

Statement by Ms. Gaile Ramoutar, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, on behalf of Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (20 April 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are Members of the United Nations.

The CARICOM delegations would wish to associate themselves fully with the Statement made by the Representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China which set out clearly the position of those countries on a number of important issues which are before the 27th Session of the Committee on Information. In addition to those remarks, the CARICOM delegations would wish to make a number of pertinent observations in relation to the several agenda items before the Committee.

CARICOM delegations would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Shashi Tharoor for his comprehensive introductory statement in which he gave the Committee a detailed overview of the more salient areas of the work of DPI over the last year.

CARICOM delegations are pleased to note that the reorganization of the Department of Public Information has now been completed in accordance with the relevant mandates of the General Assembly and with guidance from the Committee on Information and we look forward to the further strengthening of the Department so that it can better tell the UN story to an ever widening global audience which must be made fully aware of the successes as well as the shortcomings of this unique universal organization which is committed to global economic and social well being, to the maintenance of international peace and security and to encouraging respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms everywhere.

CARICOM delegations are indeed very satisfied that DPI's new operating model which reflects a new working relationship between the various Secretariat Departments and DPI will enhance further the visibility of the many priority UN activities and events.

CARICOM delegations also welcome the further integration by DPI of new information and communication technologies into its global communications infrastructure and we note that there has been a substantial increase in the use of the UN web site by a variety of target audiences. We are hopeful that some if not all of the new services such as live web casts, viewing of video clips etc, that flow from the greater use of ICT and modern communication tools will be accessible by the mass media and by the general public in the Caribbean.

CARICOM delegations thank the Department for its work in promoting the recently held international meeting on Small Island Developing States and wish to encourage the Department to continue to promote the outcomes of this meeting.

CARICOM also continues to be appreciative of the work being carried out by the UN Radio in transmitting programmes to the Caribbean region and would urge the Department to increase

the number of partnership arrangements with additional radio stations in the Caribbean region.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning now to the question of the further rationalization of the network of UN information centres, CARICOM delegations have taken due note of the fact that the initial policy approach leading to the consolidation of UNICs into one or more regional hubs has had to be recalibrated due to the difficult financial situation confronting DPI and consequently its inability to open fully staffed and resourced new regional hubs.

The UNIC Port of Spain already has regional outreach for the English speaking Caribbean. We have noted that it is among those centres whose host Governments DPI will be approaching in light of the cost of its operations. This matter is receiving the careful attention of the competent authorities in Port of Spain. The UNIC Port of Spain has, as part of its mandate, important public information dissemination functions regarding the United Nations in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Caribbean States which it serves. It is our hope that a mutually satisfactory arrangement can be arrived at between the host Government and the UN whereby the UNIC Port of Spain can continue to operate from Trinidad and Tobago and would at the same time be able to discharge efficiently and cost effectively its responsibilities, not only to the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago, but also to the other countries of the Caribbean sub regions which fall within its sphere of operations. We, accordingly, look forward to the initiation of those consultations between our respective authorities.

In this connection as well and notwithstanding the financial strictures under which the Department continues to operate, CARICOM delegations would wish to reiterate their request that favourable consideration be given to posting a national information officer to satisfy the UN information needs of the northern Caribbean Island territories as well as Belize, which person could be housed within the UNDP office in Kingston, Jamaica.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, CARICOM delegations pay particular attention to the work of the DPI in the dissemination of information on UN activities world wide, are supportive of additional funding being made available to DPI to discharge its responsibilities at Headquarters and in the field and are firmly of the view that telling the UN story to as wide an audience as is possible is an absolute imperative if the UN is to command world wide respect and admiration for all the admirable ways in which it has helped humanity to achieve its common goals over these almost sixty (60) years.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.