

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information, Ambassador Mihnea Motoc (24 April 2006)

Mr. Under-Secretary-General, Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor, and through him to the Department of Public Information, for the excellent cooperation extended to me, and to the members of the Bureau of the Committee on Information, during the past year.

Presiding over this committee for the second year, I am comforted by the knowledge that the Department is led by someone who is not only known for his vision and leadership, but also for his unwavering commitment to the ideals of the United Nations. This Committee looks forward to working with you, Mr. Tharoor, and with your Department, to build upon the achievements realized by DPI over the last few years.

I am also encouraged by the growing working relationship between DPI and the Committee, which over the years has evolved into a solid partnership. Even though the Committee meets only once a year, as members of the Bureau we are in contact with DPI throughout the year, and are able to convey to the Department the views of Member States on issues considered priorities. DPI's job is to inform the world about the work of the UN, but it is our responsibility to keep DPI informed about the priorities agreed to by Member States. This is possible when we work together, hand in hand - and that is exactly what we are doing.

We are meeting at a time when the United Nations is in the midst of a remarkable renewal. The World Summit, held in September 2005, produced a clear roadmap and set the stage for the comprehensive reform of the Organization. After piecemeal reform, and some ad hoc repair and maintenance action, fundamental changes are finally in the offing. As the President of Romania, H.E. Mr. Traian Basescu, pointed out in his statement at the 2005 World Summit, leaders of 191 member states concurred on a common vision not only to strengthen the United Nations as the centerpiece of multilateral architecture, but to reengineer it to lead in an ever - more diverse and promising world. "This global agreement means that we share in common the deep belief that there can be an Organization shielding the entire humankind and providing to the needs and aspirations of all of it."

We all agree that DPI is the voice through which this sense of optimism and common purpose must be conveyed. The Committee on Information, the legislative body dealing with public information, is an integral part of this renewal. To be an effective partner of DPI, the Committee itself must also consider ways and means to strengthen its role, especially in the context of UN reform.

In my view, there are three ways Member States can strengthen DPI's hand. First, it can help ensure that DPI is given adequate funding for its work. While budget is not an area we concern ourselves with, many of us serve on the Fifth Committee and could convey to it the feelings prevalent among Member States on the need for adequate funding for DPI.

Second, we can help DPI locally. The information centres and services are the vital link through which DPI connects to the public at large. By supporting the local information centres and building partnerships with them, we can greatly enhance DPI's ability to promote the work of the United Nations.

And third, we can encourage partnership between DPI and civil society. Non-governmental organizations are great sources of creative energy. We can enhance public information by promoting greater dialogue and partnership between DPI and national civil society organizations. I was greatly encouraged to learn that DPI has already entered into partnership with educational institutions in several countries, which are helping to translate UN documents for posting on the UN website.

Though UN reform, including the ongoing mandate review, is not within the purview of this Committee, we should also be able to contribute to this process, for example, by considering a more streamlined resolution that is duly updated, more action oriented, more coherent and less repetitive. I appeal to Member States to embrace the challenge of reform and give DPI very precise, action-oriented guidance.

Distinguished delegates,

This year's session, I believe, will be important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it will provide us with an opportunity to review the state of UN reform as it affects DPI. In the past three years, major changes have taken place in the Department. There have been both structural and operational overhauls. The report on the activities of the Department gives us some clear yardsticks to measure the success of these changes. This and four other reports circulated by DPI provide a good and clear picture of the changes brought about under the Secretary-General's reform process. I was particularly pleased to have received a letter from the Under-Secretary-General for the General Assembly Affairs, informing me as Chairman of the Committee that all COI reports slotted for issuance by the Department were issued at least six weeks prior to the start of our meeting. I hope this has allowed you to carefully examine these reports. After all, your views on these reports will shape the general debate and form the core of the draft resolution. The interactive session this afternoon will be another opportunity to discuss the Department's activities in further detail. I look forward to the encounter and also encourage you to attend.

Our objective at this year's session, as usual, will be to adopt a consensus document at the end of our deliberations. The overarching objective for us is to collectively provide the best possible policy guidance to the Department so that our Organization continues to benefit from the strong voice given to it by DPI. As your Chairman, I undertake to do my part. I am sure you will do yours.

Thank you.