useful work being done by the United Nations Information Centre in Islamabad, which should be further strengthened and upgraded. We also support the call for

allocation of adequate resources to ensure the effective functioning and strengthening of the UN Information Centers in developing countries.

We have noted the Secretary-General's report regarding languages, contained in document A/AC.198/2005/6. We would once again emphasize the importance we attach to Urdu broadcasts for the consumption of the hundreds of millions of people in the Asian region.

The use of UN website daily by millions across the world is impressive. We must, however, remind that there is a very long way to go in bridging the "digital divide." The Internet, by definition, is a tool in the hands of the affluent. We would need to continue to rely on traditional means of communication — particularly radio — in reaching out to populations in far-flung areas and transmitting the UN's message in most of the developing world.

We would also propose that, like the meetings of the Security Council and the General Assembly debate, the major meetings of the ECOSOC should also be web-cast live.

We have noted the report on modernization and integrated management of UN libraries (A/AC.198/2005/4). We would welcome those ideas that enhance the accessibility of relevant library materials to the developing countries. Any changes that might be envisaged should be within the previously agreed mandate and cognizant of the capacity of developing countries to effectively utilize the advanced technologies intended to be employed.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan has always supported closer coordination between the DPI and the DPKO. The UN peacekeepers invariably work in very challenging conditions and often produce huge "success stories" for the United Nations. It is important that this part of the story is also told — both globally and locally. The peacekeepers' job is greatly facilitated when local communities learn about the benefits a peacekeeping operation brings to them in terms of enhanced security and stability, revival of economic activity, and the prospect of reconstruction. For this, the two Departments should fruitfully collaborate to ensure that the objectives of the PKOs are well known to the communities they are set u! p to secure.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has long been a strong advocate of building bridges between societies, cultures, religions and regions. President Pervez Musharraf, during his address to the General Assembly in September 2004, outlined his concept of "Enlightened Moderation." Earlier, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution sponsored by Pakistan on the Promotion of Religious and Cultural Understanding, Harmony and Cooperation. The UN's public information system should highlight these and similar initiatives to promote our shared objectives of inter-religious and inter-cultural harmony. We welcome, in this context, the seminar series launched by DPI under the title "Unlearning Intolerance." We hope! this work would be continued and further expanded in the months ahead.

We have emphasized earlier the importance we attach to the International Program for Development of Communications (IPDC) under the auspices of UNESCO. The training of journalists under this programme has helped to strengthen communication capacities and infrastructure in developing countries. Given the importance of the IPDC program in promoting the information goals, we requested for a report by UNESCO during the 27th Substantive Session. We take this opportunity to reiterate our call.

My delegation would like to commend the work of the Accreditation and Media Unit as well as the Multimedia Resource in providing urgently required assistance from their fields to delegations of member states. Pakistan also supports the work of the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA) for its professionalism and dedication in providing a bridge between the United Nations and the world at large. We commend the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Fund which sponsors the training of journalist from developing countries.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support to the DPI in its endeavors to effectively carry out its mandate and also reassure you, Mr. Chairman, of our fullest cooperation in steering the Committee's work to successful conclusion.