

**Statement by Elmer G. Cato, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations (19 April 2005)**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Philippines is greatly pleased to see you assume as chair of the 27th Session of the Committee on Information. Our delegation congratulates you and the members of your bureau for your well-deserved election and assures you of our full support and cooperation as you guide this session to a productive conclusion.

The Philippines would also like to commend Ambassador Iftekar Ahmed Chowdhury of Bangladesh for ably guiding the work of the committee during its Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth sessions.

Our delegation would also like to express its appreciation to Mr. Shashi Tharoor, the Undersecretary General for Communications and Public Information, for his exhaustive presentation not only of how the Department of Public Information went about its work in 2004 but also of how the men and women of the DPI hurdled the many challenges that confronted them during the year that was.

The Philippines would also like to associate itself with the statement delivered on 18 April by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The DPI is the public voice of the United Nations tasked with projecting a positive image of the organization through the accurate and timely dissemination of information. It is the public relations arm of the UN responsible for ensuring that the peoples of the world have a better appreciation and understanding of the organization and its work.

The DPI has had its hands full during the past year that the UN has been at the receiving end of intense criticism and scrutiny by the international media. The allegations of corruption, mismanagement and lack of credibility and transparency that came with such controversies as the oil-for-food program and sexual exploitation and abuse involving peacekeepers have tainted the image of the UN and put to question its relevance and effectiveness.

The Philippines is convinced however that the DPI had done everything it could with the resources it had available to address these issues and concerns promptly and effectively. We think that the best approach is for us to move forward by adopting more proactive measures and strategies to complete the reorientation of the DPI based also on the lessons learned from this experience.

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippine Delegation is heartened to hear from no less than the Undersecretary General in his statement of 18 April that since the last session, the DPI has taken appropriate steps to address the media onslaught and the other challenges facing the department.

We are pleased to note the DPI's ongoing efforts to build and strengthen partnerships with media across the world. We also take positive note of the work currently being undertaken by the DPI to positively project the organization.

We wish to point out its effective handling of the aftermath of the tsunami disaster that struck South and Southeast Asia last year as well as its efforts to promote the goals and objectives of the Millennium and other concerns relating to poverty alleviation, conflict prevention, and sustainable development, to name a few.

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippines shares the view of member-states on the need for closer coordination between the DPI and other substantive offices and agencies of the United Nations, particularly the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in bringing across the UN message to the rest of the world.

In view of the recent controversy spawned by the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving UN peacekeepers, it is imperative for the DPI and the information components of the various peacekeeping missions to coordinate closely and speak with one voice in order to not only effectively address such issues but also to ensure that the host countries and peoples have a positive view of the United Nations in their respective areas.

We take positive note of the actions being taken by the DPI to take care of this particular concern.

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippines welcomes the strategic approach proposed by the Secretary General that seeks to allow the DPI to more effectively utilize existing resources in pursuing its mission.

The consolidation of all UN Information Centers (UNICs) into regional hubs similar to what was done in Western Europe could possibly be replicated in other regions but this should be done in consultation with member-states.

The Philippines also supports calls for the allocation of additional resources to support UNICs, especially those in the least developed countries, where their presence could make a big difference in terms of access to information and information technology.

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippines recognizes the importance of multilingualism in the promotion of the work of the United Nations but it should be approached pragmatically, especially when there are resource constraints. At the same time, the Philippines attaches equal importance to the impact of local languages on the local population, especially of developing countries.

We commend the DPI for its impressive work in utilizing the worldwide web in reaching out to a much larger audience. We also support its efforts to further improve the UN website in all

the official languages and urge it to address the concerns of member-states over the disparity in the treatment of official languages.

The Philippines also takes note of the DPI's effective utilization of both print and radio, particularly its recent programs that seek to deliver the good news about the UN to the peoples of Asia and Africa.

We also support efforts to improve the services of UN libraries but this should take into account the previously agreed mandate and the relevant General Assembly resolutions as well as intergovernmental coordination.

On the proposal to strengthen the DPI's links with the academe, our delegation feels that the participation of educational institutions should be broadened and not limited to activities of short duration such as art contests or television shows.

The DPI may wish to consider other options such as working with the ministries of education of member-states on the possibility of including a subject on the United Nations in the school curriculum in order to promote and sustain the knowledge and appreciation of students of the UN's role and how the organization touches their lives and those around them.

In closing, allow us to reiterate our commitment to contribute positively to the work of the committee in further strengthening the DPI. We are looking forward to a productive session under your able guidance.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.