

Statement by H.E. Koigi Wa Wamwere Mp, Kenya's Assistant Minister of Information and Communications and Head of Kenya's Delegation (26 April 2006)

Mr. Chairman,

First, may I wish the chair a most fruitful stewardship of the Committee and wish the committee utmost success in all its future deliberations.

Mr. Chairman,

While associating with the statement of the Group of 77 and China, we wish to thank the Secretary General and DPI for the production of their most informative reports and updates on the work of the UN Department of Information.

Mr. Chairman,

Kenya believes the importance of this committee cannot be overemphasized for two obvious reasons. Today mankind cannot survive without the peace and unity that the UN pursues on behalf of all and without objective and truthful information, the world would be walking in total darkness and complete danger.

While appreciating the success of DPI and UN so far, in the 21st Century, the world should be totally decolonized and I should be making my statement today in Kiswahili, an African language that is so widely spoken, that despite its limited use in the DPI website, it should today be recognized as an official language of the UN. Kenya believes that for UN information to reach grassroots and stimulate development in a large part of Africa, it is high time the UN recognized Kiswahili as one of its official languages. Right now no indigenous African language is an official language of the UN.

Mr. Chairman,

Because of UN's role as the leading peace maker, and here Kenya has played a key role with its peace-keeping forces, when western owned, local and private or international media is not objective and is demonizing African and Third World governments like Kenya when they pursue economic and political independence from western domination, DPI and UN Information Centers should give neutral and more objective information by which the world should judge the countries under media attack and those attacking them. Right now there is too much silence, when DPI and UN intervention to provide direction and mediation in media-led controversies, conflicts and wars is most needed.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite recent allegations by sections of international media that there is a threat to media freedom in Kenya, we reaffirm Kenya's commitment to the principles of the UN charter, freedom of the press as well as independence and diversity of the media.

Anyone who cares to examine the practice of Kenya's media will attest that Kenya's media is truly free. However Mr. Chairman, as Kenya denounces and refuses to engage in government censorship of the media, equally it calls upon all media, especially local and international private media not to exercise media censorship of government or ban certain political personalities and government leaders from media coverage as in the colonial days.

Mr. Chairman,

Information from DPI and UN information centres must save the world from the ideologies of negative ethnicity and racism. Not so long ago, we saw negative ethnicity plunge Rwanda, Yugoslavia and Somalia into genocide and disintegration because UN kept quiet and looked the other way for too long. As these ideologies once more rear their ugly heads in certain countries like Kenya, we believe DPI and UN information centres can help save these countries from the deadly ideologies by giving out information and showing films like Hotel Rwanda that will inform uninformed peoples of our countries of the dangers of embracing hate ideologies. In this matter neither the UN nor the DPI can afford to remain aloof again when the fires of ethnicity and racism engulf countries fanned by misguided media and selfish politicians.

Mr. Chairman,

World peace, unity, human survival and information are so intertwined that DPI must be given more resources to fully inform the world on why it should spend a lot more resources to save itself from the scourges of HIV/AIDS, growing poverty, the ever increasing gap between rich and poor, drought and famine, unfair trade in the name of globalization, corruption and neo-colonialism.

To write fairly, accurately, objectively and progressively, UN and DPI must assist to train more persons in the profession and ethics of journalism. Indeed Kenya supports a new information order where better trained, more knowledgeable and ethical journalists will report more objectively, accurately and truthfully about UN, all countries, world problems and their possible solutions. Journalism must never be used to instigate and make wars and conflicts but promote peace and harmony among people and countries.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

Kenya fully supports the bridging of the digital divide. To actualize this, Kenya has developed an E-Government strategy to strengthen democratic government at all levels, established a Universal Service Fund to take internet to every village and is creating a National Broadband Network Infrastructure to broaden the reach of Information and Communication technologies throughout the country including most undeveloped areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Once again, may this committee under your able leadership help the UN to propel this world to a better, wealthier and more just future for all.

Thank you very much.