

## **Statement by Mr. Hossein Maleki, Second Counselor, Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations (26 April 2006)**

Mr. Chairman,

It is of great pleasure for my delegation to see you presiding over the current annual meeting of the Committee on Information. We are confident that, under your skilful stewardship, the work of the Committee will be guided wisely and successfully. I avail myself of this opportunity to appreciate the Secretary General for presenting us important reports on the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI). I also commend Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, and his colleagues for their hard work aiming at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the DPI. I associate myself with the statement made by the distinguished Representative of the Republic of South Africa on behalf of G77/China.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to join others in re-emphasizing the central role of the United Nations in global affairs. Indeed, its voice must be heard by all peoples in a clear and effective manner. We fully concur with the view that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, as envisaged in the Charter. In this context, we underline the important role of the Department of Public Information as the public voice of the United Nations that can promote a public image of the Organization by disseminating its messages throughout the world.

The primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to absorb and strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization. The role that the Department can and should play in today's "monopolized world of media" is more crucial than ever for promoting the broader goals of the Organization. It must be able to bring accurate information to the attention of the peoples worldwide in order to contain and counter biased information of all kinds in the world's communication matrix. It should lead the march towards harmony within its own sphere of influence - the domain of information.

Equally important is the vital role of the Committee on Information which has been established as a forum to formulate a cogent and coherent information policy for this world body in order to bring about harmony, goodwill and greater understanding among peoples by building bridges between various societies, cultures and religions.

Mr. Chairman,

Disparity in the use of information and communications technology has immeasurably widened the existing gaps between the developed and the developing countries in the field of public information and communication technology, and as a consequence, vast segments of

the population in developing countries are yet to benefit sufficiently from the present information and communication technology revolution.

Regrettably, certain countries continue to take advantage of such imbalances. In practice, they are taking advantage of their monopoly of modern communications to distort and fabricate the events and realities in other countries, especially in the developing world, thus tarnishing the image and damaging the interests of the latter. Therefore, such a detrimental and undesirable situation demands immediate attention by the international community. The United Nations must take necessary measures to curtail the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries and put an end to this harmful trend in the world of media against the developing world. Bridging the digital divide between the developed and developing world and placing information and communications technologies at the service of development in a fair and just manner is a must and the Department of Public Information is expected to play more effective and greater role in this domain by, *inter alia*, raising public awareness.

Mr. Chairman,

The Islamic Republic of Iran stresses the significant role of the network of the United Nations information centres (UNICs) in enhancing the public image of the United Nations and disseminating messages on its activities to local populations, especially in developing countries that are lagging behind in access to modern communication system and information technology. We believe that UNICs should be enabled to better serve the United Nations in realizing its goals and purposes. To our regret, the report of the Secretary-General does not contain good news about the current situation of many UNICs in developing countries. In this regard, I wish to draw the attention of the Committee to the Secretary General's report (Para. 7, section B of document [A/AC.198/2006/1](#)) which states that the budgetary limitations facing the UNICs is the main problem for the Department of Public Information in replacing the obsolete communication equipments in the United Nations Information Centres. It is obvious that obsolete and outdated equipments hinder the ability of the centres to fulfil their responsibilities. We should therefore address this important issue in our present negotiations.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is of the opinion that freedom of expression, especially through media, in all societies is a major indicative of progress and development in different aspects of life. However, we believe that freedom of expression, as a recognized part of human rights, should be coupled with responsibility in order to avoid lawlessness and irrational behavior that may result in attacking and injuring the feelings of others. The recent sacrilege and committed in the name of freedom of expression by some publications in Europe which depicted Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), is a clear example of such a situation that resulted in creating hatred and animosity among the people of different faiths. In that regard, I encourage the DPI to continue its efforts in promoting respect for all cultures, religions and civilizations.

Mr. Chairman,

As stated in Article 9 of the General Assembly's resolution [A/RES/56/6](#), the United Nations should continue to promote and strengthen the culture of dialogue among civilizations. We appreciate the Secretary General's efforts devoted to the promotion and strengthening of this idea of high magnitude. However, we emphasize that, in fostering the culture of dialogue via all mass media, care should be taken to promote the activities that have relevance and pertinence to the purpose and thrust of this important initiative. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I assure you of my delegation's full support and constructive cooperation to achieve a successful outcome in this annual meeting of the Committee.

Thank you.