

Statement by Mr. B. N. Malakhov, Representative of the Russian Federation (19 April 2005)

Dear Mr. Chairman,

First of all, the Russian delegation would like to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your reelection and to thank you for skillfully guiding the work of the Committee. We are also grateful to Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Shashi Tharoor for his substantive and concrete presentation which is an important complement to the reports previously submitted for our consideration.

The Russian delegation believes that the need for an impartial and broad coverage of the important and diverse activity of the United Nations today is bigger than ever. One of the reasons for that is the objective problems that the Organization faces in addressing more and more complex tasks which emerged in the wake of recent international developments.

Mr. Chairman,

This year the United Nations marks its 60th anniversary. The establishment of this Organization was a result of the powerful impetus towards unification of the international community provided by the victory over fascism in the Second World War thanks to the efforts of many nations. It would be irresponsible to let the harsh lessons of the Nazi aggression and crimes go to oblivion. We must hold sacred the memory of the perished, rule out the very possibility of recurrence of world wars, unite the efforts of international community in fighting new challenges and threats while reaffirming the central role of the United Nations.

We expect that implementation of the initiative, which was put forward by Russia and a number of CIS states, to hold a special solemn meeting of the UN General Assembly in commemoration of the victims of the Second World War as well as its broad coverage by the media and a series of cultural and outreach events organized by the DPI in cooperation with the Russian Mission to the UN to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War will be an important link in the chain of the planned solemn events.

Mr. Chairman,

The Russian delegation positively assesses the results of the reorientation of the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI) initiated by the Secretary-General's proposals in light of the UNGA recommendations in Resolution 56/253. The Russian delegation believes that the new strategic goals and functional priorities set by the Department of Public Information to implement the outlined reforms were chosen correctly. We are convinced that the consistent and interested approach of the DPI leadership can actually ensure a steady progress in addressing the tasks ahead of the Department. We call to keep the pace and to firmly adhere to the course of establishing the culture of communication as one of the key elements in the reform and enhancement of efficiency of the whole UN system.

The UN Secretary-General's reports submitted for our consideration reflect a great deal of work done to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on Information in all the priority areas identified at its previous session.

Analysis of the reports show that the measures adopted to implement the agreed strategy in the area of communications of the DPI have already resulted in the strategic approach to communications functions.

The willingness of the DPI leadership to focus its efforts on dissemination of information which is really crucial and strategic for the UN, like maintenance of international peace, assistance in implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, UN reform, prevention of conflicts, fight against poverty, new threats and challenges to security, of which international terrorism is the principal one, looks justified.

In the modern world the problem of interaction between the authorities and the media in countering terrorism as well as responsibility of the media in covering terrorist acts have critical importance.

Russia, having become object of the terrorist aggression, has intensified its participation in the process of establishment of a legal, commensurable to the new threats and challenges, framework to counter terrorism and extremism both nationally and within universal and regional international organizations.

We note with satisfaction that in March 2005 the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe has adopted the Declaration On Freedom of Expression and Information in the Media in the Context of the Fight against Terrorism. This document, adopted on Russia's initiative, contains recommendations on how terrorist acts and related events, including counter terrorist operations, should be covered in the media.

Mr. Chairman,

We regard the contribution made by the DPI to the dialogue between world civilizations and cultures, in particular through the series of seminars "Unlearning Intolerance", as an important preventive measure, including for the fight against terrorism. Our delegation notes with satisfaction the success of the seminars of this series on anti-semitism and islamophobia.

Mr. Chairman,

We cannot but be satisfied with the intention of the DPI leadership "to focus on priority thematic issues and concerns of the region" in the preparation of events and products in the area of public information (report A/AC.198/2005/3).

Enhancing the culture of assessment, which is put into the focus of the current stage of the reform by the leadership of the Department, looks justified. An effective feedback — from the recipients of UN information products and programs to the news producer — is an indispensable condition for higher quality of communications functions of the DPI.

From the point of view of the Russian delegation, the emphasis on close cooperation of the DPI with the Secretariat's functional divisions, especially with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, looks opportune. Thus, the orientation towards substance is embodied in communications strategies meant to address critical problems.

The DPI commitment to the principle of multilingualism deserves a positive assessment. This is the right direction for the UN information capacity which is oriented towards Internet. It is good that the UN web-site not only exists in all six languages but also becomes richer in content. Nevertheless, it is necessary to further improve the potential of the UN web-sites in all UN languages. We are convinced that the DPI permanent monitoring of and more responsible attitude by all the divisions of the Secretariat to the preparation of their materials for the web-site will contribute to this goal.

In this regard, we would like to note the successful operation of the Russian version of the UN web-site and of the UN News Center in Russian which have increased the number of their Russian-speaking users threefold, including through the use of their materials by news agencies in Russia and beyond.

The international UN Radio Service can serve as an illustrative example of the multilingualism in the UN activities. The UN radio programs in Russian broadcast by the largest state radio station "Voice of Russia" gather the weekly audience of about 40 million people without listeners of the Russian radio programs in other countries. Literally two weeks ago the Russian unit of the UN Radio gained one more partner in Russia, namely the radio station "My Udmurtia" from Izhevsk with potential audience of 1,5 million listeners.

The Russian delegation has repeatedly supported the broadest possible access for individual users to the UN documentation. In our opinion, all Member-States of the Organization should do justice to the decision to provide a universal open access to the UN base of documents — Optical Disk System (ODS), which represents a unique storage facility for the documents of the world Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

For a number of years the issue of rationalization of the network of United Nations information centers has been under consideration of our Committee. We note that the Department has done significant job in this area while certain strategic approaches of its leadership have taken specific shape: the integrated European information center was put in operation in Brussels.

At the same time, as we have repeatedly stated, the rationalization should be conducted taking into account opinions of the countries and regional groups concerned as well as financial possibilities. In this regard, we see as substantiated the decision of the Secretary-General to review the plan on rationalization of information centers, which was made taking into consideration the new financial, political and geographic realities and opinions of the Member-States voiced at the 26th session of the Committee on Information and in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly.

We are satisfied that the report A/AC 198/2005/3 notes the effective role of the UN information center in Moscow in translating and sharing information products in Russian in the countries where this language is spoken. In recent years the center has considerably strengthened its partnership links with other UN institutions in Russia and plays a coordinating role within the system of the coordinating resident in Russia on most issues related to the outreach activities of the United Nations agencies. The expectation, expressed in the Secretary-General's report, that it could expand its regional role in the future, looks justified.

Mr. Chairman,

We have carefully studied the detailed Secretary-General's report on modernization of the UN libraries. We continue to support the mechanism of activity of the Steering Committee on Modernization of the UN libraries.

In this context we take note of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to the UN General Assembly A/59/373, which emphasizes the successful efforts of the Steering Committee and its Secretariat on the basis of the DPI Outreach Division aimed at reorganizing and coordinating the activities of the UN libraries. We would like to stress that the report speaks of the importance to develop a new library policy in the agencies of the UN system as well as the necessity to specify the mandate and financial resources of the activity of the Steering Committee and its Secretariat.

We also follow with interest the implementation of the ambitious plans of the new leadership of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library on changing the concept of library services, as reflected in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in the New York Headquarters. We refer to moving from "collections to connections" with a view to systemizing the "knowledge management" within the whole Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the DPI efforts aimed at consolidating the communications potential of the Organization and ensuring "one voice" from all the UN agencies. In particular, we regard as important the activity of the UN Communications Group established on Secretary-General's initiative in 2002. The Group has already made a considerable contribution to bringing together efforts of different UN agencies during preparation of major international meetings and events. We also believe that the work of the Department on expanding the UN capacity to give operational information for the media is quite helpful. Summaries of daily briefings of the Secretary-General's Spokesman as well as the news bulletin, press-releases and electronic mail service represent a solid basis which could be very useful for national news services.

Mr. Chairman,

The DPI faces critical and complex tasks and we would like to assure you that our delegation is ready for constructive cooperation in improving the UN information mechanisms in order to achieve mutually acceptable solutions in this area.

We would also like to thank the Secretariat for timely submission of the information-related reports, which undoubtedly contributes to the more focused and goal-oriented work of the current session.

Thank you.